

AFRIKA UND ÜBERSEE

VOLUME 93 Published on 31. December 2020

Trilingual Journal of
African Languages and
Cultures

Revue trilingue des
langues et cultures
africaines

Dreisprachige Zeitschrift
für afrikanische Sprachen
und Kulturen



Edited by the Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik
at Universität Hamburg

CONTENT

Editorial 1

Contributions to the symposium “Endangered languages in Contact: Nigeria’s Plateau languages” (2004) in honour of Ludwig Gerhardt

Blench, Roger Research on the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria 3

Blench, Roger The East Kainji languages of Central Nigeria 45

Gerhardt, Ludwig Verbal pluralization strategies in Plateau 68

Kato, Abiel Barau† Progress and problems in literacy programmes in Central Nigeria 103

Longtau, Selbut R. Historical inferences from traditions of origins of Tarok and some Chadic languages in Central Nigeria 119

Wolff, H. Ekkehard Contact-induced disturbances in personal pronoun systems in the Chadic – Benue-Congo convergence zone in Central Nigeria 158

Contributions to the 23. Afrikanistentag in Hamburg (2018)

Gensler, Orin D. Grammaticalization of *qəl* ‘gourd’ in Amharic 193

Kempf, Viktoria „Long live our tribal jujus“- Das Bedeutungsspektrum des Begriffs *juju* im kamerunischen Englisch 202

Krzyżanowska, Magdalena *Mäsob*: Designing a new Amharic coursebook 224

Nosnitsin, Denis & Maria Bulakh “Behold, I have written it on parchment ...” Two Early Amharic poems from Ms. Ef. 10 (Koriander 2), St. Petersburg 239

Articles

Akumbu, Pius & Roland Kießling The expression of diminutivity in Central Ring Grassfields Bantu 257

Jungraithmayr, Herrmann Préliminaires à une étude du saba, langue tchadique orientale du Tchad (région de Melfi) 281

Kempf, Viktoria & Tamara Prischnegg A sketch of Akum (Southern Jukunoid) 299

Book reviews 327

AFRIKA UND ÜBERSEE

VOLUME 93 Published on 31. December 2020

Trilingual Journal of
African Languages and
Cultures

Revue trilingue des
langues et cultures
africaines

Dreisprachige Zeitschrift
für afrikanische Sprachen
und Kulturen



Edited by the Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik
at Universität Hamburg



Imprint

Editing institution

Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik at Universität Hamburg

Editors

Ludwig Gerhardt, Roland Kießling, Henning Schreiber

Managing editors

Viktoria Kempf, Doreen Schröter, Theda Schumann
all in Hamburg, Germany

Academic advisory board

Pius W. Akumbu (Bamenda, Cameroon and Hamburg, Germany)
Norbert Cyffer (Vienna, Austria)
Tom Güldemann (Berlin, Germany)
Gudrun Miehe (Bayreuth, Germany)
Alice Mitchell (Cologne, Germany)
Victor A. Porkhomovskij (Moscow, Russia)
Justus Roux (Stellenbosch, South Africa)
Yvonne Treis (Villejuif, France)
Rainer Voßen (Frankfurt a. M., Germany)
Alena Witzlack-Makarevich (Jerusalem, Israel)
H. Ekkehard Wolff (Leipzig, Germany)

All correspondence concerning editorial matters should be sent to

Universität Hamburg
Asien-Afrika-Institut
Abt. für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 / Flügel Ost
20146 Hamburg
Germany

E-Mail: afrikaunduebersee@uni-hamburg.de

Licence

Authors are solely responsible for the content of their contributions.
All contributions are published under a Creative Commons-Licence
CC BY 4.0.

Volume DOI 10.15460/auue.2020.93.1

Journal DOI 10.15460/auue

ISSN 0002-0427

eISSN 2749-0971

Technical hosting

Hamburg University Press

Publishing house of the Hamburg State and University Library
(Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg)

Von-Melle-Park 3

20146 Hamburg

Germany

Published with the support of

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung, and Mr. Andreas E. Siemers.

CONTENT

Editorial 1

Contributions to the symposium “Endangered languages in Contact: Nigeria’s Plateau languages” (2004) in honour of Ludwig Gerhardt

Blench, Roger Research on the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria 3

Blench, Roger The East Kainji languages of Central Nigeria 45

Gerhardt, Ludwig Verbal pluralization strategies in Plateau 68

Kato, Abiel Barau† Progress and problems in literacy programmes in Central Nigeria 103

Longtau, Selbut R. Historical inferences from traditions of origins of Tarok and some Chadic languages in Central Nigeria 119

Wolff, H. Ekkehard Contact-induced disturbances in personal pronoun systems in the Chadic – Benue-Congo convergence zone in Central Nigeria 158

Contributions to the 23. Afrikanistentag in Hamburg (2018)

Gensler, Orin D. Grammaticalization of *qəl* ‘gourd’ in Amharic 193

Kempf, Viktoria „Long live our tribal jujus“- Das Bedeutungsspektrum des Begriffs *juju* im kamerunischen Englisch 202

Krzyżanowska, Magdalena *Mäsob*: Designing a new Amharic coursebook 224

Nosnitsin, Denis & Maria Bulakh “Behold, I have written it on parchment ...” Two Early Amharic poems from Ms. Ef. 10 (Koriander 2), St. Petersburg 239

Articles

Akumbu, Pius & Roland Kießling The expression of diminutivity in Central Ring Grassfields Bantu 257

Jungraithmayr, Herrmann Préliminaires à une étude du saba, langue tchadique orientale du Tchad (région de Melfi) 281

Kempf, Viktoria & Tamara Prischnegg A sketch of Akum (Southern Jukunoid) 299

Book reviews 327

Editorial

The present 93rd issue of *Afrika und Übersee* marks the journal's first open-access online appearance in a long series of print publications ranging back to the first issue of 1910. Indeed this debut in the online world marks the latest break in the journal's history that has seen many breaks before, most of them marked by onomastic corrections reflecting major geopolitical and ideological changes, as from the initial *Zeitschrift für Kolonialsprachen* (vol. 1–9) to *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen* (vol. 10–35) and *Afrika und Übersee* (vol. 36–present). While the current name of the journal eliminates all pejorative connotations of the prior ones, it might again seem outdated to some – the *Übersee* component being restricted to Madagascar. However, *Afrika und Übersee* has been retained as a brand name, in order to avoid overdoing the breaks and disrupting a long-standing tradition.

The transition to an online format and the launch of this issue is marked by a temporal gap of more than three years since the print publication of issue 92 in 2018. This long delay has been caused by a culmination of adverse developments, the most dramatic one being the cancellation of the post of the journal's managing editor which had been filled by Dr. Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg from 1981–2000 and Theda Schumann, M.A. from 2000–2013, resulting from university budget cuts which came down on the *Asien-Afrika-Institut* in 2013.

In its new appearance *Afrika und Übersee* will continue its established academic program for the dissemination of research on African languages within their social and historical contexts.

The present issue contains three sections: the first one is dedicated to articles from the symposium “Endangered languages in contact: Nigeria's Plateau languages” which took place on the 25th and 26th of March 2004 in honor of Prof. Ludwig Gerhardt on the occasion of his retirement. The authors explore various phenomena of contact shared by Niger Congo languages of the Plateau branch and Afroasiatic languages of the Chadic branch.

The second section contains selected papers from the 23rd Afrikanistentag which took place on the 25th and 26th of May 2018 in Hamburg. The conference spawned a set of thematically diverse contributions including a semantic analysis of the lexeme *juju* in Cameroonian English and a group of papers on different aspects of the Amharic language.

The third section finally presents papers recently submitted to *Afrika und Übersee*. Two papers provide primary data on little researched languages of Western and Central Africa, i.e. Saba (East Chadic) and Akum (Southern Jukunoid). One paper is dedicated to the expression of diminutivity in Central Ring Grassfields Bantu languages with a focus on Babanki.

The editors of *Afrika und Übersee* wish to express their sincere gratitude to a number of institutions and individuals. We thank the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG), the *Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung* and Andreas Siemers for supporting the transition of *Afrika und Übersee* with dedicated grants and a generous donation, respectively. Without their financial backing, the transition would not have happened.

We are very grateful to Dr. Doreen Schröter and Dr. Viktoria Kempf for their most assiduous and dedicated commitment as managing editors in the crucial transitional phase. A very special thanks goes to Dr. Doreen Schröter for her initiative, her perseverance and her patience during the preparatory phase, generously contributing her expertise in online publishing and passing it on to Dr. Viktoria Kempf who has taken over since 2020 and continues as managing editor. The new face of *Afrika und Übersee* has been designed by Annalena Weber, for which we are grateful.

We also thank the *Dietrich Reimer Verlag* for having hosted *Afrika und Übersee* for the past decades and especially Beate Behrens for her cooperative spirit and assistance in making the transition from the *Dietrich Reimer Verlag* to the *Hamburg University Press* as smooth as possible.

Last but not least, sincere thanks go to Isabella Meinecke and Dr. Tim Boxhammer of *Hamburg University Press* for their support in navigating *Afrika und Übersee* into the online world.

The editors

(Ludwig Gerhardt, Viktoria Kempf, Roland Kießling, Henning Schreiber)

Research on the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria

Roger Blench

University of Cambridge
rogerblench@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract:

The paper is an overview of scholarship on the Plateau language group of Central Nigeria to November 2020. It reviews the existing published and manuscript sources and describes modern scholarship. It provides an overview of the literature on the internal and external classification of these languages and the issue of endangerment, which is severe for some languages. It summarises the use of Plateau languages in education and the media, which has undergone a major revival after 2010. There is now a concerted push for the use of Plateau languages in education. The paper then reviews each subgroup, presenting an internal classification and references to publications. Based on the existing evidence, a fresh classification of Plateau is presented.

Keywords: Plateau languages, classification, media, Nigeria

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to Plateau languages

Among the many language families represented in Nigeria, one of the largest and most complex is the Plateau languages considered to be a major subgroup of Benue-Congo (Greenberg 1963; Gerhardt 1989; Blench 2000a). Plateau languages dominate the centre of Nigeria, spreading from Lake Kainji to the region south of Bauchi. Excluding Kainji and Jukunoid, there are some 40 languages according to the most recent count,¹ with a few more to be discovered. Although most Plateau populations are small (usually 2–10,000 speakers), there are ca. 1 million speakers of Plateau languages, with the bulk of the numbers made up from large groups such as Berom and Eggon. Some

1 See Blench 2020.

Plateau languages, such as Sambe and Yangkam, are moribund and others, e.g., Ayu, are severely threatened. Hausatisation and urbanisation are the main forces leading to this decline in both competence and numbers of speakers but there are countervailing trends such as increased pride in cultural heritage and desire for literacy (Blench 1998). Research on Plateau languages is far from vibrant; regrettably, the Nigerian (and indeed international) university system has largely failed this family of languages in recent years. The map in Figure 1 shows the approximate locations of Plateau language subgroups.



Figure 1. Schematic map of Plateau language subgroups

It seems never to have been in doubt that Plateau languages form part of the broader unit represented by Benue-Congo (Williamson 1989; Williamson & Blench 2000). Westermann (1927) assigned the few languages for which he had data to a ‘Benue-Cross’ family, corresponding to present-day East Benue-Congo, although later in Westermann & Bryan (1952) these were classified as ‘isolated units’. The first record of Plateau is Castelnau (1851) who gives a wordlist of Hyam in the rather unfortunate context of its title, ‘*une nation d’hommes à queue*’.² Koelle (1854) gives wordlists of Ham (Hyam), Koro of Lafia (Migili) and Yasgua (Yeskwa). Gowers’ (1907) unpublished

2 I would like to record my thanks to Professor Ludwig Gerhardt for both draw-

but widely circulated wordlists include Fyem, Kibyen (=Berom) and Jos (=Izere). A more extensive listing of language names is in Meek (1925, II:137), where the classification (contributed by N.W. Thomas) lists them under ‘Nigerian Semi-Bantu’ along with Kainji and Jukunoid. Meek (1931, II: 1–128) published wordlists of the Tyap cluster and Hyam. However, the modern subclassification of Plateau derives principally from Greenberg (1963: 8) who proposed dividing Westermann’s ‘Benue-Cross’ languages into seven co-ordinate groups including modern-day Kainji and Jukunoid, implying that they form a flat array with no internal nesting. Greenberg’s split Benue-Congo into four subdivisions correspond to modern terminology as shown in Table 1.

Shimizu (1975b), who surveyed the languages of the Jos area, was the first to report numerous languages and to propose a tentative classification for them. With numerous emendations and additions these have been reprised in almost all subsequent works (notably Williamson and Shimizu 1968; Williamson 1971, 1972; Maddieson 1972; Hansford et al. 1976; Gerhardt 1989; Crozier and Blench 1992; Storch et al. 2011; Blench 1998, 2000a, 2018).

Table 1. Greenberg’s divisions of Benue-Congo and modern terminology

Subdivision	Greenberg Term	Modern name
A	Plateau 1a,b	Kainji
	Plateau 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Plateau
B	Jukunoid	Jukunoid
C	Cross River	Cross River
D	Bantoid	Bantoid versus Bantu

This paper³ is an overview of the Plateau languages, incorporating recent findings and presenting a fresh but still tentative classification.

ing my attention to this intriguing document and providing me with a photocopy of it.

3 This paper started life as a presentation at the Hamburg meeting, March 2004, marking the retirement of Professor Ludwig Gerhardt. In the following sixteen years it has been revised numerous times and now no longer bears much resemblance to the original text. It would be impossible to list all those who have worked with me over this period, but the late Barau Kato, Selbut Longtau and Michael Bulkaam have been my principal co-workers on field data collection. John Nengel (†), Bitrus Kaze, Deme Dang, Ruth Adiwu, Barnabas Dusu (†), Gideon Asuku, Alex Maikarfi, Wayo

Figure 1 shows the locations of the different subgroups of Plateau in Central Nigeria, using the names of subgroups established in this paper, set out in §2. It covers the sources of data, the media profile of Plateau and the issue of the decline in research. The second section presents the subgroups of Plateau, following the sequence of the overall classification adopted in this paper, reporting on newly available data.

1.2 Data sources

Publications on Plateau languages has largely been descriptive material on individual languages (e.g. Lukas & Willms 1961; Wolff 1963; Mackay 1964; Bouquiaux 1964, 1967, 1970, 2001; Gerhardt 1969, 1971, 1972/3a, 1972/3b, 1973/4, 1974, 1980, 1983a,b,c, 1987, 1988a,b, 1989, 1992, 1994a,b, 2005; Dihoff 1976; Robinson 1976; Stofberg 1978; Wolff & Meyer-Bahlburg 1979; McKinney 1979, 1983, 1984, 1990; Jockers 1982; Hyuwa 1982, 1986; Maddieson 1982, n.d. a,b; Adwiraah & Hagen 1983; Hagen 1988; Price 1989; Adwiraah 1989; Sibomana 1980, 1981a,b, 1985; Longtau 1993, 2008; Shimizu 1996; Blench 2002b; Blench & Gya 2011; Blench & Longtau 2011; Wilson 2003; Marggrander 2019). With the exception of the material in Benue-Congo Comparative Wordlist (BCCW) (Williamson & Shimizu 1968; Williamson 1972), comparative materials on Plateau languages are limited. Despite its sometimes eccentric choice of items and often defective entries, the BCCW remains the only large published compilation of data.⁴ Often the source of wordlists is ‘Nigerian government files’ which generally means an orthographic list filled in by an administrator. Prior classifications such as Greenberg have relied on unpublished wordlists, also usually orthographic,

Bai and Daniel Gya have been crucial to the development of dictionary materials in their languages. Staff members at NBTT and SIL Jos, particularly David Crozier, Matthew Harley and Russell Norton have been always helpful in giving me access to unpublished materials and to discuss issues relating to particular languages. I would particularly like to thank Mark Gaddis for arranging workshops on the Koro cluster languages, Andy Kellogg for setting up meetings with the Icen community, Mike Rueck for keeping me informed about community meetings and literacy progress and Ezekiel Foron for arranging a Berom Dictionary Review workshop in 2009. The present revision includes all data collected up to November 2020.

4 The lexical data from the Benue-Congo Comparative Wordlist has been computerised and is now available on the Comparalex website (Snider et. al. 2020). The classification it uses follows Greenberg (1963).

from a variety of sources, notably University of Ibadan students. The Summer Institute of Linguistics,⁵ based in Zaria and later Jos, collected a large number of Swadesh lists in the 1960s and 1970s and these were the basis of some parts of the first edition of the Index of Nigerian Languages (Hansford et al. 1976) although the classification of Nigerian languages used there was contributed by Carl Hoffmann. During the 1980s and 1990s there was virtually no survey work,⁶ although quite large lexical, and in some cases grammatical, databases have been collected in relation to Bible translation. A development since 2017 has been the establishment of a Language Documentation Course within the linguistics and Bible Translation Programme at TCNN (Theological College of Northern Nigeria) in Jos. Students undergoing training in this programme are creating lexical databases and analysing a wide variety of languages, including some Plateau.

The Comparative Plateau Project was begun by the author in the early 1990s, starting from a perception that although linguistic field research in Plateau was largely moribund, there was substantial interest from communities in the study, and in particular, the writing of these languages. As a consequence, yearly field trips since 1993 have been undertaken to create primary documentation on the status, location and classification of all languages usually treated as Plateau. In conjunction with this, more extensive documentation, particularly the creation of dictionaries, is under way where the phonology and orthography of a language has been established. To date, primary documentation on some twenty-seven languages is available as well as much additional material on specific languages.⁷ Dictionary work is ongoing in Tarok, Izere, Mada, Berom, Iten, Eggon, Rigwe and Tyap (Appendix I). New research findings on individual languages are included in Blench 2020.

1.3 Internal and external classifications of Plateau

None of the authors who have classified Plateau languages have presented more than very incomplete evidence for their classifications. This is not a criticism; faced with large arrays of data it is easier

5 Now SIL International.

6 Survey work began again in 2006.

7 Further information and some of the datasheets can be downloaded at the author's website (Blench n.d.).

to set out what appears to be the case impressionistically than to write a monograph demonstrating it. Shimizu (1975a) and Gerhardt & Jockers (1981) constitute partial exceptions, presenting lexicostatistical classifications of sample languages together with Kainji and Jukunoid. Their calculations, however, do not include many of the languages under discussion here. However, this neither demonstrates the unity of Plateau nor even the coherence of its usually accepted subgroups. The series of publications on Plateau subgroups, especially Greenberg's Plateau 2 and 4, by Gerhardt (1972/3a, 1972/3b, 1974, 1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1989, 1994a, b) assume the boundaries of these groups, they do not demonstrate it.

A particular issue in the internal classification of Plateau and Jukunoid is the notion of a 'Benue' grouping. Shimizu (1975a: 415) proposed that some branches of Plateau should be classified with Jukunoid. In particular, he argued that Eggon (and by implication the other Plateau V languages, including Nungu and Yeskwa) and Tarokoid (at that time consisting only of Yergam (= Tarok) and Bash-erawa (= Yanjam)) formed a group together with Jukunoid. This emerged from his lexicostatistic tables and was further supported by five isoglosses, the words for 'drink', 'tail', 'meat', 'fire', and 'four'. This expanded group he christened 'Benue'. Gerhardt (1983b) questioned Shimizu's hypothesis noting that his own lexicostatistical work (Gerhardt & Jockers 1981) did not support this, and casting doubt on the five isoglosses proposed by Shimizu. The 'Benue' group continued in a sort of half-life, appearing in Gerhardt (1989) as a subgrouping of Jukunoid and Tarokoid against the rest of Plateau. Blench (2005) has presented evidence that there is a genuine boundary between Plateau and Jukunoid, drawing on lexical and morphological evidence.

This lack of agreement is a reflection of a more general problem, the evidence for a bounded group 'Plateau' in opposition to Kainji, Jukunoid, Dakoid or Mambiloid, other members of the Benue-Congo complex. Blench (2005) presents preliminary evidence to distinguish Plateau from these other groups. The relationships between Plateau languages, their coherence as a grouping and their links with Jukunoid and Kainji remain undetermined. Rowlands (1962) was the first to suggest that there was a dichotomy between the languages of the Jos area, which he linked to West Kainji, and the remainder, but his short wordlists were far from constituting linguistic proof. Compar-

ative analysis has produced some tentative evidence for isoglosses defining Plateau (see Appendix II), but so far no phonological or morphological innovations that would define the group have been proposed. Some of this diversity is undoubtedly due to long-term interactions with the mosaic of Chadic languages also occurring on the Jos Plateau (Blench 2003; Longtau this volume).

1.4 Language status and language endangerment

Plateau languages have always been spoken by relatively small populations. No group of Plateau speakers has formed large centralised political structures resulting in the consequent spread of a language of intercommunication. In the earliest colonial censuses, numbers assigned to particular ethnic groups were often in the hundreds (e.g. Temple 1922; Gunn 1953, 1956). Generally speaking, the overall demographic increase in Nigeria has led to the expansion of human populations and thus numbers of speakers. Few Plateau languages today have less than several thousand speakers unless they are moribund or undergoing language shift. Groups with a larger population, such as the Berom and Tarok, now have more than a hundred thousand speakers.⁸

One Plateau language, Sambe (Alumic §2.5), has gone extinct during the period of the survey. Sambe had six speakers in 2001, all over eighty years old, and just two in 2005. Everything that is known about Sambe is published in Blench (2015). Sambe speakers have turned to Ninzo, a neighbouring Plateau language. Yangkam (Tarokoid §2.1) is severely threatened. In 1991, it probably had ca. 400 speakers, the youngest around fifty. Most speakers have now switched to Hausa. Other languages, such as Ayu, still have several thousand speakers, but the children are no longer speaking Ayu and it is thus also endangered.

1.5 Plateau languages in education and the media

Plateau languages have a limited profile in education or the media. The main development of orthography has been by missionaries, especially SIL International, in relation to Bible translation. In some ways this has been problematic, as literacy is seen as only important for Christians. There were also secular attempts at literacy under

⁸ Numbers are politics in Nigeria today and I deliberately allow these figures to remain vague.

the Northern Regional Language Authority (NORLA) programme in the colonial era (Wolff 1954), although these never had a major impact. The Nigerian Government has been publishing a series entitled ‘Orthographies of Nigerian languages’ since the late 1970s and some Plateau languages have been detailed in these publications (Kuhn & Dusu 1985 for Berom; Hyuwa 1986 for Kaje; Longtau 2000 for Tarok; Goro 2000 for Koro Ashe). However, these are not necessarily linked with a literacy programme except where individual authors are part of such programmes (e.g. Hanni Kuhn and Barnabas Dusu) and there has been no necessary language development as a consequence. Broadly speaking, the languages with the greatest number of speakers have seen the most work, but sometimes literacy programmes are initiated for political or personal reasons.

In recent years, there has been a significant expansion in lobbying for local languages by organisations such as CONAECDA (Figure 2). This seeks to pick up the sometimes moribund literacy programmes in relation to Bible translation and repurpose them in secular literacy programmes. This has been relatively successful in Plateau State, where the government has in principle approved the development of teaching materials in eight languages. Unfortunately, as of September 2020, this is on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is clear motivation to continue programme development.⁹

Table 2 lists the Plateau languages, noting whether literacy materials exist in the language, whether work towards a Bible translation exists and whether there is any broadcasting or other electronic media. The marking of a + sign does not necessarily mean the literacy programme is viable or the Bible translation is read (see paper by Kato, this volume). Jili [= Migili] has literacy materials and a Bible but it is virtually unread, in part because of problematic orthography decisions.



Figure 2. CONAECDA logo.
Source: CONAECDA.

⁹ However, during 2021, this programme has now revived.

Table 2. Literacy, scripture translation and broadcast media in Plateau

	Language	Literacy	Scripture	Media
Northwest	<u>Eda</u> ¹⁰	+	—	—
	<u>Edra</u>	—	—	—
	Kuturmi (Obiro and Ikryo)	—	—	—
	Kulu	—	—	—
	Ejẹgha [Idon]	—	—	—
	Doka	—	—	—
	Ehwa [Iku-Gora-Ankwe]	—	—	—
Beromic	Berom	+	+	+
	Cara	—	—	—
	Iten	+	+	—
	Shall-Zwall	—	—	—
West-Central				
Izere cluster	Izere of Fobur	+	+	+
	Icèn	+	+	—
	Ganàng	—	—	—
	Fèràn	—	—	—
Rigwe	Rigwe	+	+	+
Southern Zaria	Jju	+	+	—
Tyap cluster	Tyap	+	+	+
Hyamic	Shamang	—	—	—
	Cori	—	—	—
	Hyam cluster (incl. Kwyyeny, Yaate, Sait, Dzar, Hyam of Nok)	+	—	—

10 Underlines are an orthographic convention, here denoting open /ɛ/.

	Language	Literacy	Scripture	Media
	Zhire	—	—	—
	Shang	—	—	—
	Gworok	—	—	—
	Atakar	—	—	—
	Kacicere	—	—	—
	Sholyo	—	—	—
	Kafancan	—	—	—
Koro cluster	Ashe	+	+	—
	Tinɔr (Waci-Myama)	+	+	—
	Idū	+	+	—
	Gwara	—	—	—
	Nyankpa-Bade	+	+	—
Gyongic	Gyong (= Kagoma)	+	—	—
	Angan	—	—	—
Ninzic	Ninzo	+	+	—
	Ce	+	—	—
	Bu-Niŋkada	—	—	—
	Mada	+	+	—
	Numana-Nunku-Gwantu-Numbu	—	—	—
	Ningye-Ninka	—	—	—
	Anib	—	—	—
	Ninkyob	+	—	—
	Nindem	—	—	—
	Nungu	—	—	—
	Ayu?	—	—	—
Ndunic	Ndun-Nyeng-Shakara [= Tari]	—	—	—

	Language	Literacy	Scripture	Media
Alumic	Toro	—	—	—
	Alumu-Təsu	—	—	—
	Hasha	—	—	—
	Sambe (†)	—	—	—
Southern				
Eggonic	Eggon	+	+	—
	Ake	—	—	—
Jilic	Jili	+	+	—
	Jijili	—	—	—
South-eastern	Fyem	—	—	—
	Horom	—	—	—
	Bo-Rukul	—	—	—
Tarokoid	Tarok	+	+	+
	Pe [=Pai]	—	—	—
	Kwang-Ya-Bijim-Legeri	—	—	—
	Yanƙam [=Bashar]	—	—	—
	Sur [=Tapshin]	—	—	—
Eloyi	Eloyi	—	—	—

The existence of a literacy programme does not imply that vernacular literacy is used outside the restricted context of Christianity. Indeed, many ‘literacy’ programmes, including those sponsored by churches, exist to teach reading in either Hausa or English. To teach people to read their own language is to face considerable obstacles, not the least of which is orthography. Nonetheless, since around 2015, there has been a major upsurge of interest in vernacular literacy which is gradually moving beyond the restructured context of Bible Translation. Figure 3 shows the sign to the Rigwe Bible Translation Office in Miango where work on the New Testament was completed. Figure 4 shows a community-initiated workshop to develop a dictionary of

the Rigwe language, held in Miango in November 2020. A Rigwe orthography was first designed in the mid-1980s, so this illustrates the long periods required to bring the community on board. It seems likely that similar initiatives will spring up across the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

In recent times, vernacular languages have expanded into a whole variety of new media outlets, especially the larger ones. The following short sections consider the role these play in extending the reach of Plateau languages.

Radio

The use of radio in broadcasting Plateau languages probably dates back to the 1970s.¹¹ Plateau State Radio and Television (PRTV) broadcasts in Berom, Tarok and Izere. Nassarawa State Radio and Television (NRTV) broadcasts in Mada, Eggon and Jili [= Migili] as well as Alago (Idomoid) and Gwandara (Chadic). The broadcasts are mostly news but there are also some magazine programmes. The content is tightly controlled and consists primarily of existing news broadcasts translated into local languages. No FM licenses have been granted for broadcast in local languages.

Audio recordings

Missionary organisations have produced audio recordings in many vernacular languages. Many languages which have complete or partial Bible translations also now have digital recordings of religious stories. Very local cassettes, CDs and MP3 files of music in Plateau languages are also available in markets in Jos and Kaduna.

Television

The first television broadcasts in Plateau began in 1974 although they were halted several times under the various military governments. Tel-



Figure 3. Typical Bible translation office sign. Source: author.

¹¹ Thanks to Selbut Longtau and Barau Kato (†) for information included in the media section and to Andy Warren-Rothlin for illuminating discussions on the politics of Bible translation and information on current projects.

evision is at both state and federal levels but PRTV (Plateau Radio and Television) is the most accessible station. Vernacular broadcasts are usually translated government official news; the federal government remains highly suspicious of television in minority languages. Broadcasts are currently transmitted in



Figure 4. Rigwe community dictionary workshop, November 2020. Source: Daniel Gya.

Izere, Berom, Tarok, Rigwe and KiCe [Rukuba]. These last two languages were added following the Jos crisis in 2001, which reflects the pressure that minorities are beginning to exert in the state. More languages are likely to be added in the coming years. There appear to be no television broadcasts in Plateau languages of Nasarawa State.

Film and video

Christian groups have been active in promoting the ‘Jesus film’, a film with a standard script that is translated into many languages that do not necessarily have a literacy programme. This is a film about the life of Jesus, of generally Protestant persuasion, that has been promoted by missionary groups around the world and is available on DVD and video. The film exists in Tarok, Berom, Izere and Mada and many more languages are in preparation. Pop music videos sung in some Plateau languages have begun to appear; for example, Hyam songs are now available as commercial VCDs. Even more ambitious, a secular feature film in the Berom language has been made for issue on DVD.

Internet and mobile phones

Nigerians are enthusiastic adopters of social media, and smartphones are now extremely common. Numerous languages have *ad hoc* orthographies so that users can communicate on Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. Despite lacking numerous features for standard writing systems, they seem to work, largely because the languages and idioms are common

to users. These new social media communications are in particular need of more in-depth documentation.

It has become possible to translate lexical data into small dictionaries suitable for mobile phones, and a number of languages have developed such dictionaries, for example, Pyam [= Fyem] and Izere. It is extremely likely this will become the most important way communities access literacy material in the future.

1.6 The research agenda

It would be pleasant to report that Plateau languages were the focus of a lively research community. But this is far from the case; indeed the opposite is true. Academic research on Plateau is at a very low level. Little new work has been undertaken since the mid-1990s except that reported here. Why is this so?

First and foremost this is because of they are low priority for Nigerian researchers. Nigerian universities are in decay and staff morale is low, in part because of uncertain pay and conditions, but also because of a lack of support for research. The other bodies with a record of interest in Plateau languages, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (now SIL International) and its sister-body, the Nigerian Bible Translation Trust, now regard academic publication as a very low priority and little has appeared in recent years. The Euro-American research establishment has also been virtually eliminated for different reasons. Research is now typically in collaboration with expatriate and out-of-context informants, despite the oft-publicised dangers of this approach. The economic slowdown in Nigeria has meant that fewer speakers of minority languages are visiting or studying in Europe and America, and thus opportunities for new insights into linguistic theory are significantly reduced. This illustrates all too starkly the neo-colonial nature of fashionable linguistics, which takes no interest in the languages for themselves, but values them merely for their contribution to passing seminar-room fashion. Despite much talk, Endangered Languages research has made a very limited contribution, to judge by its profile in Nigeria, which has by far the largest number of endangered languages in Africa. Although fieldwork in Africa is still supported, the negative image of Nigeria deters many potential fieldworkers. For a country that has more than one-quarter of all African languages, research is at vanishingly low levels.

By contrast, there has been a significant expansion of interest in literacy and Bible translation across the Nigerian Middle Belt since 2004. Projects that were previously moribund or inactive have been revived by a new generation of enthusiastic young speakers. A good example is Rigwe (see anon. 2006) and Eda [=Kadara]. NBTT is initiating workshops for locally funded groups as is the 'Luke Partnership' a twice-annual workshop for Bible translation and literacy. Local publishing in Nigeria is gradually expanding, but mostly in the popular arena, focusing on proverbs, oral literature and reading and writing. Publications include Gochal (1994) on Ngas, Mamfa (1998) and Lar & Dandam (2002) on Tarok and Nyako (2000) on Izere. This type of publishing will probably continue to increase and take in more ethnolinguistic groups. Also encouraging is the revival of survey work; a team active since 2006 linked to NBTT has circulated a number of studies of poorly-known language areas, including Ahwai (the Ndunic languages) and the Koro cluster.

2 Plateau languages by subgroup

2.1 Tarokoid

In Greenberg (1963), Yergam (Tarok) and Basherawa [=Yankam] were considered to be Plateau 7 languages. These two languages have been put together in most subsequent publications, notably in the Benue-Congo Comparative Wordlist (Williamson & Shimizu 1968; Williamson 1972) and Hansford et al. (1976). In Gerhardt (1989), Plateau 7 is rechristened Tarokoid in keeping with the terminological style of the volume. Two other languages, Turkwam and Arum-Chessu, assigned to Benue in Hansford et al. (1976), were added to Tarokoid. In Crozier and Blench (1992) another language, Pai, is added, following Maddieson (1972) who had already put it in Plateau 7, while confining Turkwam and Arum-Chessu to their own subgroup (Plateau 10 in Maddieson 1972). Pai had previously led a somewhat nomadic existence, classified as Plateau 6 by Greenberg (1963), as Plateau 4 in Williamson (1971) and as a separate co-ordinate branch of Plateau in Hansford et al. (1976).

Turkwam and Arum-Chessu are not included in the BCCW, while in most cases the data-slot for Pai and Basherawa is unfilled. The assignation of Toro [=Turkwam] and Alumu [=Arum-Chessu] to Tarokoid is completely erroneous. Longtau (1991) tried to make

sense of this grouping in historical terms and came out with no very convincing result. Toro and Alumu are clearly related to one another and are tentatively assigned to an ‘Alumic’ subgroup of Plateau (see §2.5 below). Tarokoid should be restricted to Tarok, Pe, Yanƙam, the Kwanka cluster and Sur. Sur is Tapshin, a language referred to in Hansford et al. (1976) with the mysterious annotation “? Eloyi”. Despite this, Sur is undoubtedly part of Tarokoid. In 2006, extended work on Kwaƙ [= Vaghat, Kwanka] showed that, far from being part of Ninzic, as suggested by earlier classifications, it is related to Sur and thus part of Tarokoid. This implies that the other languages with which it is closely related, Boi, Bijim and Legeri, are also Tarokoid (cf. Norton 2018). A dictionary of Tarok and substantial wordlists of the other Tarokoid languages have been collected, which form the basis of its classification (Blench 2004). Figure 5 shows the internal structure of Tarokoid, based on this new evidence.

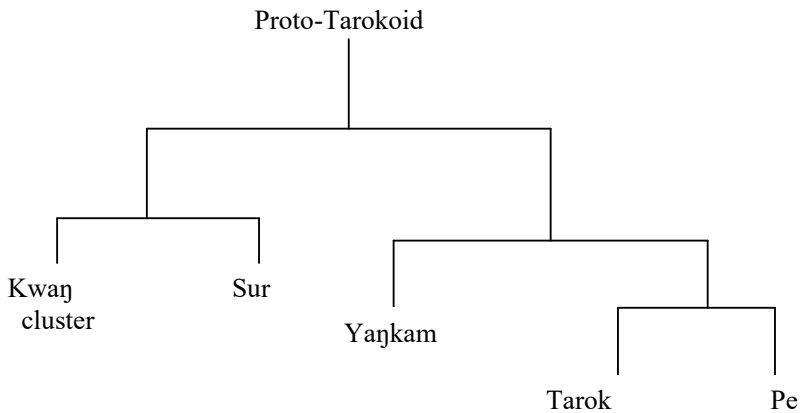


Figure 5. Internal structure of Tarokoid. Source: Blench (2004)

Of the Tarokoid languages, only Tarok itself is beginning to have an acceptable level of documentation, i.e with a series of papers on grammar and morphology and a substantial draft dictionary (Longtau 2008; Blench & Longtau 2011). Yanƙam is severely threatened and should be subject to an intensive investigation while speakers are still fluent.

2.2 Central

2.2.1 Northwest Plateau

Northwest Plateau consists of Èda/Èdra, Kuturmi (Obiro and Ikryo), (i)Kulu, Idon, Doka and Iku-Gora-Ankwe (Blench n.d.: Northwest). No new data has been published since this group was set up, although a wordlist of Ikulu has been circulated (Moser 1982 and analysed in Seitz 1993) and Shimizu (1996) has posted a grammar sketch on the Internet. Recent interest in Èda [= Kadara] language has resulted in an unpublished dialect survey (Maikarfi 2004), a preliminary alphabet book and the launching of an alphabet chart in 2009. Kadara is correctly known as 'Èda' and there is a closely related lect, Èdra (which is presumably the source of the common Hausa name).¹² Two other lects for which information is recorded, Èjègha and Èhwa, correspond to Idon and the Iku-Gora-Ankwe clusters. They are so different from each other and from Èda that they clearly deserve separate language status. Zach Yoder (pers. comm.) has collected wordlists which show clearly that the language recorded in sources as Kuturmi consists of two distinct languages, Obiro and Ikryo. Clearly, Northwest Plateau remains a high priority for further research.

2.2.2 West-Central Plateau

West-Central Plateau consists of what used to be known as the 'Southern Zaria' languages. Published and manuscript sources include (Castelnau 1851; Koelle 1854; Gerhardt 1971, 1972/3b, 1983a, 1984, 1988b, 1992; Dihoff 1976; Adwiraah & Hagen 1983; Adwiraah 1989; Jockers 1982; Price 1989; McKinney, Carol 1979, 1983; McKinney, Norris 1984, 1990; Joy Follingstad 1991; Goroh 2000; Blench & Gya 2011; Carl Follingstad, n.d.; Blench & Kaze, in progress). Although these languages are clearly linked, no published evidence has supported their coherence as a group. Gerhardt (1983a: 95ff. and references in §1.5) argues that Hyamic [Jaba], Gyongic [Kagoma] and Koro should be treated as a subgroup of Plateau 2 (here West-Central).

Given that detailed reconstruction work has yet to be undertaken, Figure 6 presents the known groups of West-Central Plateau as a flat array.

12 Thanks to Alex Maikarfi for making this data available.

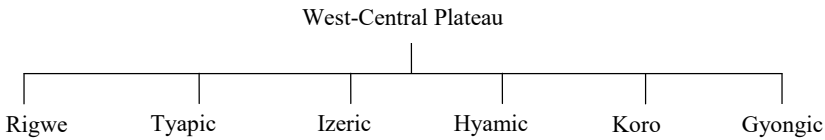


Figure 6. West-Central Plateau subgroups

It should be emphasised that future research may provide greater clarification of these relationships. Gerhardt (1994a) argued for a specific linkage between North (as represented by (i)Kulu) and West Plateau (excluding the Eggon cluster). The languages Nandu [=Ndun] and Tari [=Shakara] are listed in Crozier & Blench (1992) as part of this group. This is erroneous; Ndun-Shakara, together with the newly discovered Nyeng, form their own group, Ndunic (§2.6). The West-Central Plateau languages are a coherent geographical clustering and undoubtedly show numerous links with one another, but their genetic unity is unproven. Gerhardt (1983a: 67 ff.) presents a long comparative wordlist showing cognates between Rigwe, Izere and Tyap. However, with both new insights into the phonology of these languages (notably Follingstad 1991 for Tyap; Blench & Gya 2011 for Rigwe), and in particular the large number of lects still unrecorded at that period, a new comparative analysis is still to be undertaken. The groups that may be linked are as follows:

Rigwe (=Irigwe)

Rigwe is a single language branch of West-Central Plateau. The basic phonology and orthography is described in Anonymous (2006) and the pronominal system in Blench & Gya (2011). Unpublished sketches of different aspects of Rigwe grammar are published on the internet (Blench n.d.: Rigwe page) and work is underway on a substantial dictionary of Rigwe.

Izere cluster (Northwest Izere, northeast Izere, Cèn, Ganàng) and the isolated Fəràn language

The Izere language spoken in Fobur has been the subject of several unpublished analyses and has an orthography and a translation of the New Testament. It is divided into seven dialects, some of which are very distinct from the Fobur variety. A draft dictionary and sketches of several aspects of the grammar have been published on the internet (Blench n.d.: Izere page).

Tyapic (Tyap, Gworok, Atakar, Kacicere, Sholyo, and Kafancan) and Jju

The Tyapic languages are spoken in a series of villages around Zangon Kataf and Kagoro in Southern Kaduna State. Jju is centred on Zonkwa and it is usual to list it separately from the Tyap cluster but this seems increasingly to reflect ethnic separation rather than linguistic reality. Tyap (previously known as Kataf) has been studied by Joy Follingstad (1991) and a New Testament published. Jju (previously known as Kaje) was studied by the McKinneys (McKinney, Carol 1979, 1983; McKinney, Norris 1984, 1990) and an official orthography was devised by Daniel Hyuwa (1982, 1986).

Hyamic

The Hyamic languages (also known in the literature by the now discarded name ‘Jaba’) are spoken around Kwoi, southwards to Nok, the site of the fanour ‘Nok culture’. The people are known as Ham and the language Hyam, which is why the spelling alternates in published sources. Apart from Hyam of Kwoi, these languages remain very poorly known (see Jockers 1982). The unpublished doctoral thesis of Dihoff (1976) provides sketches of the grammar of Cori. In recent times, Hyam of Nok has become widely understood as a *lingua franca* in the larger Hyam community. James (1997) is a political and cultural history of the Ham communities that makes use of language data, although his survey materials are too incomplete to draw any final conclusions. Crozier & Blench (1992) list members of Hyamic as follows:

Cori

Hyam cluster (incl. Kwyeny, Yaata, Sait, Dzar, Hyam of Nok)

Shamang

Zhire

It now seems likely that the Hyam cluster consists of only Hyam of Nok, Sait, Dzar, while Yaata and the language of Ankun are also probably distinct, although proof is lacking.

The Shang language (Blench 2010), spoken in the village of Kuschemfa, south of Kurmin Jibrin on the Kubacha road should be added to Hyamic. This language appears to be spoken by a migrant group of Zhire who have come under heavy Koro cultural influence. Their language, while lexically Hyamic, has a nominal affix system resembling Tinor and similar Koro languages.

Koro cluster

The Koro cluster consists of five languages spoken west of Kwoi and northeast of Abuja (Blench n.d.: Koro page). Preliminary material on the Koro cluster appears in Gerhardt (1972/3b, 1983a). The Koro cluster has been intensively researched in 2008–2019 by an SIL International survey team independently of the present author as a basis for a series of translation projects.

Much of this information is unpublished, but the membership of the Koro cluster appears to be as follows:

Za (Ashe and Tinɔr [= Waci-Myamya])

Idū [Lungu]-Gwara

Nyankpa [Yeskwa]-Barde

If this terminology seems confusing, it is because the situation is in flux. Names in square brackets are former reference terms found in the literature. It appears that the Za groups had no name for themselves other than the word for ‘people’. Za [Ejar] is a recently adopted term to cover two languages, Ashe and Tinɔr. The Tinɔr have now formally adopted the name ‘Waci’. Gwara is a previously unreported language uncovered as part of fieldwork by the author. Barde is locally considered a ‘dialect’ of Nyankpa, but is sufficiently distinct not to be mutually intelligible. This is represented in Figure 7:

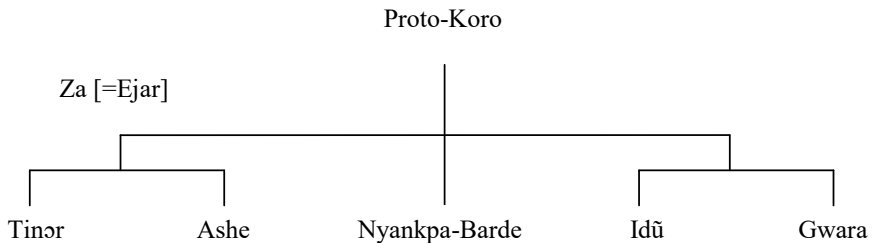


Figure 7. Classification of the Koro languages

Gyongic (Gyong, Angan)

The Gyongic group consists of two languages spoken around Fadan Kagoma between Kafanchan and Kwoi. Material on the Gyong [Kagoma] language appears in Gerhardt (1983a) and Hagen (1988). An unpublished wordlist of Angan [Kamanton] suggests that it is related to Gyong, but not closely.

2.3 Beromic

The term ‘Beromic’ has been adopted here to cover former Plateau 3 languages. Beromic now consists of Berom, Iten and two other languages, Cara and Shall-Zwall, unknown to Greenberg (1963). The principal publications on Berom are Bouquiaux (1970, 2001), and on Iten, Bouquiaux (1964). Recent unpublished or in press materials on Berom are (Blench et al. ined.) and on Iten, Blench & Dang (ined.). Cara (Teriya) was reported in a mimeo paper by Shimizu (1975b) who first proposed a link with Berom. Hoffman (1978) expressed doubts about hypothesised affiliation of Iten to Berom and noted that it seemed to be closer to the Central Plateau languages with which it has borders (especially Sholyo). However, much expanded datasets on these languages confirm the links between Berom and Iten. Shall and Zwall are two small, closely related languages in Bauchi State, far from the other Beromic languages. They were previously classified with the Ninzic languages (Greenberg’s Plateau 4), but are better placed with Beromic. Blench (2007a) describes Dyarim, a previously unreported Chadic language that is part of the South Bauchi group. Although Dyarim has no border with any Beromic language today, evidence from borrowings from Beromic suggests that related languages were formerly present in the region between Berom proper and Shall-Zwall.

Berom itself has a complex internal structure shown in Figure 9:



Figure 8. Berom dictionary workshop. Jos, Apr. 2009. Source: author.

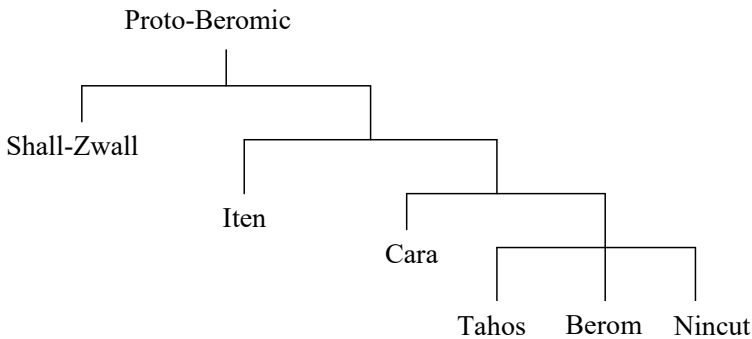


Figure 9. Internal structure of Beromic languages

Bouquiaux (1970; 2001) essentially describes the Du dialect, part of Central Berom, which is centred on Vwang (Vom) and Ryom (Riyom). However, the main dialect used for literacy and Bible translation is the Eastern dialect, roughly centred on Foron, spoken by only a minority. The other minority dialect is Rim, south and east of the main centres. There are two other languages within the larger Berom group, Tahos and Nincut. Tahos is a single village close to the Iten on the southern limits of Berom, and although locally considered a Berom dialect, is sufficiently lexically divergent to be treated as a distinct language. Nincut, known as Aboro, is geographically separate from the other Berom languages, and is spoken in several settlements along the road west of Fadan Karshi.

2.4 Ninzic

Ninzic, formerly Plateau 4, is probably the most difficult group to characterise and weak data on several languages make it unclear whether certain peripheral languages really belong to it. The name Ninzic is introduced here, reflecting the element *nin-*, which is part of many ethnonyms. The membership of Ninzic has changed quite significantly between various publications (Table 3).¹³

Descriptive materials on Ninzic are sparse.¹⁴ General overviews can be found in Gerhardt (1972/3a, 1883a) and materials on specific

¹³ Key: Blank = not listed, + = assigned to group, - = assigned to another group, ? as in source

¹⁴ Lexical field data on all the Ninzic languages can be found on the author's website, which provide justification for the classification presented here (Blench n.d.: Ninzic page).

Table 3. Changing composition of the Ninzic language group

Author	Green- berg (1963)	Hansford et al. (1976)	Gerhardt (1989)	Crozier & Blench (1992)	This paper
Name in Source	Plateau 4	Eastern Plateau group	South- western subgroup cluster a	South- western subgroup cluster 1	Ninzic
Ce [= Rukuba]	+	+	+	+	+
Ninzo [= Ninzam]	+	+	+	+	+
Mada	+	+	+	+	+
Nko					?
Katanza					?
Bu-Niṅkada		–	–	–	+
Ayu	+	+	+	?	?
Nungu		–	–	–	+
Ninkyob [= Kanin- kwom]	+	+	+	+	+
Anib = Kanufi		+	+	+	+
Nindem		+	+	+	+
Gwantu cluster		+	+	+	+
Ningye					+
Ninka					+
Kwanka- Boi-Bijim- Legeri		+	+	+	–
Shall-Zwall		+		?	–
Pe [= Pai]		–	+	–	–

languages in Hoffmann (1976), Hörner (1980), Price (1989), Ninzo Language Project Committee (1999), Wilson (2003) and Blench & Kato (in progress). The most difficult language to classify is Ayu, because it has clearly come under influence from many language groups, notably Berom and Rindre. Even though a substantial word-list is now available, its exact affiliation is unclear. The Kwaŋ cluster is now known to be a member of Tarokoid (§2.1).

2.5 Alumeric

One group of Plateau languages spoken in Central Nigeria has effectively no published data.¹⁵ These languages are: Hasha [=Yashi], Sambe, Alumu-Təsu and Toro [=Turkwam]. Except for Sambe, they have apparently been classified in previous lists on the basis of geographical proximity. Sambe is now presumably extinct, with only two speakers over 90 in 2005, while the rest have at most a few hundred speakers. A language called Akpondu, with only a couple of ‘rememberers’ in 2005 seems to have been closely related to Alumu. The group is here named Alumeric, after the language with the most speakers, but this term can be regarded as provisional. The Alumeric languages are now scattered geographically, and isolated among the Ninzic (=Plateau 4) languages. The internal structure for the group is shown in Figure 10:

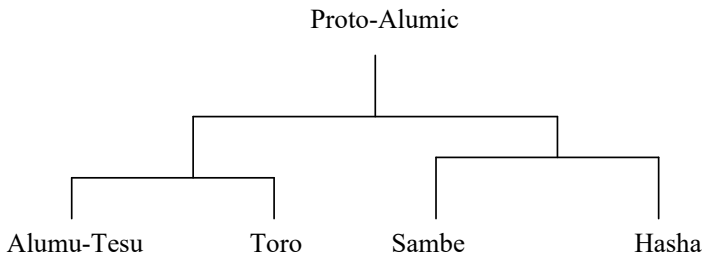


Figure 10. Internal structure of the Alumeric group

The very different sociolinguistic histories of Alumeric languages may explain their striking morphological diversity. There is considerable variability, with Alumu-Təsu and Toro having completely lost their nominal affix system and Hasha having developed a highly idiosyncratic system of reduplicating the first syllable of the stem to mark

¹⁵ Lexical data can be found at (Blench n.d.: Alumeric page).

number or plurality¹⁶ in both nouns and verbs. This is apparently the influence of a neighbouring Chadic language, Sha. Sambe no longer has a functioning nominal prefix system, but its nouns all have transparent fossil prefixes.

The relation between Alumu-Təsu and Toro is so far unclear. Toro has many lexical items identical to Alumu, as well as cognates that are highly divergent. This suggests that the languages are indeed related at a deeper level but that Toro came under influence from Alumu-Təsu in the more recent past.

2.6 Ndunic

Ndunic is a new name proposed here for the languages previously called ‘Nandu-Tari’. Existing sources list two languages, but a third language, Ningon, was first recorded in 2003.¹⁷ These languages were previously listed under West-Central Plateau (see §2.2), although on what basis is hard to determine. Maddieson (1972) had access to orthographic lists of these languages and his unpublished classification lists them as an independent branch of Plateau. The nomenclature of the three languages is shown in Table 4.

Ndun is the largest language of the group, hence the proposed name, but the three groups are independent of one another. The Ndunic people have recently adopted the name ‘Ahwai’ as a cover term for all three languages (Rueck p.c.).

¹⁶ Plural verbs, marking iterative or plural subjects and objects are a defining typological feature of Plateau languages.

¹⁷ Lexical data can be found at (Blench n.d.: Ndunic page).

Table 4. Ndunic languages: nomenclature

Common name	'one person'	'many people'	'language'	Proposed name	Comment
Nandu	<i>amer andün</i>	<i>bener andün</i>	<i>indün</i>	Ndun	The common element to these is <i>-ndun</i> and it is therefore proposed that the reference name 'Ndun' be introduced.
Ningon	<i>anyen</i>	<i>banyen</i>	<i>hanyen</i>	Nyeng	Ningon does not appear in any reference book although it is in local use. It is therefore proposed that the reference name 'Nyeng' be introduced.
Tari	<i>kiɣákára</i>	<i>úɣákára</i>	<i>íɣákára</i>	Shakara	The common element to these is <i>-ɣákára</i> and it is therefore proposed that the reference name 'Shakara' be introduced.

2.7 South Plateau

South Plateau is named for two language groups, Jilic and Eggonic, which are here put together for the first time.¹⁸ Except for Eggon these languages were unknown to Greenberg. Southern was applied to Jilic alone in Crozier & Blench (1992). Figure 11 shows this new proposal.

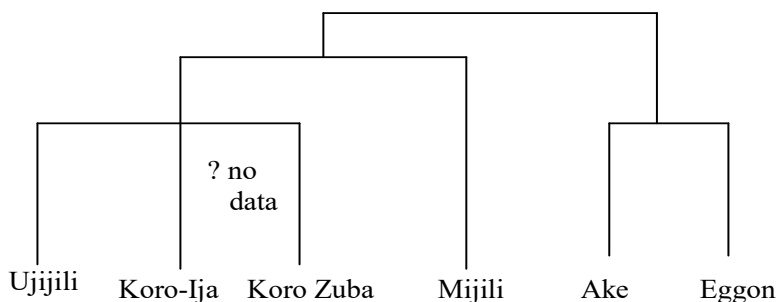


Figure 11. Classification of the Jilic-Eggonic languages

2.7.1 *Jilic*

Jilic consists of at least two languages, Mijili [=Koro of Lafia] and Ujjili [=Koro Huntu] now separated by a considerable geographic distance, but clearly related. There is a microfiched grammar and phonology of Mijili by Stofberg (1978a,b), while Ujjili is known from an unpublished wordlist. Koro Ija and Koro Zuba, two languages spoken northwest of Abuja, are said to be nearly intelligible with Ujjili, although no language data exists to demonstrate this.

2.7.2 *Eggonic*

Eggonic consists of just two languages, Eggon and Ake. These have previously been put together with Ninzic, although this is more a supposition from geography than relatedness proper. The Eggon people are numerous and the Eggon language is divided into many dialects, while Ake (=Aike) is spoken in only three villages. Eggon has a full system of nominal morphology, while Ake has lost its noun class system. Although the languages share enough common glosses to be put together, they are not close.

¹⁸ See data at (Blench n.d.: South page).

2.8 East Plateau

The three languages within East Plateau (=Greenberg's Plateau 6), Fyem, Bo-Rukul [=Mabo-Barkul] and Horom were placed together in the BCCW. This group has previously been named Southeastern (e.g. in Crozier & Blench 1992) but is here named 'East' as a better reflection of its location in relation to the Plateau centre of gravity. Nettle (1998a) is a sketch grammar of Fyem, and Nettle (1998b) includes short wordlists of all three languages, but Bo-Rukul and Horom remain virtually unknown (although see Blench 2003 for their relation with the Ron (Chadic) languages). Fyem and Horom are closely related, but the position of Bo-Rukul is more problematic.¹⁹ Figure 12 shows this structure:

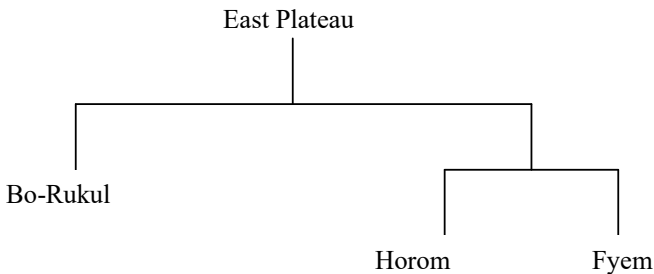


Figure 12. Structure of East Plateau

2.9 Eloyi

The Eloyi or Afo language is spoken in about twenty villages in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The principle sources on the language are Mackay (1964) and Armstrong (1964, 1983, 1984). The classification of Eloyi has been disputed, all the more because the lexical database for comparison is weak.²⁰ All the preliminary sources classified Eloyi as Plateau 2, i.e. together with Izere, Tyap etc. (e.g. Greenberg 1963; Williamson & Shimizu 1968; De Wolf 1971). Although Armstrong (1955) first suggested a link with Idomoid it was not until Armstrong (1983) that he set out the case for this classification. However, in Armstrong's (1984: 29) final published discussion of the subject he expresses some doubts, concluding 'Eloyi does not now seem as close

¹⁹ Lexical data at (Blench n.d.: Southeast page).

²⁰ Lexical data at (Blench 2007b).

to Idoma as it did when only Varvil's list [i.e. that quoted in Mackay 1964] was available'. Eloyi has many lexical items that do not seem to relate to either Plateau or Idomoid, but it is most likely that the Idomoid cognates are loans reflecting long proximity to languages such as Alago.

3 Conclusion: a revised classification of Plateau

The subheadings in §2 implicitly present a view of Plateau that is significantly different from earlier publications. However, some groups are much better defined than others; the coherence of Northwest and West-Central are still uncertain. There is no new data for many languages, whereas some other subgroups are now supported by lengthy wordlists. As a consequence, the status of these groups remains in flux. This will be amended as the Comparative Plateau Project continues.

Subgrouping at present is nearly all based on lexical and morphological data. De Wolf (1971) claimed that the nominal affix system of Plateau could be reconstructed and that there were regular correspondences with Bantu noun class prefixes. Blench (2018) shows that the Plateau affixes have eroded and been rebuilt many times and even reconstructing the proto-Plateau system is not possible. Similarities to Bantu reflect the Benue-Congo affiliation of Plateau, in other words it is in some ways ancestral to Bantu. Similarly, verbs, their extensions and plural forms can be borrowed as a package, resulting, for example, in spurious similarities between Izere and Berom. Convincing phonological innovations defining groups are difficult to establish and indeed the apparent widespread borrowing of distinctive sounds, such as the retroflex /ɽ/ of many languages in the Akwanga area, may make this problematic. The syntax of Plateau languages is still poorly known and few generalisations can be made. With these caveats, Figure 13 presents a new view of Plateau. This is clearly not final, as there are too many co-ordinate branches and too little internal structure. But until further analysis is undertaken, provisional versions of Plateau which do not promote too many unwarranted assumptions are the best that can be produced.

Plateau languages are a major grouping in terms of global language families that have been ignored for reasons that have little to do with their importance or accessibility. Whether this observation

will do anything to stimulate new research in the current climate is doubtful, but it remains a priority to leave a record for future generations.

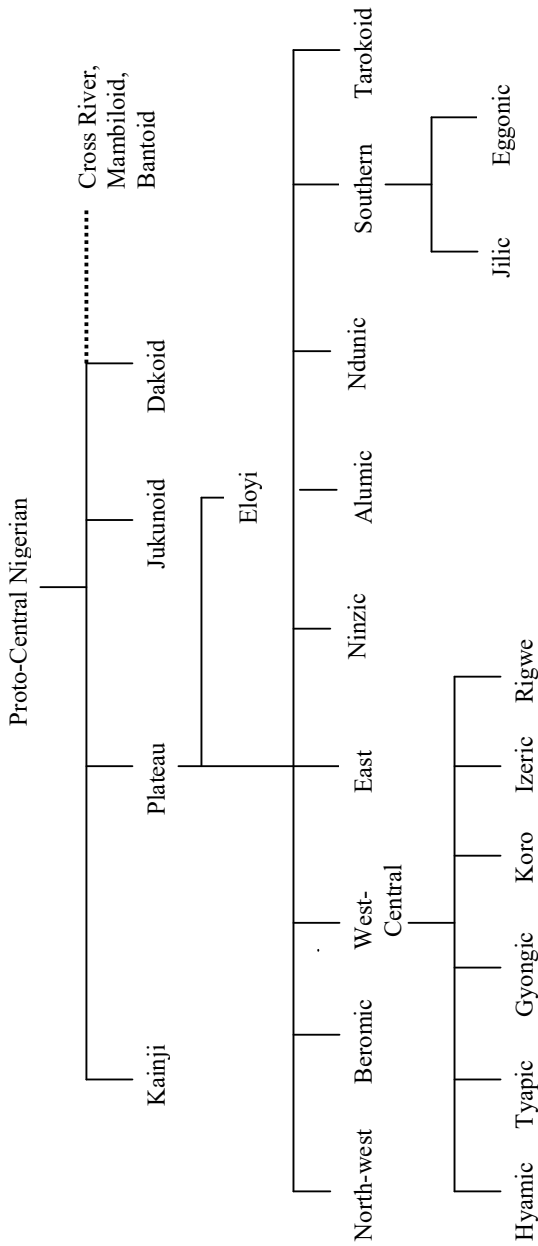


Figure 13. Central Nigerian languages: proposed classification

References

- Adwiraah, Eleonore. 1989. *Grammatik des Gworok (Kagoro)*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Adwiraah, Eleonore & Eva Hagen. 1983. *Nominalklassensystem des Gworok und des Gyong*. In Rainer Voßen & Ulrike Claudi (eds.), *Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur in Afrika: Vorträge, gehalten auf dem 3. Afrikanistentag Köln, 14./15. Oktober 1982*. Hamburg: Buske. 15–33.
- Anon. 2006. *How to read and write Irigwe*. Irigwe Language and Bible Translation Project & Nigeria Bible Translation Trust: Jos.
- Armstrong, Robert G. 1955. The Idoma-speaking peoples. In C. Daryll Forde (ed.), *Peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence*. Ethnographic Survey of Africa 10. London: IAI. 77–89.
- Armstrong, Robert G. 1964. A few more words of Eloyi. *Journal of West African Languages* 1(2). 57–60.
- Armstrong, Robert G. 1983. The Idomoid languages of the Benue and Cross River Valleys. *Journal of West African Languages* 13(1). 91–149.
- Armstrong, Robert G. 1984. The consonant system of Akpa. *Nigerian Language Teacher* 5(2). 26–29.
- Blench, Roger M. 1998. The status of the languages of Central Nigeria. In Matthias Brenzinger (ed.), *Endangered languages in Africa*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 187–206.
- Blench, Roger M. 2000a. Revising Plateau. In Ekkehard Wolff & Orin Gensler (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd World Congress of African Linguistics [WOCAL]: Leipzig 1997*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 159–174.
- Blench, Roger M. 2000b. Transitions in Izere nominal morphology and implications for the analysis of Plateau languages. *Frankfurter Afrikanische Blätter* 12. 7–28.
- Blench, Roger M. 2003. Why reconstructing comparative Ron is so problematic. In H. Ekkehard Wolff (ed.), *Topics in Chadic Linguistics. Papers from the 1st Biennial International Colloquium on the Chadic Language Family [BICCL] (Leipzig, July 5–8, 2001)*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 21–42.
- Blench, Roger M. 2005. Is there a boundary between Plateau and Jukunoid? Paper presented at the workshop on Jukunoid languages, November 18–21st. University of Vienna. <http://rogerblench.info/Language/Niger-Congo/BC/Plateau/General/Vienna%202005%20paper.pdf> (01. December, 2020.)
- Blench, Roger M. 2007a. *The Dyarim language of Central Nigeria and its affinities*. In Henry Tourneux (ed.), *Topics in Chadic Linguistics 4: Comparative and descriptive studies. Papers from the 3rd Biennial International*

- Colloquium on the Chadic Languages [BICCL], Villejuif Nov. 24th–25th 2005*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 41–59.
- Blench, Roger M. 2007b. The Eloyi language of Central Nigeria and its affinities. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Niger-Congo/BC/Plateau/Eloyi%20wordlist%20paper.pdf> (20 Nov., 2020.)
- Blench, Roger M. 2010. The Shang language of Central Nigeria and its affinities. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Niger-Congo/BC/Plateau/Hyamic/Shang/Shang%20wordlist.pdf> (20 Nov., 2020.)
- Blench, Roger M. 2015. Final Records of the Sambe Language of Central Nigeria: Phonology, Noun Morphology, and Wordlist. *Language Documentation and Conservation* 9. 192–228.
- Blench, Roger M. 2018. Nominal affixes and number marking in the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria. In John R. Watters (ed.), *Nouns, pronouns, and verbs*. Niger Congo Comparative Studies 1. Berlin: Language Science Press. 107–172. <https://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/190>. (20 Nov., 2020.) DOI:10.5281/zenodo.1314325.
- Blench, Roger. 2020a. An atlas of Nigerian languages. Kay Williamson Educational Foundation. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Africa/Nigeria/Atlas%20of%20Nigerian%20Languages%202020.pdf>. (20 Nov., 2020.)
- Blench, Roger M. 2004. Tarok and related languages of East-Central-Nigeria. Nomenclature and subclassification. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Niger-Congo/BC/Plateau/Tarokoid/Tarokoid-subclassification.pdf> (25. Nov., 2020.)
- Blench, Roger M. n.d. Roger Blench: Plateau materials. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Niger-Congo/BC/Plateau/PIOP.htm> (01. December, 2020.)
- Blench, Roger M. & Daniel Gya. 2011. Rigwe Pronouns. In Anne Storch, Gratien Atindogbé & Roger Blench (eds.), *Copy pronouns: case studies from African languages*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe. 119–128.
- Blench, Roger M. & Selbut R. Longtau. 2011. Tarok Pronouns. In Anne Storch, Gratien Atindogbé & Roger Blench (eds.), *Copy pronouns: case studies from African languages*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe. 139–162.
- Blench, Roger M., Yusufu Pwol, Barnabas Dusu & Hanni Kuhn ined. *Dictionary of Berom*. Electronic ms.
- Blench, Roger M. & Deme Dang ined. *Iten dictionary*. Electronic ms.
- Bouquiaux, Luc. 1964. A wordlist of Aten (Ganawuri). *Journal of West African Languages* 1(2). 5–25.
- Bouquiaux, Luc. 1967. Le système des classes nominales dans quelques langues (Biom, Ganawuri, Anaguta, Irigwe, Kaje, Rukuba) appartenant au groupe « Plateau » (Nigeria Central) de la sous-famille Benoué-Congo. In Gabriel Manessy (ed.), *La classification nominale dans les*

- langues Négro-Africaines: [actes du Colloque International sur « La Classification Nominale dans les Langues Négro-Africaines » organisé à Aix-en-Provence 3–7 juillet, 1967. Paris: CNRS. 133–156.*
- Bouquiaux, Luc. 1970. *La langue Birom (Nigeria septentrional) - phonologie, morphologie, syntaxe.* Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres.
- Bouquiaux, Luc. 2001. *Dictionnaire Birom.* 3 vols. Louvain, Paris: Peeters.
- Castelnau, Francis de. 1851. *Renseignements sur l'Afrique centrale et sur une nation d'hommes à queue qui s'y trouverait.* Paris: Bertrand.
- Crozier, David & Roger M. Blench. 1992. *Index of Nigerian Languages (edition 2).* Dallas: SIL.
- De Wolf, Paul. 1971. *The noun class system of Proto-Benue-Congo.* Den Haag: Mouton.
- Dihoff, Ivan. 1976. *Aspects of the grammar of Chori.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Doctoral dissertation.
- Follingstad, Joy A. 1991. *Aspects of Tyap syntax.* Arlington: University of Texas MA thesis.
- Follingstad, Carl. n.d. *Tyap dictionary.* Jos: Electronic ms.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1969a. Über sprachliche Beziehungen auf dem Zentralnigerianischen Plateau. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft [ZDMG]. Supplement I, 3: XVII Deutscher Orientalistentag 1968.* 1079–1091.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1969b. *Analytische und vergleichende Untersuchungen zu einigen zentralnigerianischen Klassensprachen.* Hamburg: Universität Hamburg Doctoral dissertation.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1971. Stammweiterungen in den Verben einiger zentralnigerianischer Klassensprachen. In Veronika Six (ed.), *Afrikanischen Sprachen und Kulturen - Ein Querschnitt.* Hamburger Beiträge zur Afrika-Kunde 14. Hamburg: Deutsches Institut für Afrika-Forschung. 95–101.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1972/3a. Das Nominalsystem der Plateau-4 Sprachen: Versuch einer Rekonstruktion. *Afrika und Übersee* 56. 72–89.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1972/3b. Abriß der nominalen Klassen in Koro, North-Central State, Nigeria. *Afrika und Übersee* 56. 245–266.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig 1973/4. Proto-Benue-Congo und Kagoma. *Afrika und Übersee* 57. 81–93.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1974. Pi-, hi-, fi-, und bu- in den Plateausprachen Nordnigerias: Klasse neun/zehn oder Klasse neunzehn? *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft [ZDMG], Supplement II: XVIII Deutscher Orientalistentag 1972.* 574–582.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1980. The fortis/lenis contrast in West African languages. *Afrika und Übersee* 63. 207–217.

- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1983a. *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Sprachen des Nigerianischen Plateaus*. Glückstadt: Verlag J.J. Augustin.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1983b. The classification of Eggon: Plateau or Benue group? *Journal of West African Languages* 13(1). 37–50.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1983c. Lexical interferences in the Chadic/Benue-Congo Border-Area. In Ekkehard Wolff, & Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg (eds.), *Studies in Chadic and Afroasiatic Linguistics*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske. 301–310.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1984. More on the verbal system of Zarek (Northern Nigeria). *Afrika und Übersee* 67. 11–30.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1987. Some remarks on the numerical systems of Plateau languages. *Afrika und Übersee* 70. 19–29.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1988a. Auf- und Abbau von nominalen Klassensystemen. In Siegmund Brauner and Ekkehard Wolff (eds.), *Progressive traditions in African and Oriental Studies*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. 69–77.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1988b. Bemerkungen zur Morphologie des Kwoi. *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere, Sondernummer 1988*. 53–65.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1989. Kainji and Platoid. In John Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *Niger-Congo*. Lanham: Universities Press of America. 359–376.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1992. Zwei alte Quellen zum Hyam (Plateau, Nordnigeria) näher betrachtet. In Erwin Eberman, Erich R. Sommerauer & Karl É. Thomanek (eds.), *Komparative Afrikanistik: Sprach-, geschichts-, und literaturwissenschaftliche Aufsätze zu Ehren von Hans G. Mukarovsky anlässlich seines 70. Geburtstages*. Wien: Afro-Pub. 137–150.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1994a. Western Plateau as a model for the development of Benue-Congo noun-class system. *Afrika und Übersee* 77. 161–176.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1994b. Serialverbkonstruktionen in den Plateausprachen Nordnigerias. In Rainer Ansoerge (ed.), *Schlaglichter der Forschung*. Berlin & Hamburg: Dietrich Reimer. 349–368.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 2005. Some notes on Yeskwa (North-Western Plateau, Nigeria) with comments on Koelle's Polyglotta Africana. *Hamburger Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 3. 35–52.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig & Heinz Jockers. 1981. Lexicostatistische Klassifikationen von Plateausprachen. *Berliner Afrikanistische Vorträge*. 25–54.
- Gochal, Gola. 1994. *A look at Shik Ngas*. Jos: Jos University Press.
- Goroh, Martin K. 2000. Koro orthography. In Appolonia Uzoaku Okwudishu & O.S. Salami (eds.), *Orthographies of Nigerian languages, VII*. Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council. 76–97.
- Gowers, W.F. 1907. *42 vocabularies of languages spoken in Bauchi Province, N. Nigeria*. Kaduna: ms. National Archives.
- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1963. *The Languages of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Gunn, Harold D. 1953. *Peoples of the Plateau Area of Northern Nigeria*. London: IAI.
- Gunn, Harold D. 1956. *Peoples of the Central Area of Northern Nigeria*. London: IAI.
- Hagen, Eva. 1988. *Die Gong - monographische Studie der Kultur und Sprache der Gong (Kagoma), Zentralnigeria*. Hamburg: Dr. R. Krämer.
- Hansford, Keir, John Bendor-Samuel & Ron Stanford. 1976. *An index of Nigerian languages*. Ghana: SIL.
- Hoffman, Carl. 1976. *Some aspects of the Che noun class system*. Ibadan: ms.
- Hörner, Elisabeth. 1980. *Ninzam - Untersuchungen zu einer Klassensprache des zentralnigerianischen Plateaus*. Hamburg: Universität Hamburg Magisterarbeit.
- Hyuwa, Daniel D. 1982. *A study of the phonological system of Kaje*. Leeds: Leeds University MA dissertation.
- Hyuwa, Daniel D. 1986. Kaje orthography. In Robert G. Armstrong (ed.), *Orthographies of Nigerian languages, IV*. Lagos: Ministry of Education. 72–99.
- James, Ibrahim. 1997. *The Ham: its people, their political and cultural history*. Jos: Jos University Press.
- Jockers, Heinz. 1982. *Untersuchungen zum Kwoi-Dialekt des Hyam/Jaba*. Hamburg: Universität Hamburg Magisterarbeit.
- Koelle, Sigismund W. 1854. *Polyglotta Africana*. London: Church Missionary House.
- Kuhn, Hanni & Barnabas Dusu. 1985. Berom orthography. In Ayo Banjo (ed.), *Orthographies of Nigerian languages, III*. Lagos: Ministry of Education. 44–61.
- Lar, Isaac B. & Ganta Godswill Dandam. 2002. *Tarok proverbs in context*. Jos: Jos University Press.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 1991. Linguistic evidence on the origins of peoples: The case of the Tarok people of Plateau State (Nigeria). *Afrika und Übersee* 74. 191–204.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 1993. A formal Tarok phonology. *Afrika und Übersee* 76. 15–40.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 2000. Tarok orthography. In E. Nolue Emenanjo (ed.), *Orthographies of Nigerian languages, VI*. Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council. 76–97.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 2008. *The Tarok language: its basic principles and grammar*. Kay Williamson Educational Foundation, Language Monograph Series 1. Jos: DART.
- Lukas, Johannes & Alfred Willms. 1961. Outline of the language of the Jarawa in northern Nigeria (Plateau Province). *Afrika und Übersee* 45. 1–66.

- Mackay, Hugh D. 1964. A word-list of Eloyi. *Journal of West African Languages* 1(1). 5–12.
- Maddieson, Ian. 1972. *The Benue-Congo languages of Nigeria*. Ibadan: Mimeo.
- Maddieson, Ian. 1982. Unusual consonant cluster and complex segments in Eggon. *Studies in African Linguistics*, Supplement 8. 89–92.
- Maddieson, Ian n.d. a). *The Noun-class system of Eggon*. Ibadan: Mimeo.
- Maddieson, Ian. n.d. b). *Verb-nominal contraction in Eggon*. Ibadan: Mimeo.
- Mamfa, Adamu Labut. 1998. *Kang wa kong jai cu iTarok kat (Keeping Tarok language alive)*. Jos: the author.
- Marggrandner, Anna. 2019. *A Grammar of Dūya. A Plateau language of central Nigeria*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.
- McKinney, Carol. 1979. Plural verb roots in Kaje. *Afrika und Übersee* 62. 107–117.
- McKinney, Carol. 1983. A linguistic shift in Kaje, Kagoro and Katab. *Ethnology* 22(4). 281–293.
- McKinney, Norris. 1984. The fortis feature in Jju (Kaje): an initial study. *Studies in African Linguistics* 15(2). 177–188.
- McKinney, Norris. 1990. Temporal characteristics of fortis stops and affricates in Tyap and Jju. *Journal of Phonetics* 18. 255–266.
- Meek, Charles K. 1925. *The northern tribes of Nigeria*. 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press.
- Meek, Charles K. 1931. *Tribal studies in northern Nigeria*. 2 vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trubner.
- Moser, Rex 1982. *Ikulu wordlist*. Hamburg: Ms.
- Nettle, Daniel 1998a. *The Fyem language of northern Nigeria*. München: Lincom Europa.
- Nettle, Daniel 1998b. Materials from the south-eastern Plateau languages of Nigeria (Fyem, Hórom and Mabo-Barukul). *Afrika und Übersee* 81. 253–279.
- Ninzo Language Project Committee. 1999. *Reading and writing Ninzo*. Fadan Wate: Ninzo Language Project Committee.
- Norton, Russell. 2018. *Bijim linguistic consultant report*. SIL Ms.
- Nyako, Joseph Azi. 2000. *Nareer Rife Nizere (proverbs and idioms in Izere language)*. Jos: Kanyek Been Aweng.
- Price, Norman. 1989. *Notes on Mada phonology*. Dallas: SIL.
- Robinson, J.O.S. 1976. His and hers morphology: the strange case of Tarok possessives. *Studies in African Linguistics, Supplement* 6. 201–209.
- Rowlands, Evan Celyn. 1969. *Teach yourself Yoruba*. London: English University Press.
- Seitz, Gitta. 1993. *Ikulu - Untersuchungen zu einer zentralnigeriansichen Klassensprache*. Hamburg: Universität Hamburg Magisterarbeit.

- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1975a. A lexicostatistical study of Plateau languages and Jukun. *Anthropological Linguistics* 17. 413–418.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1975b. *The languages of Jos Division, Linguistic Survey of Benue-Plateau State*, Part I. Kano: Bayero University College.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1996. *A Kulu vocabulary and fragments of Kulu grammatical structures*. Electronic ms. author.
- Sibomana, Leo. 1980. Grundzüge der Phonologie des Tarok (Yergam). *Afrika und Übersee* 63. 199–206.
- Sibomana, Leo. 1981a. Tarok II: Das Nominalklassensystem. *Afrika und Übersee* 64. 25–34.
- Sibomana, Leo. 1981b. Tarok III: Das Verbalsystem. *Afrika und Übersee* 64. 237–247.
- Sibomana, Leo. 1985. A phonological and grammatical outline of Eggon. *Afrika und Übersee* 68. 43–68.
- Snider, Keith, Larry Hayashi, Doug Rintoul & Wayne Dirks. 2020. Canada Institute of Linguistics: <https://comparalex.org/> (01. December, 2020).
- Stofberg, Yvonne. 1978a. *Migili grammar*. Language Data microfiche, African Series, 12. Dallas: SIL.
- Stofberg, Yvonne. 1978b. *Migili phonology*. Language Data microfiche, African Series, 14. Dallas: SIL.
- Storch, Anne, Gratién Atindogbé & Roger M. Blench. 2011. Introduction. In Anne Storch, Gratién Atindogbé & Roger M. Blench (eds.), *Copy pronouns: case studies from African languages*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe. 3–10.
- Temple, Olive. 1922. *Notes on the tribes, provinces, emirates and states of the northern provinces of Nigeria*. Capetown: Argus Printing and Publishing Co.
- Westermann, Diedrich. 1927. *Die westlichen Sudansprachen und ihre Beziehungen zum Bantu*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Westermann, Diedrich & Margaret A. Bryan. 1952. *Handbook of African languages Part 2: The languages of West Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Williamson, Kay. 1971. The Benue-Congo languages & Ijo. In Thomas Albert Sebeok & Jack Berry (eds.), *Current trends in Linguistics 7, Linguistics in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Den Haag: De Gruyter Mouton. 245–306.
- Williamson, Kay. 1972. *Benue-Congo comparative wordlist: Vol.2*. Ibadan: West African Linguistic Society.
- Williamson, Kay. 1989. Benue-Congo Overview. In: Bendor-Samuel John (ed.), *Niger-Congo*. Lanham: Universities Press of America. 247–276.
- Williamson, Kay & Kiyoshi Shimizu. 1968. *Benue-Congo comparative wordlist, Vol. 1*. Ibadan: West African Linguistic Society.

- Williamson, Kay & Roger M. Blench. 2000. Niger-Congo. In Bernd Heine & Derek Nurse (eds.), *African languages: an introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 11–42.
- Wilson, Janet E. 2003. *Transparency and spreading of tense, aspect, and mood in Kuche narrative discourse*. Arlington: University of Texas PhD dissertation. <https://rc.library.uta.edu/uta-ir/handle/10106/29488> (23 Nov., 2020.)
- Wolff, Ekkehard & Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg. 1979. Morphologie und Semantik der erweiterten Verbalstämme in der Sprache der Afuzare (Zarek). *Afrika und Übersee* 62. 1–32.
- Wolff, Hans. 1954. *Nigerian orthography*. Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation.
- Wolff, Hans. 1963. Noun classes and concord in Berom. *Actes du seconde colloque internationale de linguistique négro-africaine*. 86–96. Dakar.

Appendix I. Dictionaries in progress

Berom	Roger Blench, Yusufu Pwol (†), Hanni Kuhn and Barnabas Dusu (†)
Eggon	Roger Blench
Iten	Roger Blench & Deme Dang
Izere	Roger Blench & Bitrus Kaze
Mada	Roger Blench & Barau Kato (†)
Rigwe	Daniel Gya & Roger Blench
Tarok	Selbut Longtau and Roger Blench

Appendix II: Examples of roots common to Plateau languages

Lexical roots which define Plateau languages in relation to other branches of Benue-Congo are quite rare. Most common roots also have cognates outside Plateau, especially in Kainji and Jukunoid. However, two roots have been identified that seem to define Plateau. These are:

‘smoke’

Language	Form	Doubtfully cognate
Kulu	<i>ɪntfi</i>	
Berom	<i>(se) kyéŋ</i>	
Iten	<i>ɲkòy</i>	
Cara		<i>imveŋ</i>

‘smoke’

Language	Form	Doubtfully cognate
Shall	<i>ki</i>	
Rigwe	<i>ńtǫ́</i>	
Izere	<i>ítsin</i>	
Firan	<i>ìntsin</i>	
Ganang	<i>i-nseŋ</i>	
Ashe	<i>à-ǫ̀dò</i>	
Idū	<i>àzòdò</i>	
Tinɔr	<i>ɣàzù</i>	
Nyankpa	<i>úǫ̀dò</i>	
Hyam	<i>ǫ̀dòŋ</i>	
Ce	<i>ìntfi</i>	
Mada	<i>ntsàntsē</i>	
Ningye	<i>ntɛŋ</i>	
Gbantu	<i>ntsəŋ</i>	
Numana	<i>ntsin</i>	
Bu	<i>ɛntɛ</i>	
Təsu	<i>ń-zò</i>	
Toro		<i>muŋzu</i>
Hasha	<i>ifwe</i>	
Sambe	<i>ʃufwá</i>	
Ndun		<i>mesan</i>
Shakara		<i>manfu</i>
Eggon	<i>odzo</i>	
Jijili	<i>ŋʒɔ</i>	
Jili	<i>ńzɔ̄</i>	
Bo	<i>ifé</i>	
Horom	<i>ʃifeŋ</i>	

‘smoke’

Language	Form	Doubtfully cognate
Sur	<i>ngin</i>	
Pe	<i>ntsaj</i>	
Eloyi		<i>úwú</i> (< Idomoid)

Commentary: the proposed root formula is N.SV.N. Smoke is a mass noun so has no alternation with a plural prefix. The nasal prefix (which might be a reflex of Niger-Congo m- for mass nouns) is attested in most branches. The fricative in root initial position has numerous realisations, including /s/, /ʃ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /ɕ/, /ts/, /tʃ/. The stem vowel is usually a front vowel but alternates with a back vowel in some languages. The final nasal is usually the velar /ŋ/ but other the alveolar nasal is possible. The Alumatic and Ndunic forms appear to be cognate with one another and may well be reflexes of the main root, but the n ~ m correspondence is surprising. Shimizu’s (1980) Jukunoid proto-forms are **kyán*, **fu* and **vin*, none of which appear to be related.

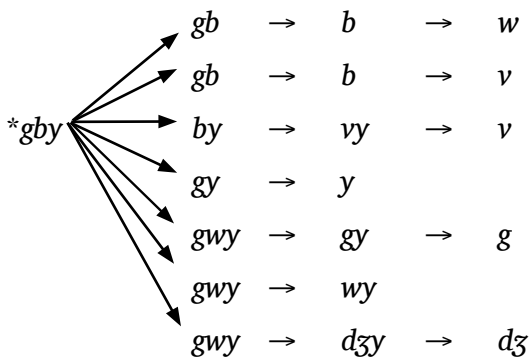
‘hunger’

Language	sg.	pl.	Gloss
Kulu	<i>iyon</i>		
Berom	<i>vyon</i>		
Cara	<i>kivɔŋ</i>		
Rigwe	<i>ɲ¹-zò</i>		
Izere	<i>izòŋ</i>		
Gwot	<i>jòŋ</i>		
Tyap	<i>ddzòŋ</i>		
Ataka	<i>jjòŋ</i>		
Jju	<i>dzwoŋ</i>		
Ayu	<i>iyon</i>		
Mada	<i>gyòŋ</i>		starvation
Bu	<i>iyɔ̃</i>		

‘hunger’

Language	sg.	pl.	Gloss
Ce	<i>ì-wyo</i>		
Numana	<i>gyɔ̀n</i>		
Hasha	<i>i-yuŋ</i>		
Təsu	<i>nyu</i>		
Ndun	<i>ugóri</i>		
Shakara	<i>ugóri</i>	<i>igori</i>	
Fyem	<i>yón</i>		
Horom	<i>yɔŋɔ</i>		
Sur	<i>yyɔŋ</i>		
Tarok	<i>ayáŋ</i>		

Commentary: The forms with **g** in C₁ position probably point to a velar in this position, widely weakened in Plateau to labial palatal. If we assume the **gb** sometimes weakened to initial **b** this may then have been fricativised to **v**. Cara may then have lost palatalisation giving **v** in C₁ position. The table below imagines some pathways that could have allowed the diverse surface forms of C₁ to develop:



The East Kainji languages of Central Nigeria

Roger Blench

University of Cambridge
rogerblench@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract:

The paper is an overview of current scholarship on the East Kainji language group of Central Nigeria. It reviews the existing published and manuscript sources and describes recent research, as well as the development of orthographies for some languages. Many East Kainji languages are severely threatened and some have gone extinct within the period under review. The paper presents an internal classification of the group and briefly discusses the external relationships of these languages. On the basis of existing data, a review of the basic phonology and noun class prefix systems is given.

Keywords: East Kainji languages, classification, status, Nigeria

1 Introduction: the identification of an East Kainji group

The East Kainji languages are a poorly studied group of some 38 languages spoken north and west of the Jos Plateau in Central Nigeria. This paper¹ presents an overview of the group as a whole, including the status of the languages included in East Kainji, their endangerment and likely classification. Some interest has recently been shown in writing these languages and these are discussed. Although descriptive work remains extremely weak, it presents some examples of the phonology and the system of noun classes.

The first record of East Kainji is in Gowers (1907), a set of unpublished but widely circulated wordlists which includes the languages

1 The paper was first presented at the Hamburg meeting to mark the retirement of Professor Ludwig Gerhardt, March 2004, but has subsequently undergone major revision. I would like to thank the reviewers for *Afrika und Übersee* for their attention to detail.

‘Rebinawa’ (= Ribina, correct name Ibunu²), ‘Naraguta’ (= Anaguta correct name Iguta), ‘Buji’ and ‘Guram’ (correct name εBoze), ‘Jere’ (correct name iZeLe), ‘Butawa’ (correct name Gamo-Ningi), ‘Gyem’ and ‘Taurawa’ (correct name Takaya). A more extensive listing of language names is in Meek (1925, II: 137), where the classification (contributed by N.W. Thomas) lists them under ‘Nigerian Semi-Bantu’ along with Plateau and Jukunoid. Meek (1931, II: 129-218) collected wordlists of Bishi, Tsam (formerly Chawai), Kurama, Janji, Gbiri and Niragu which have remained the basis for many later analyses. Westermann and Bryan (1952: 106-108) list some of these languages (Tsam, Kurama, Janji, Bishi, Jere) as ‘isolated language groups’ but classify them together with other ‘class languages’, although noting that Tsam (i.e. Chawai) has ‘no noun classes’³. The group was originally designated as Plateau 1b by Greenberg (1955), where Plateau 1a was the geographically separate West Kainji, which includes such languages as cLela and Kambari. Williamson (1971) followed Greenberg’s terminology while adding the languages that were then being included in the Benue-Congo Comparative Wordlist (BCCW). Table 1 shows a complete list of East Kainji languages with modern names and a listing of sources.

Rowlands (1962) seems to have rediscovered the link between the two branches of Kainji without reference to Greenberg, and argued that East Kainji should be treated as distinct from Plateau. The idea that Kainji languages were co-ordinate with Plateau rather than simply to be included within it seems to have surfaced in the Benue-Congo Working Group, an informal group established at the University of Ibadan in the late 1960s, which included Kay Williamson and Larry Hyman as members. The renaming of Plateau 1 as Kainji took place following the creation of Lake Kainji in 1974, but Hoffmann (in Hansford et al. 1976) still called this group ‘Western Plateau’ in the *Index of Nigerian Languages*. The term ‘Kainji’ seems to have only been formally recognised in print by Gerhardt (1989) and Williamson (1989). Shimizu (1982b), the most complete listing of these languages in print, refers to them as Western Plateau b. and his

2 Modern names are used in the body of the paper, but without the noun class prefixes. Thus the Chawai people, correctly called Atsam, are referred to as Tsam.

3 This is completely false as more recent data shows.

classification is reproduced in Gerhardt (1989) and Crozier & Blench (1992).

Published evidence for the unity of East Kainji as a group and for its subclassification is non-existent, as is any coherent account of its relation to West Kainji. Scattered wordlists, some very short, are found in Gowers (1907), Rowlands (1962), the BCCW (Williamson & Shimizu 1968; Williamson 1972) and in the publications of Shimizu (1979, 1982a). Many languages, especially of the Western branch appear to have no material available at all. Shimizu (1968) is the earliest study of a grammatical topic, the noun classes of iBunu. Di Luzio (1972) is the only published grammar sketch of an East Kainji language, tiMap (= Amo), while Anderson (1980) presented a more complete account of the noun classes of the same language. Otherwise there are only the morphological notes prefacing the fifteen Shimizu wordlists.

Since the field trips conducted by Shimizu in the 1970s, virtually no new materials have been published on East Kainji languages. Some ethnographic material has been collected (Gunn 1956; Nengel 1999; CAPRO 2004) but this throws little light on linguistic relations. As a consequence, from 2003 onwards, a survey of East Kainji communities has been undertaken, especially in the Jos area, focusing on languages reported by Shimizu as severely threatened.⁴ So far data has been collected on the Bin (= Binawa), Bishi (= Piti), Boze (= Buji), Loro, Nu (= Kinuku), Panawa, Sheni, Tunzu, Vori (= Srubu), Ziriya and Zora (= Cokobo) languages and the survey project will try and visit the remainder in the coming years. In Table 1, the data from the surveys that has been transcribed and made available to other researchers is found under Blench (2016).

4 I would like to acknowledge the collaboration of the late Professor John Nengel, University of Jos, who studied some East Kainji communities in the 1980s (Nengel 1999) and accompanied me on most of the field trips. Luther Hon, head of survey within SIL, Jos, also worked with me on the 2016 surveys, and has also made available field recordings from survey visits where I was not present. Thanks to Rachelle Wenger for information on Gbiri, and Sunday Sarki and Saleh Libisan for collaboration with the Boze community.

2 The status of East Kainji languages today

2.1 Numbers and location

No reliable or even unreliable figures are available for the number of speakers of East Kainji languages today, but most groups are very small. It is unlikely that there are more than 100,000 speakers of all East Kainji languages. Table 1 presents an overview of the East Kainji languages, with a summary of what information is available. It is arranged according to known subgroups; how these fit together is still uncertain but Figure 5 presents a tentative tree of East Kainji showing where these subgroups might fit. Red shading represents a field visit or discussions with a community group while written sources are in the reference list. ? signifies no information.

Table 1. Status of East Kainji languages

Subgroup	Language	Status	Source
Tsamic	Bishi	Vigorous	Ajaegbu et al. (2013)
	Ngmbam	Vigorous	Ajaegbu et al. (2013)
	Tsam	Vigorous	Ajaegbu et al. (2013)
Amic	Map	Vigorous	Blench (2016)
Western	Gbiri	Vigorous	Wenger (2016)
	Niragu	Vigorous	Wenger (2016)
	Vori	Vigorous	Blench (2016)
	Kurama	Vigorous	Harley (2016)
	Mala	?	
	Ruma	?	
	Bin	Vigorous	Blench (2016)
	Kono	?	
	Kaivi	?	
	Vono	?	
Tumi	?		
	Nu	Vigorous	Blench (2016)

	Dungu	?	
	Shuwa-Zamani	?	
Northern	Kudu	Probably extinct	Shimizu (1982)
	Camo	Probably extinct	
	Gamo	Probably extinct	Gowers (1907), Shimizu (1982)
North-Eastern	Ningi	Probably extinct	
	Gyem	Vigorous	Gowers (1907), Danladi et al. (2015)
	Shau (†)	Extinct	Shimizu (1982), Danladi et al. (2015)
	Si	Probably extinct	Shimizu (1982)
	Gana	Possibly spoken	Shimizu (1982)
Central	Takaya	Probably extinct	Gowers (1907), Shimizu (1982)
	Ziriya (†)	Extinct	Shimizu (1982), Blench (2004)
	Seni	Moribund	Shimizu (1982), Blench (2004)
	Janji	?	
	Zora	Moribund	Danladi et al. (2015), Blench (2016)
	Lemoro	Vigorous	Blench (2016)
	Sanga	Vigorous	
	Boze	Vigorous	Gowers (1907), Blench (2016)
	Gusu	?	
	Jere	Vigorous	Gowers (1907)
Bunu	Vigorous	Gowers (1907), Shimizu (1968)	
Guta	Vigorous	Gowers (1907), Shimizu (1979)	
	Tunzu	Vigorous	Blench (2004)

Population figures are a hostage to fortune, since none have been collected in decades. Blench & Nengel, in an informal survey of Boze villages, concluded that there were likely to be 8-10,000 speakers. Zora, which was still commonly spoken in 1969, when Shimizu visited, was down to 19 speakers in 2016. None of these populations are large and all can be regarded as ‘threatened’ due to their size. However, within that framework, where the community has been visited and there is evidence for transmission to children, these are marked ‘vigorous’ in Table 1.

Figure 1 shows the approximate locations of the East Kainji. As the populations are extremely small, the size of the captions may unintentionally exaggerate their size.

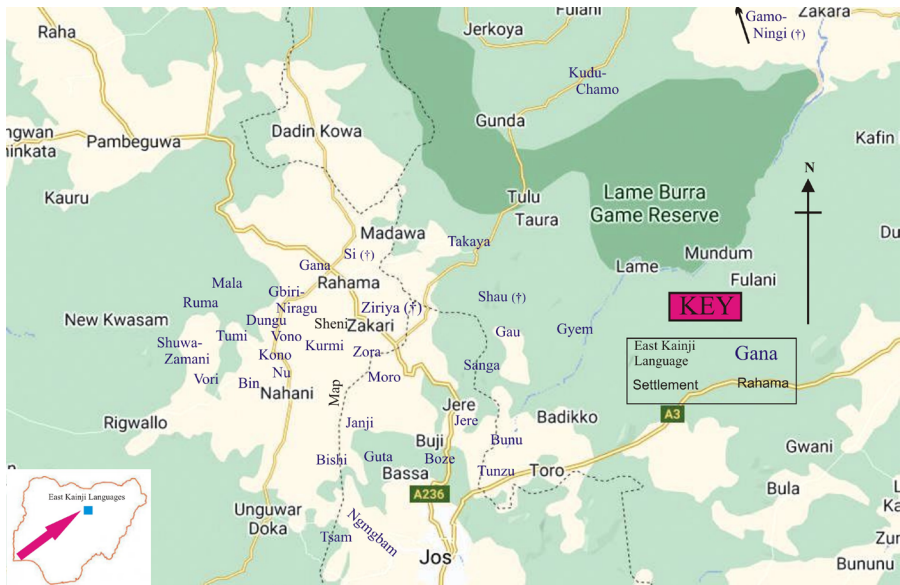


Figure 1. The East Kainji languages

2.2 Language endangerment

Almost all East Kainji languages are threatened, except perhaps Map (Amo) and Tsam (= Chawai), and many reported to exist may well now be extinct in 2021. The main sources of endangerment are a combination of the spread of Hausa and the small size of communities. East Kainji languages abut the Hausa-speaking area to the north and their speakers tend to be fluent in Hausa, which is responsible

for the declining competence of younger speakers. Although there is now some energy to protect larger languages like Boze, Jere and Map, isolated lects encapsulated among the Hausa, such as Kuda-Camo, are probably by now gone.

As an example of the type of loss since the period when Shimizu surveyed the region, the Ziriya language is completely dead. Ziriya is first referred to in Shimizu (1982: 108 ff.) where a brief wordlist is given. A field visit was made to Ziriya on 30th December 2003 and the Sarki, Abubakar Yakubu, was interviewed, probably the last person with any recall of the language (on the left in Figure 2). Ziriya village is situated at N10° 22.6, E 8° 50. It was originally divided into a number of wards as follows: Salingo, Kajakana, Wurno, Ungwar Marika, Funka and Farin Dutse. The language has definitively disappeared, and even Sarkin Yakubu only spoke it as a child, some sixty years ago, i.e. in the 1940s. He could recall some greetings and some numbers, all of which corresponded to Seni, suggesting that Ziriya was either the same or a very similar language. Ziriya was also originally spoken in a third village, Kere, somewhat further north, but it was dropped even longer ago.

Another language, Seni, had just six speakers when the community was interviewed in 2003. More recently, Zora (Cokobo), which was flourishing when Shimizu surveyed in 1969 had just 19 speakers in 2016. The two figures in the centre of Figure 3 are Mr. Adamu Jubril, 65, and Sarki Umaru Adamu, 71,



Figure 2. The last person to remember the Ziriya language. Source: author.



Figure 3. Remaining speakers of Zora. Source: author.

who were the main informants for language data.⁵ Moreover, since the speakers were dispersed and did not converse regularly, much of the morphology, such as the nominal prefix system, has disappeared.

It is unlikely these trends will be easily reversed, but with larger speech communities such as the Boze, where there is an articulate older generation with an interest in language development, revitalisation programmes are a more realistic proposition.

A Boze reader was launched in 2018 (Figure 4) and further preparations are being made,

including a dictionary for Android phones. Literacy projects associated with Bible translation have begun in several East Kainji languages, including Map and Kurama. However, although these are also driven by community enthusiasm, the technical backup required to construct effective orthographies is so far lacking. East Kainji languages have no profile in media such as radio and television.



Figure 4. Launch of Boze reader, 2018. Source: author.

2.3 Classification of East Kainji

As emphasised above, it has not been formally demonstrated that East Kainji constitutes a coherent group. Nonetheless, the vocabulary exhibits a high degree of lexical similarity. Table 1 presents the languages and subgroups of East Kainji as far as can be gauged from existing data. Figure 5 represents this as a tentative tree of the East Kainji languages. It will no doubt be subject to modification as more material becomes available.

Compared with West Kainji, which has undergone a wide variety of morphological changes that makes its individual branches look very diverse, the East Kainji languages for which data exist are comparatively similar. Impressionistically, Tsam (Chawai) and Bishi are somewhat different from the others, but the remainder form a contin-

⁵ The two other men shown were not speakers, but it was felt appropriate they be in the photograph.

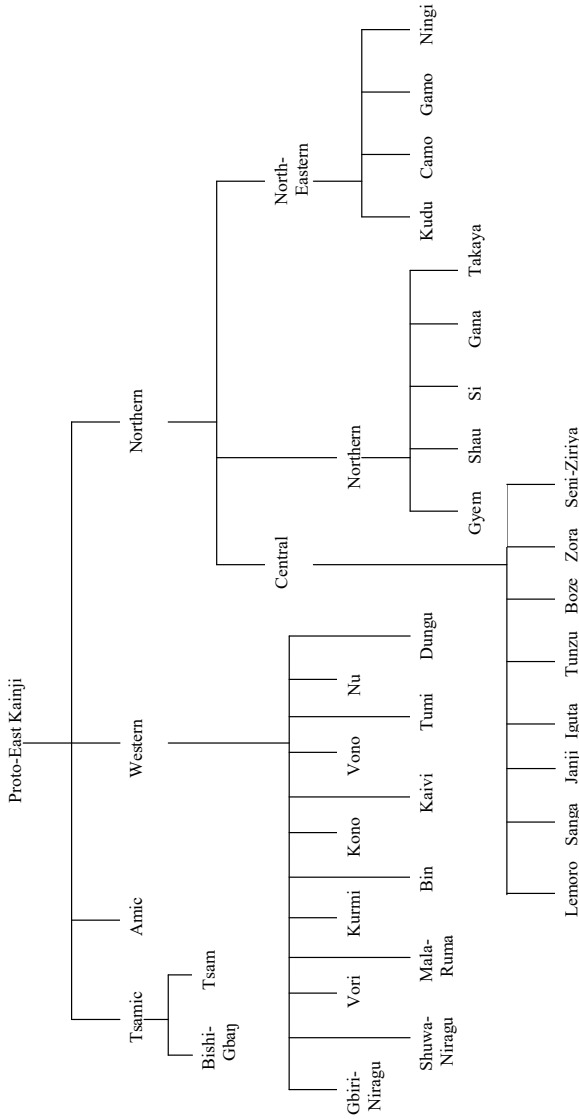


Figure 5. Tentative ‘tree’ of East Kainji languages

uous chain, although the Kuda-Camo languages were transformed under the influence of the surrounding Chadic languages.

3 Linguistic features of East Kainji

3.1 Phonology

All East Kainji languages so far studied have a relatively simple phonology and broadly resemble one another. The system of εBoze is given as an example of a system studied in some detail.

Consonants

Boze consonants are shown in Table 2.

[ʃ] and [ʒ] are probably not independent phonemes but allophones or free variants of /s/ and /z/ before front vowels. The labial-velar /gb/ seems to alternate freely with /gw/ in many speakers; this occasionally surfaces with non-contrastive labialisation as [gbw]. However, voiceless counterpart /kp/ is not heard and is apparently always realised as /kw/. Boze has no palatalised consonants, except for /ɲ/ which is a separate phoneme. However, non-phonemic palatalisation can be heard before front vowels, /i/, /e/ and /ɛ/. Similarly, there are no labialised consonants except for /kw/, but non-phonemic labialisation can be heard before back vowels, /u/, /o/ and /ɔ/. The reconstructed North Jos consonant system in Shimizu (1982b: 172) does not include labial-velars but records more palatalised consonants than in Boze, as well as a phonemic glottal stop.

Nasal prefixes in Boze are quite rare and are shifting to *i-* prefixes in some speakers; however, they do occur and are tone-bearing. These prefixed nasals, N-, are mostly homorganic with the following consonant. Boze words usually end in a vowel, but can end in approximants (*w* or *y*) or a nasal, always realised as *ŋ*.

Table 2. Boze consonant inventory

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			k g	[k ^w] gb	
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ		
Trill			r					
Fricative		f v	s z	[ʃ ʒ]				h
Affricate					tʃ ɟʒ			
Approximant					j		w	
Lateral								
Approximant			l					

Boze has medial doubled consonants as a consequence of compounding. Compounds in which the first element originally ended with a nasal, followed by a consonant of similar type (*-n*, *-l*, and *-r*), result in geminated laterals, via nasal assimilation.⁶ Hence:

‘wing’	<i>ùgàllùn</i>
‘ground squirrel’	<i>bigèllē</i>
‘sleep’	<i>ìrrō</i>

The first consonant of the two bears a tone, which is presumably the tone of the deleted prefix in the second element of the compound. The tone on the assimilated laterals can only be detected when the informant whistles the word; in ‘wing’ where the whole word is low tone, it is not apparent in elicitation. The etymology of ‘wing’ and ‘squirrel’ are unclear but in the case of ‘sleep’, this is an abstract noun derived from the verbal noun *ñrō* ‘sleeping’ with a new prefix added.

Vowels

There are eight phonemic vowels in εBoze and all occur in long and short form; there are no nasalised vowels (Table 3).

Table 3. Boze vowel inventory

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i, i:		u, u:
Close-Mid	e, e:	ə, ə:	o, o:
Open-Mid	ɛ, ɛ:		ɔ, ɔ:
Open		a, a:	

εBoze has no true diphthongs, that is, sequences of dissimilar vowels. Vy and Vw sequences occur and are usually written Vi and Vu by speakers familiar with Hausa orthography. However, the vowel usually bears a single tone. Sequences of long vowel plus semi-vowel are extremely rare. In Table 4, some lexemes with Vy and Vw sequences are presented.

⁶ As a consequence, when speakers attempt to write a word such as *ùgàllùn* ‘wing’, they often produce *uganlung*.

Table 4. Vy and Vw sequences in εBoze

	εBoze	gloss
ay	<i>bìgày</i>	‘mushroom’
	<i>rìwày</i>	‘year’
oy	<i>cǒy</i>	‘to drop’ PL
	<i>sòòy</i>	‘to put on (clothes)’ PL
aw	<i>ísáw</i>	‘grave’
	<i>udàkárjkâw</i>	‘tree (sp.)’
ew	<i>ùgēw</i>	‘hole in ground’
əw	<i>ùdântāw</i>	‘tree (sp.)’

Vowel harmony

Boze exhibits residual ATR-vowel-harmony in the stem, marked only by the opposition between open and close mid-vowels. There are two sets as shown in Table 5:

Table 5. Boze vowel harmony sets

Sets	I			II		
	Front	Central	Back	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u	i		u
Close-Mid				e	ə	o
Open-Mid	ɛ		ɔ			
Open		a			a	

The low central vowel can harmonise with either set, but the central vowel /ə/ cannot co-occur with /a/ and is only found with harmony set II. Prefixes do not underlyingly harmonise with the stem, but some speakers show a tendency to regularise the system. So, with the same stem, one speaker may use a *ri-* or *ti-* prefix, while another member of the same community will use *rɛ-* or *tɛ-*.

Tones

Boze has four level tones as well as rising and falling tones.⁷ The fourth tone, a superhigh, arises from a tone rule which requires all

7 The mid-tone is unmarked in practical transcriptions.

tones in singular nouns to be raised one level in the plural. Normally, the superhigh tone therefore appears only in plurals (Table 6).

Table 6. Genesis of superhigh tones in *ε*Boze

Gloss	SG	PL
guest/stranger	ógèn	ǎgēn
doctor	óbèrè	ǎbērē
grave	ísáw	ńsáw

At least one word has been identified with four tone levels – *bìshēshéně*, ‘tree sp.’ – which may have arisen from compounding.

A variety of glide tones occur in Boze, e.g. *cǒy* ‘to drop’, *ípôη* ‘baboons’. Glides can occur between almost any two adjacent tone-heights. Some of the glide tones arise from long vowels and VV sequences in compounds, but others occur on single vowels. In addition, when tones are raised in plural formation, the glides are raised in analogous fashion. Thus, a glide tone in a plural is usually one level higher than in the singular.

Boze and the related languages in its subgroup of East Kainji are exceptional in respect of their tonal system, which effectively constitutes double-marking of number. Tone-raising rules of this type are common in Plateau (see Blench 2000 for an example from Izere) and this may therefore be an effect of contact. Other East Kainji languages have much reduced systems. For example, tiMap (= Amo), appears to have two tones plus a rising tone in the account of Anderson (1980). Shimizu (1979, 1982a) usually transcribes the tonal systems in his lists as High and Low or High, Low and Downstep and he reconstructs the latter for his ‘Proto-North-Jos’.

3.2 Nominal morphology

The nominal morphology of East Kainji languages exhibits regular affix alternations marking number, transparent concord and usually CV(CV) syllable structures in the root. Anderson’s (1980) description of tiMap is the only comprehensive analysis of such a system. Shimizu (1968, 1979, 1982a) includes summaries of noun-class pairings he deduces from his individual wordlists, but these are far from complete, and in many languages the plurals were not recorded. Shimizu (1982b: 178) also reconstructed a ‘Proto-North-Jos’ noun-affix system and proposed reconstructions based on common lexemes.

The prefix system of Boze described below gives an example of an East Kainji noun-class system. An intriguing feature of Boze and its immediate relatives is the wide variety of allomorphs that individual stems can support (Table 7).

Table 7. Singular prefixes of εBoze nouns

Prefix	Allomorphs	εBoze	Gloss	εBoze	Gloss
∅-		kwāy	suffering	νόηδνδ	grand-father
A-	a-, ə-	àtíyé	day	èdèshèrì	sky
bV-	bi-, bu-	bìkànà	thorn	bùrà	rain
ε-		ēēyō	length		
i-		íwì	fear		
ka-		kārūnā	path		
m-	ma-, mə-	màgàgara	branch	mādērēsēw	eczema
n-		ntɔ	ashes		
OnO-	ono-, ɔɔ-, unu-	ùnū bārō	hunter	ònō rōmē	man
O-	o-, ɔ-	òòmō	grass	òvòkòlò	bark of tree
rV-	ri-, re-, rɛ-	rìjì	root	rèkoze	rainy season
				rènó	relations
tE-	te-, te-	tèēnē	charcoal	téròòmē	courage
u-		ùtítí	tree		

The permissible vowels in the allomorphs of the prefixes do not seem entirely consistent and it may be that lengthier vocabulary lists will produce more complete sets. *ka-* does not appear in an affix pairing and it might be that words with this initial syllable have a zero prefix. However, the word *ù-rùnà* ‘road’, PL *tì-runa*, has a diminutive, *kā-rūnā* ‘path’, which shows that *ka-* can be applied to a variety of nominal stems. This prefix may well be cognate with the *ko-* diminutive found in some Plateau languages, such as Berom. The word *tū-kā* ‘medicine’ may well also incorporate a *tu-* allophone of the *tV-* prefix set, since

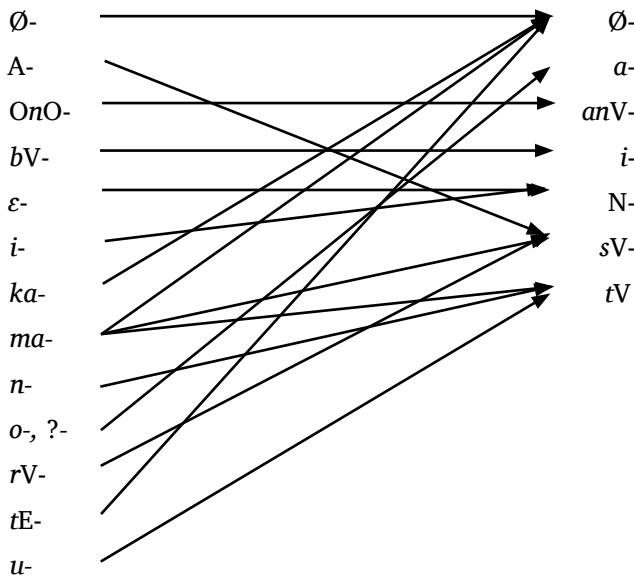
kal is a widespread root for ‘medicine’ in the Plateau area. In Table 8, the plural prefixes of εBoze nouns are shown.

Table 8. Plural prefixes of εBoze nouns

Prefix	Allomorphs	εBoze	Gloss	εBoze	Gloss
<i>a-</i>		<i>ázūwā</i>	stones		
<i>anV-</i>	<i>ana-, ano-</i>	<i>āná rǒómē</i>	men	<i>ānó társé</i>	younger brother
<i>ε-</i>		<i>ērǒ</i>	elephants		
<i>i-</i>		<i>íkáná</i>	thorns		
<i>N-</i>	<i>n-, ŋ-</i>	<i>ńsáw</i>	graves	<i>ńkézé</i>	corpses
<i>sV-</i>	<i>si-, sE-</i>	<i>sǐjǐ</i>	roots	<i>sékózé</i>	rainy seasons
<i>tV-</i>	<i>tε-, tí-, tu-</i>	<i>títǒǒ</i>	swamps	<i>tēshǒǒrǒ</i>	uncircumcised people

Table 9 shows noun-class pairings in εBoze represented as a conventional affix net:

Table 9. Noun-class pairings in εBoze



Data are too preliminary to attempt complete semantic assignments as yet, but the associations shown in Table 10 are evident:⁸

Table 10. Boze nominal affixes: semantic assignments

Singular	Plural	Semantics
<i>VnV-</i>	<i>anV-</i>	persons
<i>bi-</i>	<i>i-</i>	most animals, some plants
<i>u-</i>	<i>tV-</i>	remaining animals, most plants

At least one language, tiSeni, has a radically different system of marking plurals. Instead of, or in addition to, affix alternation, tiSeni reduplicates the first syllable of the stem. Thus, the prefix is sometimes retained and can combine with root reduplication. This phenomenon is not recorded in neighbouring languages and Shimizu (1982a: 104) did not note it. Table 11 gives some examples of tiSeni nominal pluralisation strategies.

Table 11. TiSeni nominal plurals

Gloss	Sg	Pl
seed	<i>ùgbérù</i>	<i>ùgbégbérù</i>
forest	<i>ùshírím</i>	<i>ùshíríshím</i>
neck	<i>iyâw</i>	<i>iyâwyâw</i>
ear	<i>ùtùway</i>	<i>tutuway</i>

This suggests influence from non-Hausa Chadic languages; although there are no such languages in the area today. Hasha, a rather remote Plateau language, has undergone a similar development under the influence of the Chadic language Sha. Despite this, tiSeni has lexically much in common with other North Jos languages.

Anderson (1980: 174) gives the singular/plural pairings of tiMap as follows (Table 12):

⁸ Data are drawn from the preliminary dictionary of εBoze, which has been circulated in the community (Blench et al. 2021).

Table 12. Noun-class prefix pairings in tiMap

Singular	Plural		
<i>u-</i>	1	2	<i>a-</i>
<i>ku-</i>	3	4	<i>te-</i>
<i>le-</i>	5	6	N-
N-	6		
<i>ki-</i>	7	8	<i>ni-</i>
<i>fe-</i>	9	10	<i>i-</i>
<i>ka-</i>	11	12	<i>ma-</i>

The numbers are those given by Anderson and are not intended to correspond to traditional Bantu noun-classes. Although there are clear resemblances to εBoze, the widespread allomorphy of εBoze is not represented here and the system seems much more regular.

4 The position of East Kainji within Kainji

The opposition between East and West Kainji is enshrined in the literature as a primary split of the Kainji language group. Yet no arguments in print support this division. The geographical separation of East Kainji by Greenberg (1955) and Rowlands (1962) seems to have been the main motivation for the classification rather than any linguistic evidence. Survey work among the West Kainji languages increasingly points to this division being spurious. Within West Kainji, there are very deep divisions, and despite the numerous languages of East Kainji, they almost certainly constitute a single branch of the larger Kainji unit. Morphologically, East Kainji most closely resembles the West Kainji language Basa, with its conservation of classic (C)V-CVCV structures, although detailed proof of such a relationship is lacking. Almost certainly, the West Kainji ‘Lake’ subgroup (consisting of Reshe, Shen (=Laru) and the two Reraŋ (=Lopa) languages) represent a primary split, while East Kainji is among the descendant groups of the remainder. In the light of this, Figure 6 presents a revised overview of the structure of the Kainji languages proposed in Blench (2018), where East Kainji is treated as co-ordinate with Basa. Further work is clearly needed to refine this hypothesis.

5 Conclusions

This overview makes it evident that the East Kainji languages are a relatively large group of languages in Central Nigeria which have been overlooked by linguists. They should be of particular interest to students of noun-class languages because they conserve a rich affix system, unlike many related languages. They are extremely threatened and some have gone extinct during the period of survey. In the light of this, further survey and descriptive work is a high priority.

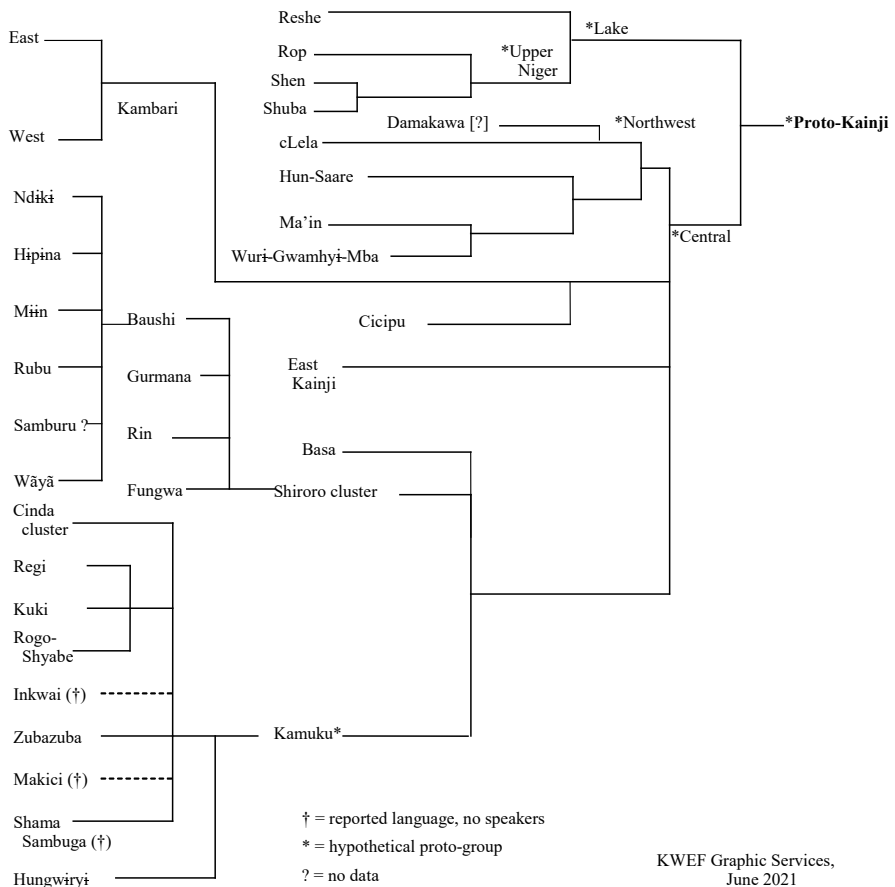


Figure 6. Revised subclassification of Kainji Languages

Conventions

∅	zero (prefix)
A	any central vowel (here a ~ ə)
BCCW	Benue-Congo Comparative Wordlist
V	underspecified vowel
O	underspecified back mid vowel (here o ~ ɔ)
E	underspecified front mid vowel (here e ~ ε)
N	any nasal

References

- Ajaegbu, Grace, Alisha Carr, Marcus Love, John Muniru & Zachariah Yoder. 2013. *A short report of a sociolinguistic survey of the Abishi (Piti) and Ngmbang (Ribang) of Kaduna State, Nigeria*. SIL Nigeria ms.
- Anderson, Stephen C. 1980. The noun class system of Amo. In Larry Hyman (ed.), *Noun classes in the Grassfields Bantu borderland*. (SCOPIL 8). Los Angeles: UCLA. 155-178.
- Bennett, Patrick R. & Jan P. Sterk. 1977. South-Central Niger-Congo: a reclassification. *Studies in African Linguistics* 8(3). 241-273.
- Blench, Roger M. 2000. Transitions in Izere nominal morphology and implications for the analysis of Plateau languages. *Frankfurter Afrikanistische Blätter* 12. 7-28.
- Blench, Roger M. 2018. Nominal affixing in the Kainji languages of north-western and central Nigeria. In John Watters (ed.), *East Benue-Congo. Nouns, pronouns and verbs*. Niger Congo Comparative Studies 1. 59-106. <https://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/190>.
- Blench, Roger M. & Boze Literacy Committee 2021. *A dictionary of εBoze*. electronic ms.
- CAPRO 2004. *Harvest of peace: An ethnic survey of Plateau State*. Jos: CAPRO Research Office.
- Crozier, David & Roger M. Blench. 1992. *An index of Nigerian languages*. 2nd edn. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Danladi, Yakubu, John Muniru, Luther Hon & Fittokka Gobak. 2015. *A summary report of sociolinguistic overview of the Gyem, Izora and Shau of Bauchi and Plateau States of Nigeria*. SIL Nigeria ms.
- Di Luzio, Aldo. 1972. Preliminary description of the Amo language. *Afrika und Übersee* 56(1/2). 3-61.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1989. Kainji and Platoid. In John Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *The Niger-Congo languages: a classification and description of Africa's largest language family*. Lanham: University Press of America. 359-376.

- Gowers, William F. 1907. *42 vocabularies of languages spoken in Bauchi Province, N. Nigeria*. National Archives, Kaduna ms.
- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1955. *Studies in African linguistic classification*. New Haven: Compass Publishing.
- Hansford, Keir, John Bendor-Samuel & Ron Stanford. 1976. *An index of Nigerian languages*. Ghana: SIL.
- Meek, Charles K. 1925. *The northern tribes of Nigeria*. 2 vols. London: Humphrey Milford for Oxford University Press.
- Meek, Charles K. 1931. *Tribal studies in northern Nigeria*. 2 vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trubner.
- Nengel, John G. 1999. *Precolonial African intergroup relations in the Kuru and Pengana polities of Central Nigerian Highlands, 1800-1900*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Rowlands, Evan Celyn. 1962. Notes on some class languages of northern Nigeria. *African Language Studies* 3. 71-83.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1968. *An outline of the I-búnú noun class system*. Ibadan: Dept. of linguistics and Nigerian Languages diploma dissertation.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1979. Five wordlists with analyses from the northern Jos group of Plateau languages. *Afrika und Übersee* 62(4). 253-271.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1982a. Ten more wordlists with analyses from the northern Jos group of Plateau languages. *Afrika und Übersee* 65(1). 97-134.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1982b. Die Nord-Jos-Gruppe der Plateausprachen Nigerias. *Afrika und Übersee* 65(2). 161-210.
- Westermann, Diedrich & Margaret A. Bryan. 1952. *Languages of West Africa: Part II*. London: OUP for IAI.
- Williamson, Kay. 1971. The Benue-Congo languages & Ijo. In Thomas Albert Sebeok & Jack Berry (eds.), *Current trends in linguistics 7. Linguistics in sub-Saharan Africa*. Den Haag: De Gruyter Mouton. 245-306.
- Williamson, Kay. 1972. *Benue-Congo comparative wordlist: Vol.2*. Ibadan: West African Linguistic Society.
- Williamson, Kay. 1989. Benue-Congo overview. In John Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *The Niger-Congo languages: a classification and description of Africa's largest language family*. Lanham: University Press of America. 247-276.
- Williamson, Kay & Kiyoshi Shimizu. 1968. *Benue-Congo comparative wordlist, Vol. 1*. Ibadan: West African Linguistic Society.

Appendix

East Kainji ‘arm, hand’

Table 12 shows for the word ‘arm, hand’ in East Kainji, combining entries from the BCCW, Shimizu (1979, 1982) and the present author’s fieldwork. Languages for which no data exists are not listed. The column headed BCCW cross-references the language names against that source.

Table 12. East Kainji glosses for ‘arm, hand’

Language	Singular	Plural	BCCW
Southern			
Bishi	<i>mo-ɔk</i>		Piti
Tsam	<i>wɔk</i>		Chaw
Northern			
Ningi cluster			
Kudu	<i>mò-ri</i>		Kuda
Camo	<i>ùkérí</i>		Cham
Gamo	<i>ù-ʔára</i>	<i>à-ʔára</i>	Buta
Lame cluster			
Gyem	<i>ò-me^k</i>	<i>cè-rèèku</i>	Gyem
Shau	<i>u-ʔara</i>	<i>tu-ʔara</i>	
Lere cluster			
Si	<i>àya</i>		
Gana	<i>ù-ʔaya</i>		
Takaya	<i>àyà</i>		Taur
North-central cluster			
Izora	<i>ù-ʔara</i>	<i>tààra</i>	
eMoro	<i>wàʔara</i>	<i>tàara</i>	
Sanga	<i>ò-ʔàra</i>	<i>tà-ʔàra</i>	
Janji	<i>tààre</i>		Janj
εBoze	<i>ò-wàrè</i>	<i>tàre</i>	Buji
iZeLe	<i>ò-warè</i>	<i>tà-are</i>	

Language	Singular	Plural	BCCW
iBunu	ù-wáré	tà-áré	Rìbn
iPanawa	ù-wáré	tì-wáré	
iLoro	ù-wáré	tàáré	
iGuta	ù-wìri	tì-ìri	
tiMap	ù-càrà	à-càrà	Amo
Seni cluster			
Ziriya (†)	àyí		
Seni	taya	uta-taya	Shen
Kauru cluster			
Gbiri	ka-kyara	na-	
Niragu	ka-tfara		Kahu
Surubu	ka-tfara	na-	Surb
Kurama	tá-áré	tí-	Krma
Kono	u-tfara	i-tfara	

As far as can be gauged, all East Kainji languages have the same root except Bishi and Tsam, which have weakened reflexes of the common Niger-Congo root #-*bok*. This root can be tentatively reconstructed as **CV-tfara*. In the North-Central cluster the initial /tʃ-/ of the root weakens first to a glottal stop (as in Zora) and then /w-/ presumably under the influence of the *u-* prefix. In the Lere cluster the *C*₂ /-r-/ weakens to /-y-/. The prefix is hard to reconstruct with certainty. In the majority of cases it is *u-*, but in some Kauru cluster languages, it is replaced with *ka-*, which is probably a later innovation. Si and Takaya have lost all trace of a prefix, which is consistent with the breakdown of number marking through affix alternation in these languages.

Verbal pluralization strategies in Plateau

Ludwig Gerhardt

Universität Hamburg

l.gerhardt@wtnet.de

Abstract:

Pluractional verbs are found in many Plateau (and adjacent Chadic) languages. The present study looks into the distribution of a stock of common markers of pluractionality. These are *s, *n, *k, and *d, all reminiscent of Proto-Bantu verb extensions. While these extensions each function differently in Bantu languages, in the Plateau area they serve a common function: that of expressing verbal pluractional stems.

The surface manifestations of pluractionality present a picture of utter complexity in most of the languages studied. The study endeavors to reconstruct the strategies different languages have followed to create a synchronic chaos from a relatively clear picture in the proto-stage. Phonological changes and morphophonemic constraints are the major cause of surface differences.

It is argued that the similarities observed between the pluractional forms of the languages treated here are due to internal developments rather than to language contact.

Keywords: Benue-Congo, Plateau-languages, comparative verbal morphology, pluractional stems

1 Introduction

1.1 Definition, Terminology, and Function

Williamson & Blench (2000: 13) say that “Newman (1990) has drawn attention to ‘pluractional’ verbs in Chadic, that is verbs which require plurality in their subject or object, or which refer to multiple actions. Such verbs are also widespread in Niger-Congo, either as part of the verbal extension system or as different lexical items.” Basically, this is what has been described under different labels in different sources by different authors.

Luc Bouquiaux (1970) has given the most detailed analysis of pluractional verbs in any Plateau language, and his definition already covers most aspects of pluractionality: “Ce type de dérivation peut affecter la majorité des verbaux [...] auxquels il donne [...] une valeur fréquentative (l’action s’accomplit continuellement), habituelle, répétitive (l’action se répète un certain nombre de fois) ou plulative (l’action est faite par plusieurs sujets ou s’exerce par l’intermédiaire d’une seule personne sur plusieurs objets.)” (Bouquiaux 1970: 206).

The only aspect that should or could be added is: derived forms of this type can also mark an action in progress, or an action that extends over a longer period of time.¹ That means: In Plateau languages a chain of semantically interrelated functions can be expressed by formally similar markers, with pure morphological marking of pluractionality on one end and pure aspectual marking of continuity or habituality on the other.

Formally, pluractional markers in Plateau languages are similar to the well-known set of verbal extensions in Niger-Congo.² Nevertheless, their function is quite different. To which extent language contact with neighbouring Chadic languages is responsible for this fact is – at least to me – less clear than it was when Ekkehard Wolff and I proposed this hypothesis in 1977 (Wolff & Gerhardt 1977: 1531f). Since then several studies have been published in which the existence of pluractional verb forms was described for other subgroups of Benue-Congo (Jukunoid, Cross River) suggesting that this feature may have developed independently in Benue-/Niger-Congo.

To my knowledge the first description of the phenomena under discussion is contained in Lukas & Willms 1961 where the formation of “habitual stems” is described in some detail for Zarek.³ Semantic considerations – Lukas & Willms include a verb ‘die’ for which a habitual stem was given – led me to reject this term suggesting the term “plural-stem” instead (Gerhardt 1971: 96); this I used in a number of publications (Gerhardt 1972/3, 1984, 1989). Hoffmann (1976: § 54) used the term “distributive”. Newman finally created

1 In fact, all extended forms in Aten are labelled “progressive” in Blench 2004.

2 This has been noted already in Mukarovsky (1963: 80–83).

3 “Every verb stem possesses two stems, the one specifies the action as habitual, the other not.” In the paper, however, by far not for all verbs a habitual form is given.

the term “pluractional” which found wide acceptance, and is also used in Wilson 2004.

In a number of published and unpublished papers Roger Blench (Blench 2000, 2001a, 2001b) has attributed the multiplicity of formatives and the generally chaotic impression one gets from studying and comparing pluractional verbs in Plateau to massive language contact.⁴ This is undoubtedly the mainstream interpretation. However, it seems to me that major features of this system are part of the linguistic inventory of the language from which the present-day languages have sprung. I think that by looking at these phenomena from a comparative vantage point, and by trying to explain them in terms of language-internal processes, one can gain insights that otherwise may be overlooked.

What can be regarded as accepted knowledge about pluractional verbs in Plateau might be subsumed under the following points:

- Pluractionality is mostly marked by derivational morphemes.
- Widely occurring markers of pluractionality are *s*, *k*, *ŋ* and *l/r*.
- Markers can be combined or can substitute each other (not always with functional correlates).
- There are few indications that vowels occur as formatives.
- On the surface *s* occurs as suffix as well as infix.
- In some languages *k* does not mark pluractionality but singular action, especially in cases where the unextended (proto-) form of a particular verb ends in **-s*.

2 Pluractional verbs

2.1 Distribution and individual markers

Pluractional verbs are found in most subgroups of Plateau languages.⁵

4 As an example I would like to quote the conclusion of Blench’s paper “Plural verb morphology in Fobur Izere” (2001a): “[...] A further source of skewing is intense bilingualism with neighbouring languages. In the case of Berom, where documentation is good, cognate forms show that borrowing, probably in both directions usually includes the plural form rather than just the root. As a result this creates interference in regularisation processes, increasing the level of surface complexity.”

5 For languages not underlined only very limited or no data are available, languages for which relatively good documentation is available that seem to have no verbal extensions are set in italics).

North Plateau = N	(Ikulu)
West Plateau = W	
North-Western = NW	(<u>Gyong</u> , <u>Chori</u> , Koro, <u>Dūya</u> , <u>Hyam</u>)
South-Western = SW	(<u>Che</u> , <u>Nindem</u> , <u>Kaningkom</u> / <u>Ningkyob</u> , <u>Ninzam</u> , <u>Mada</u>)
Beromic = B	(<u>Biröm</u> , <u>Aten</u> , <u>Cara</u>)
Central Plateau = C	(<u>Zarek</u> , <u>Kagoro</u> , <u>Katab</u> , Atakar, <u>Jju</u>)
Southeast Plateau = S	(<u>Fyem</u>)

The number of forms per language, however, varies enormously. Partly this is due to lack of information about the languages in question. On the other hand there are languages, for which relatively rich data are available, but where no pluractional verbs or only isolated forms have been recorded.

2.1.1 *S as pluractional marker in Plateau subgroups

Clearly, the most widespread marker of pluractionality is *S.

Table 1. -s(-) as plural marker in Plateau different subgroups

Language	Gloss	Base	Plural form	Derivational Process
IKULU (N)	—	—	—	
KORO (NW) GYONG (NW) DŪYA (NW)	shoot kill drink	<i>me</i> <i>fet</i> <i>xwá</i>	<i>mes</i> <i>feza</i> (?) <i>xwéǰá</i>	suffixation of <i>s</i> <i>z</i> (= voiced <i>s</i>) replaces <i>t</i> suffixation of <i>-ifá</i> + vowel assimilation
CHE (SW) ⁶ NINDEM (SW)	tear cut trees	<i>ɲara</i> <i>tɛn</i>	<i>ɲarasa</i> <i>tɛs</i>	suffix <i>s</i> + copy vowel <i>s</i> replaces <i>n</i>
ZAREK (C)	come build blow (instr.)	<i>bɛ</i> <i>nɔ̀ɔ̀k</i> <i>tép</i>	<i>bɛs</i> <i>nɔ̀ɔ̀s</i> <i>tésép</i>	suffixation of <i>s</i> <i>s</i> replaces <i>k</i> <i>-s</i> -infix + copy vowel

6 Data from Hoffmann (1976).

BIROM ⁷ (B)	catch build, weave	<i>vo</i> <i>lók</i>	<i>vos</i> <i>lógós</i>	suffixation of <i>s</i> suff. of V + <i>s</i> ; intervoc. C voiced
ATEN (B)	die put	<i>ku</i> <i>cwáàk</i>	<i>kus</i> <i>cwásèk</i>	suffixation of <i>s</i> <i>s</i> -infixation + vowel change
FYEM (S)	say	<i>lák</i>	<i>lákis</i>	suffixation of <i>is</i>

On the surface *s* can appear as an additive or replacive element or as an infix. The scenario for a sequence of events that result in these types in the individual languages will be sketched in the chapter on historical changes.

2.1.2 *N as pluractional marker in Plateau subgroups

Another marker consists of a nasal, which may be realized as *n* or *ŋ* in the individual languages.

Table 2. Nasal as plural marker in Plateau subgroups

Language	Gloss	Base	Plural form	Derivational Process
ZAREK (C)	shoot	<i>ta</i>	<i>taŋ</i>	suffixation of velar N
KAGORO (C)	shoot	<i>ma</i>	<i>maŋ</i>	suffixation
	throw	<i>ta</i>	<i>taŋ</i>	suffixation
JJU (C)	shoot	<i>ta</i>	<i>taŋ</i>	suffixation
DŪYA (NW)	bite	<i>śáár</i>	<i>śáŋ</i>	velar N replaces <i>r</i>
GYONG (NW)	go	<i>ze</i>	<i>zena</i>	suffixation of <i>n</i> + V
CHORI (NW)	answer	<i>himi</i>	<i>himna</i>	<i>na</i> replaces <i>i</i>
	throw	<i>tar</i>	<i>taŋ</i>	velar N replaces <i>r</i>

2.1.3 *K as pluractional marker in Plateau subgroups

*-*k*, unlike the markers which have been described in 2.1.1f., in quite a number of languages is not used to mark pluractionality, but to de-pluralize particular verb forms. This happens especially in cases where the final consonant of the root is *s*; see the following examples from Zarek.

⁷ The Birom data are taken Bouquiaux (1970) and from field material that was handed over to me by the late Johannes Lukas, respectively. Blench (2001b) contains data of a slightly different dialect of Birom.

Table 3. *-k* as de-pluralizing marker in Zarek in unextended stems with root-final *s*

Gloss	Extended form / SG	Base / PL	Proto form ⁸
mend, amend	<i>básák</i>	<i>bás</i>	
untie	<i>bísík</i>	<i>bís</i>	*BIS
pierce, stab	<i>tásák</i>	<i>tás</i>	

In Aten similar processes can be observed, cf.

Table 4. *-k* as de-pluralizing marker in Aten

Gloss	Extended f. / SG	Base / PL
repair	<i>yoŋke</i>	<i>yoŋ</i>
weed by hand	<i>hɔlɔŋkê</i>	<i>hɔlɔŋ</i>
twist, plait	<i>bànté⁹</i>	<i>ban</i>
dig	<i>sùmpe⁹</i>	<i>sùm</i>

Other verbs replace final *Vk* with *Vs* in the pluractional form. As is evidenced by the proto form, *V + k* in the non-pluractional/singular form must be interpreted as an extension. Pluractionality is effected by the *V + s* morpheme.

Table 5. Replacement of *Vk* by *Vs* in Zarek, Birom, and Aten

Language	Gloss	Extended f./SG	Extended f./PL	Proto form
ZAREK	throw	<i>bárák</i>	<i>báras</i>	*BAT
	get up	<i>dórók</i>	<i>dóròs</i>	*DOT
	pour in	<i>kórók</i>	<i>kóròs</i>	*KWAT
BIROM	descend	<i>gìtik</i>	<i>gìtis</i>	–
	satisfy	<i>sìrik</i>	<i>sìris</i>	–
ATEN	mix (meat)	<i>sèŋkè</i>	<i>sèŋès</i>	–

**-k*, however, also occurs as part of a sequence of formatives which together mark pluractional forms. The function of the *k*-element in

⁸ Some of the proto forms reconstructed for one or several Plateau subgroups clearly have a distribution that goes beyond the Plateau area (see Gerhardt 1983: 224–239).

⁹ *-té* and *-pé* are allomorphs of *-ké*; for morphophonological details see Appendix II.

these derivations is unclear; the pluractional meaning of these forms must be attributed to the *s*-element, e.g. Zarek:

Table 6. Pluractional -k in combination with other extensions in Zarek

Gloss	Base	Plural	Proto form
(sur)pass	<i>nár</i>	<i>násàk</i>	*NAT
bury	<i>nér</i>	<i>nésék</i>	*LYAT
jump	<i>tar</i>	<i>tásák</i>	—

*-k is subject to morphophonemic change in several languages where the nasality of C_2 is spread to the consonant of the extension; see 3.1.2 and (13) for more examples.

2.1.4 *l / r* (*D) as pluractional marker in Plateau subgroups

The last marker with a fairly widespread distribution is *-l/-r*. Generally it is found in combination with other extensions. It is not possible to define its exact function since it appears in pluractional as well as non-pluractional forms, e.g. in Jju and Ikulu.

Table 7. *l / r* as pluractional marker in Plateau subgroups

Lang.	Gloss	SG	PL	Proto form	Derivational process
IKULU	sell/buy	<i>líbrí</i>	<i>lép</i>	*DYAP	dropping of <i>-ri</i> in pluractional form together with Ablaut
	tear open	<i>péégere</i>	<i>pée(k)</i>	—	<i>-re</i> is dropped in pluractional form, devoicing of final C
KAGORO	jump, fly open	<i>fəp</i> <i>nyíp</i>	<i>fələp</i> <i>nyirəp</i>	*PUP —	<i>l</i> -infix <i>l</i> -infix
JJU	get well	<i>créŋ</i>	<i>cceŋ</i>	—	dropping of <i>l</i> -infix + fortis articulation of C_1
BIROM	send	<i>tomo</i>	<i>tomsal</i>	*TOM	double suffixation: <i>s + l</i>
ATEN	pound	<i>tò</i>	<i>tòlò</i>	—	suffixation of <i>l + V</i>

2.2 Combinations of extensions

There are clear examples in Birom to show that extensions can be combined, such as *S and *D in (8). However, these extensions do not act independently of each other, they rather seem to represent frozen derivations.

Table 8. Combinations of extensions in Birom

Gloss	Base	Plural	Proto form
send	<i>tomo</i>	<i>tomsal</i>	*TOM
grind	<i>hwoŋo</i>	<i>hwoŋsal</i>	*KWAŋ

In many Central languages pluractional forms must be considered as consisting of a stem plus several extensional markers. Some examples have already been given in the preceding paragraphs. I add some examples from Zarek, because the forms in this language are more transparent than in other languages, e.g.:

Table 9. Combinations of extensions in Zarek

Gloss	Base	Plural	Proto form	Derivational process
bury	<i>nér</i>	<i>nésék</i>	*LYAT	-s- + -k deletion of root-final C
buy, receive	<i>fan</i>	<i>fafan</i> ¹⁰	*SIAN	-s- + -ŋ deletion of root-final C

Looking at the final consonants of the two bases it is clear that more than one extension is involved (in addition to the deletion of the root-final consonant). Hypotheses about how these forms have developed are given below in 3.1.2, and 3.4.

3 Trends and Strategies

What has been said up to now might suggest a rather homogeneous picture of verbal plural formation in Plateau languages. This is far from being true. The individual languages have made very different use of the inventory of formatives and have followed different strategies in their respective systems. A parallel from Indo-European languages comes to my mind: that of the so-called strong verbs in

¹⁰ The medial *f* is a regular morphophonemic variant of -s(-) in case an alveopalatal consonant appears in word-initial position; cf. Lukas & Willms (1961: 26).

Germanic languages. There is absolutely no doubt that the highly idiosyncratic category of strong verbs that exists in all modern Germanic languages has been present in Proto-Germanic. Languages from all branches of Germanic have strong verbs. The principles that govern the system of ablaut were simple and transparent in the proto language. The different ablaut classes were phonologically conditioned. In spite of the overall similarity of the systems, and of the fact that quite a number of verbs follow the same pattern across the languages of the family, there are specific developments in the individual languages that co-operate to create a synchronic chaos. I would like to give just one example from Dutch, English, and German (quoted in their orthographic form), they belong to ablaut class III that has a nasal or liquid as C_2 and a specific vowel pattern. It is characterized by *i* in the present stem, *a* in the past stem and *u* in the perfect stem. A typical verb of that type is ‘swim’. Another verb originally in that class is ‘come’, however today it is a class of its own in the three languages. The factor that apparently triggered the special development of this particular verb was rounding of word-initial *k*, i.e. k^w . The sequence k^wi in the present tense is attested in the oldest documented Germanic language, Gothic, as *qwiman*. This sequence was treated in different ways in the three languages: in some modern forms the labialised consonant has led to the existence of rounded vowels, in other forms the rounding was lost; finally, in others it was retained.¹¹

Table 10. Germanic strong verbs

Dutch (D):	<i>zwemmen – zwam – gezwommen</i>
English (E):	<i>swim – swam – swum</i>
German (G):	<i>schwimmen – schwamm – geschwommen</i>
D:	<i>komen – kwam – gekomen</i>
E:	<i>come – came – come</i>
G:	<i>kommen – kam – gekommen</i>

Two other phenomena from the German(ic) strong verbs show clear parallels to developments in Plateau languages: There was a quite productive derivational process by which weak transitive verbs were derived from strong intransitive verbs. Some German examples are:

¹¹ The w is retained in other strong verbs such as *quellen* ‘spring from’ and *schwellen* ‘swell’, that, however – like English *swell* – belong to different ablaut classes.

Table 11. Derivation of weak transitive verbs from strong intransitive verbs

<i>fallen</i>	<i>fiel</i> [fi:l]	<i>gefallen</i>	fall (itr. from the table)
<i>fällen</i>	<i>fällte</i>	<i>gefällt</i>	fell (tr. a tree)
<i>backen</i>	<i>buk</i> [bu:k]	<i>gebacken</i>	bake (itr. bread in the oven)
<i>backen</i>	<i>backte</i>	<i>gebackt</i>	bake (tr. baker bakes bread)
<i>sinken</i>	<i>sank</i>	<i>gesunken</i>	sink(itr.)
<i>senken</i>	<i>senkte</i>	<i>gesenkt</i>	sink (tr.) ¹²

Due to the semantic similarity of the two verbs, the difference between them is no longer maintained by many speakers of German. The more commonly used weak transitive forms replace the strong intransitive forms. These survive in a number of cases in past participles and idiomatic expressions. Few people would say *Der Kuchen buk im Ofen* ‘the cake baked in the oven’ which sounds extremely old-fashioned. That means that parallel forms exist in the language that formerly had well defined different functions. However, these have been given up in the course of time or are used interchangeably by many people.

Finally it could be pointed out that verbs belonging to the same ablaut classes in older stages of German display minor differences in modern Standard German:

<i>heißen</i> [hajsən]	<i>hieß</i> [hi:s]	<i>geheißen</i> [gəhajsən]	be called
<i>schreiben</i> [ʃrajbən]	<i>schrieb</i> [ʃri:p]	<i>geschrieben</i> [gəʃri:bən]	write
<i>reißen</i> [rajsən]	<i>riss</i> [ris]	<i>gerissen</i> [gərisən]	tear/be torn ¹³

These differences in form can hardly be attributed to language contact simply because they are not found in other Germanic languages. In a similar way in Plateau, certain trends observable in most if not all languages and – at least in my view – already present at times of the proto language have created a synchronic chaos. I shall present some of these trends common to the Plateau group in the next chapter. Rather than writing a history of the languages it seems, at our present

¹² Examples with high frequency of occurrence are *liegen – legen* ‘lie down – lay’; *sitzen – setzen* ‘sit – set’. A number of verbs is homophonous in the infinitive but the finite forms differ: *löschen/erlöschen* ‘extinguish (tr./itr.)’; *erschrecken* ‘terrify – be terrified (tr./itr.)’; *hängen* ‘hang (tr./itr.)’; *senden* ‘send – broadcast’.

¹³ Other examples of this kind are *leiden* ‘suffer’, *beißen* ‘bite’, *scheißen* ‘(vulgar) defecate’.

state of knowledge, it is only possible to write the history of single verb stems, and to disentangle the processes that have worked upon the forms of the proto language to produce the forms of the present-day idioms.

3.1 Morphophonemics

A number of morphophonemic changes affect the formation of pluractional verbs and gear the languages towards pluractional heterogeneity. To give some examples:

3.1.1 Dissimilation

In Birom the sequence CVsVs does not occur in extended verb forms. Instead pluractional forms which are expected to have this structure turn up in the shape CVrVs (Bouquiaux 1971: 211) attesting to a dissimilation of $s > r$ thus giving the false/erroneous impression that an infix *-r-* marks pluractionality.¹⁴

Table 12. Dissimilation of the sequence *s-V-s* to *r-V-s* in Birom

Gloss	Base / SG	Underlying f.	Extended f. / PL	Proto form
carry	<i>tos</i>	* <i>tosos</i>	<i>toros</i>	—
cut	<i>kas</i>	* <i>kasas</i>	<i>karas</i>	—
divide	<i>gas</i>	* <i>gasas</i>	<i>garas</i>	*GAP
sow	<i>tus</i>	* <i>tusus</i>	<i>turus</i>	*TUS
vomit	<i>hɔs</i>	* <i>hɔsɔs</i>	<i>hɔrɔs</i>	*KWAT

3.1.2 Assimilation + Dissimilation

In Zarek final *k* in extended forms changes to *ŋ* in case the root-final consonant is a nasal. One such form is also observed in Birom, see (5). In a second step, the first nasal in the sequence of two nasals is dissimilated to *-r-*,¹⁵ s. Gerhardt (1984: 15). This makes N look like a pluractional marker, although it is an allomorph of final *-k*, e.g.:

¹⁴ Changes like this one account for the very high frequency of medial *-r-* in Birom, which with 24,6 %, according to Bouquiaux (1970: 91), is the most frequent sound in intervocalic position.

¹⁵ There are a few isolated forms in Zarek that have not undergone this dissimilation. The verbal noun of *mɛn* is *ku-mɛnɛŋ*, thus preserving the more archaic form.

Table 13. Nasal harmony + dissimilation in Zarek

Gloss	Base	Underlying f.	Plural
rest	<i>fán</i>	* <i>fanak</i>	<i>fáráŋ</i>
rub	<i>kón</i>	* <i>kónək</i>	<i>kóróŋ</i>
lie down	<i>mən</i>	* <i>mənək</i>	<i>mərəŋ</i>

For the first-mentioned verb the following steps have to be set up to account for the extended form:

- a. Suffixation of *k* *fán-ək*
- b. Nasal assimilation of suffixed *k* *fán-əŋ*
- c. Dissimilation of nasal in medial position *fár-əŋ*

3.2 Generalization

The simplest and most effective strategy – according to the data presented by Nettle (1998: 36) – is followed by Fyem, the only Southern Plateau language for which pluractional forms are known. In this language all verbs take the extensional element *-s*.¹⁶ According to Wilson (2004), Che has followed a similar path insofar as all verbs select one of two allomorphs. Their distribution is conditioned by the phonological environment: vowel final vs. consonant final stems. Interestingly the two allomorphs have the shape *-s* and *-k*, respectively.¹⁷

3.3 Phonotactics

Another source of complexities are language-specific phonotactic rules. The consequence of their application is that under the surface form of a consonant other sounds might be ‘hidden’. Looking at those forms in Zarek that explicitly are marked as pluractional we find the following constraints.

¹⁶ “Each verb in Fyem has a derived, second stem which has a habitual meaning. The habitual stem is derived by adding *-s*. Where the verb ends in a consonant, a vowel is inserted. The vowel is either *i* or *u*, with the choice determined by vowel harmony.” (Nettle 1998: 36)

¹⁷ It has to be noted that the only three verbs of Che with a pluractional form contained in Hoffmann 1976 are vowel-final, so that the second allomorph is not required in his data.

- a) Only *r* and *s*¹⁸ and (exceptionally) *m* are found in medial position.
- b) If *r* occurs medially, only *s*, *k* and *ŋ* appear in final position. If *s* occurs finally, for all recorded forms there exist singular forms of the shape CVCVk that means: Vs has replaced another extension Vk.¹⁹
- c) The shape CV₁sV₁p occurs exclusively in pluractional forms.
- d) There is no pluractional form with a *p* in position C₂.

Other constraints not limited to pluractional forms are:

- e) If *s* occurs medially no alveolars are admitted in final position.
- f) If *n* or *m* occur medially only *ŋ* can occur in the position of C₃.
- g) If labial sounds (*p/m*) appear as C₃, only *s* or *r* can appear as C₂.

One might ask: What has happened to medial velars and labials (see a) and g))? They occur in CVC-verbs and should be retained medially if something is suffixed. Why is the sequence C₂ [+velar] + C₃ [+velar] not allowed (see b))?

In the other languages of the Central group the inventory of sounds in intervocalic position is severely restricted; only *r* and *y* are observed in Kagoro.

In Birom, too, there are phonotactic constraints that are exhaustively described in Bouquiaux (1970: 88–100, 208ff): *r* does not occur in final position, although nearly 25% of all intervocalic consonants are *r*. An explanation to account for this peculiarity given by Bouquiaux is that glides (*w* and *y*) occurring in root-final position become *r* in extended verb forms, e.g. *haw* PL: *hɔrɔs* ‘farm’; *sey* PL: *sɛrɛs* ‘buy, receive’; or *kwey* PL: *kwɛrɛs* ‘run’.²⁰

The sequence of consonants in intervocalic position is severely restricted; *t* + *s* and *s* + *s* are reduced to *s*, e.g.

¹⁸ If C1 is alveo-palatal *s* in medial or final position is changed to *f*.

¹⁹ There is a group of nine singular forms of the shape CVsVk, where -Vk is dropped in the pluractional form, see examples under (3). Comparative evidence, however, shows that the -s is part of the verb root.

²⁰ Details of the vowel alternation are given in Bouquiaux (1970: 211).

Table 14. Reduction of CC to simple C in Birom

Gloss	Base	Plural	Underlying form	Proto form
learn	/mata/[mara]	masa	*matsa	*MAT
bury	/lète/[lère]	lèse	lètse	*LYAT
threaten	/sità/[sira]	sisa	sitsa	—
turn	sùsu	sùsa	*sussa	—

Finally, metathesis occurs and gives the impression that infixes instead of suffixes occur.

Table 15. Metathesis: CVs > sVl in Aten

Gloss	Base	Extended form	Underlying	Proto form
lie down	laàl	laasêl	laales	*DAD
open	φaâl	φáásèl	φaales	—
buy	sàÿ	sasèl	sayes	*SIAN
finish	taày	taasèÿ	taayes	—

3.4 Sound changes

Attention has to be paid to historical changes and their implications. The most spectacular one has affected Proto-Plateau PP *S which in final position has changed to the palatal semi-vowel in the Katab cluster and in Jju. This change sets apart these languages from the rest of Central Plateau.

‘sell’	ZAREK	rep, rées	KAGORO	lyap, lyay	*DYAP
‘put’	ZAREK	sák, sáás	JJU	sak, saay	*SAK
‘kill’	CHORI	fer, fés	JJU	hɣat, hɣaay ²¹	*PYAT
	ZAREK	fer, ²² fés	KAGORO	çat, çay	
‘four’	CHE	-nas	KAGORO	-nay	*NAS
	BIROM	-nas			
	ZAREK	naas			
‘new’	BIROM	-pas	ATAKAR	-fay	*PAS
	ZAREK	-fas			

²¹ I use the digraph *hɣ* to symbolize a voiceless labial-palatal approximant ç^w or x^{wy} would probably be a more adequate transcription.

²² Word-final *r* in Zarek corresponds regularly to PP *T.

As has been shown in 2.1.1 and 2.2, *S can appear as a suffix as well as an infix.²³ In the latter case two things can happen. Either *-S- changes to -y-, e.g. in Kagoro where we find the following forms,

Table 17. *-S- as infix in Kagoro

KAGORO	<i>çap, çiyap</i>	blow	*PYAP
	<i>tyap, tiyap</i>	cut	*TYAP
	<i>nat, niyat</i>	go	*NAT
	<i>bat, biyat</i>	catch	—
	<i>tat, tiyat</i>	thatch	—

or the root-initial consonant gets fortis articulation,²⁴ as in Jju.

Table 18. *-S- in Jju

JJU	<i>rop, dzzop</i>	tie up	*DWAP
	<i>ryap, dzzap</i>	sell	*DYAP ²⁵
	<i>tup, tssup</i>	plant	*TUP
	<i>top, tssóp</i>	sting	*TOP (stab)

3.5 Lenition

Lenition of medial consonants is observed in nearly all languages of Central Plateau and Birom. In Plateau languages progressive or increasing lenition is a historical process that in the long run leads to the differentiation between additive and replacive *S. The process starts with the lenition and/or spirantization of the root final consonant that gets into intervocalic position by the suffixation of -Vs. This becomes apparent in Bouquiaux' and Lukas' transcription of pluractional forms in Birom, where Lukas writes (in a narrower transcription) *lɔgɔs* or *lɔyɔs* while Bouquiaux, in a phonemic transcription, gives *lɔkɔs*, for there is no contrast of voice in medial and final obstru-

²³ Detailed arguments will be brought forward in 3.5 for the genesis of the forms in Kagoro, Jju and Zarek.

²⁴ The loss of *I, either syllabic or not, is made up for by the emergence of fortis consonants. This is known also from other sub-systems of idioms in the Katab dialect-cluster, e.g. in cases where a nominal prefix *i-/*í- of the proto language merges with the initial consonant of the stem resulting in a fortis consonant. This development presupposes the change from *S to *I/Y. Some examples are given in Gerhardt (1980: 210).

²⁵ For a different development of this PP root in other languages see under (16).

ents. The process of lenition can be carried on further and lead to the loss of the consonant in intervocalic position. In Birom there is one verb which shows alternant forms indicative of this process: pluractional forms of *tset* ‘cut’ are *tseres* and *tsees* which alternate freely. The same process, however without documentation of the intermediate steps, occurs in Zarek and the Katab dialect-cluster. Finally, in languages such as Katab and Kagoro the length of the vowel has been reduced with the consequence that -s appears as a substitute for the root-final consonant.

$$*CVC + Vs \rightarrow CVC + Vs \rightarrow CVVs \rightarrow CVs$$

↓
[+ voice (+ cont)]

This process is one of the major causes of pluractional complexity because it can lead to homophonous forms. Imagine a set of verbs such as *tap*, *tat*, *tak*, *tam*, *tan*, *taŋ*, *tas*. In Zarek all of them could come up as *tas* in their pluractional form. To solve the problem of ambiguity (s. Gerhardt 1984: 16) languages have employed different strategies. For Zarek – because of sufficient data – it is possible to demonstrate some of these strategies in (19):

Table 19. Disambiguation strategies in Zarek

Difference in	SG, PL		SG, PL	
a) vowel length:	<i>rɛp</i> , <i>rɛɛs</i>	vs.	<i>rɛɛr</i> , <i>rɛs</i>	sell/lick
b) tone:	<i>nòòk</i> , <i>nóóś</i>	vs.	<i>nó</i> , <i>nóóś</i>	build/enter
c) verb extensions:	<i>tarak</i> , <i>táràs</i>	vs.	<i>tar</i> , <i>tásák</i>	spread to dry/ jump

However, criteria according to which these strategies are chosen are not clear. In fact, which strategy is chosen for a particular verb differs from language to language (s. Appendix I).

3.6. Phonological loss

The eventual loss of medial consonants has been mentioned before, but vowels may be dropped as well. In case the medial consonant of a word is *r/l* in Kagoro the vowel of the first syllable has changed to an underspecified high/mid vowel in the first syllable. In Jju this vowel has been dropped completely. As a consequence one gets forms such as (see (5) for similar forms):

Table 20. Vowel loss

‘jump, fly’	ZAREK <i>furuk</i>		JJU <i>hwruk</i>
‘pay’	BIROM <i>talá</i>	KAGORO <i>táránj</i>	JJU <i>tránj</i>

3.7 Optimal forms

In Plateau languages only few pluractional forms are found that consist of three syllables. Exceptions are Che and Aten where CVCVCV-structures can be observed. This constraint holds true not only for the extended verbs but for the rest of the vocabulary as well.²⁶ This fact suggests a concept that could help to solve some of the problems raised by plural verb formation in Plateau: apparently, in these languages there is something like a maximal or optimal length for stems. Words that are longer than CVC/sVC/s²⁷ are truncated to fit this shape. The process of building optimal forms seems to consist in piling up phonological features of several extensional elements on the final consonant of a verb stem. The conservation of phonological properties achieved in this way helps to avoid ambiguous forms. The manifold phonotactical constraints that can be observed support this hypothesis.

Examples will be taken from Zarek because data in this language are more transparent than in the rest of the group. Let us consider two verbs with labial final consonant. The verb ‘divide’ *kábák*, *kásàp*²⁸ goes back to PP *KAP (in Zarek the original form is preserved in the verbal noun *ku-kap*) and finally to PBC *-GAB-. On the surface we have an infix *s* in the plural. But it seems more revealing to set up as input a sequence of two extensions *kap-as-ak* to derive the pluractional form. This would lead to a form of three syllables, therefore some kind of apocope has to be performed to arrive at the optimal form. In a first step this leads to deletion of the stem-final *p*, and at the same time to a transfer of the labial articulation to the final consonant. The same process could be set up in deriving the plurac-

²⁶ This refers to the complete data of Zarek in Lukas & Willms, the first 100 pages of Bouquiaux’ Dictionary of Birom (2002) and my data on Kagoro, Jju and Atakar. All exceptions to this rule are ideophones.

²⁷ Words of the structure CVCsVC (*tomsal*) are found only in Birom; words consisting of CVCCV (*bante/tulsa*) occur in Birom and Aten. Otherwise CVCVC is the structure of maximal length.

²⁸ The verbs *fábák* ‘fold’, *fébék* ‘blow’, *fúbúk* ‘sip’, *kóbók* ‘borrow’, *kúbúk* ‘open’, *nabak* ‘stretch/lift up’ and *túbúk* ‘pierce’ form their pluractional in an identical way.

tional form of *fásàm* ‘close’ from a simple verb *fám* by setting up an underlying form *fam-as-ak*,²⁹ with the additional step of transferring the nasal articulation of the root-final consonant to the second extension. Verbs with a final alveolar sound behave in a similar way with the difference that the articulatory features of the alveolar are not transferred to the extension. Starting with a PP verb such as ‘bury’ *ner*, *nésék* – reflex of a PP-root *LYAT – or ‘buy, receive’ *fan*, *fafan* – reflex of a PP-root *SIAN – something like the following processes must be set up:³⁰

Suffixation	V-assimilation/ C-modification	Feature transfer Nasal assimilation	Surface form
<i>lyát-as-ak</i>	> <i>lét-és-ék</i>	> <i>né(t)-és-ék</i> ³¹	> <i>nésék</i>
<i>sian-as-ak</i>	> <i>fan-as-ak</i>	> <i>fa(n)-af-an</i>	> <i>fafan</i>
cf. <i>káb-ák</i>	> <i>kap-as-ak</i>	> <i>ka(p)-as-ap</i>	> <i>kásâp</i>
<i>fam-as-ak</i>	> <i>fam-as-ak</i>	> <i>fa(m)-as-am</i>	> <i>fásàm</i>

4 Extensions irretraceable to widespread formatives

Up to now only those pluractional verbs have been treated that make use of elements found in most if not all subgroups of Plateau. However, in all languages there are formation types that are represented in one language only³² that therefore must be regarded as innovations of the language in question. In most cases the actual number of verbs that appear in these subtypes is quite insignificant. The number of the different subtypes, however, is not at all insignificant. In addition, most of these verbs are not etymologically related to verbs in the other languages. This seems to argue against language contact as being responsible for these phenomena. In some cases, an explanation already mentioned by Bouquiaux is reasonable: stem final consonants which have been lost in the simple forms are preserved in the extended forms. I shall quote examples from the individual languages without further comment.

²⁹ *tómòŋ* ‘push’ and *rímúŋ* derive their pluractional in the same way, except that the singular of these verbs is extended: **rim-ik*, **tom-ok*.

³⁰ Verbs with velar finals (*k*, *ŋ*) in my corpus do not take double extensions.

³¹ In Zaric, Proto-Plateau PP *L has become *N.

³² or a group of very closely related speech-forms.

Table 21. Idiosyncratic developments in individual languages

BIROM	<i>tùlù</i>	<i>tugus</i>	cause to come out
	<i>mɔɔ</i>	<i>mɔ̀b̀ɔ̀s</i>	kill, break
	<i>rá</i>	<i>rágas</i>	do, touch
	<i>ta</i>	<i>tabas</i>	reach, hew, mix
	<i>gyílì</i>	<i>gyílsit</i>	jump
	<i>hànta</i>	<i>hàmo</i>	tear (old material)
	<i>lùmlà</i>	<i>lulum</i>	rumble, roar, sound distant thunder
		<i>nyít</i>	<i>nyìgit</i>
ZAREK	<i>ɲaar</i>	<i>ɲa</i>	uproot
	<i>fírìk</i>	<i>fí</i>	squeeze, milk, wring
	<i>whûr</i>	<i>whí</i>	remove from, pull out
	<i>cáràk</i>	<i>cá</i>	hit, pound, stamp

I would like to conclude with a hypothetical form to demonstrate how the operation of processes described so far can result in quite different pluractional forms in Plateau languages:

Let us postulate a verb root PP *TAS with the supposed meaning “form a pluractional verb in Plateau languages”.³³

The appropriate form in Birom would be:

BIROM **tas*, *tas-as* > *tas*, *taras* (s-Dissimilation);

Zarek would mark the non-pluractional form with the result

ZAREK **tas-ak*, *tas* > *tasak*, *tas* (marker *K for singular action);

Kagoro would de-pluralize the -s final stem and otherwise display the regularly corresponding form:

KAGORO **tasak*, *tas* > *tiyak*, *tay* (sound shift *s to y);

In Jju -s-infixation would result in a fortis consonant:

³³ I gratefully acknowledge Russ Schuh’s idea of inventing an artificial form as a pedagogical device which he used in a paper prepared for a Hausa language course which without further references was circulated in mimeographed form in the Hamburg Institute some decades ago. There he used an invented verb with the meaning “to form the different grades of a Hausa verb” to demonstrate how the derivational system of Hausa works.

JJU **tasak, tas* > *ttsak, tay* (loss of internal *s* of the non-plural stem and formation of a fortis consonant);

Chori would follow another avenue:

CHORI **tas, tas-sa* > *tas, taza* (reduction of two alveolar sounds, voicing of intervocalic consonants);

Fyem finally would use the generalized form as indicated in 3.2..

FYEM **tas, tas-is* > *tas, tasis* (application of a generalized pattern).

Examples of real verbs and their pluractional form are shown in Appendix I.

5 Language contact vs. internal processes

In his papers on Izere and Berom verbal plurals Blench cites a series of forms which he claims go back to language contact. “Berom and Izere fall into very different subgroups of Plateau and such similarities do not arise from analogous morphological processes.”³⁴ In this paragraph I shall discuss some of the data quoted from these articles in the light of the comparative data presented in the present paper.

Table 22. Comparative data from Birom and Zarek according to Blench

BIROM		ZAREK (= IZERE)	
a. <i>vó, vós</i>	catch, fetch, harvest	<i>bó, bós</i>	fetch
b. <i>ku, kufu</i>	die, faint	<i>kú, kús</i>	die
c. <i>tɛ, tɛsɛ</i>	put	<i>té, tés</i>	dress up, fit; wear, give birth
d. <i>wùl, wùlus</i>	reach, arrive	<i>wúruk, wurus</i>	come out, go out
e. <i>gaŋ, gaŋas</i>		<i>gaŋ, gáás</i>	push
f. <i>kaŋ, kaŋas</i>	separate (two people)	<i>kam, káás</i>	separate out (fighters, animals), differen- tiate, disperse

³⁴ Blench (2001b: 19)

<i>g. lək, ləgəs</i>		<i>nək, nós</i>	build
<i>h. wók, wógos</i>	hear, feel	<i>fók, fòds</i>	hear; experience sth.
<i>i. lere, lese</i>	bury	<i>ner, nesek</i>	bury, hide (object)
<i>j. nára, nása</i>	stretch out, extend	<i>nár, násàk</i>	surpass; become; spend (time); put
<i>k. bárák,</i>	throw	<i>bárák,</i>	throw aimlessly
<i>básák</i>	(e.g. stones)	<i>bárás</i>	

The verbs quoted in Blench's paper have been regrouped according to the formation of the pluractional form:

a – c

As shown under (1) these CV-verbs simply add *s* or in some cases *s* + *V* to the stem to form their plural stem. Birom is the only language in the set that, in one exceptional case, adds *f* instead of *s*. In Zarek *f* may be used as a pluractional element under well-specified conditions: C1 has to be an alveo-palatal. But this environment is not found in the Birom case. The *f* is unique, the pluractional form of this verb therefore cannot be the result of language contact to Zarek/Izere.

d – h

These verbs have the structure CVC in Birom. They make use of the suffix *s* together with a copy of the stem vowel. This type of formation is by far the most frequent and regular type not only in Birom but in all languages in the corpus. In Zarek/Izere only *wuruk*, *wurus* employs a different type: the non-pluractional form is marked by a *Vk* suffix which is replaced in the pluractional form by *Vs*. This is one of the types frequently used with verbs that end in an alveolar sound.³⁵ In all other cases Zarek stem-final consonants have been dropped in intervocalic position, a process described in 3.5.

i – j

Under 3.3 it has been demonstrated that the sequence *rs* does not occur in Birom, *r* seems to have been lost after total assimilation and the shortening of the sequence *ss* to *s*.³⁶ In Zarek double suffixation with subsequent adjustment has occurred (2.2.).

³⁵ If the stem ends in *n* the regular nasal assimilation described in 3.1.2 takes place.

³⁶ However *ls*, *ns*, *bs*, *gs* are possible in Birom and, in fact, occur frequently.

k

In this case the suffix *-k* has to be set up for Birom (*bárák*) and subsequently *-s-* has been infix. The sequence *rs* (see preceding paragraph) has been shortened. The verb in Zarek follows the formation type that was observed under *d*.

In spite of the surface similarity of the verb forms, in all cases cited by Blench language-internal processes, in some cases with phonologically defined groups of verbs, can be made responsible for the specific pluractional forms. This seems to be an explanation preferable to language contact.

6 Conclusion

The preceding paragraphs were intended to provide evidence that the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria have in common a stock of verbal derivational elements which must be considered part of the proto language³⁷ from which the present day speech forms have sprung. However, effects of language-internal developments – all wide-spread and natural in other language families of the world – have produced an extremely complex situation in which the relations between modern surface forms of different languages are not transparent anymore. The use of traditional comparative procedures such as detailed comparison and internal reconstruction can help to shed at least some light on the fascinating if complicated features of this still highly neglected language group.

Appendix I – Comparative pluractional morphology

In the following Appendix the formation of pluractional forms in different Plateau-languages will be compared for individual verbs to exemplify some of the hypotheses presented in this paper.³⁸

³⁷ Whether there has been something like Proto-Plateau is a question that seems to have been answered by some authors in the negative. The answer to this question, however, is not crucial to the argument. If the sub-branches of what is classified as Plateau should prove to be coordinated subgroups of a higher unit, the deverbal elements would belong to the inventory of this higher unit.

³⁸ In the following tables alternative forms are separated by ‘/’: (*báràŋ/báàŋ*); singular and pluractional forms are separated by a comma ‘,’: (*ban, beaŋ*). Only one form is given, when no special pluractional form could be elicited or when the

Table 23. ‘add’ in Central Plateau

Gloss	PP (C)	Zarek	Jju	Kagoro	Katab	Atakar
add	*BAN	<i>báràŋ/ báàŋ, báràs</i>	<i>brájŋ</i>	<i>[beaŋ] = /biyaŋ/</i>	<i>ban, beaŋ</i>	<i>beaŋ</i>

The unextended Katab form justifies the setting up of PP *BAN as basic form for Central Plateau. The proposal for the language-specific developments is as follows:

In Zarek the singular is extended by the singulative suffix *-k*. Through nasal assimilation *k* becomes *ŋ*; *n* which has been shifted to intervocalic position is denasalized. In the plural **k* is replaced by **s* (for a form with non-nasal final consonant see (4) and 3.1.2).

In Katab the PP-form is retained in the simplex form. For the plural – which in Kagoro and Atakar is the only form that is attested – multiple affixation has to be postulated. Final *ŋ* points to **k* as suffix in combination with nasal stem-final consonant (s. under Zarek), the internal vocalism goes back to a regular sound shift involving the infix *s*, s. (17).

A development along the following lines can be postulated:

**ban-s-k* → *basan-ak* → *basaŋ* → *bayaŋ* → *biyaŋ/beaŋ*.

In Jju, after the processes described for Zarek have taken place, a further development has led to a loss of the vowel between C1 and C2:

baraŋ → *bəraŋ* → *braŋ*.

Table 24. ‘ask’ in Northwest and Central Plateau

Gloss	PP	Zarek	Jju	Kagoro	Katab	Atakar	Gyong
ask	PP (NW + C): *DIP	<i>ríp, rísìm</i>	<i>dzzim</i>	<i>lyip, lyirəm</i>	<i>lyip, lyirəm</i>	<i>lip</i>	<i>liptsa</i>

The most straightforward form is found in Gyong, where the variant of **S*, typical of that language, is suffixed. However, no simplex form could be elicited. The Central Group as a whole shows the irregularity that the final consonant is nasal although a labial plosive was set up as a proto-sound. The Zarek and Jju forms correspond in a regular way. Kagoro and Katab display the infix *r* in the pluractional.

informants were sure that such a form did not exist. It was not possible to clarify whether the individual forms have singular or pluractional function.

Table 25. ‘to blow’ in Central Plateau

Gloss	PP (C)	Zarek	Jju	Kagoro	Katab	Atakar
blow (instr.)	*TYAP	<i>tép, tésép</i>	<i>tyáp, tyák</i>	<i>tyap, tiyap</i>	<i>tyap</i>	<i>tyap</i>

In Zarek affixation of *s* as well as *k* has to be set up (see 3.7). The resulting form exceeds the optimal length and has been shortened to CVCVC. The articulatory features of the root-final consonant and the second extension, i.e. plosive and labial, have been heaped upon the final consonant. The Kagoro form corresponds regularly to what is found in Zarek. V1 has been assimilated to the palatal glide. Jju replaces final *p* by *k* which here has a clear pluractional function.

Table 26. ‘borrow’ in Beromic an Central Plateau

Gloss	PP	Birom	Zarek	Kagoro	Katab	Atakar
borrow	PP *KOP	<i>hwóp, hwóbɔs</i>	<i>kɔbɔk, kɔsɔp</i>	<i>kwap</i>	<i>kwáp</i>	<i>xwáp</i>

In Birom we find a straightforward suffixation of Vs with lenition of C2 in intervocalic position. The form in Atakar points to an infix *s*, which is needed to account for *x*, the fortis articulation of *k*.

Table 27. ‘break’ in Central, Northwest and Southwest Plateau

Gloss	PP	Zarek	Kagoro	Katab	Atakar	Chori	Gyong
break	C: BUT NW: BUN	<i>búr, búsúŋ</i>	<i>bvut, bvuy</i>	<i>but</i>	<i>but</i>	<i>bun, bunya</i>	<i>bún</i>
		Nindem	Ning- kyop	Ninzam	Mada (N)	Mada (W)	Che
	SW: MUN	<i>mun, mus</i>	<i>mun</i>	<i>mur</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>mir</i>	<i>mú, múrúsú</i>

The three reconstructions are clearly related. The pluractional in Zarek points to PP (C) *BUN, which is justified by no other language in the Central group. In PP (SW) final *r* is a regular reflex of *n* in Ninzam and Mada West. The Kagoro form (with fortis C1) and final *y* is exceptional because two *s*-affixes in one form seem to be involved, one causing the final *y*, the other the fortis consonant. The loss of the final consonant in the simplex form of Che is not explainable.

Table 28. ‘build’ in Beromic and Central Plateau

Gloss	PP	Birom	Zarek	Jju	Kagoro	Katab
build	*LOK	<i>lók, lógós</i>	<i>nók, nós</i>	<i>nók</i>	<i>nók</i>	<i>nók</i>
	NW	Chori	Gyong	Hyam	Koro	
		<i>nok, nogza</i>	<i>nók</i>	<i>nok</i>	<i>ndogo</i>	
	SW	Nindem	Ningkyop	Ninzam	Mada (N)	Mada (W)
		<i>lók</i>	<i>rók</i>	<i>rú</i>	<i>ló</i>	<i>ló</i>

All extended forms follow the same pattern, i.e. -s is suffixed with the usual consequences. The root *LOK is quite widespread in Plateau. *L and *N have merged in the Central Branch. (s. ‘bury’ in (9), (14) und (22)).

Table 29. ‘buy’ in Beromic and Central Plateau

Gloss	PP	Birom	Zarek	Jju	Kagoro	Katab	Atakar
buy	*SIAN	<i>sey, se(r)es</i>	<i>fán, fáj/ fájāŋ</i>	<i>san, ssaŋ</i>	<i>san, say</i>	<i>san</i>	<i>sáán</i>
		Aten					
		<i>sày, sasèl</i>					

There are only three verb stems in Birom that end in *y*. All form their pluractional in different ways (see example for ‘come’). The Aten form is the result of metathesis of the stem final sound and the suffixed *s*, because *y* does not occur in any verb form in word-medial position. The change from final *y* to *l* is probably due to analogy, because -*vl* is a sequence in final position. Final *f* in Zarek is due to an assimilation that affects final *s* if C1 is an alveo-palatal sound. (In Zarek the local name of Jos is *zwaf*.) The Zarek alternative forms go back to **sianas* and *sian-as-ak*, respectively. In Jju the -*s*- has given way to a fortis consonant. The Kagoro form corresponds regularly to the first extended form in Zarek.

Table 30. ‘come’ in Biromic, Central and South-West Plateau

Gloss	B	Birom				
come	*BA	<i>vey, vèsè</i>				

	C	Zarek	Jju	Kagoro	Katab	Atakar
		<i>bé, bés</i>	<i>ba, bay</i>	<i>bay</i>	<i>beaŋ</i>	<i>bi</i>
	NW	Gyong	Hyam	Koro	Dūya	
		<i>ba</i>	<i>ba/bɔ</i>	<i>bá</i>	<i>bá</i>	

With the exception of Katab all languages make use of the extensional element *s(-)*. The vocalism in Katab points to an infix *s* plus a nasal extensional element. Final *i* in Atakar is the regular correspondence of PP *A in open syllables.³⁹ There is no other verb in Birom that forms its pluractional in a parallel way, i.e. by replacing *y* by *sV*. The languages of the North-Eastern branch display no pluractionals for this verb.

Table 31. ‘eat’ in Central Plateau

Gloss	PP-2A	Zarek	Kagoro	Jju	Katab	Atakar
eat	*GA	<i>ya, yas</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ya, dzza</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>yi</i>

The pluractional marking in Jju is remarkable because the fortis consonant points to *S as extension. However, if *S is suffixed to an open syllable it should become final *y* instead of a fortis consonant.

Table 32. ‘fall’ in Beromic, Central and North-West Plateau

Gloss	PP	Zarek	Kagoro	Jju	Katab	Atakar
fall	(C + B) *KUA	<i>kpa, kpas</i>	<i>kwa</i>	<i>kpa</i>	<i>kwa, kway</i>	<i>kwi</i>
		Birom	Aten			
		<i>ga, gabas</i>	<i>hò, hòyèsè</i>			
		Gyong	Koro			
	(NW) *GWA	<i>gbá</i>	<i>gbá, gbésà</i>			

The verb ‘fall’ displays suffixation of *s*. A special case, however, are the Beromic languages, where *-b-* or *-y-*, respectively, are added to the stem. These sounds are not justified etymologically.

³⁹ For this correspondence see Gerhardt (1983: 61f) where 15 cases are quoted.

Appendix II – Aten verbal extensions

In this Appendix I present the verbal extensions of Aten in the same fashion and using the same paragraph numbers as in the main part of the article.

1. Introduction

Roger Blench, whose data (Blench 2003, 2004) form the base of the present appendix, notes that in Aten, the extended verbs have a continuous meaning. This puts Aten at the one end of the chain of semantic functions, mentioned in the introductory paragraph of this paper. He writes: “In Iten, not all the verbs have the perfect and continuous form. This form is achieved in four different ways in some verbs as follows: [...]”

1. Extension of the vowel [...]
2. Addition to the root [...]
3. The change of the last consonants [...]
4. Shortening the word [...]” (Blench 2003: 4f)

This seems to be a gross understatement in face of the complexities provided by the extensional system of Aten. The four processes mentioned by Blench are represented, but they manifest themselves in quite different and sometimes in idiosyncratic ways.

My intention is to show how Aten conforms to the Central Nigerian patterns as well as where it has developed independently. I shall use the term “extended” for the continuous that corresponds to “pluractional” in most of the other languages, although the continuous in some cases is not extended, rather the non-continuous form is marked by some extensional element. The two sources of Blench contain some forms that are at variance. These variations concern:

Vowel quality, e.g.:

ϕweel, *ϕep* ‘blow (mouth, wind)’; alternatively: *ϕeel*, *ϕep*;

Vowel length, e.g.:

taày, *taasèy* ‘jump’; alternatively: *tay*, *tasey*;

Vowel elision, e.g.:

kyive, *kyivese* ‘stumble, knock against sth.’, alternatively:

kyive, *kyibse* ‘stumble or hit one’s leg’

Vowel variation, e.g.:

kyinak, *kyinasak* ‘stand’; alternatively: *kyìnák*, *kyìnìsák*

2.1.1 S as pluractional marker

In its simplest form this marker occurs as a suffix added to vowel-final stems, and in form of -Vs with consonant-final stems. Without exception V_2 is a copy of V_1 . (In a few cases vowel lengthening occurs.) This is by far the most frequent formation type (59 out of 187 cases).

(II-1) -(V)s as marker for the habitual

<i>ku</i>	<i>kus</i>	die
<i>sɔ</i>	<i>sɔs</i>	drink
<i>kɔp</i>	<i>kɔvɔs</i>	borrow
<i>sit</i>	<i>siris</i>	pour
<i>φok</i>	<i>φoyɔs</i>	hear, feel
<i>bok</i>	<i>bowɔs</i>	have

Voiceless final obstruents are replaced (as is normal in Plateau) by the respective voiced fricatives in medial position; *k* is replaced by *ɣ* or *w*. There are no verbs with stem-final long vowel in the simplex form in this group.

Similar to Birom, some verbs form their extended form by adding *sV*. This type is found in 15 forms. If verbs have the structure CVV in the non-extended form, this is the regular way to form continuous stems. In 10 verbs the final vowel of the extended form is *-e*, a copy vowel in the rest. Four verbs in this set have *e* as stem vowel so that the copy vowel cannot be distinguished from a special formative. Three out of four verbs ending in VV reduce vowel length.

(II-2) -sV as marker for the continuous

<i>cwaa</i>	<i>cwase</i>	throw a spear
<i>kyi</i>	<i>kyisi</i>	return
<i>rɛè</i>	<i>rɛɛsè</i>	burn
<i>see</i>	<i>sese</i>	transplant esp. tree etc.
<i>woo</i>	<i>wose</i>	burn
<i>gava</i>	<i>gavasa</i>	have an accident
<i>φɔwɔ</i>	<i>φɔwɔso</i> ⁴⁰	taste
<i>rèné</i>	<i>rènesé</i>	sink
<i>sème</i>	<i>sèmesé</i>	wake up

Although there are 7 *l*-final verbs that add Vs to the simple stem for forming the continuous, there are 8 such verbs in which there seems to occur metathesis of the stem-final consonant with *s*.

40 The change of quality in the final vowel is exceptional.

(II-3) metathesis: *IVs* → *sVI*

<i>bèl</i>	<i>bésèl</i>	be cooked
<i>laàl</i>	<i>laasèl</i>	sleep, lie down
<i>φáâl</i>	<i>φáásèl</i>	open
<i>taàl</i>	<i>taasèl</i>	finish
<i>waal</i>	<i>waasèl</i>	dry

If verbs have a long vowel in their simplex form, the long vowel is also found in the extended form.⁴¹

The only two CV(V)C-verbs with *y* as final consonant in the simple stem show up in the *S-group. They have in common medial *s* resulting from metathesis, but they differ in that the expected final *y* in *sasèl* has been changed to *l* which is by far more frequent in this position than *y*.

(II-4) *y*-final verbs

<i>sày</i>	<i>sasèl</i>	buy
<i>tày</i>	<i>taasèy</i>	jump

The last larger group of verbs to be treated under the heading of *s* as extension consists of 8 verb stems that – without exception – end in a velar consonant in the habitual containing an infix *s* as continuous marker. It is remarkable, though not explainable, that half of the verbs in this group do not display the usual copy-vowel in the extension.

(II-5) *s*-infix in verbs with velar-final verbs

<i>cwáàk</i>	<i>cwásèk</i>	put
<i>kóóŋ</i>	<i>kóóséŋ</i>	stop doing sth., cease, desist
<i>tèk</i>	<i>tèsék</i>	leave, go away
<i>yaarŋ</i>	<i>yasèŋ</i>	see, look
<i>kyìnák</i>	<i>kyìnísák</i>	stand
<i>tuvak</i>	<i>tuvasàk</i>	join a broken rope together
<i>murak</i>	<i>musak</i>	make fire
<i>tɔk</i>	<i>tɔsèk</i>	carry

Other verbs, which replace an extensional element in the non-continuous form with some form of *-s* are treated under 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 of this Appendix.

⁴¹ Exceptions are some CVV verbs where the long vowel is shortened in the extended form, s. (II-2).

The remaining cases in which the element *-s* is found come up in numerically very small groups only. I give the complete list. In most cases there are no etymologically related forms in other languages. Some minor sets, however, can be identified, e.g. CVC-Verbs that end in *s* in the continuous form. It seems remarkable that verbs displaying a root-final *s* form a subgroup of their own in other languages, such as Zarek and Birom. In Zarek this stem-final *s* is taken as a pluractional marker, consequently these verbs are “de-pluralized”, using the extension *-k*. This seems to be the case in Aten as well.

(II-6) CVC-verbs with final *s* in the continuous

non-CONT	CONT	
<i>harase</i>	<i>has</i>	scrape out (as sand from)
<i>serese</i>	<i>sēs</i>	uproot a cereal plant in order to
<i>tàaté</i>	<i>tàs</i>	remember, think (particularly obsessively about sth.)

However, there are some verbs that display final *s* in the non-continuous form. Two of them form a continuous stem; here the consonant of the extension is *-t*. A third verb – ‘fly’ *yèrét* – has a different non-continuous stem while *-t* shows up in the continuous *yèsét*. This *t* is a completely language-internal development since it is found in no other Plateau language to form a pluractional verb.

(II-7) Extended CVsVt-verbs

<i>mòs</i>	<i>mòsót</i>	be fat
<i>sòós</i>	<i>sòsét</i>	sit

The last seven verbs each form a class of their own.

(II-8) Isolated formations

<i>cwaàl</i>	<i>cwamas</i>	close sth. with a cover
<i>hò</i>	<i>hòyèsé</i>	fall
<i>hovose</i>	<i>hosop</i>	divide
<i>kɔrɔse</i>	<i>kɔsɔ</i>	scratch
<i>tèpé</i>	<i>tevēs</i>	cry out (cocks, horses)
<i>waatê</i>	<i>waras</i>	warm sth. on the fire
<i>yelle</i>	<i>yeres</i>	call so.

2.1.2 *N

A nasal *as* extension marker was found in only one (out of 189) verbs: *təl* – *ton* ‘pound’, where *-l* is replaced by the consonant of the extension.

2.1.3 *K as pluractional marker

*-k as marker of the extended form occurs in *təl – tɔ̀rèk* ‘show, point out’. Like in other languages, it is mainly used for marking non-continuous verbal forms (see examples from other languages under 2.1.3). The existence of an underlying -k in the non-continuous form could be postulated for about a dozen of stems, i.e. -k functions here as a “singular” affix. All the verbs concerned either end in *l* or in a nasal consonant in the continuous form. Similar to the languages of the other subgroups, *k* is subject to assimilatory processes: The consonant of the suffix is assimilated to the place of articulation of the stem-final consonant.

(II-9) *-k in assimilated form as non-continuous marker

non-CONT	underl. form	CONT	
<i>lɛlɛmpe</i>	* <i>lɛlɛm-ke</i>	<i>lɛlɛm</i>	lick
<i>sùmpe</i>	* <i>sùm-ke</i>	<i>sùm</i>	dig
<i>bànté</i>	* <i>bàn-ké</i>	<i>bàn</i>	twist, to plait
<i>ʃɔ̀nté</i>	* <i>ʃɔ̀n-ké</i>	<i>ʃɔ̀n</i>	weed with a hoe
<i>yɔ̀ŋke</i>	* <i>yɔ̀ŋke</i>	<i>yɔ̀ŋ</i>	repair
<i>làlté</i>	* <i>làl-ké</i>	<i>làlo</i>	scramble over meat, especially hunters
<i>lɛlté</i>	* <i>lɛl-ké</i>	<i>lɛlto</i>	farm the first part of a ridge, carried out by men

The setting up of three allomorphs of a single underlying suffix *k* is more economical than postulating three independent extensions, *-pe*, *-te*, and *-ke*. There are verbs that can be included in this group because in some forms an apparently orthographic *n* occurs instead of *ŋ*.

(II-10) -k as suffix after orthographic -n

<i>sùnké (sùŋ-ké?)</i> , <i>sùún</i>	shake a tree
<i>zànké (zàŋ-ké?)</i> , <i>zàán</i>	do the first hoeing for millet/yam farms

Three verbs replace *-k in the non-continuous form with -s.

(II-11) Replacement of *k with -s in the non-continuous form

<i>byiŋki</i>	<i>bijis</i>	collect items together
<i>sèŋkè</i>	<i>sèŋès</i>	mix meat or beans with beniseed
<i>bantê (*ban-ke)</i>	<i>banâs</i>	mix fresh beer with three days' old beer

2.1.4 *D [l / r] as pluractional marker

This extensional element for the continuous has only been found in the verb *tò, tòlò* ‘pound’. This verb has an alternative form (*tòl – ton*; s. 2.1.2 of this Appendix).

Five verbs replace *-l/rV* in the non-continuous form with *-sV* in the habitual stem.

(II-12) Replacement of *-l/rV* with *-sV* in the non-continuous form

<i>φèlé</i>	<i>φèsé</i>	boil
<i>wùru</i>	<i>wùsé</i>	go out, exit
<i>wara</i>	<i>waase</i>	climb

2.2 Combinations of extensions

There are no clear examples for multiple suffixation of extensional elements in Aten. In this respect Aten differs from most of the other Plateau languages displaying extended verb stems such as Birom, Kagoro, Jju etc.

3 Trends and Strategies

While vowels seem to play no important part in the derivational system of most Plateau languages, the Beromic languages present many verb stems where vowels are of crucial importance in forming an extended verb form. Some different types must be distinguished: Verb stems in which vowel length is the only marker of continuous stems:

(II-13) Vowel length

<i>ba</i>	<i>baa</i>	seal sth. (hole)
<i>tal</i>	<i>taàl</i>	pay
<i>tul</i>	<i>tùul</i>	uproot (yam)
<i>yek⁴²</i>	<i>yáàk</i>	give birth

The majority of verb stems display copy vowels in position V_2 . Without exception, all 58 verbs that form their continuous stem by suffixing *-Vs* have the same vowel in both syllables. On the other hand: all 11 verb stems that form their continuous stem by a process of metathesis resulting in infixes *s* have *e* or *ε* in the second syllable irrespective of the stem vowel which is *e* in some cases.

⁴² I regard the vowel of the simplex as the product of assimilation to the place of articulation of *y*.

(II-14) Affixation of a non-copy vowel together with *-s(-)/-se(-)*, *-sɛ*

<i>cwaa</i>	<i>cwase</i>	throw a spear
<i>howo</i>	<i>howoseè</i>	dry up
<i>kyivɛ</i>	<i>kyivɛsɛ</i>	stumble, to knock against things
<i>woo</i>	<i>wose</i>	burn
<i>laàl</i>	<i>laasèl</i>	sleep, to lie down
<i>φáál</i>	<i>φáásèl</i>	open
<i>φuùl</i>	<i>φuusèl</i>	cook beer or kunnu
<i>toðl</i>	<i>tosèl</i>	remove a pot from the fire

Another group of verbs of the structure CVCV deletes the final vowel in the continuous form, i.e. the continuous is derived by a kind of “subtractive” morpheme. This is in strong contrast to all other forms in all other languages and reverses the markedness of semantically marked forms.

(II-15) Vowel deletion in the continuous form

<i>bala</i>	<i>bal</i>	remove scales
<i>lɔlɔ</i>	<i>lɔl</i>	build
<i>φɛlɛ</i>	<i>φɛl</i>	search for sth.
<i>tùkí</i>	<i>tùk</i>	spit
<i>yènɛ</i>	<i>yèn</i>	prise up large clods of earth with hoe
<i>yèsɛ</i>	<i>yès</i>	sweep

This is the most intriguing group of all verbs since here the continuous form, otherwise derived, is definitely unmarked.

To sum up: Aten displays a derivational system that is as complex as that of any Plateau language. In addition to what has been described so far, there are many forms that are derived in a way that is rarely, or nowhere else, found in other Plateau languages.⁴³ These formation types are restricted to Aten and must be considered as language internal developments. This situation is typical for all languages for which relatively rich documentation is available. These special formations cannot be attributed to language contact: if something is found only in one language there is no source in other languages from which to borrow this particular formation. Aten in this respect does not differ from neighbouring languages where also idiosyncratic verbal derivations can be found. In any case, much fur-

⁴³ E.g. the continuous form that is distinguished from the non-continuous form by change of tone: *sùúk*, *súúk* ‘shake (as a rattle)’; or insertion of consonants: *baal*, *bava* ‘slap’, *hyè*, *hyèyè* ‘slaughter’.

ther research in this fascinating area is needed urgently, especially because the younger generation is no longer fully familiar with the subtleties of verbal derivation.

Abbreviations

Ms.	Manuscript
PP	Proto Plateau: Reconstruction for Central, Western Plateau + Beromic
PP (C)	Reconstruction for Central Plateau
PP (NW)	Reconstruction for Northwestern Plateau

References

- Adwiraah, Eleonore. 1988. *Grammatik des Kagoro (Kagoro)*. Frankfurt, Bern: Lang.
- Blench, Roger M. 2000a. Revising Plateau. In Ekkehard Wolff & Orin Gensler (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd World Congress of African Linguistics [WOCAL]: Leipzig 1997*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 159–174.
- Blench, Roger M. 2001a. Plural verb morphology in Fobur Izere. Cambridge: Ms.
- Blench, Roger M. 2001b. Plural verb morphology in Eastern Berom. Cambridge: Ms.
- Blench, Roger M. 2004. *Iten Dictionary*. Cambridge: Ms.
- Bouquiaux, Luc. 1970. *La langue Birom (Nigeria septentrional) - phonologie, morphologie, syntaxe*. Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres.
- Bouquiaux, Luc. 2001. *Dictionnaire birom (Langue Plateau de la famille Niger-Congo) I–III*. Langues et civilisations Africaines 29–31. Louvain & Paris: Peeters.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1971. Stammweiterungen in den Verben einiger zentral-nigerianischer Klassensprachen. In Norbert Cyffer, Veronika Six, Ekkehard Wolff, Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg & Ludwig Gerhardt (eds.), *Afrikanische Sprachen und Kulturen: Ein Querschnitt*. Hamburger Beiträge zur Afrika-Kunde 14. Hamburg: Deutsches Institut für Afrika-Forschung. 95–101.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1972/3. Abriß der nominalen Klassen im Koro (North Central State, Nigeria). *Afrika und Übersee* 56. 245–26.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1980. The fortis/lenis contrast in West African languages. *Afrika und Übersee* 63. 207–217.

- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1983. *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Sprachen des nigerianischen Plateaus*. Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1984. More on the verbal system of Zarek (Northern Nigeria). *Afrika und Übersee* 67. 11–30.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1989. Kainji and Platoid. In John Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *The Niger-Congo Languages*. Lanham: University Press of America. 359–376.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 2002. Pluraktionale Verben in einigen Benue-Congo-Sprachen des nigerianischen Plateaus, Teil I: Allgemeines, das Suffix *S, seine Varianten, seine Kombinationen. *Hamburger Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 1. 37–58.
- Hoffmann, Carl. 1976. Some aspects of the Che noun class system. University of Ibadan, Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages: Ms.
- Lukas, Johannes & Alfred Willms. 1961. Outline of the language of the Jarawa in northern Nigeria (Plateau Province). *Afrika und Übersee* 45. 1–66.
- Marggrander, Anna. 2018. *A Grammar of Dūya*. (Westafrikanische Studien 39). Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- McKinney, Carol. 1979. Plural verb roots in Kaje. *Afrika und Übersee* 62. 107–117.
- Mukarovsky, Hans. 1963. Some reflexions on a Nigerian class language. *Wiener völkerkundliche Mitteilungen* 11(6). 65–8.
- Nettle, Daniel. 1998. *The Fyem language of northern Nigeria*. München: LINCOM Europa.
- Newman, Paul. 1989. The historical change from suffixal to prefixal reduplication in Hausa pluractional verbs. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 11(1). 37–44.
- Newman, Paul. 1990. *Nominal and verbal plurality in Chadic*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Seitz, Gitte. 1993. *Ikulu-Untersuchungen zu einer zentralnigerianischen Klassensprache*. Hamburg: University of Hamburg MA thesis.
- Williamson, Kay & Roger Blench. 2000. Niger-Congo. In Bernd Heine & Derek Nurse (eds.), *African languages. An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 11–42.
- Wilson, Janet. 2004. TAM marking in Kuche. Paper presented at the Symposium on “Endangered languages in Contact: Nigeria’s Plateau Languages”, 25th–26th March 2004 at the University of Hamburg.
- Wolff, Ekkehard & Ludwig Gerhardt. 1977. Interferenzen zwischen Benue-Kongo und Tschad-Sprachen. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Supplementa II*. 1518–1543.

Progress and problems in literacy programmes in Central Nigeria

Abiel Barau Kato †^a, updated by Roger Blench^b

Lafia, Nigeria^a, University of Cambridge^b
rogerblench@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract:

Central Nigeria is a region of great linguistic diversity where there were no pre-colonial orthographies in use. The expansion of population and modern education has created a strong demand for local literacy programmes for the Plateau languages of Central Nigeria. For people to be able to develop themselves intellectually, it is important that they have a system of writing that is truly their own. Initially, demand for literacy has been in relation to programmes for Bible translation, and this is largely where funding is sought. However, these programmes are frustratingly long-term and some have been quite ineffective due to poor (or no) initial planning and ill-designed orthographies. However, in the decade since 2010, demand is increasingly coming from non-denominational organisations whose concern is cultural maintenance, and thus the use of vernacular languages in education. This paper examines the progress achieved and problems faced by some of the Plateau languages in the area of literacy development with a more detailed case study of the Mada Literacy Programme, as well as offering some practical solutions to assist the spread of literacy.

Keywords: Mada, Nigeria, literacy, orthography, translation

1 Introduction

An effective mother-tongue literacy programme has a critical role to play in the linguistic enterprise. It promotes the survival of minority languages and at the same time motivates neighbouring ethnic groups to promote their own language and culture, as well as laying a solid foundation for literacy in national languages (Akinnsaso 1993). The argument for promoting mother-tongue literacy as a step to broader literacy is succinctly stated by M'Bow (1978: 1):

The rights of every individual could not be applied in practical terms other than by every individual first grasping the alphabet of his own language. Only through learning to read does a man assume his full responsibility as a citizen. If he cannot read, he is powerless to realize the whole of his civic and political potential; neither can he exercise power at any level whatever in modern society. The peoples most affected by illiteracy cannot fully control their future development unless they have a system of writing which is truly their own.

In this paper,¹ the author reports on the progress and problems of literacy among the Plateau languages in Central Nigeria including comparisons with similar programmes elsewhere. Central Nigeria, often referred to as the Middle Belt, includes Niger, Kogi and Kwara States in the west, stretching as far as Adamawa and Taraba in the east. There are at least 150 languages in the region as a whole, of which only a few have continuing literacy programmes and these are within the context of Bible translation. Elsewhere, literacy programmes have become moribund. Such programmes are now only remembered by the names of the expatriate workers who started them but who have since left the country, while others are only represented by outdated primers preserved in the archives. The paper provides an overview of the picture of mother-tongue literacy in the Plateau area and discusses in more detail some of experiences within the Mada Bible Translation and Language Project, the mother tongue of the author.

According to Nigerian Federal Government policy, the language of communication in the classroom (Primary 1–3) should be the mother tongue (Okedara & Okedara 1992). The main institution intended to promote this is the NERDC (National Education Research and Development Council), based in Abuja. This institution publishes ‘official’ orthographies for Nigerian languages. However, it has no resources to promote the use of these orthographies and state governments are largely left to their own devices when implementing this policy. Where a particular language is considered to be dominant in a state

1 Unfortunately, the first author of this paper died in 2014. He thanked the organizers of the Hamburg meeting for inviting him and for the audience, whose comments have been incorporated into the revised version of this paper. Roger Blench updated much of the information in September 2020, based on his own recent knowledge of the situation. He would like to thank Selbut Longtau and Matthew Harley for insights into particular programmes.

(such as Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) that state government will promote it.² These languages are taught in higher institutions of learning while other languages are neglected. However, in highly multilingual states, such as Plateau and Nasarawa, where there is no dominant language, the attention given to minority languages is highly contested, and state governments have instead often chosen to promote Hausa through the Adult Literacy programmes.

2 The growth of orthography development

In the earliest period (i.e. from the 1840s onwards), literacy and Bible translation were in the hands of individual missionaries. Few of these met with success, in part due to the fearsome difficulties of Plateau languages, which have both complex consonant systems and elaborate tonal schemes. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) began work in Nigeria in 1970, and instituted a more rigorous approach to phonology and grammar. However, following a dispute with the Nigerian government in 1976, it left the country and its programmes were handed to the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) which carried on translation work. The slow speed of the operations of NBTT (often as much as twenty years between initial approaches and launch of the New Testament) led to frustration within the communities and a growth of new local bodies which promised to provide much more rapid results. SIL only returned to bible translation under its own logo in 2018

Two examples of such newly established local bodies are the NBTT Orthography Workshops, and the Seed Company's Luke Partnership Programmes. NBTT Orthography Workshops involve rapid visits of two to three weeks by specialists based in Jos to communities which express an interest in literacy. The phonology is sketched during this period and then an alphabet chart is printed. Some examples of communities where this approach has been taken are the Amo in Plateau State, Maya [= Bali] in Taraba State and the Kyanggawa in the south of Kebbi State. This has the advantage of responding to the community but the major disadvantage that the phonology is not subjected to any peer review (or even written down), and thus the alphabet

2 Although this is not inevitably the case. For example, Kanuri is the dominant language in Borno State, but the state government makes little or no effort to promote it.

charts can be highly unreliable. There is almost no follow-up; communities are left to their own devices in respect of further action. The Seed Company's Luke Partnership Programmes are on a larger scale. These involve bringing together around ten ethnolinguistic groups which have expressed interest in developing literacy and Bible translation. Expatriate linguistic consultants were brought in,³ many with no knowledge of African languages, and worked with teams of three to four speakers to develop a phonology and orthography of the language and begin a translation of the Gospel of Luke. Each team could attend two such workshops, after which the project had to be self-supporting. The principal zones where this has been undertaken are Bauchi, Gombe and Adamawa States, where there are many minorities whose languages are almost unknown to the scientific public. This has had better results than the NBTT strategy, but a failure to consult any previous literature on the languages in the workshop, and a complete bypassing of tone has also sometimes allowed the development of highly inadequate orthographies. No sociolinguistic surveys are conducted prior to the workshops, so, for example, dialect choices are based on the statements of those attending. Experience in Nigeria has shown time and again that literacy can be a strategy manipulated by particular subgroups as a tool for political ascendancy. Moreover, the explicitly Christian orientation can be problematic; many of these populations have significant numbers of Muslims, who can be actively deterred from literacy programmes by the emphasis on Bible translation.⁴

However, beyond Bible translation, there have been striking new developments in the area of community development. An organisation known as CONAECDA has been established in Plateau State, with nascent branches in other states, to lobby government for the establishment of mother-tongue education in the schools. Following a series of meetings with Plateau State education officials, in 2019, eight languages were selected for further development. Teams are currently exploring either reviving former literacy materials or preparing more modern primers. Many questions remain about devel-

3 This has come to a halt due to insecurity in the regions east of Jos.

4 In northwestern Nigeria, where many West Kainji languages are developing literacy programmes, those with a specifically Christian orientation have been forced to switch to 'religion-neutral' practices, to avoid alienating influential Muslims who also want to participate in language development.

oping customised course materials and paying teachers, but this is a promising start.

3 Progress

3.1 Overview of mother-tongue literacy programmes in the Plateau area

There exist around 40 Plateau languages divided into Northern, Western, Central, Southeastern, Southern and Tarokoid (Gerhardt 1989; Blench 2000). Under these groupings, there are further sub-groups and clusters, many still largely undescribed. Literacy programmes exist for only a few of them, within the framework of Bible translation. Table 1 summarises the state of mother-tongue literacy in the Plateau area.

The following non-Plateau (i.e. Chadic and Adamawa) languages have literacy programmes: Goemai, Mwaghavul, Ngas, Ron, Waja, Tula, Dadiya and Laamang. The Ron Project has effectively halted due to internal disputes over dialect and orthography issues, although there have been recent moves to revive it. The literacy program of Laamang is no longer active, in part due to local opposition from the Muslim community leaders.

3.2 Case studies

3.2.1 *Migili*

The Migili people started translating the New Testament in 1972 and completed it in 1984. In 1985 it was launched, but after this, nothing was heard of it. The expatriate consultant Yvonne Stofberg, who did the initial phonological analysis, left the country, and no final agreement was reached on key orthographic issues such as the number of vowels. No effort was made regarding a literacy programme and only recently have plans been made to revive it. The main New Testament translator, Pastor Vincent Dogo, undertook a major revision of the orthography in 2017, but disputes within the committee have so far prevented its uptake in the community.

Table 1. Literacy work in Plateau languages

Language	Literacy materials	Comment
Berom	Folk stories – Orthography – <i>Susti</i> ⁵ – Primers 1 & 2 – New Testament – Old Testament in progress – <i>Bere Nehta</i> – newsletter – <i>Takada Lele</i> – Hymn book – <i>Lele</i> – Psalm – Radio magazine programme – Dictionary – Jesus Film – Gospels of Luke & Mark on tapes – Alphabet chart with pictures – Alphabet chart without pictures	Literacy classes moribund
Ce (Rukuba)	Gospels of Mark & John – Christmas stories – Radio magazine programme	Community-sponsored literacy programme and classes active
Eggon	Orthography – New Testament – two Primers – Dictionary – Jesus Film – Old Testament started (but on hold) – Radio magazine programme	Moribund. Existing orthography highly inadequate
Hyam	Bible books – Wordlist – Alphabet chart – Body parts chart – Reading and writing Hyam – Hyam proverbs (unpubl.) – Hymns – Story book (unpubl.) – Names of animals (unpubl.) – New Testament in progress	Community-sponsored literacy work very limited. Existing orthography highly inadequate
Dūya [= Idū]	Reading and writing book – Grammar book - Draft New Testament chapters	Many orthographic issues unresolved
Iten (Eten = Aten)	Song book (also on tape) – Transitional materials – Gospel of Mark – Dictionary (upcoming) – New Testament completed – Radio magazine programme	Literacy work in progress

5 Titles in italics are the names of booklets published in vernacular languages.

Rigwe	Hymn book – New Testament completed – Radio magazine programme	Community-sponsored literacy programme and classes active
Izere	Orthography – Alphabet chart – <i>I fa yir Izere</i> (i.e. Let's read Izere)– Alphabet booklet – Jesus Film – Radio magazine programme – New Testament completed – Dictionary (draft)	Literacy work moribund
Icen	Reading and writing book – New Testament completed	Literacy work in progress
Migili ⁶	Orthography – Reading and writing book – Folktales – New Testament completed – Radio magazine programme – Jesus Film	Moribund
Ninzo	Orthography – Alphabet chart – Primers 1 & 2 – Reading and writing Ninzo – Story book – New Testament completed	Literacy work moribund
Nyankpa	Reading and writing book – Draft New Testament chapters	Literacy work in progress
Tarok	Orthography – Teachers handbook – Primers and readers in three volumes – Catechism – Alphabet chart – Jesus Film – Radio magazine programmes – New Testament – Dictionary (forthcoming) – Old Testament in progress – Hymn book – Grammar book	Literacy classes very vigorous

6 Recent contact with the main New Testament (NT) translator reveals that five churches, which were planted by him, are using the NT, and at the moment plans under way to get the literacy programmes started in many more churches and villages.

3.2.2 *Kice [= Rukuba]*

Kice (Rukuba) is an example where the community has been strongly motivated to develop literacy classes independently of the mission organisations. A basic orthography has been developed and work has begun somewhat sporadically in both literacy and Bible translation. However, it has so far not been possible to incorporate tonal marking into the orthography, despite the role it plays in the grammatical system.

3.2.3 *Goemai*

Goemai (a West Chadic language) is an example of how standards are slipping, driven by the need to provide translations of religious literature, irrespective of whether they are read. The first orthography of the Goemai language was developed by a Catholic priest, Father Sirlinger, in the 1930s, and with a few changes, this is still in use today, despite its problematic conventions. A New Testament has been launched by NBTT, despite the absence of a published phonology.⁷ If orthographies are not subject to public scrutiny there will inevitably be problems, after the initial enthusiasm for the New Testament publication.

4 The evolution of the Mada Literacy Programme

4.1 Background

Mada is a Plateau language spoken mainly in Nasarawa State, with pockets found in southern Kaduna State and parts of Niger State. The only existing materials on the language are short studies by Gerhardt (1972/73, 1983) and Price (1989). The idea to reduce the language to a written form through Bible translation was mooted in 1978 by Solomon Manzuch. It was not until 1982 that it became a reality, after consultations with the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT), who sent a SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) team, Norman and Barbara Price, to begin the translation work. Although the original plan was for them to be based in the field, it was rapidly decided to move the project to Jos.

⁷ This is not strictly true, since Hellwig (2011), an academic grammar of Goemai includes the phonology. However, the relationship between the phonology and the orthography has never been spelt out.

Before the work took off, a committee was set up to decide which dialect should be used. The committee was to oversee the work of translation with a separate committee for literacy work, but when it became obvious that the literacy committee was inactive, the translation committee combined both functions. The committee sat on several occasions to discuss which of the dialects to use. Price (1989) had surveyed Mada dialects and concluded there nine: Rija, Ancho, Anjagwa, Boher, Gbugyar, Gwanje, Ungwar Zaria (Rinze), Akwanga (Kegbe) and Ninghaan. These dialects are divided into three groups based on the forms of a particular pronoun. Table 2 shows the dialects and the distribution of the corresponding pronoun.

Table 2. Mada pronoun 'us' by dialect

<i>tə</i>	<i>lə</i>	<i>kwa</i>
Rija	Ninghaan	Ungwar Zaria
Ancho	Akwanga (Kegbe)	
Boher		
Gwanje		
Anjagwa		
Gbugyar		

It can be seen at once that these are quite different from one another, rather than simply phonological shifts. It was decided to select a representative of the lects using *tə*, as these were more numerous.

Rija was chosen since it is also the centre of a Mada chieftaincy and commonly understood by speakers of other lects. Rija has been called the 'Central' dialect although this is not really the case. From 1982 to 1997, when the New Testament was completed in draft, the Rija dialect was used. However, at this point there was a change of personnel in the translation team, and finally, the pure Rija dialect was not used in the printed version of the New Testament, but mixed with elements from the Gwanje dialect, because this was the dialect of the individual who undertook the final editing and typesetting. Although the New Testament was launched with the usual fanfare, it has subsequently been subject to much community dispute because of its mixed forms.

The evolution of literacy classes followed a similar arc. When the author joined the translation project in 1987, there were just two existing literacy classes, run by a language helper. As the work progressed, two more classes were formed, and by 1992, we had established ten classes in different villages. However, the only source of income for literacy workers was that raised by the local committee, which was both low and irregularly paid. Nonetheless, the number of literacy classes gradually expanded and we were able to establish 20 literacy classes between 1993 and 1997, which we visited once every month. After completing the New Testament in draft in 1997, the author also left the translation work, partly due to poor pay and secondly, to pursue further education.

After the author had left, the other language helper decided to take a different approach to literacy work. He recruited 10 trained voluntary literacy teachers, who were divided into 5 groups of 2. They travelled and traversed the length and breadth of Mada land and the Mada diaspora, organising and establishing literacy classes. This took them to more villages than before. Also, literacy lessons were organised through a radio programme tagged “Mada Magazine”. This was done mainly with the rural populace in mind, especially those who were and are not literate in any language at all.

In the year 2000, the New Testament was launched and the following year, the author was appointed Literacy Coordinator as a voluntary position to supervise literacy activities since the former language helper was re-assigned to other responsibilities by NBTT. In that year we compiled five primers and one pictorial booklet. We organised a workshop on “Train the Trainers”, and right now, those so trained have gone to set up classes in their villages and wherever they reside. So far, books and other reading materials published or prepared in Mada include the following (Table 3):

Table 3. Literacy materials in Mada

Published or prepared	Audience
<i>Nə tə bla Mada gıgər</i> – Let’s Read Mada Together	literate
<i>Mənyuren Mada</i> – Alphabet chart	beginning-literate
<i>Yəso Krisəti se bə nggon nggon yə gu kpə tə cunwɔn</i> – Jesus Christ has power to save	literate
<i>Mərən ətu ki yə la te</i> – Newsletters	literate

<i>Gbrin ki</i> – Pictorial booklet	beginning-literates
<i>Bla Mada</i> – Primers 1–5. Not printed	beginning-literates
<i>Bla Mada</i> – Primer for beginners	beginning-literates
Orthography	beginning-literates
<i>Ren Kpan Nyu Suswe</i> – New Testament	literate
<i>Gbrin ya Yeso</i> – Jesus Film	non-literates
Dictionary. In preparation	
<i>Nggyeren Mada</i> – Mada Proverbs. In progress	literate
<i>Māsen ə nyu Mada</i> – Selected hymns. Not printed	literate

The Mada team has also translated the Nigerian National Anthem and the Pledge.

Literacy activities include:

- a. reading centres in cities and local villages;
- b. media – magazine programmes on radio and recording of *Let's Read Mada Together* on tapes;
- c. train the trainers workshops (participants are encouraged to write stories);
- d. teaching of Mada language in 10 pilot primary schools (begun in September 2004);
- e. production of songs on tapes (singing competition);
- f. reading competition and scripture recitations.

Institutions and organisations collaborating with the Mada Bible Translation and Language Project in the area of literacy work include: Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT), State Ministry of Information, Local Government Education Authority (LGEA), Community Development Associations (CDA), Churches, Women Fellowship Groups and Bible Colleges. In relation to this, courses are being run by NBTT that have direct bearing on literacy promotion. These include: Introductory Course on Applied Linguistics (ICAL), Introductory Course on Translation Principles (ICTP), Literacy workshops, Writers workshops and Train the Trainers workshops.

4.2 Orthographic issues

Just as there were problems in the choice of a dialect, so it was in the orthography. One issue that has been the subject of much controversy is the representation of nasals. There are two types of word-

final *n* in Mada, a syllabic coda *n* and a *V + n* sequence representing nasalisation, i.e. IPA [Ṽ], (originally marked with a cedilla under the vowel). However, since there is no clear phonemic contrast between [Vn] and [Ṽ] in Rija, it was decided to drop the cedilla and write both sequences as Vn.

Mada orthography is unusual for a Nigerian language in that it marks tones. Mada has short words, no evident noun-classes and no morphological distinction between noun and verb. Hence, without tone-marking, there would be many homographs and it would be very difficult to read. The translation team together with the Project Committee sat down to consider the marking of tones on words. Mada has three basic tone heights, which it was decided to mark as follows: high (unmarked), mid (-) and low (˘). There are two contrastive contour tones – rising (´) and falling (ˆ) occurring on individual syllables, which are less frequent, though essential for some grammatical distinctions. Take for example the following words:

Table 4. Mada minimal tonal quadruple

Mada	Gloss	Tone pattern
<i>lá</i>	negative tense marker	high
<i>là</i>	continuous tense marker	low
<i>l̂à</i>	to help	low
<i>lǎ</i>	madness	rising

In orthographic representation, the high tone is omitted hence a contrastive CVCV set would appear as follows:

Table 5. Orthographic representation of a contrastive CVCV set

Mada	Gloss	Tone pattern
<i>m̄m̀m̀</i>	winnowing basket	mid-low
<i>m̄m̄m̄</i>	maggot	mid-mid
<i>m̀m̀m̄</i>	corn powder	low-mid
<i>mum̄</i>	there (distance)	high-high

Nigerian languages often mark high (´) and leave mid unmarked. For Mada, however, it is more economical to mark the mid tone because it is less frequent than the high tone. Needless to say, there was considerable controversy about this, as tone-marking is usually avoided

in typical orthographies. In popular signage, Mada is usually written without tones, but it is only possible to interpret these because the meanings of short phrases are already known. Logical as it is, it has proven extremely difficult to teach learners to mark tones accurately.

4.3 Problems with the Mada literacy project

4.3.1 *Inaccurate assessment of literacy and Bible translation needs*

It took the Mada people 18 years to complete the New Testament, due to a number of factors including the following:

- a. poor mobilisation and sensitisation of the people on the importance of the work and what was required of them;
- b. not accepting the leadership of the person who initiated the work;
- c. the attitude of the project advisor, who was not so eager to finish the work on time (“Jesus was not in a hurry” became his motto);
- d. no definite plan of action as regards the literacy programme;
- e. no continuing enthusiasm, since it took so much time to finish the work. This was seen in the way people supported the work financially; they became tired of the numerous appeals for money by the project committee which reduced the initial eagerness and enthusiasm that greeted the introduction of the translation work.

In the case of Mada, the translators were the same people engaged in literacy activities, which created too much of a burden on them, given the poor remuneration and problematic transport situation. For other languages with literacy coordinators, most of them may not be trained. Sometimes there are no personnel at all who can read and write their own languages. Even Yoruba and Hausa, which are taught at university level, have the same problem of lack of trained teachers (Aaron 1998: 5). Because there are no trained literacy personnel, there are few people to write books. Even where there are qualified writers, money is not available to publish such material. Without money, little or nothing can be achieved. Money is needed to print literacy materials and to pay the workers and for other contingencies. Two of us had to leave the translation work at one point because of poor salaries.

Not all Mada speakers see the need for mother-tongue literacy. Visits to communities to start or restart literacy classes were often met

with opposition from community leaders who claimed that reading and writing English and Hausa were sufficient and that reading Mada was a waste of time. Over time, this opposition has receded, as vernacular literacy has become more popular. The editor of this paper was invited to speak at the Nze Mada symposium in 2016 on the prospects for reviving Mada literacy.

4.3.2 *Local political rivalry*

In Mada, local political rivalries did and do still affect the work; people of different political leanings are not willing to work together. During the launching of the New Testament and the Jesus Film, many influential people did not attend because of political differences with the translation team. Beside this, there was also a personality clash between the first language helper (Solomon Manzuche) and others including the final language helper, regarding the initiator of the translation work.

5 Conclusions

For meaningful literacy and translation work to start in any language, it is essential to carry out a preliminary assessment to set priorities. Surveys should be conducted to find out the needs on the ground, and particularly whether translation is a community priority or not. Some languages may not necessarily be interested in Bible translation, but literacy programmes can still be embarked upon. Even where there is genuine interest in Bible translation, it is still better to begin with literacy before going into translation of any kind. At present, because funding for translation is prioritised over literacy, the result is often unread (and unreadable) Bible translations.

These points can be summarised as follows:

- a. An absence of sociolinguistic surveys has meant that literacy and Bible translation programmes are begun where there is a lack of popular demand and even social barriers to the use of a particular dialect. This can mean that considerable effort is wasted on projects that come to nothing.
- b. A consequence of this is that Bible translation programmes take an inordinately long time and sometimes project personnel leave in frustration. Related to this is pressure from funding bodies to translate scripture regardless of literacy.

- c. Ironically, now that the concept of developing literacy has been sparked among minority communities, there are no resources to work even with highly motivated groups, for example, the Hyam or the Kice [Rukuba].
- d. Funding is a problem, but probably not a major one. The problem is more of connecting producers of literacy materials with those who have resources.

To achieve any meaningful literacy work, agencies concerned with endangered languages should provide the funding available for the development and printing of materials.⁸ It is equally important to train people to do the work. We do not have trained personnel to run literacy programmes in various languages. Furthermore, if donor agencies collaborate with Community Development Associations (CDA) to develop literacy materials, this will go a long way to help the growth of mother-tongue literacy work. More so, much work needs to be done in the area of language survey. Many Plateau languages have no contact with literacy development; once their status is assessed they can be introduced to the concept of reading and writing their mother tongue.

References

- Aaron, Marianne. 1998. A way to improve literacy in primary education in Nigeria. *Notes on Literacy* 24(2). 1–57.
- Akinaso, F. Niyi. 1993. Policy and experiment in mother tongue literacy in Nigeria. *International review of Education* 39(4). 255–285.
- Blench, Roger M. 2000. Revising Plateau. In Ekkehard Wolff & Orin Gensler (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd World Congress of African Linguistics (WOCAL): Leipzig 1997*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe. 159–174.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1972/73. Das Nominalsystem der Plateau-4-Sprachen. Versuch einer Rekonstruktion. *Afrika und Übersee* 56. 72–89.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1983. *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Sprachen des nigerianischen Plateaus*. (Afrikanistische Forschungen 9). Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1989. Kainji and Platoid. In John Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *Niger-Congo*. Lanham: Universities Press of America. 359–376.

⁸ It is ironic in an era when there has never been more interest in endangered languages and when institutions such as the SOAS-based ELDP promote the projects they fund, that many minority languages are floundering for lack of a few hundred dollars.

- Hellwig, Birgit. 2011. *A Grammar of Goemai*. (Mouton Grammar Library 51). Berlin & New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- M'Bow, Amadou-Mahtar. 1978. *UNESCO Adult Education*, Thirteenth International Literacy Day. o. 3, April 1978. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000034674?posInSet=1&queryId=aae04e03-7890-4c08-af6c-8319cc0c4008> [accessed 13. Nov. 2020]
- Okedara, Joseph T. & C.A. Okedara. 1992. Mother-tongue literacy in Nigeria. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 520(1). 91–102.
- Price, Norman. 1989. *Notes on Mada Phonology*. Dallas, Texas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Historical inferences from traditions of origins of Tarok and some Chadic languages in Central Nigeria

Selbut R. Longtau

Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT), Jos

selbutlongtau@gmail.com

Abstract

Contact between the Tarokoid languages of Sur, Yangkam, Pe, Vaghat Cluster, Tarok and some Chadic languages found in southeast Plateau State of central Nigeria and its implications for the sketching of a history for the area is the main thesis of this work. A brief outline of oral traditions of origin of the sub-groupings of Tarok language is presented and interpreted in the light of linguistic data to illustrate how the methodology works. The underlying principles of this paper are based on the theoretical premise that oral traditions can shed some light in the interpretation of linguistic data and vice versa. Lexical items found in secondary sources and an Ngas wordlist I took were examined for cognates between the Chadic languages and Tarok proper.

Keywords: Tarokoid, West Chadic, linguistic geography, oral traditions and history

1 Introduction

The overall picture of the linguistic geography of the Tarokoid/Chadic contact reveals that the Plateau area is a convergence zone in the south-westerly and north-easterly movements of Chadic and Plateau languages from their respective homelands. An examination of the data of the sub-groupings of each family further shows that the area has become homeland long enough for Tarokoid to have split into the present daughter languages of Sur, Yangkam, Pe, Vaghat Cluster and Tarok. The absence of Chadic roots common to all Tarokoid languages implies that the break-up was long before the Chadic languages currently in the area became important.

The implication of this for history is that Benue-Congo languages first occupied the southeast portion of Plateau as well as the rest of Plateau state and not Chadic languages. From our rich data, attempts will be made to provide evidence to support these hypotheses and postulations in order to upgrade them to the level that they can be used in theoretical abstractions, comparative studies and teaching. This may turn an academic exercise into an essay that will be perceived by lay people as having some utilitarian value.

The spread of languages and contacts between them is a study that can be undertaken using one of several models. The comparative method for investigating the dispersal of technology such as the bow and arrow, climatic changes and domestication of plants and animals is plausible (Blench *in ed. a.*). For the small but fiercely autonomous societies as the ones that abound in the Middle Belt area of Nigeria, oral traditions still largely remains the main source of historical accounts. There are documents in colonial archives that some consider as superior to oral sources given that they have a history of over 100 years. That may not be tenable since the aim of colonial officers in the first place was not to prepare professional history monographs. On the contrary, the priority in the archival mimeographs was to distil as much information as possible to create administrative units that may be coherent. In that sense, the exercises had narrow and non-academic agendas.

A question of a theoretical interest from this paper is whether or not we can decipher linguistic clues in oral traditions that can authenticate this branch of history. Historians received Joseph H. Greenberg's genetic classification of African languages in 1963 with euphoria. The expectations were that historical and comparative linguistics would provide a tool that can confirm or refute such oral traditions. Twenty years after, that level of enthusiasm was still high, as Isichei (1982) suggests. Ballard (1971) was an attempt to apply linguistic insights in making historical inferences on some Middle Belt peoples. Williamson (1988) carried out a similar exercise for the Benue-Congo family. Horton (1995: 203) discussed and sketched the diaspora processes for Niger-Congo using Williamson's (1988) insights. Blench (1995) proposed a history of domestic animals in Northeast Nigeria based on linguistic insights. Blench et al. (1997) looked at the diffusion of maize in Nigeria hinging very much on linguistic evidence.

Historical inferences based on language data have continued to engage the fascination of scholars. James (1997) sketched a history of some southern Kaduna peoples in like manners. Blench (1998a) gave a history of the spread of New World crops in Nigeria on the basis of linguistic evidence. Nettle (1998) used linguistics to postulate a history of Fyem in Plateau state. However, these techniques inevitably will suffer a credibility gap, a squandered hope and sheer spent energy, unless the poor level of documentation on Central Nigerian languages is addressed and the enterprise tackled systematically in order to produce reliable and truly genetic classification schemas or other useful analyses.

Contact between Tarokoid languages and the Chadic languages in southeast Plateau State of central Nigeria and its implications for sketching a history of the area is the main thesis of this paper.¹ Other comparative studies of some languages of the area include Hoffmann (1970), Wolff et al. (1977), Gerhardt (1983) and Blench (2003). A summary of the traditions of origin of sub-groups of Tarok is presented here together with the linguistic evidence in a tabular format. At another level of theoretical abstraction, new language data is used to assess the reliability of some oral traditions. Contact between Ngas and Tarok will be the principal exemplar of the Plateau/Chadic interaction of admixture of languages of different phyla. Lexical items found in Jungraithmayr (1968 & 1970), Burquest (1971), Kraft (1981), Frajzyngier (1991), Jungraithmayr & Ibriszimow (1995), Seibert & Blench (ined), Longtau & Blench (forthcoming) and an Ngas wordlist I took in August 2003 were examined for cognates between Ngas and Tarok proper as well as Tarokoid *in toto*.² The underlying motivation of this paper is to find evidence that oral traditions may shed light on the interpretation of linguistic data and vice versa. That approach is enhanced by a comparison of cognates in some Tarokoid, Plateau and Chadic languages.

Classification of West Chadic languages has a long tradition. However, the same cannot be said about Tarokoid. The most recent Tarokoid classification proposal only identifies as members Pe, Tarok,

1 Some fieldwork for parts of this paper took place within the framework of a project titled "A History of the Tarok Nations" under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts, University of Jos.

2 I am most appreciative to Mr. Dakom Yusufu, a 45-year-old man (as of 2004), for being my principal Ngas informant.

Sur, Yangkam (Blench, ined b.). According to Roger Blench (in a personal communication) the Vaghat Cluster is also a member of the Grouping. The cursory look at the comparative wordlist from my own research on the affixes of Tarok and Vaghat Cluster in the Appendix corroborates that position. This new classification of Tarokoid now supersedes the ones in Williamson and Shimizu (1968), Williamson (1971), Maddieson (1972), Williamson (1973), Shimizu (1975), Hansford et al. (1976), Gerhardt (1989), Crozier & Blench (1992) and Williamson (1992).

Longtau (1991), with some element of a hyperbole, described Tarok as almost completely immersed in the sea of Chadic languages. According to oral traditions, many speakers of Chadic languages changed their cultural and linguistic identities and actually swelled up the original Tarok population. Therefore, it is expected that an overwhelming Chadic lingual mark should have been left on the Tarok language. However, there is no such corresponding influence on its lexicon commensurate to what may appear to be a demographic Chadic invasion. Furthermore, the absence of Chadic roots common to all Tarokoid languages implies that the break-up of Tarokoid was long before the Chadic languages came to the area. The implication of this for historical reconstruction is that Benue-Congo languages first occupied the southeast portion of Plateau State as well as the rest of the state and not Chadic languages as posited in Williamson (1988). The West Chadic languages came only recently and created a wedge between Tarokoid and the rest of Plateau. Such incursions, especially by Ngas, led to further separation between members of Tarokoid itself. Discussion on splits as a result of these contacts will be elaborated. Attempts will be made to provide evidence to support these inferences and postulations to upgrade them to the level that they can be used in comparative studies and teaching. This approach seems to be the next logical phase to refine generalisations of earlier scholarly era.

2 Tarokoid/Chadic Languages of Southeast Plateau/South Bauchi States

The Tarokoid/Chadic languages found in the contiguous border areas of Southeast Plateau and Bauchi states, including the immediate vicinity of Tarok constitute the principal examples in this work. How-

ever, the available data on the outlying Chadic language of Ron by the southwest escarpment of the Jos Plateau are considered because it can shed much light on the nature of contacts between Plateau and Chadic and so these too are considered. The Tarokoid languages of the Vaghat Cluster, Sur, Yangkam and the Chadic languages of Zaar and Boghom, and the Jarawa-Bantu languages of Duguri, Jaar and Kantana that border Yangkam delineate the northernmost border of the research area in southeast Plateau and Bauchi States of central Nigeria. The Chadic languages of Ngas, Fyer, Tambes and Tal, and the Tarokoid language of Pe form the western boundary. The Chadic languages of Goemai, Teel (also called Tel or Montol), Yiwom and the Kofyar Cluster form the southern boundary. The Tarokoid language Tarok, Jukun-Wase (Jukunoid), Hausa (Chadic) and Fulbe (Atlantic) demarcate the eastern boundary. These languages are found in Pankshin, Shendam, Langtang-North, Langtang-South, Qua'an-Pan, Mikang, Bokkos, Wase and Kanam Local Government Areas (LGAs), all in Plateau State and Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro LGAs of Bauchi State. Table 1a,b and the map in Figure 1 will help us to make sense of the distribution and geographical of this paragraph.

Table 1a - Distribution of languages in contact of Bauchi state and Local Government Areas (LGAs)

Language	Language family	LGA
Zaar	Chadic	Bogoro and Tafawa Balewa
Vaghat Cluster	Tarokoid	Bogoro
Sur	Tarokoid	Bogoro

Table 1b - Distribution of languages in contact of Plateau state and Local Government Areas (LGAs)

Language	Language family	LGA
Ron	Chadic	Bokkos
Vaghat Cluster	Tarokoid	Mangu
Sur	Tarokoid	Bogoro
Yangkam	Tarokoid	Wase, Kanam
Duguri	Jarawa Bantu	Kanam
Jaar	Jarawa Bantu	Kanam

Kantana	Jarawa Bantu	Kanam
Ngas	Chadic	Pankshin and Kanke
Fyer	Chadic	Pankshin
Tambes	Chadic	Pankshin
Tal	Chadic	Pankshin
Goemai	Chadic	Shendam
Teel (Montol)	Chadic	Mikang
Kofyar Cluster	Chadic	Qua'an Pan
Tarok	Tarokoid	Langtang-North, Langtang-South and Wase
Wase-Tofa	Jukunoid	Wase
Hausa	Chadic	Wase
Fulbe	Atlantic	Wase
Yiwom	Chadic	Mikang

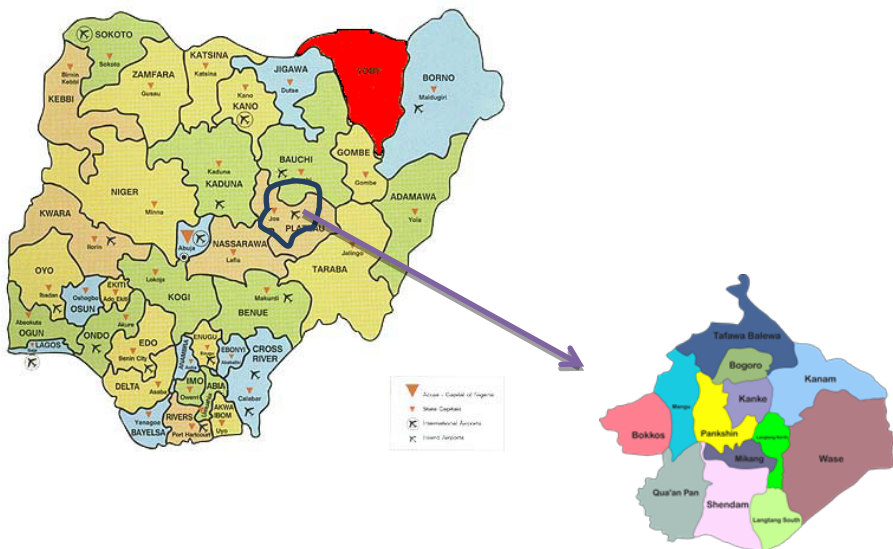


Figure 1 – Distribution of LGAs of languages in contact. Source: Wikipedia, modified by Rev. Saul Samuel.

The historical implications of the linguistic geography of the area are discussed in the next section and in 4.2.

3 Languages of the Tarokoid/Chadic contact in Tarok oral traditions

3.1 Deductions from Tarok names for neighbouring languages

The first task which will be of a narrative nature is to analyse Tarok oral traditions of origin to illustrate the value of a detailed and holistic study of such sources. Contacts between Tarok and its neighbours seem to have occurred in several phases, as the layers of traditions by the people themselves suggest.³ Oral accounts of long distance relations both in space and time would have been useful in establishing genetic links or cultural contacts between such languages but such do not exist. What exists are accounts on basically present day neighbours. Written accounts that we have are fragmentary or non-existent or uninformed assumptions based on the scholarship from eras that draw inspiration from early Bantu studies. The inferences proffered here are of two categories: those that agree with the linguistic evidence and so are valid for reconstructing history; and those that do not fit the linguistic evidence and so can only be used provisionally. A review edition of a Tarok History now published as Shagaya (2005) was consulted for oral traditions of origins of Tarok clans in all the governmental administrative units. It records in great details the origins of Tarok clans with names of progenitors as far back as oral traditions can recount. Any oral tradition of origin about a clan that captures its linguistic affiliation/nomenclature as found in the Tarok language becomes incontrovertible evidence for reconstructions. That source, Famwang (1980) and Lannap (2000) are works taken together with my knowledge as a member of the community for more than 60 years to try and make sense of competing Tarok oral traditions of origins. The synthesis without any details on the accounts themselves is given in summary form in Table 2. The Tarok names for neighbouring languages are analysed here as linguistic data.

³ I draw highly from my experience as a speaker of the Tarok language of over 60 years.

Table 2. Names given by Tarok to neighbouring languages

Standard Language Reference	Name by Tarok	Linguistic Affiliation
Boghom	Burom	West Chadic
Duguri	Dugri	Jarawa Bantu
Goemai	Lar	West Chadic
Jukun-Wase	Jor	Jukunoid
Kanam	Kanang	West Chadic
Kantana	Kantana	Jarawa Bantu
Ngas	Dúk	West Chadic
Pe	Pe	Tarokoid
Sur	Unknown to Tarok	Tarokoid
Tal	Tal	West Chadic
Teel/Montol	Dwal	West Chadic
Yangkam	Yangkam	Tarokoid
Yiwom	Zhan	West Chadic
Zaar	Zhim	West Chadic

The following deductions can be made from the above ethno-linguistic naming system:

- i. Two Tarokoid languages, Pe and Yangkam, are known to the Tarok people by the names the people use for themselves in standard references.
- ii. The third Tarokoid language, Sur, is unknown to the Tarok people. However, Blench (ined b.) posits it in the Grouping based on linguistic evidence.⁴ That gives a clue that the split between Sur and the splinter groups not only took place a very long time ago, so that they do not feature prominently in oral traditions of origin but no contacts have been maintained after the breaks.

4 It is also instructive to note that Met is a language whose linguistic affinity is yet to be established is a neighbouring language to Sur. Hosea Suwa a speaker of the language in a personal communication said Met is a dialect of Sur and not Ngas. He is of the view that Met share many nouns and verbs in common with Tarok. He speaks both Met and Ngas fluently but he learnt Tarok as an adult.

- iii. Unlike Sur, the speakers of Pe and Yangkam have been in constant contact with Tarok people independently. The Tarok land occupies a vintage position because the speakers of Yangkam perceive that the speakers of the Tarok language are not only their relatives but that their languages have a lot in common. However, the Yangkam people are not even aware that their language is related to Pe in any way. On the other hand the Pe people are aware that sections of the Tarok people are their distant relatives and that the two languages share in common several vocabularies. Cultural contacts between Tarok and the two continue to this day. This can be exemplified by the annual agricultural rites of mPwak-nTung between Yangkam and Nachang of Bwarat in Tarok land; and iMalkan between Ghang of Tarok land and Pe. Both ceremonies mark the beginning of the planting season. Some sections of Tarok outrightly call themselves simply as Pe (apart from Oga Pe who are Pe people who were assimilated by Tarok in living memory). This information may even carry an undertone that can be advanced as a layman's linguistic evidence.
- iv. The Jarawa-Bantu languages of Kantana and Duguri and the Chadic language of Boghom are known by the names the people call themselves. The Dugri and Burom variants are due to Tarok phonological constraints. The use of true names in this case is an indication of very recent contact. Kantana and Duguri featured prominently in local trade with Tarok in pre-colonial times because of their ironware and hand-woven cloths. Therefore, these oral traditions are only of recent origin for them to be easily recalled and even some families can be pointed to who have those ethnic identities. According to the Tarok, Duguri are reputed for powerful medicinal potions as well. Kanam language has been completely eclipsed by Boghom and so the language is unknown to the Tarok. Boghom (Burom) is well known to the Tarok but the language is only preserved in recent folktale songs (Sibomana 1981; Longtau 1997) and by bilingual speakers and families that trace their descent to those directions.
- v. Tal features very prominently in Tarok oral traditions of origins. However, according to Banfa (1985) most Tarok informants do not even know the geographical location of Tal.
- vi. Contacts between Tarokoid and Zaar (Chadic), Yiwom (Chadic), Jukun (Jukunoid), Goemai (Chadic) and more Ngas (Chadic) are

within living memory and predated the coming of the British in 1902 by not more than 400 years.

The above names are the ones recalled in Tarok oral traditions. Almost every single Tarok family today has a member who can trace his descent to one of those non-Tarok groups. Such peoples have been completely assimilated, including immigrants who came in the last 200 years through marriage and initiation into the male masquerade cult. The influx of Ngas to Tarok land in modern times was stopped only around 1970. Today Tarok is a lingua franca even amongst Plain Ngas of Amper in Kanke LGA of Plateau State. Can oral tradition shed more light on the linguistic geography of the area?

3.2 Outlines of Tarok oral traditions of origin and prehistoric implications

Tables 3–6 are summaries of oral traditions of probable origins of Tarok clans as found in Shagaya (2005). They reveal that many Tarok clans claim Chadic origins. Tarok land has been divided into 5 major administrative districts, namely Gazum, Bwarat, Gani, Langtang and Langtang-South. The Gazum Grouping comprises three sub-groups called Zini, Ghang and Kwallak.

Table 3 gives the names of clans in the Gazum Grouping and their origins according to oral traditions.

Table 3. Origin of Clans of Gazum Grouping

Name of clan	Chadic affiliation	Name of clan	Plateau affiliation
Dif̄ar	Ngas	Gif̄əng	Pe
Damb̄ər	Ngas	Kulloḱ	Pe
Gantang	Tal	Man (in Ghang)	Pe
Jwakb̄ər	Ngas	Gong (in Kwallak)	Pe
Lagan	Tal	Dangyil/Dangre (in Kwallak)	Pe
Luktuk	Tal	Kurswang (in Ghang)	Pe
Warok	Tal		
Kwangpe (in Ghang)	Goemai		

Nyallang	Goemai		
Dwal (in Ghang)	Tel/ Montol		
So (in Kwallak)	Ngas		
Nan (in Kwallak)	Tal		
Guzum (in Kwallak)	Tal		
Total	13	Total	6

Table 4 attempts to summarise the complex set-up of clans in the Bwarat Grouping.

Table 4. Origin of Clans of Bwarat Grouping

Name of clan	Chadic affiliation	Name of clan	Benue-Congo affiliation
Dangre	Tal	Mer	Pe
Diyani	Tal	Dangyil	Pe
Gbak	Tal	Jat	Pe/Jukun
Ghanghan	Tal	Oga Pe	Pe
Kamtak	Tal	Singnga	Yangkam
Kau	Tal	Nachang	Yangkam
Laka	Yiwom		
Lokmak	Tal		
Nggarak	Yiwom		
Nggum	Yiwom		
Nyinang	Yiwom		
Total	11	Total	6

The oral traditions of origins of the Pe clans in the Gani Grouping of Table 5 together with Nachang in Table 4 hold an important clue to the link between Tarok and Yangkam. Nachang, Wang and Dokos are 'isolated' Tarokoid groups in the Gani District.

Table 5. Origin of Tarok Clans of Gani Grouping

Name of clan	Chadic affiliation	Name of clan	Benue-Congo affiliation
Gwan	Tal	Binding	Jukun
Lyangjit	Tal	Wang	Pe
Mwal	Tal	Dokos	Pe
Piga	Tal	Singnga	Yangkam
Shamot	Tal		
Laka	Yiwom		
Total	6	Total	4

Dokos do not have an elaborate tradition of origin. All they could recall is that they had lived in the Gani area for a very long time and Wang was the next to join them. However, their entire population was almost wiped out because of a plague that followed their eating of a rat. Unlike other clans of the area, they have no ritual site on the Tarok hill settlements because they have been completely assimilated by Piga clan. This may be a clue to the fact that they were one of the earliest constituents of Tarok that moved to the Benue Valley before others as postulated here. It is the consensus of opinion of elders that they must be Pe. It is easy to imagine what happened. Probably Dokos left an intermediate Tarokoid homeland and moved into the Benue trough. Yangkam would have followed. Nachang was left in Bwarat area, and today that constituted strong evidence of the route Yangkam took as they headed for the plains. It could well be that some Dokos joined them as they headed for the Wase Rock enclave. Thus, the population of Dokos was further depleted. A detailed ethno-linguistic and/or archaeological investigation of that proposed route might yield some useful information beyond conjectures.

The Langtang Grouping is the most populated and the major source of the Ngas lexicon that is found in the Tarok language. This Grouping is also referred to as Nimɓər “admixture of peoples”. Table 6 gives a summary of their origins.

Table 6. Origin of Clans of Langtang Grouping

Name	Chadic affiliation	Name of clan	Benue-Congo affiliation
Ce/Gan	Tal	Kangkur*	Pe
Gəli	Tal*	Nyikət*	Jukun
Mbəp	Tal*	Timwat	Pe
Mwanso	Tal*		
Nani	Tel*		
Ritak	Tal (also called Kumbwang)		
Korgam	unknown*		
Total	7	Total	3

* Now completely assimilated by Gan

Three sub-groups are found in Nimbər, namely Ce/Gan, Ritak (i.e. Kumbwang) and Timwat. Timwat stands out as a sore thumb in this grouping. They claim to be the original speakers of the Tarok language that is spoken today. To buttress their claim, they said when the Ngas/Tal peoples increased in number and were able to speak their language fluently, they had to evolve a speech code called iTimwat in order to be able to communicate freely even in the presence of the immigrants. That oral tradition agrees with the language data that Tarok is not Chadic even though the majority of its speakers today are of Chadic origin.

Tables 2–5 establish a *prima facie* that according to oral traditions, most clans that make up the Tarok people are of Chadic origin today but the language is Plateau. I have spent energy and gone into great detail on oral traditions to illustrate that finding the missing links for the genetic classification of languages should be a holistic task. The resources to undertake such thorough analysis of oral traditions may not be there. However, it has been demonstrated here that it can be a useful tool in the reconstruction of the story of mankind. A further but less obvious point is that speakers of Tarokoid languages already populated the enclave of Southeast Jos Plateau long before the arrival and spread of Chadic-speakers as Ron and Ngas. This is discussed at greater length in 4.3.

What marks has this seeming influx of Chadic peoples, indicated by Tables 3–6, left on the Tarok language in particular and Tarokoid in general according to the synchronic data?

4 Cognates between Tarok and Chadic languages

In this section, cognates between Tarok and some Chadic languages will be analysed. Principal sources for the comparison are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Principal sources of data for lexical comparison

Language or group	Source	Abbreviation
Berom; other Plateau languages	Blench wordlists hard/electronic mss	RMB
Chadic	Jungrauthmayr & Ibrizimow (1995)	JI
Ngas	Burquest (1971), author's field notes	B, SRL
Ron group	Seibert & Blench (ined.)	S&B
Tarok/Tarokoid	Blench wordlists	RMB
	Longtau & Blench (forthcoming)	L&B
	Author's field notes	SRL
	Author's Tarok Grammar	SRL TG

4.1 Tarok/Ngas cognates and historical implications

Tables 8a, 8b and 8c are generated from a comparative wordlist of about 1000 items. The direction of borrowing of Tarok words by Ngas speakers (Table 8a); Table 8b are Ngas cognates by Tarok speakers and Table 8c are borrowings by both languages of miscellaneous nature. The commentary columns give more insights so that no extensive discussion will be warranted. Each cognate in Tables 8a, 8b and 8c is evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Look-alike-ability and identical meanings.
2. Cognates already identified in standard publications as Niger-Congo/Benue-Congo/Plateau or Afro-asiatic/Chadic roots. Therefore, the determination of the direction of borrowing of any cog-

nate that has been identified as a classic root becomes straightforward.

3. Any cognate found in two or more Tarokoid languages but in just that one Chadic language is treated as a Tarokoid root. Similarly, any cognate found in two or more Chadic languages but in just that one Tarokoid language is treated as a Chadic root. If a language has a doublet and one form is cognate with a neighbouring language that has none, then it is the second term that has been borrowed.
4. Morphophonemic considerations such as borrowed sounds, sound-correspondences, compounding of words and weakening of sounds shed light on the direction of borrowing. For instance, the velar nasal in word final position is a widespread Plateau feature and if found in a cognate, Chadic might have borrowed the word. If a cognate appears to be compounded or extended, then the shorter version is more original. Similarly, if a cognate exhibits weakening of a consonant by using a semi-vowel or voicing or prosodies such as palatalisation or labialisation then the plausible direction of borrowing can easily be suggested.

Table 8a. Tarok loans borrowed by Ngas speakers

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	NGAS	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
1.	back	<i>asim</i>	<i>zim</i>	Cf. Sur <i>gim</i> , Yangkam <i>pinza</i> .	SRL, RMB
2.	bow	<i>ijáj</i>	<i>njan</i>	Cf. Pe <i>ì-gigyan</i> , Berom-Foron <i>gbànj</i> and Tahoss <i>mbanj</i> . Cf. Karfa <i>banjáj</i> However, the Tarokoid languages Yangkam and Sur still use the Niger-Congo root <i>-ta</i> (<i>táá Y. and kita S.</i>). The other Ngas word for 'bow' is <i>rì</i> .	B, RMB, SRL
3.	cloud	<i>ilitù</i>	<i>lupú</i>	Cf. Sur <i>leri</i> .	SRL, RMB
4.	corn stalk filter	<i>akànjfàt</i>	<i>kasej</i>	The word is simplified in Ngas or a compound found with the Tarok word <i>fák</i> 'to filter' as is the case with Sur <i>fifak</i> . Cf. Pe <i>u-karjsat</i> .	SRL, RMB
5.	corpse	<i>akúm</i>	<i>kuum</i>	Cf. Sur <i>tukum</i> , Yangkam uses the Niger-Congo root- <i>ku</i> .	SRL, RMB
6.	evil spirit	<i>ijiji</i>	<i>ʒìgì</i>	Tarok form is in children's speech. The first part in Tarok is derived from the expression: <i>izè iga nri atak</i> 'animal that devours'. The etymology of the Ngas term is <i>izè</i> of Tarok.	B
7.	father	<i>pòn</i>	<i>pup</i>	Burquest (1971) records 'father' also as <i>bàbá</i> .	SRL, B
8.	gourd-bottle	<i>abəj</i>	<i>bej</i>	Cf. Yangkam <i>boj</i>	SRL RMB
9.	grind	<i>kpà</i>	<i>gwak</i>	Cf. Sur <i>gwak</i> , Yangkam <i>gba</i> , Ake <i>kpa</i> .	RMB

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	NGAS	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
10.	house fly	<i>icijcìŋ</i>	<i>nj/ñjciìl</i>	The root is widespread in Benue Congo.	RMB, SRL
11.	hunger	<i>ayáŋ</i>	<i>ni:n</i>	Cf. Sur <i>yyɔŋ</i> , <i>yyekwan</i> ‘famine’; very widespread in Plateau.	SRL, RMB
12.	lightning	<i>amílám</i>	<i>màlɔp</i>	Cf. Yangkam <i>mílum</i> .	B, SRL
13.	millet	<i>imàr</i>	<i>mar</i>	Cf. Yangkam <i>marak</i> , Sur <i>mər</i> , Pe <i>ime</i> , Mijili <i>amo</i> .	B, S&B, RMB, SRL
14.	mother	<i>ùnà</i>	<i>nin</i>	Cf. Pe <i>na</i> .	SRL
15.	new	<i>-pipe</i>	<i>mpwi</i>	Cf. Sur <i>pi</i> , Pe <i>mpe.pi-</i> is a well-attested Niger-Congo root.	B, RMB, SRL
16.	patch on cloth	<i>abyáp</i>	<i>mbyap</i>	Confirmed by the Ngas informant.	B, L&B
17.	provide space	<i>caŋ</i>	<i>ǰáŋ</i>	Confirmed by the Ngas informant.	SRL
18.	rotten beans brew	<i>mmànàŋ</i>	<i>manana</i>	Confirmed by the Ngas informant that it is a food item of the Tarok.	SRL
19.	shiny	<i>mílám</i>	<i>mwalim</i>	Note that the Ngas word means ‘smooth’ and ‘slippery’.	SRL
20.	shoe	<i>akwàp</i>	<i>kap</i>	Cf. Yangkam <i>taxap</i> , Sur <i>tukwa</i> , Pe <i>kap</i> , Horom <i>paksak</i> , Rukul <i>i-kpaksak</i> .	B, S&B, RMB, SRL
21.	skink	<i>adun</i>	<i>ñdú</i>	The nasal has eroded in Ngas.	SRL

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	NGAS	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
22.	sling	ñcwàláák	ncwálat̩	A sound shift involving the velar nasal took place in the Ngas form.	B, SRL
23.	small	-yen	yinyin	Cf. Horom òyèn'child', Rukul a-wyen, Eggon á-wyí (reconstructed *ó-yén in Proto Lower-Cross); Fyem áyin 'mother'.	B, RMB, SRL, JI
24.	stone	ípát̩	p̩at̩ (Hill dialect)	Cf. Ningye mpat̩. The other Ngas word for 'stone' is zwal.	RMB, SRL
25.	stool	itòk	pitot̩	Cf. Pe ì-ten, Yangkam toyom. Sur yizat̩, which is a cognate to Tarok's izan 'wood rack' which falls under the same domain of meaning.	SRL, RMB
26.	strength	ikàm	kám	Confirmed by the Ngas informant.	SRL
27.	sweet (tasty)	cāŋ	ŋat̩	Cf. Yangkam ŋat̩.	SRL
28.	twist (a rope)	myar	mya:r	Cf. Sur myerkat, Yangkam myar.	SRL, RMB
29.	weave	lòk	lòk	Cf. Sur lòk.	SRL RMB
30.	wooden basket frame	ajwár	jwa:r	Reputed to be a Tarok basket for carrying pots.	SRL
31.	young man	ùyènzèm	gyèmzāt̩	The palatal and velar sounds in the Ngas form are widespread in Plateau.	SRL, RMB

Table 8b -Ngas loans by speakers of Tarok

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	NGAS	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
1.	basket (type)	<i>m̄bāndar</i>	<i>bāndār</i>	Cf. Pe <i>m̄bāndar</i> , Sur <i>m̄bandar</i> . All three Tarokoid languages borrowed this item only recently. Generic terms for basket in Tarokoid are: Yangkam <i>nnap</i> , Tarok/Pe <i>anap</i> .	SRL, B
2.	be heavy	<i>tōn</i>	<i>twɔn</i>	The Tarok cognate means 'well built'.	SRL
3.	candle tree	<i>mpét</i>	<i>pet</i>	Widespread in West Chadic 3A.	B
4.	God	<i>iNan</i>	<i>Ne:n</i>	Widespread in West Chadic 3A. Tarok is the only Plateau language that uses the term instead of the 'Sun'.	B, JI
5.	important person	<i>ùdàskàm</i>	<i>diskam</i>	Widespread in West Chadic 3A.	B, SRL
6.	local bread	<i>mpàmpám</i>	<i>pempem</i>	The full Tarok name is <i>mpàmpám oDwal</i> of Tel, a relative of Ngas.	L&B, B
7.	scabies	<i>akwat</i>	<i>kwas</i>	In Tarok the syllable final strident is realised as unreleased plosive.	B
8.	small bag	<i>agal</i>	<i>nzwal</i>	Cf. Sur <i>gari</i> . This is a borrowing from Ngas into both Tarok and Sur. The process must have taken place after the split of Tarok and Sur because the Tarok word for 'bag' is <i>akindin</i> .	B, RMB, SRL
9.	spear	<i>ngájik</i>	<i>gafi</i>	This generic Ngas word for 'spear' is a 'special ritual spear' in Tarok. Cf. also Sur <i>gafi</i> Yangkam <i>gəs</i> .	SRL, RMB

Table 8c – Tarok and Ngas borrowings of uncertain/miscellaneous nature

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	NGAS	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
1.	boil	<i>fil</i>	<i>fil</i>	Direction of borrowing is uncertain.	SRL
2.	duck	<i>itílá</i>	<i>tíílá</i>	Direction of borrowing is uncertain.	SRL
3.	grass hut temporary house	<i>apák</i>	<i>púk</i>	Very widespread in this region. Cf. Hausa <i>buka</i> and Berom <i>búk</i> .	B, S&B
4.	hunger	<i>ayátŋ</i>	<i>ni:n</i>	Cf. Sur <i>yyɔŋ</i> , <i>yyekwan</i> ‘famine’, very widespread in Pla-teau.	SRL, RMB
5.	smallpox	<i>nìmìn</i>	<i>girmin</i>	The direction of borrowing can be suggested. If the Ngas form is a compound, it is likely to be a borrowing.	B
6.	speak	<i>là</i>	<i>lə</i>	Direction of borrowing is uncertain.	SRL
7.	twin	<i>-jèn</i>	<i>játŋ</i>	Direction of borrowing is uncertain as the same word is found in Mupun (Frajzyngier 1991) and Kofyar cluster.	B

The criteria listed above form the theoretical basis in reaching the categorical statements made in the commentaries and therefore may be considered subjective outside this work.⁵

Taking widespread cognates together with cultural borrowings, it can be said that an overwhelming number of look-alikes are Tarok loans into Ngas. Tables 8a,b,c clearly demonstrate that the contact between Tarok and Ngas has left a limited mark on the Tarok lexicon. The first implication of this for the history of Tarok speakers is that no wave of Chadic immigrants joined the original Benue-Congo population, but rather the immigrants came in trickles.

4.2 Tarok/Ron cognates and historical implications

The evidence of contact between the Chadic language of Ron and the Tarokoid language of Tarok given in Tables 9a and b is even more intriguing because of the geographic distance between the two languages today. The table was generated from an unpublished comparative wordlist of over 1000 items compiled by Uwe Seibert and Roger Blench (ined). In order to determine the direction of borrowing, each item was compared with Tarokoid as a whole, the neighbouring Plateau languages, Benue-Congo and according to the criteria set out in §4.1. For most items, there is no local source of borrowing from neighbouring Plateau languages Horom, Barkul etc. as may be expected. Instead, the loans are from Tarokoid.

The high number of cognates between Tarok and Ron is a pointer to the fact that the Proto-Ron language came under the influence of Tarokoid before their present expansion to the escarpment of the Jos Plateau from their probable nucleus at Fyer/Tambes. The absence of data on borrowing of Ron by speakers of Tarok is an indication that no active contact is going on. However, active contact is ongoing between Tarokoid and Ngas.

⁵ Tone markings for the Tarok data and Ngas collected by me are certain. However, tones in the Ron data by Uwe Seibert are provisional.

Table 9a Tarok loans by speakers of Ron

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
1.	agree/answer	<i>máńń</i>	<i>mun</i>	Monguna <i>mu:n</i> Karfa <i>muná</i> forms are same reflexes of Ron.	S&B
2.	antelope (generic)	<i>ńkàr</i>	<i>cakar</i>	Ron added a longer prefix.	S&B
3.	bend (verb)	<i>gan</i>	<i>màgàn</i> Sha	Cf. Pe <i>ngommen</i> , Yangkam <i>gorj</i> .	S, RMB
4.	big calabash	<i>ńgój</i>	<i>igwoj</i> Tambes	Tambes represents the cognate.	S&B
5.	big, large, great	<i>agban</i>	<i>mgbáj</i> Mangar	Benue Congo root.	S&B
6.	body	<i>izár</i>	<i>zík</i> Mangar <i>zàk</i> Sha	Cf. Pe <i>ì-set</i> .	S&B, RMB
7.	bow	<i>ijáj</i>	<i>banjáj</i> Karfa	Plateau root instead of the Niger-Congo root <i>-ta</i> . Cf. Pe <i>igigyanj</i> , and Ngas <i>ńjanj</i> .	S, JI, RMB
8.	buffalo	<i>iyeeet</i> (Yangkam)	<i>yát</i> Daffo	Cf. Sur <i>yjet</i> . Tarok <i>izàr</i> , Pe <i>isat</i> is the more widespread Plateau root <i>za-</i> in BCCW.	S, L&B
9.	crowned crane	<i>ijanjà</i>	<i>jarát</i> Daffo- Butura, <i>jarat</i> Bokkos <i>jarát</i> Monguna	The Chadic suffix is a modification.	S&B

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
10.	deleb-palm	<i>ŋgáŋ</i>	<i>ŋgaŋ</i> Bokkos	Cf. Pe <i>ngan</i> , Yangkam <i>kaŋa</i> , Sur <i>gan</i> . In Fyer <i>ingan</i> refers to 'oil palm'.	S&B
11.	despise	<i>bèt</i>	<i>tíbèt</i> Bokkos	The Ron form is a modification.	S&B
12.	dig, excavate	<i>bok</i>	<i>bor</i> Daffo-Butura, Bokkos <i>bo</i> Mangar	The Ron form is a weakening.	S&B
13.	drink	<i>wa</i>	<i>wó</i> Bokkos	A widespread root, but cf. Pe <i>wu</i> , Yangkam, Sur and Alumu <i>wá</i> .	S&B
14.	drum (generic)	<i>igàŋgáŋ</i>	<i>kingaŋ</i> Bokkos, <i>àŋgəŋgáŋ</i> Monguna, <i>gəŋgáŋ</i> Mundut	Plateau root.	S&B
15.	ear	<i>acwáŋ</i>	<i>atón</i> Sha	Cf. Pe <i>uton</i> , Sur <i>koto</i> , Yangkam <i>ton</i> , Cara <i>kicuŋ</i> , Tahos <i>cuy</i>	S, L&B
16.	fish (generic)	<i>igwàli</i>	<i>gwájé</i> Sha, <i>g^wojé</i> Monguna <i>gùjé</i> Daffo- Butura, Bokkos <i>gijé</i> Mangar	Chadic suffix replaces the Tarok liquid <i>-li</i> .	S&B
17.	gazelle (generic)	<i>ifí</i>	<i>fáfi</i> Bokkos <i>fífé</i> Karfa	The Ron form carries a long prefix.	S&B
18.	grave	<i>awap</i>	<i>wuf</i> Mangar <i>wonv</i> Mundat	A Tarokoid loan into Chadic. Cf. Pe <i>tiwap</i> , Yangkam <i>woop</i> .	S, RMB

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
19.	hard	<i>kam</i>	<i>kamaán</i> Daffo-Butura	Tarok loan into Ron.	S&B
20.	hare	<i>izum</i>	<i>sumór</i> Mundat, Richa <i>sumbó:r</i> Karfa	A widespread Plateau root and a likely source for Hausa <i>zoomoo</i> . Cf. Pe <i>isom</i> , Yangkam <i>wum</i> , Cara <i>izum</i> . Sur uses the Ngas <i>kafwan</i> .	S&B
21.	liver	<i>anyi/ani</i>	<i>nín</i> Monguna	A widespread Benue-Congo root, but here a likely Tarok loan into Ron.	S&B, RMB
22.	mix (as dry ingredients in soup only)	<i>yír</i>	<i>yèr</i> Sha <i>yíráy</i> Karfa	Chadic is a modification.	S&B, RMB
23.	molar	<i>íbatj</i>	<i>bám</i> 'jaw' Mangar	Platoid loan into Ron.	S&B
24.	remember	<i>riŋ</i>	<i>tsirim</i> Mundat	Cf. Pe <i>lenkat</i> , Sur <i>lyeŋ</i> , Yangkam <i>ryaŋ</i> .	S
25.	roast (without fat or oil, grill)	<i>wàŋ</i>	'fry' <i>waŋ</i> Daffo-Butura, Bokkos <i>faŋ</i> Monguna	For the semantic shift in Ron see Yangkam <i>vaŋ</i> and Sur <i>voŋ</i> , Pe <i>mva</i> .	S&B
26.	roof, thatch	<i>amár</i>	<i>mawár</i> Daffo-Butura, Mundat, Sha <i>awár</i> Monguna	The prefix in Ron is a modification.	S&B, RMB

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
27.	shoot effectively	<i>fár</i>	'hunt' <i>far</i> Daffo-Butura, Bokkos <i>war</i> Monguna, <i>wâr</i> Mundat, Karfa.	The Ron cognate <i>war</i> is a weakening.	S&B
28.	silk-cotton tree (red flower)	<i>ngbyàngbyán</i>	<i>bánàk</i> Mundat <i>bân</i> Karfa	Chadic suffix is a modification.	RMB
29.	skink	<i>adun</i>	<i>ndakúl</i> Daffo- Butura <i>ndakul</i> Bokkos	Cf. Ngas <i>ndu</i> where the nasal is deleted, but in the case of Ron a suffix is added.	S&B
30.	sorghum	<i>ikúr</i>	<i>akúr</i> Mundat <i>ákôr</i> Karfa <i>akutúr</i> Richa	This is a Niger-Congo root.	S&B, RMB
31.	sour	<i>sám</i>	<i>mumwesán</i> Daffo-Butura	The Ron form is a modification.	S&B
32.	sow/plant/transplant	<i>suk</i>	<i>sok</i> Bokkos <i>su</i> Daffo <i>set</i> Fyer	The Tarok synonym <i>ál</i> has Tarokoid support, cf. Pe <i>ɓwak</i> , Sur <i>ɓar/ɓi</i> , Toro <i>ɓya</i> . This points to a proximity that the Ron nucleus was nearer to Tarok than the other Tarokoid languages and at the same time an evidence that the Tarokoid split took place before the arrival of Chadic. Cf. Jili <i>sé</i> .	RMB

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	COMMENTARY	SOURCE
33.	strength	<i>ajij</i> (a giant)	<i>manjey</i> Daffo- Butura <i>njéj</i> Bokkos <i>njey</i> Mangar <i>ngbé:r</i> Karfa	The Ron form is a modification.	S&B
34.	tie	<i>sàr</i>	<i>zar</i> Tambes	Cf. Berom <i>cát</i> , Sur <i>ʒit</i> , Horom <i>jet</i> Fyem <i>jit</i> , Ayu <i>rɔp</i> and Tahos <i>rɔɔs</i> are cognates of the Tarok synonym <i>ran</i> . The Sur word validates a Tarokoid link with Fyem, Horom and the Berom and Ayu/Tahos words establish the Tarok word as not a Chadic loan.	S&B

Table 9b – Tarok and Ron borrowings of uncertain/miscellaneous nature

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	SOURCE
1.	branch (verb)	<i>wòl</i>	<i>wel</i> Daffo-Butura and Bokkos, <i>wél</i> Monguna, <i>wé:l</i> Karfa	S&B
2.	climb high	<i>kúr</i>	<i>kur</i> 'heap' in Karfa	S&B
3.	cobra	<i>ipí</i>	<i>abi</i> Bokkos	S&B
4.	dig, excavate	<i>ɓok</i>	<i>ɓor</i> Daffo-Butura, Bokkos, <i>ɓo</i> Mangar	S&B
5.	ear	<i>acwáj</i>	<i>atón</i> Sha	S, L&B
6.	forge	<i>la</i>	<i>lân</i> Bokkos <i>lá</i> in Daffo-Butura 'melt with heat'	S&B, RMB
7.	frog	<i>izər</i>	<i>nzàrkotj</i> Fyer	S&B, RMB

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	SOURCE
8.	gather, collect	<i>büt</i>	<i>subüt</i> Daffo-Butura, <i>subüt</i> Bokkos, <i>subüt</i> Monguna	S&B, TG
9.	gazelle (generic)	<i>ift</i>	<i>fafi</i> Bokkos, <i>fifié</i> Karfa	S&B
10	god (high)	<i>iNan</i>	<i>Neen</i> Fyer	S&B
11.	gourd	<i>abəŋ</i>	<i>baŋ</i> Tames	S&B
12.	grave	<i>awap</i>	<i>wuf</i> Mangar, <i>wony</i> Mundat	S, RMB
13.	hard	<i>kam</i>	<i>kamaán</i> Daffo-Butura	S&B
14.	hare	<i>izum</i>	<i>sumór</i> Mundat, Richa, <i>sumbó:r</i> Karfa	S&B
15.	heap (verb)	<i>biŋ</i>	<i>hibiŋ</i> Daffo-Butura	S&B
16.	hunger/ famine	<i>ayaŋ</i>	<i>yuy</i> in Mangar	S&B, RMB
17.	in-law (mother, father, daughter)	<i>-ká</i>	<i>ka</i> Bokkos, <i>ákaká</i> Karfa	S&B
18.	in-law (mother, father, daughter)	<i>-ká</i>	<i>ka</i> Bokkos, <i>ákaká</i> Karfa	S&B
19.	knee	<i>iriŋ</i>	<i>arum</i> Monguna <i>aróm</i> Richa	S&B
20.	lay as a huge pile	<i>səp</i>	<i>səm</i> heap in Mundat	S&B
21.	load	<i>dík</i> (to be heavy)	<i>ndík</i> Daffo-Butura	S&B
22.	monkey	<i>ikírám</i>	<i>kerəŋ</i> Monguna, <i>kiir</i> Fyer	S&B
23.	pied crow	<i>igürók</i>	<i>ŋgorok</i> Bokkos	S&B

SRL	GLOSS	TAROK	RON	SOURCE
24.	roof, thatch	<i>amár</i>	<i>mawár</i> Daffo-Butura, Mundat, Sha <i>awár</i> Monguna,	S&B, RMB
25.	send (so. to do sth.)	<i>ré</i>	<i>rut</i> Daffo-Butura, <i>ro</i> Bokkos	S&B
26.	sleep	<i>rá</i>	<i>rák</i> Bokkos, <i>rák</i> Fyer	S&B
27.	sour	<i>sám</i>	<i>mumwesán</i> Daffo-Butura	S&B
28.	sow/plant/transplant	<i>suk</i>	<i>sok</i> Bokkos, <i>su</i> Daffo, <i>set</i> Fyer	RMB
29.	speak	<i>la</i>	<i>là</i> 'voice' in Daffo-Butura	S&B
30.	split, chop into pieces	<i>bwak</i>	<i>bak</i> Bokkos <i>bwáy</i> Karfa, <i>bak</i> Fyer	S&B
31.	strength	<i>ajij</i> (a giant)	<i>manjey</i> in Daffo-Butura, <i>njéj</i> in Bokkos, <i>njey</i> in Mangar, <i>məghé:r</i> in Karfa	S&B
32.	twin	<i>ijèn</i>	<i>njân</i> Daffo-Butura, Mangar, Sha, <i>anjân</i> Monguna, <i>jáj</i> Ngas	S&B
33.	vulture	<i>ngùlúk</i>	<i>gulúk</i> Karfa, <i>àngtùlu</i> Mundat	S&B
34.	widen (e.g. a hole)	<i>byàn</i>	<i>bwáy</i> Daffo-Butura, <i>báj</i> Monguna	S&B
35.	with	<i>kǎ</i>	<i>ká</i> Daffo-Butura	S&B

4.3 Prehistoric implications from data of the languages in contact

4.3.1 Cognate data

A first historical inference that can be made from the data in Tables 8a,b,c and 9a,b is that the Chadic languages of Ron and Kulere came in contact with Tarokoid at a different period from Ngas. Secondly, as the number of loan words between Tarokoid and Ron is higher than Ngas, this points to more intense contact than with Ngas. It is most likely Ron speakers came in contact with Tarokoid before other Chadic groups moved into the Tarokoid homeland I am postulating as Sur. There are not many loans between Ron/Ngas and Tarok/Tarokoid apart from widespread roots. This is a strong evidence that contacts occurred successively. Blench (2001) actually postulates that Fyer and Tambes are the Ron speakers who 'stayed at home'. Ngas was not present at that homeland.

Curiously enough, the lack of influence of Tarokoid on Fyer and Tambes is least. At the moment, an explanation that can be proffered is that in prehistoric times Ron was in direct contact with Tarokoid unlike her sister languages. We can even suggest a kind of bilingualism between Tarok and Ron but the present geographic distance has masked the phenomenon. Cognates involving several basic vocabularies are even more unexpected since contacts are not supposed to have been intense. The factors that could have triggered the west movement of the Ron speakers to create further distance leaving Fyer and Tambes at the present Ron homeland cannot be accounted for yet. However, it could be argued that it was when the Ron began to expand that they came into close contact with Tarokoid.

Indirect evidence for the conclusion that the Ron came into contact with Tarokoid before contact with Ngas may be the absence of common forms in all the West Chadic languages such as Tel, Goemai, Mupun and Mwaghavul. Major sources such as Jungrathmayr (1970), Kraft (1981), Frajzyngier (1991), and Fitzpatrick (1911) were examined but no special borrowings could be established. The implication for the present-day geographic gap between Tarokoid and Ron is that speakers of Ron parted with Tarok long before the recent arrival of speakers of languages that now constitute the intrusive populations. A deduction that can be made about the disparity in shared cognates between Tarokoid and Ron versus Ngas is that it is Ngas rather than

Ron is the more recent expansion. It is easy to postulate that Ron is thus an older branch of West Chadic that pre-dates the arrival of Ngas. Nettings (1968) gave the year of the arrival of Ngas to the Plateau area as 1300 AD. Their arrival created a gap between Boghom and Yangkam. Sur is the Tarokoid language that ‘stayed at home’. Yangkam split away first and its speakers left along the migration route that would give rise to Pe and Tarok. From this group, Tarok split, leaving Pe approximately where they are today. With the arrival of West Chadic languages in the area, a gap was created between Pe and Tarok. Ron was the first West Chadic language to move into the Tarokoid homeland of Tapshin and Ngas was the next to follow. A further distance was created between Sur and Yangkam with the arrival of Boghom from the Bauchi area (Shimizu 1978). The impacts of these migrations isolated Tarok for a long time. The consequence may have been that Tarok retained more reflexes of proto-Tarokoid than the other languages (Blench ined. b). A further implication of the isolation of Tarok is that a careful examination of its lexicon may reveal that it has preserved some traits of great antiquity (Jungraithmayr 1982). Ngas precipitated the movement of Proto-Ron from the original homeland at Fyer/Tambes. Ngas settlement at that time was at Duk only and Tarok uses that place name for Ngas even today. It is realistic on the basis of Table 8 to postulate that contact between Ron and Tarokoid was longer than the contact between Ngas and Tarokoid.

A more complex speculation is that prior to Tarokoid contact with Chadic, interaction with Adamawa-Ubangian languages could have precipitated the split of proto-Tarokoid. Therefore, the Chadic influence must be considered as a late event. A follow up study to test the hypothesis may be useful.

However, the data here shows only interaction on the Tarokoid/Chadic border area. It has been clearly demonstrated that Southeast Plateau was an area of intensive contact between Chadic and Plateau languages in a phase pre-dating the expansion of West Chadic to the edge of the escarpment. Tarokoid was the farthest flung group of Plateau speakers in East Central Nigeria before the arrival of Chadic. Proto-Tarokoid had been in this area long enough for it to have dif-

ferentiated into Sur, Yangkam, Pe, Tarok and others to be discovered, before Chadic contacts.

4.3.2 Evidence from interpretation of names

Place names preserve interesting historical information.

4.3.2.1 Duk

The Ngas settlement called *Duk* is also the name the Tarok people call Ngas people, *oDúk*. This settlement is in the Ron homeland of Tambes/Fyer.

4.3.2.2 Nyelleng

Nyelleng is a settlement in Ngas land that is about 4 kms to Tapshin the main settlement of the Tarokoid language Sur. A section of the Tarok people who claims descent from the Tarokoid language Pe has a village called Funyallang. An etymology of the name will shed some historical facts. The *nyallang* of *funyallang* is the same *nyelleng* in Ngas area. *Funyallang* is a compound name made up of a verb *fu* ‘to pierce through’ + a noun *nyelleng*, meaning ‘people who migrated through Nyelleng’. The etymology lends credence to a historical link between Sur and Tarok.

4.3.2.3 Dishili/Tapshin

Dishili is the name the Ngas people call the Sur people. An oral tradition of Ngas from Kor claims that they once settled at Dishili which is Tapshin (in Sur language). It is the homeland of Tarokoid ‘who stayed at home’. Kor is the westernmost Ngas settlement today.⁶

5 Conclusions and recommendations

1. The hilly area from Tapshin, Nyelleng, Duk, Tambes to Fyer has been suggested as a plausible homeland for Tarokoid and Ron languages. The Chadic languages Ron and Ngas came from the

⁶ I am grateful to Engr Yusufu I. Gomos of Kor for supplying this information to me on 6th October 2003. He identified the following Ngas villages whose speech forms have changed considerably due to the impact of bilingualism in the last 50 years or so: Kor, Garram, Kulukning, Tayin, Manget, Hikmwaram, Belming, Pangpel, Darang and Jang. Ngas spoken in these remote and almost inaccessible villages have come under the heavy influence of Mupun, Chip and Tal.

northeast to encounter Tarokoid. The area now occupied by Yangkam, Tarok and Pe was a contiguous Tarokoid belt prior to the Ngas expansion.

2. So far, evidence for pre-Tarokoid languages is non-existent. Presumably, there were once Adamawa languages in this area. A comparison of the Plateau languages of Shal/Zwal, Fyem and Jarawa-Bantu and Adamawa-Ubangi may be a helpful research endeavour.
3. The relatively few cognates common to Tarokoid and West Chadic languages such as Mwaghavul and Goemai compared with the numerous cognates between Tarokoid, Ngas and Ron is a pointer to histories of interaction. Ron left the Tarokoid area before the arrival of Ngas and its subsequent expansion.
4. These postulations are made with the hope that more work in the area can shed better light. A recent survey led to the collection of data of a Chadic language that was previously unknown to the scientific community, Dyarum, located between Duguza and Izere (Blench 2004).
5. The linguistic geography of Central Nigeria has remained an unexplored goldmine as far as documentation is concerned. This is an indictment against comparative and historical linguists in Nigeria. The departments of African languages and linguistics of Nigerian universities together with the National Language Institute of Nigeria can easily complete the task of describing these languages if the exercise can be properly planned and coordinated, and survey personnel trained.
6. Recent comments on the state of the classification of Plateau languages contain some elements of despair and frustration. Blench (2000) succinctly stated that the classification of Plateau languages and their place in the larger scheme of Benue-Congo have been more a matter of assertion than demonstration. He concluded that no proof is possible on their genetic classification because there is no published data on many languages. Such fears are justifiable given that it is over a century and a half since Koelle's *Polyglotta Africana* was first published and yet after such a long time the possibility of finding undocumented languages cannot be ruled out. However, not all hope is lost, provided we are able to change the paradigm by investing time and resources in getting good descriptive publications whose data can then be

used to set up sound theories. This so-called bottom-up approach in the terminology of development practitioners is a suggestion worth exploring.

7. The Tarok people themselves have spearheaded much research into their history, culture and language. Other groups in Central Nigeria can be encouraged to emulate this and a synergy will develop if scholars from the North can foster such approaches. This can be a solution to the increasingly difficult insecurity challenges in Nigeria. Outsiders must find new methodologies to circumvent such challenges as well as inaccessibility due to poor infrastructures as roads.

References

- Angas Language Committee. 1978. *Shàk nkarn kè shàktok mwa ndàn Ngas. Ngas - Hausa - English dictionary*. Jos: NBTT.
- Banfa, Stephen. 1985. *Political transformation and ethnic unification of a Plateau community - the Tarok from 19th century to c. 1954*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham dissertation.
- Ballard, Joseph A. 1971. Historical inferences from the linguistic geography of the Middle Belt. *Africa* 41(4). 294–305.
- Blench, Roger M., Kay Williamson & Bruce Connell. 1994. The diffusion of maize in Nigeria: a historical and linguistic investigation. *Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika* 15. 9–46.
- Blench, Roger M. 1995. A history of domestic animals in Northeastern Nigeria. *Cahiers des sciences humaines* 31(1). 181–237.
- Blench, Roger M. 1996. Report on the Tarokoid languages. *Iatiku* 3. 14–15.
- Blench, Roger M. 1998a. The introduction and spread of New World crops in Nigeria: a historical and linguistic investigation. In Monique Chastanet (ed.), *Plantes et paysages d'Afrique: une histoire à explorer*. Paris: Editions Karthala. 165–210.
- Blench, Roger M. 1998b. The status of the languages of central Nigeria. In Matthias Benzinger (ed.), *Endangered languages in Africa*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe. 187–205.
- Blench, Roger M. 2000a. Revising Plateau. In Ekkehard Wolff & Orin Gensler (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd World Congress of African Linguistics [WOCAL]: Leipzig 1997*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 159–174.
- Blench, Roger M. 2003. Why reconstructing comparative Ron is so problematic. In H. Ekkehard Wolff (ed.), *Topics in Chadic Linguistics. Papers from the 1st Biennial International Colloquium on the Chadic Language Family [BICCL] (Leipzig, July 5–8, 2001)*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag. 21–42.

- Blench, Roger M. (ined a.) What caused the original dispersal of Niger-Congo languages?: linguistic and archaeological models. Electronic Ms.
- Blench, Roger M. (ined b.) Tarok and related languages of east-central Nigeria: nomenclature and sub-classification.
- Blench, Roger M. The Dyarim language of Central Nigeria and its affinities. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Afroasiatic/Chadic/West/Dyarim/Dyaram%20Paris%20paper.pdf>
- Burquest, Donald A. 1971. *A preliminary study of Angas phonology*. Studies in Nigerian Languages1. Zaria: Institute of Linguistics. Kano: Center for the Study of Nigerian Languages.
- Crozier, David & Roger M. Blench. 1992. *Index of Nigerian Languages (edition 2)*. Dallas, Texas: SIL.
- Famwang, Wilson V. 1980. *The Tarok culture*. Jos: Crossroads Publications. [A printing of a 1978 manuscript].
- Fitzpatrick, Joseph F. 1911. Notes on the Yergum, Montol, Gurkawa, and Ankwe languages. *Journal of the African Society* 10. 213–221.
- Frajzyngier, Zygmunt. 1991. *A dictionary of Mupun*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1983c. Lexical interferences in the Chadic/Benue-Congo border-area. In Ekkehard Wolff, & Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg (eds.), *Studies in Chadic and Afroasiatic Linguistics*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske. 301–310.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1989. Kainji and Platoid. In John Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *Niger-Congo*. Lanham: Universities Press of America. 359–376.
- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1966. *The Languages of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hansford, Keir, John Bendor-Samuel & Ron Stanford. 1976. *An index of Nigerian languages*. Ghana: SIL.
- Hoffmann, Carl. 1970. Ancient Benue-Congo loans in Chadic? *Africana Marburgensia* 3(2). 3–23.
- Horton, Robin. 1995. The Niger-Congo Diaspora: language, geography and history. In Emenanjo E. Nolue & Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (eds.), *Issues in African Languages and Linguistics: Essays in Honour of Kay Williamson*. Aba: National Institute for Nigerian Languages. 203.
- Isichei, Elizabeth. 1982. Introduction. In Elizabeth Isichei (ed.), *Studies in the history of Plateau state, Nigeria*. London: Macmillan Press. 17.
- James, Ibrahim. 1997. *Studies in the history, politics and cultures of Southern Kaduna peoples groups*. Jos: Ladsomas Press.
- Jungraithmayr, Hermann. 1968. A comparative wordlist of the Ron languages (Southern Plateau, Northern Nigeria). *Africana Marburgensia* 1(2). 3–12.
- Jungraithmayr, Hermann. 1970. *Die Ron-Sprachen. Tschadohamitische Studien in Nordnigerien*. Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin.

- Jungraithmayr, Hermann. 1972. Fyer-Sätze. *Afrika und Übersee* 55. 258–262.
- Jungraithmayr, Hermann. 1982. Chadic within Hamitosemitic or between Hamitosemitic and Nigritic? In Hermann Jungraithmayr (ed.), *The Chadic languages in the Hamitosemitic-Nigritic border area* (Papers of the Marburg Symposium 1979). Berlin: Dietrich Reimer. 3–8.
- Jungraithmayr, Hermann & Dymitr Ibrizimow. 1995. *Chadic lexical roots*. 2 vols. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Kraft, Charles. 1981. *Chadic wordlists*. 3 vols. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Koelle, Sigismund W. 1854. *Polyglotta Africana*. London: CMS.
- Lannap, Albert (ed.) 2000, *The Tarok woman*. Jos: University of Jos Press.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 2008. *Tarok language: its basic principles and grammar*. (Kay Williamson Educational Foundation (KWEF), Nigeria Monograph Series 1). Jos: DART. [It was in mimeograph in 2004].
- Longtau, Selbut R. & Roger M. Blench (in progress). *A dictionary of Tarok*. ms.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 1991. Linguistic evidence on the origins of peoples: The case of the Tarok people of Plateau State (Nigeria). *Afrika und Übersee* 74. 191–204.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 1997. Tarok children's songs. *Afrika und Übersee* 80. 11–31.
- Longtau, Selbut R. & Roger M. Blench. (forthcoming). *Tarok dictionary*. Jos: University of Jos Press.
- Maddieson, Ian. 1972. *The Benue-Congo languages of Nigeria*. Ibadan: Mimeo.
- Netting, Robert McC. 1968. *Hill farmers of Nigeria*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Nettle, Daniel. 1998. *An outline of the Fyem language*. München: Lincom Europa. 83–93.
- Seibert, Uwe. 1998. *Das Ron von Daffo (Jos-Plateau, Zentralnigeria): morphologische, syntaktische und textlinguistische Strukturen einer westschadischen Sprache*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Seibert, Uwe & Roger M. Blench. (ined.). Ron composite. Electronic file.
- Sibomana, Leo. 1981/82. Tarok-Erzählungen. *Afrika und Übersee* 64(3). 49–279.
- Shagaya, John 2005. *Tarok History: a Publication on the historical development of the Tarok Society*. Ibadan: Daybis Ltd., Jericho.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1975. A lexicostatistical study of Plateau languages and Jukun. *Anthropological Linguistics* 17. 413–418.
- Shimizu, Kiyoshi. 1978. The Southern Bauchi Group of Chadic Languages, a survey report. *Africana Marburgensia. Special Issue* 2. 10.
- Williamson, Kay. 1971. The Benue-Congo languages & Ijo. In Thomas Albert Sebeok & Jack Berry (eds.), *Current trends in linguistics 7. Linguistics in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Den Haag: De Gruyter Mouton. 245–306.

- Williamson, Kay. 1973. *Benue-Congo comparative wordlist: Vol. 2*. Ibadan: West African Linguistic Society.
- Williamson, Kay. 1988. The pedigree of nations: historical linguistics in Nigeria. *Inaugural Lectures 1987/88*, 5. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press. 3–29.
- Williamson, Kay. 1992. Some Bantu roots in wider context. In Erwin Eberman, Erich R. Sommerauer & Karl É. Thomanek(eds.), *Komparative Afrikanistik: Sprach-, geschichts-, und literaturwissenschaftliche Aufsätze zu Ehren von Hans G. Mukarovsky anlässlich seines 70. Geburtstages*. Wien: Veröffentlichungen der Institute für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie. 387–403.
- Williamson, Kay & Kiyoshi Shimizu. 1968. *Benue-Congo comparative wordlist, Vol. 1*. Ibadan: West African Linguistic Society.
- Williamson, Kay & Roger M. Blench. 2000. Niger-Congo. In Bernd Heine & Derek Nurse (eds.), *African languages: an introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 11–42.
- Wolff, H. Ekkehard & Ludwig Gerhardt. 1977. Interferenzen zwischen Benue-Kongo- und Tschad-Sprachen. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* Suppl. 3, 2. 1518–1543.

Appendix: Comparative Affixes in Tarok and Vaghat Cluster

Vaghat Affixes	Vaghat	Gloss	Tarok	Tarok Affixes
∅	<i>mát</i>	abundant	<i>mak</i>	∅
∅	<i>pél</i>	animal	<i>i-bíl</i> ‘domestic animals’	<i>i-</i>
∅	<i>nén</i>	bird	<i>ì-níl</i>	<i>i-</i>
-a	<i>púl-à</i>	boil (verb)	<i>fíl</i>	∅
∅	<i>kúp</i>	bone	<i>a-kúp</i>	<i>a-</i>
-i	<i>gán-ì</i>	bracelet	<i>i-kan</i>	<i>i-</i>
<i>a-</i>	<i>àlín</i>	cassava	<i>alín</i> ‘root’	<i>a-</i>
<i>li</i>	<i>lì:fém</i>	chameleon	<i>ità-súm</i>	<i>i-</i>
∅	<i>bér</i>	charcoal	<i>a-bíráj</i> ‘cinders’, <i>m-birij</i> ‘soot’	<i>a-/-vN and N-/-vN</i>
∅	<i>kòk</i>	chest	<i>ikók-sók</i>	<i>i- and -sok</i>
∅	<i>káp</i>	chop (verb)	<i>káp</i> ‘to divide/ share’	∅

Vaghat Affixes	Vaghat	Gloss	Tarok	Tarok Affixes
∅	<i>nák</i>	clan	<i>ùnàl/onàl</i> ‘relation(s)’	<i>u-/o-</i>
∅	<i>lúj</i>	cloth	<i>ilùkwàn</i>	<i>i- and -kwaN</i>
<i>gú-</i>	<i>gúrúm</i>	cripple	<i>ùgùrùm</i>	<i>ugu-</i>
<i>-zí</i>	<i>gùn-zí</i>	crooked	<i>gən</i>	∅
<i>-dik</i>	<i>dìmdík</i>	dark (colour)	<i>dín</i> ‘to be black/blacken’	∅
<i>a-</i>	<i>ámè</i>	dew	<i>ìmì-myàŋ</i>	<i>imi-</i>
∅	<i>kū</i>	die	<i>kú</i>	∅
<i>-na</i>	<i>bàná</i>	fasten	<i>bam</i>	∅
∅	<i>mák</i>	fat (verb)	<i>mwal</i> , but <i>mak</i> ‘to be tall’	∅
∅	<i>bēp</i>	fats	<i>ṁ-bìp</i>	<i>m-</i>
∅	<i>ⁿd’áj</i>	finger	<i>ifàŋ</i>	<i>i-</i>
∅	<i>ná</i>	give	<i>ná</i>	∅
∅	<i>ʃèn</i>	guest	<i>ùnìm-tʃìn</i>	<i>u-</i>
∅	<i>ʃék</i>	guinea fowl	<i>ìrú-sòk</i>	<i>iru-</i>
<i>a-</i>	<i>àt^wál</i>	hail(stone)	<i>adʔdal</i>	<i>adʔ-</i>
∅	<i>ʃû</i>	head	<i>ifí</i>	<i>i-</i>
∅	<i>gàr</i>	head-pad	<i>akár</i>	<i>a-</i>
∅	<i>dʒh</i>	heart	<i>itun</i>	<i>i-</i>
<i>-let</i>	<i>ⁿdéplèt</i>	heel	<i>ṁdoŋ</i>	<i>n-</i>
<i>-i</i>	<i>lári</i>	hide	<i>lar</i> ‘to disappear/vanish/lose’	∅
∅	<i>pár</i>	hunt	<i>bàr</i>	∅
∅	<i>ʃém</i>	iron/metal	<i>atʃàm</i>	<i>a-</i>
∅	<i>dék</i>	kidney	<i>arùsòk</i>	<i>aru-</i>
∅	<i>góh</i>	ladder	<i>ṁgwàŋ</i>	<i>N-</i>
∅	<i>ján</i>	lazy	<i>naŋ</i> ‘to be lazy’	∅

Vaghat Affixes	Vaghat	Gloss	Tarok	Tarok Affixes
∅	wàrámin	leak + ?water	wàr ‘to leak’	∅
-an	nàrán	lean against	nàr	∅
∅	tám	leopard	ìdà-míη	i-/-CVN
∅	kók	mahogany	ikò	i-
∅	nám	meat	ìjám ‘flesh/muscle’	i-
di-	dìsfár	mend	dfámfi	dfám-
∅	mús	millet	ìmàr	i-
∅	pé	moon/month	ape	a-
∅	dūk	mortar	atúm	a-
a-	àbí	mouse	ipi	i-
∅	núη	mouth	anunη	a-
∅	ⁿ kōm	navel	ìgúm	i-
∅	núη	noise	anùnη	a-
la-	là ^b át	okra	ìbwàm	i-
-su	pélsù	open (verb)	bòl	∅
zu-	zùzút	owl	izìη	i-
-fá	ò ^w áfá	peel	òwàl	∅
-vi	ηàlví	poison	akàl	a-/∅
-làη	pílàη	porcupine	ikpyá	i-/∅
∅	náp	pull	dàp	∅
∅	l’áj	remember	riη	∅
ka	káfì	room	hézí	N-
∅	líη	root	alèη	a-
-ul	núnùl	smell	nìη	∅
∅	džá	snake	izwà	i-
∅	g ^w ál	snore	kpàl	∅
∅	kōη	sorghum	ikùr	i-
-fì	lètìfì	spoil	làk	∅

Vaghat Affixes	Vaghat	Gloss	Tarok	Tarok Affixes
<i>ki-</i>	<i>kìtáh</i>	stalk	<i>tá</i>	∅
<i>-bila</i>	<i>ǰíbilà</i>	stir	<i>ǰí</i>	∅
<i>-le</i>	<i>váŋlèlè</i>	swing	<i>yìŋgìt</i>	<i>-gìt</i>
∅	<i>ǰól</i>	tail	<i>aswál</i>	<i>a-</i>
<i>di-</i>	<i>dìdém</i>	termite	<i>ìnàntàn</i>	∅
∅	<i>lám</i>	tongue	<i>abílám</i>	<i>abí-</i>
∅	<i>ǰīn</i>	tooth	<i>i ǰīn</i>	<i>i-</i>
∅	<i>pél</i>	uncover	<i>ǰíl</i> ‘not full as before’	∅
∅	<i>mém</i>	wild cat	<i>mim</i> ‘feline’	∅
∅	<i>nòr</i>	wound	<i>a(nú)nur</i>	<i>a-</i>
<i>-di</i>	<i>ǰúmdì</i>	wrap	<i>kúp</i> ‘fold’	∅
<i>bé-</i>	<i>bélàŋ</i>	yesterday	<i>ñlám</i>	<i>N-</i>

Contact-induced disturbances in personal pronoun systems in the Chadic – Benue-Congo convergence zone in Central Nigeria

H. Ekkehard Wolff

Leipzig University
ekkehard.wolff@gmx.de

Abstract:

The paper looks at personal pronoun systems in languages of the convergence zone on both sides of the borderline between Benue-Congo and Chadic. Focus is on inventories and systems, meaning the overall inter-relationship of pronoun shapes across the categories of person, number, grammatical gender and noun class (3rd person concord). The issues to be explored are (i) whether the personal pronoun systems as such provide any further indication towards the Sprachbund idea implied in Wolff & Gerhardt (1977), and (ii) whether one can identify some unusual features of or patterns within the systems, which are shared by languages on both sides of the line separating Benue-Congo and Chadic, and which are of such nature as to strengthen the hypothesis of a cross-genetic convergence zone. The answers provided are affirmative: In addition to cross-genetic borrowing of pronoun shapes, which is generally considered rare and/or at least remarkable, pronoun systems as such and across the convergence zone show at least two rather quirky disturbances of the expected pattern that can hardly be explained but by rather surprising instances of cross-language interference. These two kinds of disturbance within systems will be discussed under the headings of “category shifting” and “circumfix conjugational pattern” emergence. Given the present state of knowledge, the paper can only point out promising lines of detailed historical research: Any attempt to provide final answers would be premature at this stage.

Keywords: Benue-Congo, Chadic, exogamy practices, language convergence, language shift, Sprachbund

1 Introduction¹

Discussing complex issues of language contact in Central Nigeria where Benue-Congo (BC) and Chadic languages meet would, by now, create little surprise since this area has become widely accepted as a likely convergence zone in terms of a Sprachbund, even though thorough and systematic studies of contact-induced typological convergence are still lacking. This was, by no means, so when Ludwig Gerhardt and I embarked on our first joint project some 30 years ago by writing a paper on “Interferenzen zwischen Benue-Kongo- und Tschad-Sprachen” (Wolff & Gerhardt 1977; hereafter “WG 1977”). Detailed and methodologically sound studies on language contact, particularly in Africa, were still in their infancy in those days, and quite intentionally we introduced our contribution by quoting Paul Thieme (1964: 589), in order to prove him wrong on the matter in the body of our paper: “We readily borrow the Russian word *sputnik* but we should not dream of inflecting it, or deriving an adjective from it in the Russian way.”

We know now that not only words, particularly nouns, are likely to be borrowed, but that practically everything can be borrowed from one language into another, and, in addition and since then, Ludwig and I have lost all faith in the notion of “basic” or “fundamental”

1 I am grateful to my long-time friend and colleague Ludwig Gerhardt to whom this paper was dedicated on the occasion of his retirement from the Chair of Afrikanistik at the University of Hamburg in 2003, for valuable comments on a previous version of this paper, regarding historically plausible (even though at the time not yet reconstructible) shapes of personal pronouns in BC in general, and Plateau languages in particular, partially based on evidence from Bantu reconstructions. After the paper had been finalized for publication in 2009, I saw Kirill V. Babaev’s (2008) article “Reconstructing Benue-Congo person marking I: Proto-Bantoid” which was, somewhat hastily, incorporated into the discussion. Unfortunately, two general typological studies on “Person” and “Number” with potential bearing on this paper were brought to my attention only post festum and could not be integrated; these are Michael Cysouw’s PhD dissertation “The paradigmatic structure of person marking” (Nijmegen 2001), and Thomas Gehling’s “‘Ich’, ‘du’ und andere. Eine sprachtypologische Studie zu den grammatischen Kategorien ‘Person’ und ‘Numerus’” (Münster 2004). – The current shape of the paper represents the version submitted for publication in 2009.

vocabulary that would be highly or even noticeably resistant to borrowing or any kind of contact-induced change.²

The hypothesis about a linguistic convergence zone on and adjacent to the Central Nigeria Plateau, quite likely stretching into the Gongola Basin and possibly beyond, has gained fairly wide acceptance, as far as I see, since it was first sketched out in WG 1977. It has become a basic assumption for the extensive work that, for instance, our colleagues from Frankfurt/Main and others have been and still are conducting in the area. A historical scenario to account for the emergence of a Sprachbund has been tentatively developed in a recent paper by Jungraithmayr, Leger & Löhr (2004) [hereafter “JLL 2004”], who basically assume the following sequences of migration:

1. a westward migration of Chadic pre-Warji and pre-Saya Group speakers into a BC speaking area, followed by
2. a migration of Chadic pre-Ron-Angas Group speakers into the same area, resulting in
3. considerable language shift from BC to Chadic with subsequent substratum interferences from, possibly, pre-Tarok, pre-Jarawan Bantu, and pre-Jukunoid speakers;
4. a third wave of westward Chadic migration bringing the Tangale, Kwami, Pero, Piya and Widala into the area.

It is basically such assumed historical contacts that would be responsible for the emergence of the postulated Sprachbund. Later and quite likely, many of these languages underwent further contact-induced changes, triggered by what JLL 2004 refer to as “Jukunisation” (in the 16th/17th century), the impact of the 19th century Fulbe jihad and, even later, the still ongoing process of “Hausaisation” of the so-called Nigerian Middle Belt.

Quite recently, Daniel Nettle (1998) in his monographic description of Fyem (a BC language half surrounded by Chadic languages)

2 At last, a recent international research project under the auspices of the Max-Planck-Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig throws light on the issue of constraints on borrowability of lexical items in terms of “loanword typology” (Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009a/b). Several African languages are part of that investigation, among them Hausa (Awagana & Wolff 2009a/b) and Kanuri (Löhr & Wolff 2009a/b), which both appear to form part of a hypothetical “Wider Niger-Benue-Lake Chad Sprachbund” which still deserves focussed research as a potential convergence zone of its own within Güldemann’s (2008) “Macro-Sudan Belt”.

has again sketched out the existence and history of a linguistic convergence zone in the area. He develops the following scenario:

“Now it is not obvious that the Chadic influence on Fyem is substratal; there is no evidence that the present day Fyem once spoke a language like Ron or Maghavul. In fact, [...] it is the other way round, [...] part of the Ron-Kulere peoples once spoke an ancestor of Fyem. [...] there is one important section of the Fyem community which is in perpetual language shift, and that is married women. Fyem clans are exogamous... Marriage of Fyem men to women of Ron-Kulere and other small Chadic groups has been common for generations... (Relations between Fyem and Maghavul have traditionally been hostile, but this may not have been a bar to intermarriage given the existence of local practices of marriage by abduction...)” (Nettle 1998: 87f).

As for the areal linguistic features of the postulated convergence area, the following (and possibly others that I am not aware of) have been suggested:

- heavy lexical borrowing in both directions, including so-called basic vocabulary, possibly with shared areal innovations (WG 1977, Nettle 1998);
- very similar phonological inventories and shared phonotactic constraints (WG 1977);
- levelling/neutralisation affecting verbal derivational systems in BC languages in terms of converging marking devices to exclusively encode verbal plurality of the nature that is originally associated with Chadic languages (WG 1977, Wolff & Meyer-Bahlburg 1979, Nettle 1998, Gerhardt 2002; see also Gerhardt in this volume);
- intransitive copy pronoun (ICP) constructions (WG 1977, JLL 2004);
- distribution of object pronouns relative to the verb (WG 1977);
- noun PL formation (WG 1977, Nettle 1998);
- tonal systems with 3 distinctive levels (JLL 2004);
- lexicalised nasal prefixes in Chadic (JLL 2004);
- reduction of grammatical gender in Chadic (JLL 2004);
- the pronoun systems as amalgam of Plateau-family elements, borrowed elements from Chadic, and language-specific innovations (Nettle 1998).

It is in front of this background that I will look at personal pronoun systems in languages of the convergence zone on both sides of the borderline between BC and Chadic. Focus is on inventories and sys-

tems, meaning that I shall look at the overall interrelationship of pronoun shapes across the categories of person, gender (or noun class concord), and number. As far as I am aware, this has not yet been done in any systematic way for this particular geographic area.

The main question is whether the personal pronoun systems as such provide any further indication towards the Sprachbund idea, and whether one can identify some quirks, i.e. very unusual features of or patterns within the systems, which would strengthen the hypothesis of a cross-genetic convergence zone.

5 Personal Pronoun Systems

5.1 Chadic languages in the convergence zone

There is a constantly repeated piece of traditional wisdom in African linguistics, which says that pronouns are extraordinarily stable, particularly in Afroasiatic languages:

“And rightly so, for what linguist ... could not respond to the monotonous sameness in the pronominal paradigms of Semitic, Egyptian, Berber, Cushitic, and Hausa? Even Marcel Cohen, in refusing to admit Hausa in the Afroasiatic family, had to admit that the resemblances in the pronominal systems were ‘frappantes’ [...]” (Newman 1980: 15).

By implication, one could construe this folklore to also mean that, at least in Afroasiatic languages including Chadic, pronouns are less likely to be replaced, and their paradigms are almost resistant to drastic changes due to language contact. I will show here that this is not so in the particular language-contact area, i.e. the Chadic – Benue-Congo Convergence Zone in Central Nigeria. Furthermore, contact-induced changes in the pronoun systems are not restricted to Chadic languages in the area, but are found in neighbouring BC languages as well. Our investigation begins with Nettle’s lucid yet somewhat frustrated statement on the situation in Fyem (we shall return to this language in more detail later):

“The grammatical similarities between Fyem and its Chadic neighbours extend into the pronoun system [...] there is a complex mix of genetic and areal influence. Almost the entire set of possessives is shared with Birom, which is probably genetic influence. There are many shared forms with the Ron group, particularly Fier, as well as some with Maghavul, Ngas and Hausa. These relationships must be due to borrowing [...]. [...] Overall, then, the pronoun system is rather typical of our pic-

ture of Fyem as a whole, a complex and mutated amalgam of Plateau-family elements, borrowed elements and its own innovations.” (Nettle 1998: 86)

The following observations do not aim at providing reconstructions of pronouns based on the comparative method. Rather, the idea is to identify and map certain irregularities and drastic disturbances of expected patterns, and relate these to a theory of language contact across genetic and sub-genetic linguistic boundaries in the postulated Chadic – Benue-Congo (C-BC) Convergence Zone. Because, by looking at the pronoun systems in individual languages in this zone, one does indeed observe recurring perturbations of expected patterns. These unexpected variant or innovative forms pertain, first of all, to cognate forms across linguistic boundaries, i.e. they suggest borrowing of personal pronoun shapes, which is interesting and remarkable in itself in view of the widespread assumption that personal pronouns tend to be rather stable. However, and this is the most surprising part of it, highly irritating quirky perturbations also occur across categories within the individual systems of the same language – observations that will be discussed under the heading “category shift”, i.e. substitutions across the categories of person, gender, and number.

To start with Chadic, I basically follow Blažek (1995) and Newman (1980) with regard to reconstructed pronoun shapes within Chadic (Table 1) and across Afroasiatic (Table 2).³

Note that specific contrasts in vowel quality were used to create gender pairs (Newman 1980: 16):

“The Chadic 2nd feminine singular pronoun differs from its masculine counterpart, not only in having final *-m*, which is commonly lost, but also in having *-i* as its vowel as opposed to the masculine *-a*, a feature paralleled elsewhere in Afroasiatic [...]. Note, interestingly, that in the 3rd person, the opposite is usually the case, i.e. it is the feminine pronoun which has *-a* and the masculine which has the high vowel (either *-i* or *-u*).”

³ Note that the original charts have been slightly rearranged to fit the contrastive purpose.

Table 1. Proto-Chadic personal pronoun reconstructions

		Newman 1980	Blažek 1995: Proto-Chadic			
		Chadic (Old Hausa) subject	Set A (independent)		Set B (object/possessive)	
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 1	stage 2
SG	1.C	<i>wa, ni</i>		*ʔan-i (*ʔan-u, *ʔan-a?)	*ʔi, *ʔʔja	*yu
	2.M	<i>ka</i>	*ka(y)		*ku	
	2.F	<i>kim</i>	*ki(m)		*kum, *kim ?	
	3.M	<i>ši</i>		*si, *su ?	*sV, *ni	
	3.F	<i>ta</i>	*ta		*ta	
PL	1.IN	<i>mun na</i>	*muni		*mu(ni)	
	1.EX		*ʔyina/u < *ʔina/u ?		*ʔʔina/i/u	
	2.M	<i>kun</i>	*kuni/a			*kuni/a
	2.F	<i>sun</i>	*suni		*suni/*tuni	

Table 2. Proto-Afroasiatic personal pronoun reconstructions

		Newman 1980	Blažek 1995: Proto-Afroasiatic			
		PAA	set A (independent)		set B (object/possessive)	
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 1	stage 2
SG	1.C	*i, *ni	*ʔaku	*ʔan-ʔaku	*[ʔ]ya, *ʔ/yi, *ʔ/ya	*ya, *yi, *yu
	2.M	*ka	*ta	*ʔan-ta	*ku	*ku
	2.F	*kim	*ti	*ʔan-ti	*ki	*ki
	3.M	*šl/su	*šumwa	*šl(wa)	*šl	(set A)
	3.F	*ša/sa	*šiya	*šl(ya)	*šl	(set A)
	1.IN		*muni	*ʔan-muni	(*muni)	
PL	1.EX	*na	*hina/u	*ʔan-hina/u	*na/ni/nu	*na, *ni, *nu
	2.M	*kun	*tumwa	*ʔan-tumu/-tumV	*kumwa	*kumu/*kunV
	2.F		*tinya	*tinya	*kinya	*kin(n)a
	3.M		*šumwa	*šumu/šumV	*šumwa	(set A)
	3.F		*šinya	*šin(n)a	*šinya	(set A)

Table 3. Circumfix conjugational pattern in Berber and Semitic

		Pre-Berber			>		Proto-Berber		Semitic	
		Imperfect	Perfect			Mixed System	Imperfect			
SG	1.C	*ʔa-	*ku			*ʔa-...-a	*ʔa-			
	2.M	*ta-				*ta-...-ad	*ti-			
	2.F	*ta-	*ti-			*ta-...-ad	*ti-...-ī			
	2.M	*ya-	*-(a?)			*ya-	*yi-			
	3.F	*ta-	*-at		*ta-...-at	*ta-	*yi-/ti-			
	1.C	*na-	*(-na)			*na-	*ni-			
PL	2.M	*ta-	*tumu		*ta-...-tam	*ta-...-am	*ti-...-ū			
	2.F	*ta-	*-tum-at		*ta-...-tamat	*ta-...-mat	*ti-...-ā/-na			
	3.M	*ya-	*-an		*ya-...-an	*-an	*yi-...-ū			
	3.F	*ya-	*-nat		*ya-...-nat	*-nat	*yi-/ti-...-ā/-na			

Also, a peculiarity of subject marking with verbs deserves attention that is not reflected in Blažek's and Newman's charts. Some languages in Afroasiatic show circumfixed or ambifixed person marking in verbal conjugation, for instance Berber and Semitic languages, which appears to have occasional reflexes in Chadic. Cf. Blažek's (1995) Berber and Semitic charts (Table 3).

One notes, further, the intrusion of originally demonstrative elements into the pronoun system, replacing the original 3rd person pronouns. Blažek (1995) identifies the following demonstrative elements across some families within Afroasiatic:

- **t*- > feminine (with reflexes in Chadic and Berber)
- **n*- SG.M, possibly PL, in Chadic (with reflexes also in East & South Cushitic, Egyptian)
- **k*- gender-neutral or masculine (with reflexes in Chadic, South Omotic)⁴

For Chadic, at least two more elements can be added (cf. Schuh 1983 for the whole set of early Chadic determiners): **y*-, **d*-.

Note, further, three general Chadic innovations, possibly on the PC level:

- substitution of the *t*-paradigm of the 2nd person pronouns (Blažek's set A of PAA) by the *k*-paradigm;⁵
- generalisation of the demonstrative *t* + *V* for 3SG.F pronoun;
- introduction of the demonstrative *n* + *V* for 3SG non-feminine pronoun (probably at later stages, other demonstratives were introduced in the same way, creating 3SG pronoun shapes of the structures *y* + *V*, *k* + *V*, *d* + *V*).

Looking at some of the better documented Chadic languages in the convergence area, one observes some irritating deviations from the Proto-Chadic, not to say Proto-Afroasiatic, pattern.

1. The Ron Group languages (Jungraithmayr 1970), for instance, have suffered from a breakdown of distinctions, on the segmental level, pertaining to person, number and gender. The system has been rebuilt based on phonetic rather than phonemic distinction

4 Whereas Schuh (1983) treats **k*- as gender-neutral in early Chadic, Blažek (1995) views it as masculine in early Afroasiatic.

5 Possible exceptions to this general substitution can be found in the Tera group where **t* + *V* is retained in 2nd person (cf. footnote 20).

and, most of all, tonal contrast. Looking at the cases of the Fyer and Sha varieties in some detail (Tables 4 and 5), one notices that the distinction between 1SG/PL and 2SG/PL, for instance, broke down and was repaired by re-designating 2SG segmental material *ká/kú* to 1PL.⁶ Gender and number distinction in 3SG was reorganised in Fyer (introducing a new morpheme *mí/mú* that was likely borrowed from BC). Gender and number distinction in 3SG was given up in Sha in favour of the marked ex-feminine *tí*. Number distinction in 3rd person was shifted to tone in Sha, as in 1SG and 1PL.EXCL. Furthermore, Fyer underwent a surprising borrowing of circumfix conjugation from BC in its 1PL.EXCL, just like Sha quite likely borrowed 3SG subject marking *a-* from BC and generalised it across the number distinction, albeit creating a tonal contrast for number.

2. A similar picture emerges in Guruntum, a language of the Saya Group (Haruna 2003) (Table 6). Again, like in the Ron Group, distinctions between 1SG/PL and 2SG/PL broke down and were repaired, very much in the same way, by re-designating 2SG segmental material to 1PL, but creating tonal differences. I also assume shift from 1PL.EXCL to 1SG, as in Ron-Sha. Likewise as in Ron, gender and number distinction in 3SG was given up in favour of the marked feminine, and again number distinction was shifted to tone. Furthermore, borrowing from Hausa cannot be excluded for the subjunctive 1SG, and contact with BC languages may be responsible for the shape of the independent pronoun 1SG.

6 This is the first instance to be discussed of assumed category shift of pronouns. The discussion is based exclusively on linguistic form of the pronouns. No clear motivation for the apparent or assumed categorical shift can be identified at this time. One possible line of explanation would follow the suggestion that, at some historical stage, inclusive and dual pronouns were “compound pronouns” (such as one still finds in Grassfields and Bantu A languages) which, for whatever reasons, underwent simplification with the unmotivated drop of one of the compounded elements (Roland Kießling, p.c.). A more pragmatically oriented explanation would make incomplete language learning responsible (on the part of exogamous women, cf. scenario description in the introduction of this paper) ensuing ‘confusion’ of the pronouns of self-reference (1st person) and for the addressee (2nd person). I consider it significant that such confusion involves the participant pronouns, hardly the reference pronouns of the 3rd person (as in Ninzam, cf. below, which would provide a counter-example).

Table 4. Personal pronoun systems in Ron (Fyer)

		Ron-Fyer		
		SG	PL	Observations
1	EXCL		'i/yi...nyí	cf. Izere/Zarek (BC): circumfix marking re-designation from < *ka 2SG.M, < *ku(n) 2PL.C
	INCL	'i/yi	ká	
	DU		kú	
2	M	'á/yá < *ka	'ú/wú < *ku?	
	F	shí < *ki		
3	M	mí/mú	sí/sú	mí/mú: BC noun class concord marking?
	F	tí		

Table 5. Personal pronoun systems in Ron (Sha)

		Ron-Sha		
		SG	PL	Observations
1	EXCL	nì	ní	copying 1PL.EXCL *nì into 1SG, with subsequent number neutralisation + tonal re-distinction
	INCL			
	DU			
2	M	yí < *kya < *ka	ká	re-designation from: *kya < *ka re-designation from: *kí(m) 2SG.M? 2SG.F?
	F	cí < *kyi < *ki		
3	M	'a, (ti)	'á	cf. BC language pattern 3SG a-; innovative tonal distinction (cf. 1st person) language-internal gender neutralisation
	F	'a, (ti)		

Table 6. Personal pronoun system in Guruntum

			Guruntum		
			SG	PL	Observations
1	EXCL		<i>ȳim</i> , <i>ɪŋ</i> (subj), <i>ni</i> (obj), <i>-ŋa</i>	<i>kàŋ</i> , <i>kàŋ</i> , <i>-gəŋ</i>	SG: INDEP <i>ȳim</i> < Proto-Bantoid * <i>me</i> ? subjunctive <i>ɪŋ</i> < Hausa <i>ʔn</i> ? object <i>ni</i> re-designation of 1PL.EX * <i>ni</i> into 1SG? PL: re-designation of 2SG.F.INDEP <i>kàŋ/kàŋ/gəŋ</i> + L tone into 1PL.C?
	INCL				
	DU				
2	M		<i>kau</i> < <i>ka</i> + * <i>ku</i> , <i>kə</i> , <i>-gu</i> , <i>-gù</i>	<i>kàu</i> , <i>kə</i> , <i>-gu</i> , <i>-gù</i>	re-designation from 2SG <i>kau/kə</i> + L tone into 2PL? copying <i>gu</i> , <i>gù</i> from SG into PL
	F		<i>kaŋ</i> < <i>ka</i> + * <i>kim</i> , <i>ɪŋ</i> < * <i>kim</i> , <i>gu</i> (obj), <i>-gəŋ</i>		partial gender neutralisation in SG object <i>gu</i>
3	M		<i>-sì</i> (poss)	<i>ka-shì</i> < <i>ka</i> + * <i>si</i> , <i>shì</i>	gender neutralisation in 3SG in favour of marked F pronoun <i>ti</i> with exception of generalised <i>-sì</i> for possessive;
	F		<i>kadi</i> < <i>ka</i> + * <i>ti</i> <i>ti</i>	<i>tì</i> (subj)	re-designation of <i>ti</i> + L tone into PL for subjunc- tive

3. Another West Chadic language of the Saya Group has been described to some extent under the name Guus (aka Sigidi) by Caron (2001). Interestingly, at least as far as subject pronouns preceding the verb are concerned, Guus has streamlined its system to a neat tonal parallelism across the 10 conjugational paradigms of the TAM system, with the corresponding SG and PL pronouns being identical in segmental shape, the only difference is tonal: M tone in the SG, L tone in the PL, cf. the “aorist” paradigm for illustration (Table 7); there is no more gender distinction, nor one of inclusive or exclusive.

Table 7. Personal pronouns in Guus

	SG	PL
1	<i>m-a</i>	<i>m-à</i>
2	<i>k-a</i>	<i>k-à</i>
3	<i>tʃ-a</i> < <i>*ti-a</i>	<i>tʃ-à</i> < <i>*tì-a</i>

The shape of the 1st person pronoun, by its bilabial nasal, allows for two different hypotheses: (a) PL origin and category shift into SG, (b) borrowing from BC (SG). The shape of the 2nd person pronoun corresponds to the expected Chadic SG and was likely copied into PL. The palatalisation part of the 3rd person pronoun can be explained as resulting from the reconstructable form **ti* with high front vowel (cf. Ron and Guruntum above), this is corroborated from the object pronoun shape *tə*. The original masculine pronoun with the shape SG **sV* ~ **fi* / PL **sVn* can still be found in the genitive constructions *gwàa-fí* / *-àa-s* and *gwàa-gé-san* / *-àa-gé-sàn* (Caron 2001: 11).⁷

4. Two other Chadic languages in the convergence area on which there is some recent documentation, i.e. Goemai (Hellwig 2003) and Mupun (Frajzyngier 1993), show nothing of the above person, number and gender re-shuffling. However, for them it appears to be the 3rd person that has undergone some – quite likely contact-induced – change in the expected Chadic pattern. Goemai 3SG.C (no gender distinction) has generalised the original demonstrative *ni*

⁷ In another publication Caron (2006) documents the pronominal systems of a total of eight Zaar languages (including Guus) of the Saya group which provide more variation on the same theme.

(independent set). Mupun also has no genuine 3rd person pronouns, according to Frajzyngier (1993).⁸ This is only partially true, at least traces of a full pronominal system of a very Chadic nature can be found in the system, for instance, with reflexives (1993: 119). Interestingly however, the deictic morphemes used for 3SG maintain the ancient vocalic contrast between M- and F-forms: *wù(r)* for M, and *wà(r)* for F (note that the form *wu(ri)* reappears as PL pronoun in two of the Zaar languages presented in Caron (2006: 99f), namely Dir and Nyamzak/Langas). The PL morpheme *mo* eventually deserves explanation from a language contact scenario and should be compared to Goemai *mùep* which also looks distinctly non-Chadic.

2.2 Benue-Congo languages in the convergence zone

To the best of my knowledge, no comparably comprehensive account like that of Blažek for Chadic and Afroasiatic pronouns is available for Niger-Congo or even Benue-Congo or the Plateau language family.⁹ However, looking at the scattered evidence from languages like Kagoro, Kaje, Iregwe, Koro, Izere/Zarek, Kwoi, Birom (Gerhardt 1967/68, WG 1977), Ninzam (Hoerner 1980), Gong (Hagen 1988) and particularly Fyem (Nettle 1998) that were at my disposal when preparing this paper, a fairly homogeneous picture emerges with regard to the pronoun systems within Plateau.

First of all, there is no gender distinction nor one of inclusive-exclusive or even dual in these languages (see also Babaev 2008: 161, for Proto-Bantoid as not possessing these distinctions). Without

8 “In Mupun there are no third person deictic pronouns referring to humans. There are two conditions that allow the use of third person pronouns. The SG and PL pronouns may be used if their referents have been mentioned previously in discourse. The third person PL pronoun *mo* may be used also without any antecedent, but in such case it is a marker of the indefinite human agent...” (Frajzyngier 1993: 84).

9 This situation has drastically changed since the publication of Babaev (2008). Ludwig Gerhardt (p.c.) had already drawn my attention to the following reconstructions for PL pronouns in Bantu, at least, based on the works of Dempwolff, Meeussen, and Schadeberg: 1PL *tu ~ tv* (Dempwolff *tí / tî / tu / tû*); 2PL *mu ~ mv* (Dempwolff *mu/mû*). These reconstructions are confirmed in Babaev (2008). Closer to the geographic area of investigation, the Jarawan Bantu languages, again according to Gerhardt (p.c.), tend to have 1PL *su* (cf. Babaev’s reconstruction **(bè)c(u)e*), 2PL *wun* (to be compared with Babaev’s **(bè)n(u)e*).

claiming any comparative value in terms of reconstruction, the following chart (Table 8) appears to reflect some basic shapes of personal pronouns across Plateau (Western, Central and South-Eastern groups, according to the classification by Gerhardt 1989) that have been found in the available sources:

Table 8. Prototypical personal pronoun shapes in BC languages of the Plateau area

	SG	PL
1	<i>MI</i> <i>(I)N ~ NUη</i> <i>(I)ηGA</i> <i>NJE</i>	<i>NYI ~ NE</i> <i>NTA</i> <i>ZI / ZA ~ NZHI</i> <i>ZəT / ZHIT</i>
2	<i>U / WU ~ UWA ~ WA</i> <i>WAN ~ NWAN / MWAN</i> <i>ηU</i>	<i>NYU</i>
3	<i>MA ~ A</i> <i>γA ~ ηA</i> <i>KU / KA ~ GU / GWA ~</i> <i>(U)WA</i>	<i>BA ~ Bɔ</i> <i>MBA</i> <i>BAR ~ MBAR</i>

This can now be compared to the reconstructions by Babaev (2008: 160f) for Proto-Bantoid as a whole (Table 9a), and non-Bantu Bantoid in particular (Table 9b):

Table 9a. Proto-Bantoid (incl. Bantu) pronominal paradigm (“locutors” only)

	Prefixed (subject)	Independent (non-subject)
1SG	* <i>ɲi-</i>	* <i>(à)me</i>
2SG	* <i>ɔ-</i>	* <i>(à)we</i>
1PL	* <i>tɔ-</i>	* <i>(bè)c(u)e</i>
2PL	* <i>mv-</i>	* <i>(bè)n(u)e</i>

Table 9b. Proto-“Other” Bantoid (excl. Bantu) pronominal paradigm (“locutors” only)

	Subject	Non-subject
1SG	* <i>me-</i> , * <i>n-</i>	* <i>àm(e)</i>
2SG	* <i>o</i>	* <i>we</i>
1PL	* <i>(bè)c(u)e</i>	* <i>(bè)c(u)e</i>
2PL	* <i>(bè)n(u)e</i>	* <i>(bè)n(u)e</i>

Babaev’s reconstructions allow the following approximations with the abstracted “basic shapes” listed in Table 8 which help to identify potential candidates of contact-induced substitutions (cf. Table 9c).

Watching out for re-designation of pronominal material across persons and number, six Plateau languages show striking cases of a comparable breakdown of system plus seemingly floppy repair strategies as were seen in some Chadic languages of the convergence zone.

1. Izere/Zarek (Central group; see Table 10) appears to have tripled its pronoun shape inventory by borrowing pronoun forms based on the Chadic-origin determiners *ka/ku* (and, maybe less likely, *ti/tu* or even *ni*), and/or possibly borrowing and generalising the 1PL.EXCL pronoun *ni* of Chadic provenance. Further, Zarek appears to have also borrowed a pre-Chadic looking circumfixed conjugation type for both subject and object marking, unless one wants to identify these with so-called ICP constructions.¹⁰ The morphological material *yir-/-ir* and *yin-/-in* still lack plausible historical explanation, unless one can relate *yin-/-in* to the Plateau proto type pronoun *NYI* of 1PL, and assume a shift

¹⁰ “Intransitive Copy Pronouns” (ICP) are recapitulative pronouns that become suffixed, first of all, to intransitive verbs; they match the pre-verbal subject pronouns in person/number/gender, but not in shape. This special set of personal pronouns was first discovered (and named “ICP”) in West Chadic languages. Relationship with ICP constructions that are, however, cross-genetically virulent in the whole geographic area (and which were, at the time, considered to be of Chadic origin) was the explanation suggested in WG 1977. I am much more hesitant now as regards this simple explanation, particularly since in Zarek this has nothing to do with intransitivity of verbs. Circumfixed conjugation patterns, including ICPs, may indeed be a genuine and vintage areal feature of this particular convergence zone, unless it proves to be a rather ancient feature of (some part of) BC.

from there into 2PL marking.¹¹ The 1PL form *yir-/ir* could at least partly be derived from reconstructable **t̃-* (Babaev 2008) since Zarek /r/ in final position reflects historical **t* (hypothesis owed to Gerhardt, p.c.).¹² With regard to the emergence of circumfix conjugation in general, however, independent language-internal motivation is probably the less likely hypothesis than the assumption of language contact with Chadic or even pre-Chadic languages.¹³

11 The comparison with Babaev's (2008) reconstructions poses some problems of diachronic plausibility: Firstly, any approximation of forms found in the Plateau languages with Proto-Bantoid **t̃-* conflicts with the observation that non-Bantu Bantoid is reconstructed differently as **(b̃)c(u)e* for 1PL. One is probably to assume that somehow the **-cue* part of the reconstruction links up with the **t̃-* known from Bantu (which would be something to explain for more recent Bantu-internal development rather than for the non-Bantu Bantoid languages of the Plateau). Further, the *(y)in* part of the disjunctive pronoun shape could somehow reflect the **-n(u)e* sequence of Proto-Bantoid **(b̃)n(u)e* for 2PL, yet without making this hypothesis a stronger case.

12 Note that deriving *yir-* and the suffixed elements *-ir* from older forms containing original **ti* as found in Bantu reconstructions, still cannot explain the triple pre-verbal forms *yir-*, *t̃-*, and *ni-*.

13 Cf. Table 3 for early Afroasiatic (i.e. pre-Chadic) circumfix patterns that may have served as a model.

Table 9c. Approximations between pronoun shapes found in selected BC Plateau languages and the Proto-Bantoid reconstructions by Babaev (2008)

	BC Plateau basic shapes	“Other Bantoid”			“Bantu”	
		Subject	Non-subject	subject	Non-subject	
1SG	MI (DN ~ NU)η (D)ηGA NJE	*me-, *η-	*ām(e)	*ni-	*(ā)me	
2SG	U/WU ~ UWA ~ WA WAN ~ NWAN / MWAN ηU	*o	*we	*ð-	*(ā)we	
3SG	MA ~ A γA ~ ηA KU/KA ~ GU/GWA ~ (U)WA	Noun class concord				
1PL	NYI ~ NE NTA ZU/ZA ~ NZHI ZəT / ZHIT	*(bè)c(u)e	*(bè)c(u)e	*tð-	*(bè)c(u)e	
2PL	NYU	*(bè)n(u)e	*(bè)n(u)e	*mv-	*(bè)n(u)e	
3PL	BA ~ Bɔ MBA BAR ~ MBAR	Noun class concord				

Table 10. Personal pronouns in Zarek

	Izere/Zarek		
	SG	PL	Observations
1	<i>mi</i> ~ <i>tí</i> ~ <i>ni</i>	<i>yir ... ir</i> < * <i>yit...it</i> ? <i>tí ... (y)ir</i> < * <i>tí...it</i> ? <i>ni ... (y)ir</i> < * <i>ni...it</i> ?	Alternative hypotheses: <i>tí – ta – tu</i> < Chadic demonstrative <i>tV</i> - series; <i>ka – ku</i> < Chadic demonstrative <i>kV</i> - series; <i>ni</i> < Chadic demonstrative <i>nV</i> -series, or: Chadic 1PL.EX;
2	<i>wan</i> ~ <i>ta</i> ~ <i>ka</i>	<i>yin ... in</i> <i>ta ... (y)in</i> <i>ka ... (y)in</i>	
3	<i>wu</i> ~ <i>tu</i> ~ <i>ku</i>	<i>ba</i> <i>ta ... ba</i> <i>ka ... ba</i>	

2. Closely related Kagoro and Iregwe within the Central group of Plateau have innovated (along with another language, Kaje) a pronoun for 1PL, based on a voiced alveolar fricative: *zə* ~ *zət* (Kagoro), *nzhi* (Iregwe), *za* ~ *zi* ~ *zhi* (Kaje) (Table 11). Whether the initial alveolar fricative has anything to do with **c* of the *(*bè*) *c(u)e* reconstructed for Proto-Bantoid (Babaev 2008) is a possibility, unless the latter is reflected in the final *t* of the Kagoro form *zət* (according to Gerhardt [p.c.], Iregwe only allows open syllables so that there can be no trace of this final *t* anyway) which would still leave the initial *z* unaccounted for. As counter-intuitive as it sounds, one cannot dismiss the hypothesis that the original pronoun of the shape *NYI* became re-designated to 2 PL and has replaced the *NYU*-shaped original form. The 1SG pronoun *n-* could be both an etymological reflex of the Proto-Bantoid variant **n-* or a loan from Chadic. Note that the exclusively tonal distinction between 3SG and 3PL *à* vs. *á* has parallels in Chadic.

Table 11. Personal pronouns in Kagoro and Iregwe

	Kagoro/Gworok		
	SG	PL	Observations
1	<i>n-</i> , <i>núŋ</i>	<i>zə</i> ~ <i>zət</i>	SG: * <i>n(V)</i> reflects either the Proto-Bantoid variant * <i>n-</i> (Babaev 2008) or is a loan from Chadic

2	<i>á, nwan</i>	<i>nyí ~ nyín</i>	PL: re-designation of 1PL <i>nyi</i> (ultimately from Chadic or reflex of Proto-Bantoid <i>*(bè)n(u)e</i> ?) ¹⁴
3	<i>à, gu, gwa</i>	<i>á, ba</i>	copying 3SG into PL: <i>a</i> + H tone

Iregwe/Rigwe			
	SG	PL	Observations
1	<i>nje</i>	<i>nzhi</i>	SG: <i>*nCV</i> may or may not reflect the Proto-Bantoid variant <i>*n-</i> (Babaev 2008)
2	<i>na, mwan</i>	<i>nyi</i>	re-designation of 1PL <i>nyi</i> ? ¹⁵
3	<i>ku ~ u</i> <i>~o</i>	<i>a,</i> <i>mbe</i>	copying ex 3SG <i>a</i> into PL; replacing 3SG <i>*a-</i> by <i>ku</i> -series

3. Western group Gong (Kagoma; Hagen 1988) and Ninzam (Hoerner 1980) also show some irregularities in their pronoun systems (Tables 12 and 13). Gong appears to have borrowed from Chadic the 1PL.EXCL **nV* which functions as 1PL, with the original shape of the 1PL now functioning as 2PL – like in Kagoro and Iregwe of the Central group.¹⁶

¹⁴ The shape *NYI ~ NE* for 1PL would have to be considered a possible loan (from Chadic), since Babaev's (2008) reconstruction **(bè)c(u)e* for Proto-Bantoid provides little reason to consider the two to be cognates. However, with considerable effort one might be able to relate the *NYI ~ NE* shapes to Babaev's (2008) reconstruction **(bè)n(u)e* for 2PL presupposing yet another category shift (from 2PL to 1PL) as in other instances reported in this paper.

¹⁵ The less spectacular assumption would, of course, be to relate the pronoun shape *nyi* to reconstructed **(bè)n(u)e* (Babaev2008) giving the “basic shape” of Plateau 2PL pronouns *NYU*. Homophony with “basic shape” *NYI* for 1PL would be no issue here, nor for Gworok above, since Rigwe and Gworok have developed highly idiosyncratic forms for 1PL: Rigwe *nzhi*, Gworok *zə ~ zət*.

¹⁶ Roland Kießling (p.c.) suggests a plausible step-by-step development which would explain the motivation for the categorial shift: The former Gong 1PL, in the light of interference from Chadic, was reanalysed as 1PL.INCL (in contrast with borrowed 1PL.EXCL), thereby creating a Chadic type system with 1PL.EXCL/INCL distinction. Semantic narrowing of 1PL.INCL to the 2nd person component and suppression of the 1st person component later dissolved the INCL/EXCL distinction and made the language return to a BC type of system again – under maintenance of the contact-induced 1PL > 2PL category shift. This plausible hypothesis, however, would presuppose earlier BC-Chadic bilingualism and would be reminiscent of the scenario described for *Fyem* above.

Table 12. Personal pronouns in Gong

	Gong/Kagoma		
	SG	PL	Observations
1	<i>mi</i>	<i>ne</i>	PL: < Chadic 1PL.EXCL <i>*nV</i> ? ¹⁷
2	<i>ŋu</i>	<i>nyi</i>	PL: re-designation of 1PL <i>nyi</i> ? ¹⁸
3	<i>a ~ ŋa</i>	<i>bɔ ~ mbɔ</i>	

Ninzam has innovated its set of PL pronouns in a rather idiosyncratic way: There is a new 1SG form which has no direct correspondent in any of the languages I have been able to look at. It either adds *ta* to the nasal of the 1PL (cf. Fyem below), or the shape of the pronoun corresponds to PB **t+V* with added prenasalisation. Ninzam again appears to copy 3PL material into 2PL. Unique in our sample so far, Ninzam has rebuilt its 2PL (*i*)*mba* on the model of the 3PL *ba* (adding prenasalisation as it is also known from Gong and Fyem). Finally, it allows 3PL *ba* to be phonologically enlarged by both prenasalisation (like in Gong, and possibly in all of its PL pronoun shapes) and/or addition of final *r*.

Table 13. Personal pronouns in Ninzam

	Ninzam		
	SG	PL	Observations
1	<i>(i)ŋga</i>	<i>(i)nta</i>	innovative forms in both SG & PL (unless related to Bantu <i>*ngu</i> POSS and <i>*tɔ̃</i> , acc. to Gerhardt p.c.) SG – cf. Guruntum <i>-iŋ</i> (subjunctive), <i>-ŋa</i> (POSS) PL – cf. also Fyem <i>moti</i> , Birom <i>wot</i>

¹⁷ Given Babaev's (2008) Proto-Bantoid reconstructions, one cannot exclude an explanation for the origin of the 1PL pronoun shape *ne* which would be based on category shift from singular to plural (Babaev reconstructs both **me-* and **n-* for 1SG).

¹⁸ See fn 15.

2	<i>uwa</i> ~ <i>wa</i> ~ <i>u</i>	<i>(i)mba</i>	2PL built in analogy to 3PL and prenasalisation as found in Gong and Fyem
3	<i>a</i> ~ <i>uwa</i> <i>ma</i> <i>ku</i>	<i>aba</i> ~ <i>ba</i> <i>bar</i> ~ <i>mbar</i>	innovative enlargement of 3PL by final consonant <i>-r</i>

4. The last Plateau language to be looked at in some detail is Fyem (Nettle 1998), from the Southeastern group. In this language, the situation is extremely messy.

In the first set of pronouns (independent, object and two series of possessive; Table 14), there is again the mutual transfer of pronoun shapes between 1st person and 2nd person, in Fyem, however, both in SG and PL. Independent 1SG *mé* corresponds to the 2SG possessives *-mé/ná-me*.

In the PL, only the emphatic possessive retains the original pronoun in *ná-mun*, whereas the original 1PL independent, object and short possessive pronouns occur in 2PL *múni*, *-mún*, *-mún*. Clearly, this pronoun shape reflects the Chadic 1PL.INCL **muni*.

Vice versa, it is only the emphatic possessive *ná-mot* of 2PL that retains its original (?) function, whereas the other forms are now found in 1PL in the shapes *móti*, *-té*, *-mót*. (Note that the pronoun shape *mot/moti/(mo)te* for 2PL is innovative and reminds one of the Ninzam innovation of its 1PL *(i)nta*.)¹⁹

Further innovations are the velar nasal base of the 1SG object and possessive forms, which again reminds one of Ninzam *(i)ŋga*, which ultimately could reflect borrowing from Chadic, cf. Guruntum 1SG possessive *-ŋa*. Also, a bilabial nasal base for 3SG has not been encountered in any of the other Plateau languages that I have looked at, so it is considered innovative here. Presently, I have no explanation as to the origin of the object pronoun *-ii*. Since all these are originally BC noun class languages, however, both *mo* and *-ii* could be reflexes of noun class concord elements.

The second set of Fyem pronouns are the preverbal subject markers, one sub-set for the PRF and the IMPV aspect paradigm

¹⁹ Little clarity if any comes from Babaev's (2008) reconstructions: The bilabial nasal /m/ clearly indicates 1SG, the alveolar /t/ could be related to reconstructed **c* in 1PL.

each (Table 15). Quite surprisingly, these sub-sets look like representing a Chadic language, with the likely exception of 3SG *á* (which, however, can also be found in Chadic languages) and 2SG *wú*. Interestingly, quite different historical strata may be involved here: Present-day Hausa could be responsible for the two forms of the 1SG: *náa* corresponds directly to the Hausa PRF form *náa*, and *ín* corresponds to the Hausa CONTINUOUS pronoun *ín* (*nàa*). Using *tí* in 2nd person, both in SG and PL, in particular with a disjunctive (circumfix) element *-n* in the PL form, resembles the pre-Chadic pattern of Afroasiatic (cf. Berber, Semitic; cf. Table 3 above) and has reflexes in Ron and, across the genetic borderline, in Zarek, which both have circumfix marking albeit for 1PL.²⁰ IMPV 2PL *wún* corresponds to a Chadic pattern insofar, as **-n* is quite regularly added to the SG pronoun to form PL: *wú* + *n*, the fact notwithstanding that *wú* as such is most likely of BC stock. 3SG PRF *taa* is a reflex of PC 3SG.F and corresponds in segmental shape to the Hausa PRF form *táa*.

²⁰ The only Chadic language that I am aware of that uses *tV* in the 2nd person is Central Chadic Tera (Newman 1970: 36; Tera has a linguistic history that links it with the West Chadic Bole group, cf. Newman 1969/70). Intriguingly, the *tV*-element also occurs in 1PL, cf.

1SG		1PL	<i>témə</i>
2SG	<i>tó</i>	2PL	<i>tínu</i>

I would like to add a caveat here: The occurrence of **tV*- and **kV*-/**nV*- particularly as first part of compound structures could always reflect a gender-sensitive linker (originally referring back to a preceding noun, usually in possessive constructions). One cannot exclude the possibility that the “linker” is the only part that survives apocopation of the original pronoun part of a complex bi-morphemic construction of the type linker + pronoun.

Table 14. Personal pronouns in Fyem – set I

Fyem: Pronoun set I				
	Function	SG	PL	Observations
1	INDEP	<i>mé</i>	<i>móti</i>	innovative PL form, but cf. Ninzam (<i>i</i>) <i>nta</i>
	Object	<i>-uŋ / -iŋ</i>	<i>-té</i>	innovative SG form – but cf. Ninzam (<i>i</i>) <i>ŋga</i> ; cf. Guruntum <i>-iŋ</i> (SUBJ)
	POSS	<i>-naŋ</i>	<i>-mót</i>	innovative PL form – but cf. Ninzam (<i>i</i>) <i>nta</i>
	EMPH POSS	<i>ná-ŋ</i>	<i>ná-mun</i>	innovative SG form, but cf. Ninzam (<i>i</i>) <i>ŋga</i> – cf. Guruntum <i>-ŋa</i> (POSS)
	INDEP	<i>wéé</i>	<i>múni</i>	innovative PL form, but cf. Ninzam (<i>i</i>) <i>nta</i> – cf. Guruntum <i>-ŋa</i> (POSS)
2	Object	<i>-o</i>	<i>-mún</i>	PL < Chadic 1PL.INCL * <i>muni</i>
	POSS	<i>-mé</i>	<i>-mún</i>	PL < Chadic 1PL.INCL * <i>muni</i>
	EMPH POSS	<i>ná-me</i>	<i>ná-mot</i>	SG: re-designation from 1SG <i>mé</i> ?
3	INDEP	<i>mái ~ méi</i>	<i>béi</i> [^m <i>béi</i>]	SG innovation (former Ncl concord marker * <i>ma</i> ?)
	Object	<i>-ii</i>	<i>bá</i> [^m <i>bá</i>]	SG innovation (former Ncl concord marker?)
	POSS	<i>-mó</i>	<i>-ba</i>	SG innovation (former Ncl concord marker * <i>mu</i> ?)
	EMPH POSS	<i>ná-mó</i>	<i>ná-ba</i>	SG innovation (former Ncl concord marker * <i>mu</i> ?)

With regard to number marking by exclusively tonal contrast, the 3rd person follows the pattern known from languages of the Saya group of Chadic. The most salient observation pertains again to a shift of forms from 2nd person to 1st person, i.e. PRF *ti* / *ti...n* has corresponding segmental forms in 1st person PRF and IMPV involving tonal contrast again: *tí* / *tík*. Another Chadic feature could be seen in the parallel formation of the IMPV 1PL and 3PL pronoun shapes *tí-k* and *tá-k* which look like the PRF pronoun plus added *-k*. This is reminiscent of the two paradigms of the Hausa PRF in which one paradigm is marked by adding **-k(a)* to the simple pronoun, cf. the PL forms *mu-kà*, *ku-kà*, *su-kà*.

Table 15. Personal pronouns in Fyem – set II

		Fyem: Pronoun set II – preverbal (subject)		
		PRF	IMPV	observations
SG	1	<i>náá</i>	<i>ín</i>	cf. Hausa <i>náa</i> PRF, <i>ín (nàa)</i> CONTINUOUS
	2	<i>tí</i>	<i>wú</i>	* <i>tV</i> < pre-Chadic 2nd person?
	3	<i>taa</i>	<i>á</i>	* <i>ta</i> < (Proto-)Chadic 3SG.F <i>taa</i> ; cf. Hausa PRF 3SG.F <i>táa</i>
PL	1	<i>tí</i>	<i>tík</i>	re-designation of 2nd person <i>ti/tí-k</i> ; cf. Hausa <i>mu-kà</i>
	2	<i>tí ... n</i>	<i>wún</i>	* <i>tV</i> < pre-Chadic 2nd person; circumfix marking <i>*tV...nV</i> < pre-Chadic 2nd person; <i>wú + n</i> < Chadic pattern of PRON pluralisation, cf. Hausa <i>ku-n</i>
	3	<i>táa</i>	<i>ták</i>	for tonal contrast <i>taa</i> : <i>táa</i> cf. Chadic Saya (Zaar) Group; for <i>tá-k</i> cf. Hausa <i>su-kà</i>

5 Summary and Conclusion

At least five types of contact-induced processes of language change have affected the pronoun systems in the convergence zone. These five processes can all be illustrated with examples from Fyem (Table 16):

Table 16. Types of contact-induced changes affecting personal pronouns

	Processes	Illustrations: Fyem
1.	substitution <i>in situ</i> so-to-speak by borrowed pronouns	<i>taa</i> < Hausa <i>táa</i> , <i>ín</i> < Hausa <i>ín</i>
2.	substitution of pronoun(s) plus analogical restructuring affecting other pronouns (involving sub-morphemic components)	<i>tí-k</i> / <i>tá-k</i> – cf. Hausa/Chadic <i>-kà</i> , <i>ta-a</i> – cf. Hausa PRF I, <i>wu-n</i> – cf. Chadic INDEP PL PRON
3.	re-designation of function with regard to person, gender, number, involving genetically acquired pronouns	<i>mé</i> 1SG > <i>-mé</i> 3SG POSS, <i>ná-mot</i> 2PL POSS > <i>móti</i> / <i>mót/-té</i> 1PL
4.	re-designation of function involving borrowed pronouns	<i>ti</i> 2SG > <i>tí</i> 1PL, <i>ná-mun</i> 1PL POSS > <i>múni</i> / <i>-mún</i> 2PL
5.	borrowing of coding strategies/formative patterns within the system, either involving genetically acquired or borrowed pronouns	tonal marking <i>ti... : tí, taa : táa</i> ; PL marking by circumfix <i>ti</i> > <i>ti...n</i>

The most quirky feature is that of shifting pronoun shapes across the categories of person and number (less relevant: gender). In most examples these category shifts are accompanied by establishing tonal contrasts (mostly H tone for PL, as opposed to non-H for SG, or simple tonal polarity).²¹ Clearly, each individual case alone would raise serious doubts about the assumption of diachronic category shift. It is the massive occurrence of this phenomenon in this area that gives

²¹ This observation could be particularly interesting with regard to the theory of tonogenesis in Chadic since it would provide a functional explanation why an originally non-tonal Chadic language should go tonal in parts of its grammar (in addition to attributing this solely to a stable geographic and possibly also culturally relevant neighbourhood, in terms of stable exogamy patterns, with tone languages of BC genetic affiliation). Note, however, that the implied BC origin of tonal distinctions between SG and PL pronouns (particularly 3rd person) is more of an assumption based on “expert intuition” than being based on established diachronic evidence. (For tonogenesis theory in Chadic see Wolff 1983, 1987)

weight to the assumption – unless a more plausible explanation can be advanced. Cf. Table 17 for a summary of category shifts.

About as quirky as the cross-category pronoun shifting is the occurrence and distribution of circumfix conjugational patterns – if one leaves the special case of ICP conjugations aside, to which there may (or may not) be an ultimate relationship of yet unclear nature. Quite likely, a category shift is involved at the same time, i.e. from 1PL to 2PL, if one can identify the pronoun shapes containing **(y)in* as originally of 1PL origin; cf. summarising Table 18.

If one is willing to assume a pre-Chadic origin of circumfix conjugation, then this might point towards the existence of a rather ancient Sprachbund or convergence zone across the present-day Chadic–Benue-Congo genetic borderline.²² This would be in accordance with long-standing “expert intuitions” (cf. Carl Hoffmann’s [1970] eye-opening little article on “Ancient Benue-Congo loans in Chadic?”, the title of which one would want to rectify by replacing the question mark by an exclamation mark.) Later, Gerhardt (1983, following up on WG 1977) has shown that and how borrowed lexical items have entered the proto-language reconstructions for the language groups involved.

The exact delineation of the particular convergence zone within the “Macro-Sudan Belt” (Güldemann 2008) still remains to be worked out, this is a task for future research which requires cooperation of Benue-Congoists and Chadicists, and possibly Saharanists and even Songhay specialists – depending on how far east and west one wants to look. In terms of lexical interference, some answers emanate from the SAHELIA/MARIAMA project of our colleague Robert Nicolăi, and from the international Loanword Typology project at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig (Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009a/b), in which Africanists from Leipzig have taken part.

²² Traces of the AA pattern of circumfix person marking can be found across Chadic, usually hidden behind so-called “plural verb stems” with a nasal ending, and certain imperative PL forms (cf. Newman 1990, Wolff 2011).

Table 17. Category shift of personal pronoun shapes

Category	Direction of shift	Language	Genetic affiliation	Examples
NUMBER	SG = > PL	Guruntum	Chadic: Saya group	2nd person <i>kau/kə/gu/gù</i> = > <i>kàu/kà/gu/gù</i> 3rd person <i>tí</i> = > <i>tí</i>
	PL = > SG	Guruntum Ron-Sha	Chadic: Saya group Chadic: Ron group	1st person (<i>*ní</i>) = > <i>ní</i> 1st person <i>ní</i> = > <i>ní</i>
PERSON	1SG = > 3SG	Fyem	BC: Plateau-SE	INDEP <i>mé</i> = > POSS <i>-mé/nd-mé</i>
	1PL = > 2PL	Gworok	BC: Plateau-C-2	} <i>nyí</i> (originally 1PL) ²³ EMPH POSS <i>ná-mun</i> = > <i>múni/mún</i>
		Rigwe	BC: Plateau-C-2	
		Gong	BC: Plateau-W-1	
		Fyem	BC: Plateau-SE	
2PL = > 1PL	Fyer Fyem	CH: Ron group BC: Plateau-SE	<i>*ku</i> = [wú~'ú] = > <i>kú</i> EMPH POSS <i>ná-mot</i> = > <i>móti/mót/-té</i>	
3PL = > 2PL	Ninzam	BC: Plateau-West-2	<i>ba</i> = > (<i>i</i>) <i>mba</i>	
PERSON & NUMBER	2SG = > 1PL	Fyer Sha Fyem	Chadic: Ron group Chadic: Ron group BC: Plateau-SE	<i>ka</i> = > <i>ká</i> M. <i>ka</i> = > <i>gyá</i> , F. <i>ki</i> = > <i>gí</i> <i>tí</i> = > <i>tí</i>
	2SG.F = > 1PL	Guruntum	Chadic: Saya group	<i>kaŋ/gəŋ</i> = > <i>kəŋ/gəŋ</i>

23 See fn 15.

Table 18. Distribution of circumfix conjugational pattern

	Examples			Language	Genetic affiliation
1PL	<i>'i/yi_ nyí</i> <i>yír_ ir</i>	<i>tí_ (y)ir</i>	<i>ní_ (y)ir</i>	Fyer Zarek	CH: Ron group BC: Plateau-C2
2PL	<i>yín_ in</i>	<i>ta_ (y)in</i> <i>tí_ n</i>	<i>ka_ (y)</i> <i>in</i>	Zarek Fyem	BC: Plateau-C2 BC: Plateau-SE
3PL	<i>ba</i>	<i>ta_ ba</i>	<i>ka_ ba</i>	Zarek	BC: Plateau-C2

From the vantage point of the study of pronoun systems, at least the following language groups or individual languages within Chadic are tentatively viewed as forming part of the “Chadic-Benue-Congo Convergence Zone” (classification by Newman 1990, but arranged according to tentatively assumed contact intensity/geographic distance):

I. West Chadic

A. Sub-branch West-A

1. Ron group
2. Angas group
3. Bole group
4. Hausa (as the most recent lingua franca in the area);

B. Sub-branch West-B

1. Saya group (ex Southern Bauchi)
2. Warji group (ex Northern Bauchi)

II. Central Chadic (ex Biu-Mandara)

A. Subbranch BM-A

1. Tera group
2. Bura group (?)

Figure 1. Tentative list of Chadic language groups which form part of the Chadic – Benue-Congo Convergence Zone in Central Nigeria

As for the Benue-Congo languages which are most likely part of this convergence zone, evidence has been found from the following groups and subgroups of the “Platoid” languages as classified by Gerhardt (1989: 364f):

1. Plateau

B. Western group

1. Northwestern subgroup

a. Koro cluster: Koro

b. Jaba cluster: Gong (Kagoma)

2. Southwestern subgroup

a. Cluster A: Ninzam

C. Central group

2. South-Central subgroup

a. Rigwe (Iregwe)

b. Zarek cluster: Izere/Zarek

c. Jju (Kaje)

d. Katab cluster: Gworok
(Kagoro)

D. Southeastern group

1. Fyem

Figure 2. Tentative (minimal) list of Plateau languages which form part of the Chadic – Benue-Congo Convergence Zone in Central Nigeria

These lists of language groups are based on the observations referred to in this and previous papers, plus the following West Chadic languages which have not been touched on in this article:

1. the distribution of 3PL *MU* ~ *MO* not only in the Angas group, but also in the Bole group (cf. Blažek 1995: 43);
2. the distribution of 1SG *MI(nV)* in the Warji and Saya groups and, possibly, even Bura group (cf. Blažek 1995: 40).

Abbreviations

AA	Afroasiatic (languages)	F	feminine (gender)
BC	Benue-Congo (languages)	IPFV	imperfective
C	Central group (Plateau languages)	IN(CL)	inclusive
C	common gender	INDEP	independent (pronoun)
CH	Chadic (languages)	M	masculine (gender)
DU	dual	Ncl	noun class
EX(CL)	exclusive	PAA	Proto-Afroasiatic
		PB	Proto-Bantu

PC	Proto-Chadic	SE	Southeastern group (Plateau languages)
PL	plural		
POSS	possessive (pronoun)	SG	singular
PRF	perfect	W	Western group (Plateau languages)
PRON	pronoun		

References

- Awagana, Ari & H. Ekkehard Wolff, with Doris Löhr. 2009a. Loanwords in Hausa, a Chadic language in West and Central Africa. In Martin Haspelmath & Uri Tadmor (2009a). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 144–165.
- Awagana, Ari & H. Ekkehard Wolff, with Doris Löhr. 2009b. Hausa vocabulary. In Martin Haspelmath & Uri Tadmor (2009b). 1668 entries. <https://wold.clld.org/language/4>. (5 October 2020.)
- Babaev, Kirill V. 2008. Reconstructing Benue-Congo person marking I: Proto-Bantoid. *Journal of West African Languages* 35(1/2). 131–183.
- Blažek, Vaclav. 1995. The microsystem of personal pronouns in Chadic, compared with Afroasiatic. In Dymitr Ibriszimow & Rudolf Leger (eds.), *Studia Chadica et Hamitosemitica*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe. 36–57.
- Caron, Bernard. 2001. Guus, aka Sigidi (Chadic, West-B, South-Bauchi): Grammatical notes and vocabulary. *Afrika und Übersee* 84. 1–60.
- Caron, Bernard. 2006. South-Bauchi West pronominal and TAM systems. In Bernard Caron & Petr Zima (eds.), *Sprachbund in the West African Sahel*. Louvain, Paris: Peeters. 93–112.
- Frajzyngier, Zygmunt. 1993. *A grammar of Mupun*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1967/68. Analytische und vergleichende Untersuchungen zu einigen zentralnigerianischen Klassensprachen. *Afrika und Übersee* 51. 161–198; 52. 23–57, 125–143, 207–242; 53. 44–65.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1983. Lexical interferences in the Chadic/Benue-Congo border area. In Ekkehard Wolff & Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg (eds.), *Studies in Chadic and Afroasiatic linguistics*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske. 301–310.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 1989. Kainji and Platoid. In John Bendor-Samuel (ed.), *The Niger-Congo languages: A classification and description of Africa's largest language family*. Lanham, New York & London: University Press of America. 359–376.
- Gerhardt, Ludwig. 2002. Pluraktionale Verben in einigen Benue-Congo-Sprachen des nigerianischen Plateaus, Teil I: Allgemeines, das Suffix *s, seine Varianten, seine Kombinationen. *Hamburger Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 1. 37–58.
- Güldemann, Tom. 2008. The Macro-Sudan belt: towards identifying a linguistic area in northern sub-Saharan Africa. In Bernd Heine and Derek

- Nurse (eds.), *A linguistic geography of Africa*. 151–185. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hagen, Eva. 1988. *Die Gong. Monographische Studie zur Kultur und Sprache der Gong (Kagoma), Zentralnigeria*. Hamburg: Dr. R. Krämer.
- Haruna, Andrew. 2003. *A grammatical outline of Gùrdùj/Gùrùntùm (Southern Bauchi, Nigeria)*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Haspelmath, Martin & Uri Tadmor (eds.). 2009a. *Loanwords in the world's languages: A comparative handbook*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Haspelmath, Martin & Uri Tadmor (eds.). 2009b. *World loanword database*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. <https://wold.clld.org/>. (5 October 2020.)
- Hellwig, Birgit. 2003. *The grammatical coding of postural semantics in Goemai (a West Chadic language of Nigeria)*. (MPI Series in Psycholinguistics 22.) Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.
- Hoerner, Elisabeth. 1980. *Ninzam – Untersuchungen zu einer Klassensprache des zentralnigerianischen Plateaus*. Hamburg: University of Hamburg MA thesis.
- Hoffmann, Carl. 1970. Ancient Benue-Congo loans in Chadic? *Africana Marburgensia* 3. 3–23.
- Jungraithmayr, Herrmann. 1970. *Die Ron-Sprachen. Tschadhamitische Studien in Nordnigerien*. Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin.
- Jungraithmayr, Herrmann, Rudolf Leger & Doris Löhr. [JLL] 2004. “Westwärts weht der Wind”. Migrationen im südlichen Tschadseegebiet. In Klaus-Dieter Albert, Doris Löhr & Katharina Neumann. *Mensch und Natur in Westafrika – Ergebnisse aus dem Sonderforschungsbereich „Kulturentwicklung und Sprachgeschichte im Naturraum Westafrikanische Savanne“*. Weinheim: Wiley-VCH. 169–195.
- Löhr, Doris & H. Ekkehard Wolff, with Ari Awagana. 2009a. Loanwords in Kanuri, a Saharan language. In Martin Haspelmath & Uri Tadmor (2009a). 166–190.
- Löhr, Doris & H. Ekkehard Wolff, with Ari Awagana. 2009b. Kanuri vocabulary. In Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (2009b). 1591 entries. <https://wold.clld.org/language/5>. (5 October 2020.)
- Nettle, Daniel. 1998. *The Fyem language of northern Nigeria*. München: LINCOM EUROPA.
- Newman, Paul. 1969/70. Linguistic relationship, language shifting, and historical inference. *Afrika und Übersee* 53. 217–23.
- Newman, Paul. 1970. *A Grammar of Tera. Transformational syntax and texts*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Newman, Paul. 1980. *The classification of Chadic within Afroasiatic*. Leiden: Universitaire Pers.

- Newman, Paul. 1990. *Nominal and verbal plurality in Chadic*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Schuh, Russell G. 1983. The evolution of determiners in Chadic. In Ekkehard Wolff & Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg (eds.), *Studies in Chadic and Afroasiatic linguistics*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske. 157–210.
- Thieme, Paul. 1964. The Comparative method for reconstruction in linguistics. In Dell Hymes (ed.), *Language in culture and society: A Reader in linguistics and anthropology*. New York: Harper & Row. 585–598.
- Wolff, H. Ekkehard. 1983. Tonogenese in tschadischen Sprachen. *Afrika und Übersee* 66. 203–220.
- Wolff, H. Ekkehard. 1987. Consonant-tone interference in Chadic and its implications for a theory of tonogenesis in Afroasiatic. In Daniel Barreteau (ed.), *Langues et cultures dans le bassin du lac Tchad*. Paris: ORSTOM. 193–216.
- Wolff, H. Ekkehard. 2011. Semitic-Chadic relations. In Stefan Weninger & Michael Streck (eds.), *Handbook of Semitic languages*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 27–37.
- Wolff, H. Ekkehard & Ludwig Gerhardt. [WG] 1977. Interferenzen zwischen Benue-Kongo- und Tschad-Sprachen. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* Suppl. 3, 2. 1518–1543.
- Wolff, H. Ekkehard & Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg. 1979. Morphologie und Semantik der erweiterten Verbalstämme im Afuzare (Zarek). *Afrika und Übersee* 62. 1–38.

Grammaticalization of *qəl* ‘gourd’ in Amharic¹

Orin D. Gensler

Leipzig, Germany
gensler@eva.mpg.de

Abstract:

The Amharic word *qəl* ‘gourd’ represents a rare case where a plant term serves as the source of a grammaticalization chain. The development occurred in two stages, first metaphoric change, then grammaticalization proper: gourd > skull/head > Intensive (never Plain) Reflexive (‘he himself, etc.’). This process was entangled with the grammatical evolution of two other words, *ras* and *gəll*. *Ras*, which is the basic unmarked term for ‘head’, as such underwent the basic unmarked grammaticalization into a Plain Reflexive (and only secondarily into an Intensive Reflexive). The other word, *gəll* ‘separate, individual’, phonetically quite similar to *qəl* but with no etymological connection to ‘head’, grammaticalized directly to the meaning ‘one’s own, by oneself’, thence secondarily to an Intensive Reflexive (but never a Plain Reflexive). Thus two near-synonyms (*qəl*, *ras* ‘head’) underwent two parallel grammaticalizations, but yielding different results: *qəl*, unlike *ras*, was never a Plain Reflexive. Why? The distinctive semantic evolution of *qəl*, I suggest, was partly driven by its phonetic similarity to the historically unrelated *gəll*, which also was never a Plain Reflexive. The phonetic similarity helped to foster a semantic attraction between the two grammaticalizing morphemes.

Keywords: Amharic, grammaticalization, intensive reflexives, attraction of morphemes

The Amharic lexical item *qəl* (Kane 1990, I: 673–674) basically means ‘gourd, calabash’. As this article will be dealing with the grammaticalization development undergone by *qəl* within Amharic, I should say at the outset that it is only tangentially concerned with the word’s pre-Amharic etymology and development. A word cognate to *qəl* and

1 Oral versions of this paper were presented at the 23rd Afrikanistentag in Hamburg and at the 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (ICES 20) in Mekelle, Ethiopia. I am indebted to Gideon Goldenberg’s article “‘Oneself, ‘one’s own’ and ‘one another’ in Amharic” (1998), which (though much more briefly) covers some of the same ground as this paper. My thanks also to an anonymous reviewer for Afrika und Übersee.

having the meaning ‘gourd’ pervades the Transversal South Ethiopic (TSE) branch of Ethio-Semitic: Amharic *qəl*, Argobba *qāli*, Harari *qulu*, Silt’i *qula*, *qila*, Wolane *quli* (see Leslau 1963: 123, 1979: III, 474).² It is also found in the Western Gurage language Soddo, where it has the form *qəl* (identical to Amharic, hence possibly a borrowing?) – and apparently nowhere else in Ethio-Semitic, notably not in the classical language Ge’ez. Given this distribution, the etymon is straightforwardly reconstructible as having existed already in Proto-TSE, whence it was inherited (in the sense ‘gourd’) by the daughter language Amharic. Its ultimate genesis in Proto-TSE is not the concern of this paper.³ Note that, outside of Amharic, the meaning always seems to be strictly ‘gourd’.

Amharic *qəl* also has a metaphoric extension to ‘skull, head’. This metaphor can be seen in other languages as well. English has the slang phrase *he’s off his gourd* meaning ‘he’s out of his head, crazy’. Arabic has *qar‘a* ‘gourd; skull, head’ (just cited) (Goldenberg 1998); French has *citrouille* ‘pumpkin, gourd; (slang) head’ (ibid.). There is a rough parallel in Indo-European: one source of IE words for ‘skull’ is ‘shell’ (Buck 1949: 212–14). The semantic grounds for the metaphoric shift are clear: ‘gourd’ and ‘head/skull’ both have a similar shape, size, and hard but breakable exterior. We can see this explicitly in the Amharic idiom *yä-ras qəl* (lit.) ‘of-head gourd’, i.e. ‘skull’. For the semantic extension ‘skull’ > ‘head’, cf. Amharic *č’anqəllat*, lit. ‘skull’, commonly also used to mean ‘head’.

This *qəl* (not just a homonym, see below) also has a number of grammatical uses as an emphatic particle, in several contexts (examples and page references are from Leslau 1995, *Reference grammar of*

2 Of the TSE languages, only Zay lacks any clear cognate to *qəl*. In his 1963 Harari dictionary, Leslau offers Zay *wülle* ‘gourd’ as a cognate, a suggestion that is not repeated in his 1979 Gurage dictionary. Indeed, I have seen no mention of a possible path that might link *wülle* to *qəl*; such a link is imaginable (perhaps **qulle* > **ulle* > *wulle*?), but would be ad hoc and irregular phonologically. (See Meyer 2005: 72–73 for the change *q* > *ʔ* in Zay, but only syllable-finally.)

3 Leslau suggests that it is “probably from Cushitic” (1963: 123), as a number of Cushitic languages also have the word, e.g. Oromo *qulu*, *qilla*, Qabeena and Alaba *qulā*. There are no reliable Semitic cognates outside of Ethiopia. Two similar-looking words in Arabic might conceivably be etymologically relevant: *qulla* ‘jug, pitcher; summit’ and *qar‘a* ‘gourd; skull, head’; the former is a good match formally but not semantically, the latter semantically but not formally. All this is speculation.

Amharic). It should be noted, however, that it is not used as a Plain Reflexive (*he hit himself).

- (1) Intensive Reflexive ‘he himself / you yourself’
əssu qəl-u / antä-w qəl-əh
 he *qəl*-his you-DEF *qəl*-your.2MS (p. 59)
- (2) ‘Separately, apart’ (with the Distributive element *əyyä*)⁴
bä-yyä-qəl or: əyyä-qəl
 in-DISTR-*qəl* DISTR-*qəl* (p. 146)
- (3) Temporal intensifier (optional); frozen form 3MS *qəl-u*
s-irəbä-w (qəl-u) {yəbälall}
 when-hungers-him *qəl*-its {he.will.eat}
 ‘when he is hungry {he will eat}’⁵ (p. 670)
- (4) Conditional intensifier (optional); frozen form 3MS *qəl-u*
X-mm b-ihon (qəl-u)
 X-FOC if-it.is *qəl*-its
 ‘even if it is X; as for X’ (p. 683)
- (5) Concessive intensifier (optional); frozen form 3MS *qəl-u*
b-VB.SIMP.IPFV-mm (qəl-u)
 if-Verb-though *qəl*-its
 ‘even though Verb’ (p. 684–85)

Sentence (6) gives a real text example for usage (5) (thanks to Magdalena Krzyzanowska):

- (6) *bəzu fätäna-wočč-ənnä adäga-wočč*
 many trial-PL-and danger-PL

b-idärs-(ə)bbəññ-əmm qəl-u yalä mənnəm räddat
 if-it.happens-on.me-though *qəl*-its without any helper

täwätəčč-aččäw-allähu
 overcome.GERUND.1SG-them-AUX.1SG
 “Even though many trials and dangers have happened to me,
 I have overcome them without any helper” (Yəṭbaräk 14: 9-16)

4 When prefixed to a noun, the distributive morpheme *əyyä* conveys the sense “each one in turn” (Leslau 1995: 148).

5 Presumably the temporal-intensifier sense would convey something like ‘Precisely when he is hungry, then he will eat’.

There are a number of preliminary points to note about these constructions. First, in Amharic, the suffix *-u* in *qəl-u* can in general mean either 3MS.possessive ‘his/its’ or the definite article; but its possessive function here is clear from the 2nd-person example *antä-w qəl-əh* ‘you yourself’ (shown in (1) above). Second, the use of *qəl* is rather uncommon in (today’s) Amharic, and is far more a feature of the written than the spoken language. Third, the use of *qəl* is never the only way to express these concepts. In the Intensive Reflexive usage (1), instead of *qəl-u*, speakers more commonly use the Plain Reflexive *ras-u* ‘himself’ (= his-head). In (2), instead of *qəl*, more common are constructions with *(yä)-gəll* ‘self, (one’s) own’ (see below). In (3, 4, 5), frozen *qəl-u* is simply optional, and informants differ when asked about its function; some speakers consider it to be elevated style, while others point to its emphatic function. Assuming an emphatic function in (3, 4, 5), the frozen *qəl-u* would derive from the Intensive Reflexive use, paraphrased as ‘in this selfsame situation itself, in this very case, precisely then’. One can compare German *selbst* ‘self > even (if)’, or French *même* ‘same > even (if)’ (Goldenberg 1998). But why this special development should have happened at all, I do not know.

Arguably, the literal and the grammatical uses of *qəl* are not just homonymy, but represent a case of grammaticalization. Analysis as grammaticalization yields a plausible, motivated etymological source for the grammatical particle, as explained in this paper. No other etymology for the particle has been put forward; and few linguists would reject a plausible etymology in favor of no etymology at all, which is what a claim of homonymy would entail.

Grammaticalization in Semitic as a whole has been the subject of a book-length treatment (Rubin 2005). This of course includes Ethio-Semitic. Indeed, there are numerous examples of grammaticalization in Ethio-Semitic languages, e.g. the change of classical Ge’ez *näbärä* ‘sit’ to a ‘be’-verb (especially as an Auxiliary) in Amharic. The case of *qəl*, however, has gone unmentioned in the limited grammaticalization literature on Amharic, e.g. not in Abinet 2014. Yet the grammaticalization is easy to motivate. A grammaticalization from ‘head’ (or bone, belly, body, spirit, etc.) to Reflexive is well-known, and likewise from ‘head’ to Intensive Reflexive (‘he himself’, see Heine & Kuteva 2002: 168). A grammaticalization path starting from ‘gourd’ would then be mediated by the metaphoric extension from ‘gourd’ to ‘skull, head’:

- (7) *qəl* ‘gourd’ > ‘head’ > Intensive Reflexive (but never Plain Reflexive).

This grammaticalization involves a plant term as its starting point. Such plant-based grammaticalization paths are not common worldwide, as far as I know. Heine & Kuteva (2002) mention only “tree, branch”, grammaticalizing to a classifier. A dramatic case of this kind occurs in the Amazonian language Hup (Epps 2008):

- (8) *teg* ‘stick, tree’ > generic nominalizer > marker of purpose > future (!!).

Epps (2008: 151f., 594ff.) justifies in detail this quite exotic development. Important in these cases is the generic, non-specific nature of ‘stick, tree’. With *qəl* ‘gourd’, by contrast, what is essential is its specific nature (shape, size, hardness), providing the basis for the crucial metaphoric extension to “head”.⁶

Amharic has two other morphemes which overlap functionally with *qəl*: (a) *ras* ‘head’; (b) *gəll* ‘(one’s) own, self’. In order to understand the historical development of *qəl*, it is important to examine these as well. The case of *ras-u* ‘his-head’ is simpler, and I will present it first. In Amharic, as throughout Semitic, *ras* is the ordinary word for ‘head’. Following a very common crosslinguistic pattern, *ras-u* has grammaticalized to a Plain Reflexive (exx. taken from Leslau 1995: 57–60):

- (9) [*ras-u*]-*n* *gäddälä*
 head-his-ACC he.killed
 ‘he killed himself’ (lit. ‘he killed his head’)

This reflexive grammaticalization of *ras-u* ‘his-head’ had already occurred in Ge’ez, where the cognate *rə’s-u* “occurs very frequently” as a reflexive (Dillmann [1907]1974: 345). Reflexive grammaticalization is thus not a development that took place within Amharic, but

6 Amharic yields another possible plant-based grammaticalization, also unmentioned in the grammaticalization literature: Amharic *sər* ‘root’ has taken on the grammaticalized function of a preposition ‘beneath’. Compare Ge’ez *sərw* ‘root’, with cognates throughout Semitic (cf. Leslau 1987: 535). A potential problem is that the meaning of this word in Semitic languages is entangled with the meanings ‘sinew’ and ‘foundation’, so that it is not guaranteed that this was originally specifically a plant term. The exact reconstruction of the Semitic proto-form is also problematic formally. For discussion of this Semitic root see Kogan 2015: 42.

an inheritance from Ge’ez. This stands in clear contrast to the case of *qəl*, which did not even exist in Ge’ez. The Amharic-specific grammaticalization of *qəl* thus occurred against the background of the already-existing grammaticalized *ras*. – Finally, Amharic *ras-u* can also express Intensive Reflexive:

- (10) a. [əne ras-e] *nägä* *amättallä^wh*
 I head-my tomorrow I.will.come
 ‘I myself will come tomorrow’
- b. *yä-[ras-u]* *färäs* *näw*
 of-head-his horse it.is
 ‘it is his own horse’ (‘of himself’)

The case of *gəll* ‘(one’s) own, self’ (Kane 1990, II: 1879–1880) is trickier. Etymologically, a root *g-l-l* occurs throughout Ethio-Semitic with the basic meaning ‘to separate, set aside, set apart’ (Cohen et al. 1993: 126, no.11; Leslau 1987: 191) – thus Ge’ez *gällä*, *gälälä*; Amharic *gällälä* ‘stand aside, retire’; etc. This gives the key to the meaning of the noun *gəll*: ‘individual, one’s own self as set apart from others’. Note that *gəll*, in contrast to *ras* and *qəl*, has nothing to do with grammaticalization from ‘head’. Note also the phonetic similarity between *gəll* and *qəl*; both have the form [Velar.stop - ə - Liquid (single or geminated)]. This will be significant in what follows.

Grammatically, *gəll* requires a preposition: *yä-* ‘of’, *lä-* ‘to/for’, *bä-* ‘in/by’, *bä-yyä-* ‘in-Distributive’ + *gəll*.⁷

The functions of *gəll* are all individuating and emphatic in some way. Most basically, *gəll* can express ‘one’s own, of oneself’ (Leslau 1995: 58-61):

- (11) *yä-gəll* *təqm*
 of-own benefit
 ‘self-interest’
- bä-gəll* *səra*
 by-own work
 ‘by one’s own work, self-employed’

7 All of these might arguably involve *yä-* ‘of’, because of the rule of Amharic morphophonology which regularly converts **bä-yä-* > *bä-*; **lä-yä-* > *lä-*; etc., so that hypothetically **bä-yä-gəll* > *bä-gəll*, etc. (Leslau 1995: 193). I do not see any way of proving this, however.

It can express Intensive Reflexive, a meaning which partly overlaps with ‘one’s own’:

- (12) *məgb-u-n* *bä-mulu* *lä-gəll-u* *adärrägä-w*
 food-DEF-ACC in-full for-own-his he.made-it
 ‘he made all the food for himself’
- (13) *bet-u-n* *bä-gəll-u* *sarrä-w*
 house-DEF-ACC in-own-his he.built-it
 ‘he built the house on his own’

It can express “separately, apart”, when occurring with the Distributive morpheme *-(ə)yyä*:

- (14) *ləj-očč-u* *bä-yyä-gəll-aččäw* *bällu*
 child-PL-DEF in-DISTR-own-their they.ate
 ‘the children ate individually/separately’

But *gəll* cannot express a Plain Reflexive.

The three morphemes (*qəl*, *gəll*, *ras*) exhibit functional overlap, as shown below:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---|
| (15) Plain reflexive | Intensive Reflexive | ‘Separately, on one’s own’ | Concessive Intensifier
‘even though’ |
| <i>ras-u</i> | <i>ras-u</i> | | |
| | <i>(yä)-gəll-u</i> | <i>bä-(ə)yyä-gəll</i> | |
| | <i>qəl-u</i> | <i>bä-(ə)yyä-qəl</i> | <i>qəl-u</i> (frozen 3MS) |

As a final observation, it is of interest that we have here two parallel grammaticalizations from two different words meaning ‘head’:

- *ras*: head > Plain Reflexive
- *qəl*: gourd > head > Intensive Reflexive (never means Plain Reflexive)

Note that the two cases yield different outputs. In fact, parallel grammaticalizations with two different outputs occur in other languages, too. In Kilivila, *bwa* and *kai* (both ‘tree’) grammaticalize to different classifiers. Similarly, in Chinese, *shù* and *gè* (both ‘tree’) grammaticalize to different classifiers (Heine & Kuteva 2002:301).

These disparate observations may give the impression of a disjointed hodgepodge. How can we put them all together to reconstruct the grammaticalization history of *qəl* in a way that does justice to all

the above facts? Leading questions to keep in mind are: Why should the two parallel grammaticalizations have occurred at all? And why is the distribution of functions the way it is?

I propose the following scenario: The grammaticalization of *qəl* specifically in Amharic was abetted by its monosyllabic nature, in contrast to bisyllabicity elsewhere in TSE; grammatical morphemes tend to be short. The fact that *qəl* existed alongside an already-grammaticalized reflexive *ras* must also have furthered the process, in that speakers were already familiar with the concept of grammaticalization of a body-part term ‘head’ to a reflexive. However, the pre-existence of *ras* as a Plain Reflexive would have militated against precisely the same grammaticalization of *qəl* to a Plain Reflexive (redundantly). Rather, the grammaticalization trajectory of *qəl* was deflected semantically by its phonetic similarity to *gəll*.⁸ The guiding principle would then be: phonetic similarity can engender semantic similarity, so that two originally distinct morphemes “attract each other”. *Gəll* provided *qəl* with a similar but somewhat different grammaticalization target, a reflexive of a different kind: not a Plain but an Intensive Reflexive. A second factor “pushing” the semantic development of *qəl* to an Intensive Reflexive would have been the intrinsically more “colorful” nature of a word for ‘head’ that comes from ‘gourd’ (a polysemy which speakers could not have been unaware of). Arguably, a “colorful” word would be perceived as stronger than a plain word, thereby iconically favoring an interpretation as Intensive Reflexive (which is stronger than a Plain Reflexive).

In conclusion, I present a summary of points of interest regarding the grammaticalization of *qəl* ‘gourd’:

- a. It is apparently not mentioned in the grammaticalization literature on Amharic (or anywhere?)
- b. Grammaticalization starting from a plant term is not common
- c. Its development is entangled with that of two other grammaticalized words: *gəll*, *ras*
- d. There were two parallel grammaticalizations from ‘head’, with different outcomes

⁸ A salient difference between *qəl* and *gəll* is that *gəll* must take a preposition, while *qəl* generally does not. But there is one parallel construction where both morphemes do take a preposition: both *bä-yyä-qəl* and *bä-yyä-gəll* ‘separately, apart’ take the same compound preposition *bä-(ə)yyä-* ‘in + Distributive’.

- e. Finally, the semantic development of *qəl* was partly guided by (accidental) phonetic similarity to *gəll*. The literature on grammaticalization has not paid much attention to the role played by such fortuitous phonetic resemblance to other morphemes; but cf. the ideas in Heath (1998), and cf. Gensler (2002).

References

- Abinet Sime Gebreyes. 2014. *Grammaticalization in Ethiosemitic with comparison to Oromo*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University PhD thesis.
- Buck, Carl Darling. 1949. *A dictionary of selected synonyms in the principal Indo-European languages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cohen, David, François Bron & Antoine Lonnet. 1993. *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques*. Fascicule 3: GLD-DHML/R. Louvain: Peeters.
- Dillmann, August. [1907] 1974. *Ethiopic grammar*. Transl. James S. Crichton. Reprint, Amsterdam: Philo Press.
- Epps, Patience. 2008. *A grammar of Hup*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Gensler, Orin. 2002. Why should a demonstrative turn into a preposition? The evolution of Welsh predicative *yn*. *Language* 78. 710–764.
- Goldenberg, Gideon. 1998. ‘Oneself’, ‘one’s own’ and ‘one another’ in Amharic. Reprinted in Gideon Goldenberg, *Studies in Semitic linguistics: Selected writings*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press. 384–402.
- Heath, Jeffrey. 1998. Hermit crabs: Formal renewal of morphology by phonologically mediated affix substitution. *Language* 74. 728–759.
- Heine, Bernd & Tania Kuteva. 2002. *World lexicon of grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kane, Thomas Leiper. 1990. *Amharic-English dictionary*. 2 volumes. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Kogan, Leonid. 2015. *Genealogical classification of Semitic: The lexical isoglosses*. Boston & Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1963. *Etymological dictionary of Harari*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1979. *Etymological dictionary of Gurage (Ethiopic)*. 3 volumes. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1987. *Comparative dictionary of Ge’ez*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1995. *Reference grammar of Amharic*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Meyer, Ronny. 2005. *Das Zay*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Rubin, Aaron D. 2005. *Studies in Semitic grammaticalization*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Yəṭbarāk Gəḍäy. 2002(?). *Yäqane bet bahälännä yähäywäte gäṭṭämāññ*. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing.

„Long live our tribal jujus“ - Das Bedeutungsspektrum des Begriffs *juju* im kamerunischen Englisch

Viktoria Kempf

Universität Hamburg
viktoria.kempf@uni-hamburg.de

Abstract:

In the following I analyse the range of meanings of the generic term *juju* in Cameroonian English based on short essays which were written by students from different South-western Cameroonian communities in 1968. The analysis shows that *juju* has a wide range of meanings, it can denote several semantically connected phenomena: 1. a secret society, 2. a supernatural power, 3. a mask which personifies a deity, 4. a performance, in which a deity occurs (in the form of a mask), 5. an object which has supernatural powers.

Keywords: Cameroonian English, *juju*, lexical semantics

Zusammenfassung:

Im Folgenden wird das Bedeutungsspektrum des generischen Begriffs *juju* im Kamerunischen Englisch auf der Grundlage von Aufsätzen, die 1968 von Studierenden aus verschiedenen südwestkamerunischen Gemeinschaften über *jujus* verfasst wurden, untersucht. Die Analyse zeigt, dass der Begriff *juju* ein sehr weites Bedeutungsspektrum hat. Er kann folgende semantisch miteinander verbundene Phänomene beschreiben: 1. einen Geheimbund, 2. eine übersinnliche Kraft, 3. eine Maske, die eine Gottheit personifiziert, 4. eine Darbietung, in der eine Gottheit (als Maske) auftritt, oder in der einer Gottheit gehuldigt wird, 5. ein Objekt, das mit Kräften einer Gottheit ausgestattet ist.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Kamerunisches Englisch, *juju*, lexikalische Semantik

1 Einleitung¹

In den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten sind neue Englischvarietäten stärker in den Fokus linguistischer Forschung getreten. Dazu gehören insbesondere Varietäten aus dem postkolonialen Raum, zu dem auch Westafrika gehört (Anchimbe & Mforteh 2011). Außer syntaktischen und phonologischen Besonderheiten weisen diese Englischvarietäten auch lexikalische und semantische Eigenheiten auf. So haben sich im Zusammenspiel mit lokalen Sprachen eigene Lexeme herausgebildet, oder etablierten Lexemen wurden neue Bedeutungen zugewiesen (Corum 2015; Anchimbe & Mforteh 2011; Anchimbe 2005; Polzenhagen 2005; Huber 1999). *juju* ist ein solcher Begriff, der im kolonialen Kontext in Westafrika entstanden ist und sich seither in die verschiedenen Varietäten mit unterschiedlicher Bedeutungszuschreibung verbreitet hat (Huber 1999: 101).

Im nigerianischen Englisch zum Beispiel hat das Wort zwei Bedeutungen: 1. „talisman, idol, witch-craft, poison, charm“ und 2. „a popular Nigerian music, ‘juju music’ [...]“ (Igboanusi 2010: 184). Blench (2005: 4), der Missionare für die Verbreitung des Begriffs verantwortlich macht, bemerkt, dass *juju* von vielen als pejorativ wahrgenommen wird. Er definiert es für das nigerianische Englisch sehr breit als „anything to do with traditional religion“ (Blench 2005: 14). Im Oxford English Wörterbuch (OED 2020) ist es verzeichnet als ein Wort, das nicht häufig in allgemeinen Texttypen vorkommt, aber auch nicht vollkommen obskur ist. Es wird dort mit drei Bedeutungen aufgeführt: Die erste Bedeutung wird auf derogative und nicht mehr zeitgemäße Art ausgewiesen, deckt aber einzelne Bereiche des in der folgenden Arbeit beschriebenen Phänomens mit ab:

„An object of any kind superstitiously venerated by West African native peoples, and used as a charm, amulet, or means of protection; a fetish. Also, the supernatural or magical power attributed to such objects, or the system of observances connected therewith; also, a ban or interdiction effected by means of such an object (corresponding to the Polynesian taboo).“ (OED 2020).

1 Ich möchte mich bei den Teilnehmern des 23. Afrikanistentages und bei den Rezensentinnen von *Afrika und Übersee* ganz herzlich für die Anregungen zu meinem Vortrag und die Korrekturen und Vorschläge für den Artikel bedanken. Jegliche verbliebenen Fehler sind mir geschuldet.

Die zweite Bedeutung ist eine Marihuanazigarette, wobei diese Bedeutungszuschreibung sehr selten ist, für sie sind nur zwei Literaturquellen aus den 1940er- und 1960er-Jahren angegeben. Auch wurde das Wort mit dieser Bedeutung nur in britischen und amerikanischen Englischvarietäten verwendet. Die dritte Bedeutung ist der bereits in Igboanusi (2010) und Blench (2005) erwähnte Musikstil aus Nigeria (OED 2020).

Der Fokus der vorliegenden Arbeit liegt auf dem Bedeutungsspektrum des Begriffs, wie er im kamerunischen Englisch verwendet wird. Kouega (2008: 100) definiert *juju* in seinem Wörterbuch des kamerunischen Pidginenglisch als ‚medicine man‘, ‚witch-doctor‘, ‚something frightful‘. Wie die Untersuchung der studentischen Aufsätze zeigen wird, greift diese Definition zu kurz und wird dem Begriff nicht gerecht.

Die Herkunft des Begriffs ist nicht vollständig geklärt, entweder fehlt er in etymologischen Wörterbüchern des Englischen (Ayto 1990) und Beschreibungen westafrikanischer Varietäten gänzlich (Kperogi 2015; Anchimbe 2005), oder es wird das französische *joujou* ‚Spielzeug‘ als Entlehnungsquelle angegeben (Room 1999). Der früheste Beleg für den Begriff stammt wohl aus dem Jahr 1699, wobei auf ein ‚idol-house‘ als Jou-Jou verwiesen wird (Churchill 1732: 462, cit. in Christophersen 1953: 289). Christophersen (1953: 289) vermutet, dass der Begriff auf das Portugiesische *deus* ‚Gott‘ zurückzuführen ist, eine Hypothese, die aufgrund der starken phonetischen Abweichung des angenommenen Ursprungswortes und der heutigen Form unplausibel scheint. Es ist jedoch tatsächlich so, dass der Einfluss des Portugiesischen an der westafrikanischen Küste vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert stärker war als der des Französischen. Mehrere Reisende aus der damaligen Zeit berichten von einer auf dem Portugiesischen basierenden Lingua Franca, die sich dort entwickelt hatte (Huber 1999: 259–261; Ngefac 2014: 435f.). Würde man dabei bleiben, dass ‚Spiel‘ die Bedeutung des Ursprungswortes von *juju* ist, käme auch das portugiesische *jogar* ‚spielen‘ als Ursprung in Betracht.

Ines Fiedler (pers. Komm.) schlägt ihrerseits vor, dass *juju* vom Wort *vòdún* aus der in Benin gesprochenen Sprache Fon abgeleitet worden sein könnte. Der weit verbreitete Begriff *Voodoo* ist ebenfalls

davon abgeleitet, von der Aussprachevariante [vudʒu], die in Benin geläufig sein soll.²

Auch wenn sich nicht endgültig rekonstruieren lässt, aus welcher Sprache genau der Begriff stammt, ist es klar, dass er im kolonialen Kontext an der westafrikanischen Küste entstanden ist und so seinen Weg ins Standardenglische gefunden hat, wo er jedoch eher selten zum Einsatz kommt, wie der Eintrag im OED 2020 nahelegt. In ethnologischer Literatur wird *juju* schon lange nicht mehr verwendet und Autor*innen sprechen von „cult agencies“, „associations“ (Röschenthaler 2004) oder „secret societies“ und „masks“ (Koloss 2008). Andere verzichten gänzlich auf eine Übersetzung lokaler Konzepte und verwenden emische Begriffe (Zeitlyn 1994).

Im Alltag wird *juju* von Sprecher*innen des Kamerunischen (Pidgin) Englisch³ für unterschiedliche Bereiche des religiösen und kulturellen Lebens verwendet und das mit einer weitaus höheren Frequenz als es in westeuropäischen Texten und Gesprächen der Fall ist. Als westeuropäischer Feldforscherin im Nordwesten Kameruns ist mir der Begriff sofort aufgefallen, seine Bedeutung war mir nicht geläufig. So kann man sagen, dass diese Wissenslücke, gepaart mit Kouegas (2008) mangelhaften Definition des Begriffs diesen Artikel motiviert hat, in der Hoffnung, etwas Licht in sein komplexes Bedeutungsspektrum zu bringen.

2 Die Texte

Im Folgenden untersuche ich anhand von Aufsätzen, die 1968 von Studierenden aus Südwestwestkamerun über *jujus* in kamerunischem Englisch verfasst wurden, mit welchen Bedeutungen dieser Begriff benutzt werden kann. Die Verfasser*innen waren 40 Studierende des Lehrerausbildungscolleges in Nyasoso, das am Fuße des Kupeberges liegt (Valentin 1980). Die Aufsätze wurden in einem kleinen Heft (48 Seiten) von Peter Valentin 1980 herausgegeben.

² Leider lässt sich diese Aussage nicht durch das einzige mir zugängliche Wörterbuch des Fon belegen, dort wird [vödú] als phonetische Form angegeben (Höftmann 2003: 376).

³ Pidgin steht in Klammern, da der Begriff *juju* sowohl im kamerunischen Englisch als auch im kamerunischem Pidgin Englisch synonym verwendet wird. Es bedeutet nicht, dass jegliches kamerunische Englisch ein Pidgin ist. Im Folgenden wird K(P)E der Einfachheit wegen als KPE geschrieben.

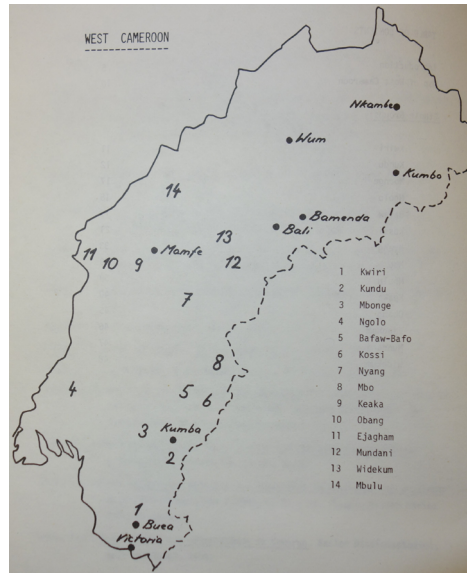


Abbildung 1. Herkunft der Autor*innen der Aufsätze. Quelle: Valentin 1980: 1.

Der Herausgeber war ein Schweizer Ethnologe, der am Lehrerseminar in Batibo im Missionsdienst der Basler Mission als Lehrer tätig war (Straumann o. D.). Ob er auch in Nyasoso unterrichtet hat, oder nur die Aufsätze aus ethnologischem Interesse in Auftrag gegeben hat, bleibt unklar. Zur Motivation der Veröffentlichung schreibt er: „to make [the texts] available as basic material for cultural anthropologists and field workers.“ (Valentin 1980: 7). Die Autor*innen der Aufsätze, deren Namen leider nicht in dem Heft vermerkt wurden, kamen aus 14 verschiedenen Gemeinschaften der Südwestregion Kameruns und waren um die 20 Jahre alt (Valentin 1980: 5) (Abbildung 1).

Die besagte Region ist sprachlich heterogen, es werden zumeist Bantoide und Cross-River Benue-Kongosprachen gesprochen. Darüber hinaus sprechen die meisten Menschen im Süd- und Nordwesten Kameruns auch das kamerunische Pidginenglisch (Eberhard et.al. 2020). Das kamerunische Englisch ist eine Sprache der Bildung, und Menschen, die sekundäre Bildung genossen haben, sprechen es. Anchimbe (2005: 46) beschreibt die Stellung der offiziellen Sprachen (OLs) in Kamerun folgendermaßen „[...] the OLs are survival codes

limited to the formal settings of education, employment, media, administration, politics and law [...]“.

Ich habe Valentins Heftchen deswegen für eine Studie ausgesucht, weil ich die Aufsätze als wichtige historische Dokumente betrachte. Es handelt sich bei ihnen um geschriebene Primärtexte von jungen Laien, deren Wissen und Sichtweisen in der Forschung oftmals übergangen werden. Ich möchte behaupten, dass in ethnologischer und linguistischer Forschung in erster Linie ältere Menschen und eher Männer über das Wissen zu ihren Gemeinschaften befragt werden, was auch oft in der gerontokratischen Organisation der Gemeinschaften begründet ist. So werden oft eher ältere Männer dazu erkoren, das Wissen an die Ethnolog*innen und Sprachforscher*innen weiterzugeben. Das Wissen der jungen Leute, die oftmals nicht als Expertinnen wahrgenommen werden, wird als irrelevant betrachtet. Diesen Eindruck vermittelt auch folgende Aussage Valentins (1980: 5):

„The worth of the texts as primary sources should not be overestimated. They are to be taken as what they are: statements by young people who do not necessarily have a straightforward relationship with the traditional culture.“

Dieser Aussage stimme ich nicht zu. Abgesehen von der Einschränkung, dass wahrscheinlich die meisten der Studierenden nicht Mitglieder eines Geheimbundes waren, haben alle Mitglieder einer Gemeinschaft unterschiedliche Grade von Wissen über ihre Institutionen (Sharifian 2003: 191f.). Somit sind die Studierenden ebenfalls valide Quellen für dieses Wissen, auch wenn es vielleicht kein Expertenwissen ist. Die Aufsatzsammlung lässt junge Menschen aus dem Südwesten Kameruns zu Wort kommen, Menschen, deren Stimme in gerontokratisch organisierten Gemeinschaften eher nicht gehört werden. Zudem handelt es sich hier um Wissen, das potenziell vom Verschwinden bedroht ist. Während der christliche Glaube in Kamerun immer weiter an Bedeutung gewinnt, treten die im Heft beschriebenen Praktiken zunehmend in den Hintergrund.

Insgesamt haben die Studierenden 76 Aufsätze über *jujus* in ihren Heimatorten verfasst. Teilweise berichteten mehrere Personen aus einer Gemeinschaft über dieselben *jujus*. Tab. 1 zeigt eine Auflistung der von den Studierenden beschriebenen *jujus*. Es fällt auf, dass einige *jujus* in mehreren Gemeinschaften existierten, wie zum Beispiel das *Male*, welches sowohl bei den Kwiri, den Kundu, den Ngolo

und den Kossi (geschrieben als *Mall*) zu finden ist. Hier ergeben sich zwei Schwierigkeiten beim Vergleich: Zum einen sind die Namen an die jeweiligen Sprachen angepasst. Auch gab es keine einheitlichen Transkriptionskonventionen, das gleiche *juju* kann unterschiedlich in die englische Orthografie übertragen worden sein, wie zum Beispiel *Nzomah* bei den Mbo und *Nzoemal* bei den Kossi, welches auch als *Nzo Mal* geschrieben wurde (Valentin 1980: 39; 33; 28). Zum anderen kann man nicht davon ausgehen, dass der gleiche Name auf die gleichen Praktiken verweist. Vielmehr ist anzunehmen, dass die Praktiken sich aufgrund von Aneignungsprozessen in den einzelnen Gemeinschaften unterschieden.⁴

Tab 1: Aufzählung beschriebener *jujus* aus 14 westkamerunischen Gemeinschaften (Valentin 1980: 6)

Gemeinschaft	Beschriebenes juju
Kwiri	Male
Kundu	Male, Ngoba, Butame, Dikongiri, Mosongosongo, Njoku, Mokongo, Nganya, Ekpangatete, Nyankpe, Dynangi, Ku
Mbonge	Njogu-a-Male, Dibundu, Dioh, Molimi ma Ose, Molimi ma Oma
Ngolo	Male
Bafaw	Esape = Muankum
Kossi	Mwankum, Ahon, Mall, Bepie, Ebassenjum, Ebenzu, Mwajeneh, Abukumoh
Nyang	Obasinjom, Nfam, Agon, Bekundi, Nyankpe, Njuckadar
Mbo	Nzomah
Mbulu	Mbuoli
Keaka	Ekpangatete, Nyanpwoi, Obasinjom, Mmawok, Atimambik
Ejagham	Obasinjum, Ndem, Ekwe

4 Rösenthaller (2004) beschreibt, dass einige *jujus* im Südwesten Kameruns veräußerbar sind. Hierfür gibt es auch einen Beleg in den Studierendenaufsätzen. Eine Person berichtet über Male bei den Ngolo: „It is so important to its members in that they derive money from it. Any tribe interested to have it, has to give fat sums of money, cows, goats and wine.“ (Valentin 1980: 18 *sic*).

Mundani Mennang
Widekum Ayakure

Zur Analyse der Studierendenaufsätze müssen folgende Aspekte bemerkt werden: Zum einen war das kamerunische Englisch nicht die erste Sprache der Studierenden (Valentin 1980: 6), was zu einer idiosynkratischen Verwendung von Begriffen führte. Das Wissen um die *jujus* ist den Mitgliedern von Geheimbünden vorbehalten, sodass die Studierenden nur begrenzt über Detailwissen verfügen konnten. Darüber hinaus oblag es der Kreativität und Subjektivität der einzelnen Autoren, wie detailliert sie die *jujus* beschrieben. Manche Aufsätze sind eine Seite, andere nur ein paar Sätze lang. Bei einigen Aufsätzen wird nicht deutlich, was genau die Autorin beschrieb, weil große Anteile des kulturellen Insiderwissens nicht explizit dargelegt wurden. Als letzten Punkt muss man den Entstehungskontext der Aufsätze berücksichtigen: Sie wurden am presbyterianischen Lehrerkolleg verfasst, an welchem christliche Missionsarbeit durchgeführt wurde. Da die traditionellen religiösen Praktiken als mit dem christlichen Glauben unvereinbar gelten, standen die Studierenden zumindest unter indirektem Druck, die von ihnen beschriebenen Praktiken negativ zu bewerten. Valentin (1980: 5) sagt zum Prozess der Aufsatzauswahl:

„In selecting the passages to reproduce we have concentrated on those purely descriptive in character. We have omitted those reflecting the personal attitude of the authors toward jujus, either condemning them as the devil’s work or appreciating them as “native tradition”.“

Dennoch sind sowohl positive als auch negative Wertungen der beschriebenen Praktiken in die Aufsätze eingeflossen. So schmuggelte eine Studierende den Appell „Long live our tribal jujus“ an das Ende ihrer/seiner Beschreibung (Valentin 1980: 46). Andere Studierende werteten die von ihnen beschriebenen kulturellen Praktiken als Spiel ab (Valentin 1980: 29).

Als letzten Punkt muss noch einmal auf die Entstehungszeit der Aufsätze hingewiesen werden. Sie wurden 1968 verfasst, das bedeutet, dass es sich hier um einen Schnappschuss des kamerunischen Englisch zu der damaligen Zeit handelt und sich die Konzepte mittlerweile gewandelt haben können.

3 Die Analyse

Im ersten Schritt der Analyse wurden die Studierendenaufsätze nach dem Vorkommen des Begriffs *juju* durchsucht und wiederkehrende Bedeutungen wurden festgehalten. Folgende sechs Bedeutungen kristallisierten sich dabei heraus:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. ein übernatürliches Wesen | [ÜBERNATÜRLICHES WESEN] |
| 2. ein Geheimbund | [GEHEIMBUND] |
| 3. eine Maske, die eine Gottheit personifiziert | [MASKE] |
| 4. eine Zeremonie, bei der ein übernatürliches Wesen als Maske auftritt, oder in der übernatürliche Kräfte verwendet oder angerufen werden | [AUFFÜHRUNG] |
| 5. ein Objekt, das mit übernatürlichen Kräften ausgestattet ist | [OBJEKT] |

Die Bedeutungen reduzierte ich auf einen Schlüsselbegriff, typografisch abgegrenzt durch Großbuchstaben und eckigen Klammern, und annotierte mit ihnen die Aufsätze der Studierenden, um zu sehen, welche Bedeutungen überwiegen.⁵ Die Begriffe ordnete ich entweder einem Wort, einem Satz oder einem ganzen Textabschnitt zu. Verwies mehrere Einheiten in einem Aufsatz auf dieselbe Bedeutung, wies ich den Begriff nur einmal zu. Für jede Bedeutung gab es bestimmte Wortwurzeln, Lexeme oder Formulierungen, die eine Zuordnung auslösten. Abschließend wurden die zugewiesenen Bedeutungen gezählt, womit sich zentrale und marginale Bedeutungen herauskristallisierten. Im Folgenden gehe ich konkreter auf die einzelnen Zuweisungen ein.

Die Zuweisung [ÜBERNATÜRLICHES WESEN] wurde durch eine Vielfalt von Aussagen, die auf die übernatürliche Natur der *jujus* hinweisen, ausgelöst: Zum einen sind es das Aussehen und die Fähigkeiten der *jujus*:

1. Das *juju* sieht anders aus als ein Mensch.

⁵ Hier handelt es sich nicht um „Frames“ im Sinne von Ungerer und Schmid (2006: 207ff.), sondern um Wortbedeutungen.

2. Es klingt anders oder spricht eine andere Sprache als die Menschen.
3. Es hat außergewöhnliche Kräfte oder bewegt sich anders als Menschen.

Des Weiteren gibt es spezifische Praktiken, die Gemeinschaftsmitglieder gegenüber *jujus* ausführen, die nahelegen, dass es sich um übernatürliche Wesen handelt.

1. Das *juju* wird angebetet als oder gleichgesetzt mit Gott.
2. Es erhält Opfergaben.

Für eine Zuweisung der Bedeutung [GEHEIMBUND] waren Wortwurzeln und Begriffe wie „member*“, „(secret) society“, „enter“, „entrance fee“, aber auch der Kontext ausschlaggebend.⁶

Auf die Bedeutung [MASKE] wiesen Wortwurzeln und Lexeme wie „dress*“, „gown“, „cloth*“ hin. Beschreibungen von (geschnitzten) Masken und elaborierten Verkleidungen von Personen lösten ebenfalls eine solche Annotation aus.

[AUFFÜHRUNG] wurde immer dann annotiert, wenn das Wort *juju* mit einem Verb vorkam, das auf die Prozesshaftigkeit des Begriffs hinweist, wie z.B. „perform*“, „play“ (v.), „do*“ und „practise*“, „celebrate*“, „function*“ (v.).

Als [OBJEKT] wurden Textstellen markiert, bei denen ein Objekt beschrieben wurde, das kleiner als eine Maske ist und dem eine übernatürliche Kraft zugeschrieben wurde.

In allen Fällen half auch der Kontext bei der Zuschreibung der Schlüsselbegriffe.

Die folgende Aufzählung zeigt, wie oft eine Zuschreibung in den gesammelten Aufsätzen Valentins vorkamen.

1. [GEHEIMBUND]	34
2. [ÜBERNATÜRLICHES WESEN]	26
3. [MASKE]	18
4. [AUFFÜHRUNG]	6
5. [OBJEKT]	2

Die häufigste Bedeutung ist die eines „Geheimbunds“ mit 34 Vorkommen, gefolgt von „übernatürliches Wesen“ mit 26 Vorkommen.

6 Ein * ist ein Platzhalter für etwaige Wortendungen. So steht member* für das Nomen member aber auch für membership.

„Maske“ mit 18 Belegen ist eine weitere häufige Bedeutung. Zu vernachlässigen sind wohl die Bedeutung einer „Aufführung“ und eines machtvollen „Objektes“, welche nur sechs, bzw. zwei Mal in den 76 Aufsätzen vorkommen.

Im Folgenden stelle ich der Reihe nach Textbelege vor, die die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von *juju* im kamerunischen Englisch veranschaulichen.

3.1 *jujus* als Geheimbünde

Die Anhänger einzelner Gottheiten sind in Geheimgesellschaften organisiert. So schreibt ein Studierender aus der Gemeinschaft der Kossi über Mwankum (1):

(1) Mwankum bei den Kossi

„It was one of the leading and powerful jujus in Bakossi, and it was only for men over 21 years. Anybody who wanted to enter gave three goats, five fowls, and two leaves of tobacco.“ (Valentin 1980: 21).

Aus dem obigen Beispiel wird deutlich, dass die Vereinigung nur für eine bestimmte Gruppe von Personen offen ist, für Männer über 21. Darüber hinaus gibt es eine Aufnahmegebühr.

Über Nzomah bei den Mbo schreibt eine Autorin (2):

(2) Nzomah bei den Mbo

„It is more or less a food eating and drinking society. Where the members find faults in their friends in order to ask fines of food and jars of wine. In this juju special persons are selected who can dance well.“ (Valentin 1980: 39).

Das Beispiel in (2) weist klar auf die Bedeutung von Nzomah als eine Vereinigung hin. Diese hat Mitglieder, die bestimmte Regeln einhalten und bei Zuwiderhandlung Strafen zahlen müssen.

3.2 *jujus* als übernatürliche Wesen

Auf den Umstand, dass es sich bei einem *juju* um ein übernatürliches Wesen handelt, weisen unterschiedliche Beschreibungen hin. Zunächst werden *jujus* als Wesen beschrieben, die anders aussehen als Menschen. Diese Andersartigkeit manifestiert sich darin, dass *jujus* ihre Größe oder Form verändern können oder unsichtbar sind. Auch können sie tierischer Gestalt sein und über außergewöhnliche

Kräfte verfügen. Hier ergibt sich eine Überschneidung mit der Bedeutung [MASKE], da Masken auch eine Markierung der Andersartigkeit von Menschen darstellen. Sowohl unsichtbare übernatürliche Wesen als auch die Masken verfügen über diese Kräfte.

In den Beispielen (3a–c) werden *jujus* als unsichtbare Wesen beschrieben. Während ein Studierender Mwankum/Muakum bei den Kossi als Geist konzeptualisiert (3b), beschreibt ihn eine andere Studentin als einen unsichtbaren *juju* (3c).

(3) *jujus* als unsichtbare Wesen

- (a) Nganya bei den Kundu: „Another one is Nganya. This one is not seen. It only moves in the night, while people are asleep.“ (Valentin 1980: 14).
- (b) Mwankum bei den Kossi I: „This is the greatest and most powerful *juju* which is being used in my tribe and town. It is in the form of a spirit and it only comes out at night.“ (Valentin 1980: 22).
- (c) Muakum bei den Kossi II: „This *juju* is said to be an invisible *juju*, because it cannot be seen by any other persons in the village apart from the old men. If there is something coming to happen, it comes out in the night and announces it. It has a loud frightful voice, and it only speaks in its mother tongue.“ (Valentin 1980: 26f.).

Andere Beschreibungen deuten auf eine tierische Gestalt der *jujus* hin (4a–b).

(4) *jujus* mit Tiergestalt

- (a) Nzoemal bei den Kossi: „[...] meaning Elephant *juju*, because the *juju* looks like a large elephant. It is an interesting thing to witness the Nzoemal dance. When dancing the *juju* could sometimes increase its height or decrease it. It sometimes became taller than the surrounding house tops and could also decrease its height to that of a man.“ (Valentin 1980: 33)
- (b) Male bei den Kwiri: „At night the *juju* man will transform himself into an elephant and pull down the tree.“ (Valentin 1980: 11)

Oftmals beschreiben die Studierenden außergewöhnlich große *jujus*, wie auch in (4a). Möglicherweise ist hier eine auf Stelzen laufende

Maske gemeint. In (4b) ist nicht klar, um welche Art von Wesen es sich handelt, ob eine Maske, oder eher eine übernatürliche Kraft beschrieben wird.

Ein weiterer Hinweis auf die Andersartigkeit der *jujus* ist ihr Klang. Sie klingen übermenschlich (5a–b und 12) und manche sprechen ihre eigene Sprache (5c).

(5) Der Klang der *jujus*

- (a) Ekpangatete bei den Kundu: „It is always heard or seen when an old man dies. It makes a long loud noise announcing the name of the dead person.“ (Valentin 1980: 15).
- (b) Nyanpwai bei den Keaka: „The real juju itself is kept in a room with one person looking after it, so when it wants anything, it only tells that man who is in the room with it. It makes very great noise just as that of a lion, and the sound it makes is well known by the juju members.“ (Valentin 1980: 42).
- (c) Bepie bei den Kossi: „It was a type of juju which was mainly to signal the death of an important person, whom they had dreamed to have died. This juju moves everywhere in the night saying certain words in a very wonderful language.“ (Valentin 1980: 22).

Außergewöhnliche Kräfte weisen *jujus* als übernatürliche Wesen aus: Sie bewegen sich sehr schnell (6a), sind sehr klug und stark, können Geschehnisse in der Vergangenheit vorhersagen oder zukünftiges Unglück vorhersehen. Sie heilen (6b), sorgen für Regen und gute Ernten (6c). Sie beschützen vor Hexe(r)n und bestrafen sie.

(6) Übernatürliche Kräfte der *jujus*

- (a) Bepie bei den Kossi: „The juju had a terrible speed which he took to move in the night. The juju is always very fast to travel all corners of the village when it is out.“ (Valentin 1980: 22)
- (b) Obasinjum bei den Ejagham: „At certain periods a sick person is brought to the juju to tell exactly what is really wrong with him. From there it can tell how his sickness started and how he hopes to cure it, if the particular person is able to bring some drink to the juju.“ (Valentin 1980: 46)

- c) Male bei den Kwiri: „It was also believed that if there had been no rain and crops were dying, animals were carried to the juju house and slaughtered, so that blood ran down like water. After a time they had rain.“ (Valentin 1980: 12).

Wie aus (6c) hervorgeht, werden *jujus* von ihren Anhängern verehrt, was sich unter anderem an Opfergaben erkennen lässt.

3.3 *jujus* als Masken

Masken sind ein weit verbreitetes Phänomen im Nord- und Südwesten Kameruns. Sie bestehen aus einer Kopfbedeckung und einem Kostüm, das den Körper bedeckt und gehören Geheimbünden. Initiierte Personen aus diesen Geheimbünden schlüpfen in diese und agieren als das repräsentierte Wesen. Während viele Autorinnen die Masken als Personifikationen von Gottheiten interpretieren, betont Koloss (2008: 78), dass es sich um eigenständige Wesen handelt und keinesfalls um Repräsentanten übersinnlicher Kräfte:

„[...] masks in the Cross River region are not at all representations or incarnations of various spirits; they are, as I could ascertain in the Cameroon Grasslands, beings in their own right. Although most masks display attributes of the human body or of animals, they do not depict any natural or supernatural beings.“ (Koloss 2008: 78).

Es scheint so zu sein, dass im äußersten Norden des Graslandes in Kamerun die Tradition der Masken nicht mehr sehr lebendig ist. Zeitlyn (1994: 105) schreibt über die Masken bei den Mambila, die im Südwesten der Adamawaregion leben: „In the past there were several sorts of male masquerades, different suits and head-pieces, but now there is only one used in Somié.“ In Bezen, welches im Norden der Nordwestregion liegt und wo ich zwischen 2011 und 2016 geforscht habe, kommen die Masken auch nur noch sehr selten zum Vorschein. Weiter südlich, zum Beispiel in Wum, der Hauptstadt des Distriktes Menchum, treten *jujus* auf Beerdigungen auf und man kann den berühmten Koh fast täglich auf der Straße beobachten.

Die folgenden zwei Abbildungen 2 und 3 zeigen Koh und Mwabuh aus Weh, einer Ortschaft nördlich von Wum. Beide Masken sind weit verbreitet im kamerunischen Grasland (Koloss 2008: 114f.). Koh hat einen charakteristischen, großen schwarzen Kopf. Die Maske des Mwabuh ist aus Holz geschnitzt und sitzt schräg nach oben gerichtet auf dem Kopf des Trägers, welcher ein aufwändiges Federkleid trägt.



Abbildung 2. Koh in Weh. Foto: Roland Kießling 2002.



Abbildung 3. Mwabuh in Weh.
Foto: Roland Kießling 2002.

Die Oberkörper der *jujus* sind gekrümmt und Koh ist angeleint. Seine Bewegungen sind unvorhersehbar: Er kann plötzlich die Richtung ändern und Personen verfolgen.

In den Studierendenaufsätzen gibt es viele Belege für die Bedeutung [MASKE], wie an den folgenden Textausschnitten in (7) und (8) illustriert wird.

(7) Male bei den Kundu

„Male is a juju which is danced by a person, most probably a man. The man puts himself in a long big bag. This juju can rise to a height of about fifteen feet. It has no hands externally. It dances by sending the bag front and back, side to side. On the legs it wears bangles made of special seed shells ‚njanja‘, which make a noise as the juju dances.“ (Valentin 1980: 12).

(8) Nzomah bei Mbo

„In this juju special persons are selected who can dance well. These people are given special clothes sewn by a tailor. This cloth is well beautiful in a way that it attracts the interest of the people. And in this particular aspect there are always two people who are chosen to wear the sewn clothes. One is called a female, the other a male. In fact it is a marvellous thing, it is good for oneself to witness it when displaying. The people make a big round circle around the waist with a hard thing. Then it is covered with the cloth and at the tip there is something in the form of a clay pot with the feathers of fowls put on it.“ (Valentin 1980: 39).

In den Beschreibungen in (7, 8) werden die *jujus* als maskierte Performer wahrgenommen. Dies ist nicht in allen Texten der Fall, teilweise werden die *jujus* als eigenständige Wesen beschrieben (9, 10).

(9) Ekpangetete bei den Keaka (Ejagham)

„When they want to enjoy themselves or celebrate an occasion, they usually take out the materials, such as local guns, spears, ropes from jute, swords, drums and a big bell, many small ones, yellow and black piece of cloth, with which they decorate the juju. The important members will take over the responsibility of dressing Ekpangetete. The big bell will be tied on the waist, small bells on his knees, black cloths on the lower part of the body as his skirt, white one or yellow one up as his blouse. The sword will be given to him, ropes fastened on the legs and the spear in his left hand. After the juju has been well dressed, the floor members will now carry their guns, drums, spears, bells, and immediately you hear the lovely music being produced by the members.“ (Valentin 1980: 40).

(10) Obasinjum bei Nyang

„It is a juju built by Banyang tribe in Mamfe. It is built up of black clothes, feathers of special birds such as big horn. The head is made from wood in the form of a bird's head, the neck is made with a material got from raffia. On the head are put horns in the form of teeth and looking glasses in the form of eyes.“ (Valentin 1980: 35).

3.4 *juju* als Aufführung

Aus einigen Beispielen wird deutlich, dass der Begriff *juju* als etwas Prozesshaftes gedacht wird. In Beispiel (7) schreibt die Autorin aus Kundu „Male is a juju which is danced by a person, [...].“ (Valentin 1980: 12). Wobei *dance* als weit gefasster Begriff verstanden werden muss, der eher ‚aufführen, tanzen, zelebrieren‘ bedeutet. In Beispiel (13) schreibt die gleiche Studierende über Dikongiri: „This juju is organized at night when a person who is suspected to have been a great witch or wizard dies.“ (Valentin 1980: 13). Auch der folgende Satz eines Studierenden über Nzo Male bei den Kossi zeigt, dass *juju* nicht nur auf übersinnliche Wesen oder Objekte hinweisen kann, sondern auch auf eine Praktik. „The Nzo Male juju, which is practised all over Kumba division tribes, is one of the best jujus in the whole of West Cameroon.“ (Valentin 1980: 28).

Koloss (2000: 118, kursiv im Orig.) beschreibt den Auftritt von Nkock bei den Oku folgendermaßen:

„*Nkock* is so terrifying and wild that it must be accompanied by two retaining *nchisendase*, who hold him at length with ropes to hinder his flight and to avoid his wreaking damage. Other *nchisendase*, *ebfeafe Nkock* (wind of Nkock‘), wave their hands with large leaves, shouting repeatedly: ‚*Kebei, kebei, kebei*‘ (‚bad, bad, bad‘), warning onlookers of *Nkock*‘s impending approach.“

Die Anlässe, zu denen *jujus* hervorkommen, sind unterschiedlich. Zum einen treten sie zur Unterhaltung der Dorfbewohner auf, andere kommen nur zu Beerdigungen von Bundmitgliedern hervor. Die folgenden Beispiele (11a–e) illustrieren die verschiedenen Anlässe.

(11) Anlässe, zu denen *jujus* auftreten

- a) Ebenzu bei Kossi: „for dancing during marriage, deaths and wrestling matches“ (Valentin 1980: 25).
- b) Mwajeneh bei Kossi: „used to frighten children“ (Valentin 1980: 25).

- c) Nzoemal bei den Kossi: „is performed on occasions when a member of its society had died, or when there was an intake of new members“ (Valentin 1980: 33).
- d) Ekpangetete bei den Keaka: „When they want to enjoy themselves or celebrate an occasion“ (Valentin 1980: 40).
- e) Abasijum bei den Nyang: „They use Abasijum when someone is sick. Also when someone has transformed into anything. When an important person dies in the town, they use it.“ (Valentin 1980: 35).

Kießling (p. K.) berichtet, dass der Anlass des Auftrittes von Mwabuh und Koh in Weh ebenfalls der Tod eines hochgestellten Bundmitglieds war (Abb. 2, 3).

3.5 *jujus* als machtvolle Objekte

Im KPE kann *juju* auch auf ein machtvolles Objekt verweisen, jedoch scheint diese Bedeutung, zumindest in den untersuchten Studienaufsätzen, eher marginal zu sein. Bei beiden Textbelegen in (12–13) handelt es sich um dieselbe Autorin aus der Gemeinschaft der Kundu und in beiden Fällen ist nicht wirklich klar, was mit dem beschriebenen Wesen gemeint ist. So schreibt sie über Butame:

(12) Butame bei den Kundu

„It is said to be a little creature which can make a very loud ‚mu, mu‘, when it is touched. It is always hidden in a box in a bowl of water inside the palaver- or central house. [...] When an important personality, who had been a juju-priest dies, the Butame is sounded [...].“ (Valentin 1980: 12f.).

Genau genommen handelt es sich bei Butame um eine kleine Kreatur. Dass es sich nicht um eine Maske handelt, wird aus ihrer Größe deutlich: sie wird in einer Schatulle in einer Wasserschale aufbewahrt. Bei dem folgenden von dem Autor beschriebenen *juju* Dikongiri in (13) handelt es sich ebenfalls um ein Objekt. Es ist zu klein (2,5cm breit und 61cm lang), um als Maske zu dienen, auch die Verwendungweise spricht gegen die Klassifizierung als solche.

(13) Dikongiri bei den Kundu:

„Dikongiri is a kind of juju which is made of a flat piece of board about one and a half inches wide and about two feet long. A hole is made at one end of the board through which a rope is passed and tied.

This juju is organized at night when a person who is suspected to have been a great witch or wizard dies. It is turned round and round holding the end of the rope. The board when turning round and round makes a zig-zag movement thereby producing a roaring sound. It is believed to have the power of driving evil spirits away from the town.“ (Valentin 1980: 13)

Beispiel (13) veranschaulicht nochmals, dass der Begriff *juju* auf mehrere, semantisch verwandte Bereiche gleichzeitig verweist: zum einen wird deutlich, dass die Autorin einen Gegenstand beschreibt, doch der erste Satz des zweiten Abschnitts zeigt auch, dass sie auch eine Aufführung im Sinne hat.

Die Studierenden berichten immer wieder davon, dass *jujus* ihre eigenen Schreine haben (Valentin 1980: 11, 17, 25, 32, 34). Es wäre denkbar, diese ebenfalls als Objekte zu klassifizieren, sofern die Schreine auch als *juju* bezeichnet werden, wie im Bezen.

4 Zusammenfassung

Das Ziel dieses Artikels war es, zu zeigen, wie vielfältig das Bedeutungsspektrum des Begriffs *juju* im KPE ist. Man könnte meinen, dass diese Breite dem Umstand geschuldet ist, dass es sich um einen externen, aus der Kolonialzeit entsprungenen Begriff handelt und somit lokale Konzepte auf unzulässige Weise vereinfacht werden. Das folgende Zitat von Rösenthaller (2004: 244) zu *njom* und *okum* bei den Ejagham zeigt jedoch, dass auch die kulturinternen Begriffe eine Vielzahl semantisch verwandter Institutionen und Phänomene beschreiben.⁷

„A *njom* as well as an *okum* was perceived as one conceptional body with all its parts belonging to the institution. In this way, Obasinjom, for example, ‚was everything‘ that belonged to the *njom* as a whole: the members, the mask, the shrine, the laws, the symbols and insignia, its properties and its agency.“ (Rösenthaller 2004: 244 kursiv im Original).

Im südjukunoiden Bezen gibt es auch zwei generische Begriffe, die ein Pantheon verschiedener Gottheiten umfassen und die ins kame-

⁷ Rösenthaller (2004) übersetzt *njom* (Pl. *ajom*) als ‚cult agency‘ und *okum* (Pl. *akum*) als ‚association‘ ins Standardenglische. Ins KPE würden die Begriffe auch als *juju* übersetzt (Rösenthaller, pers. Komm.).

runische Englisch als *juju* übersetzt werden: *bākān* und *ōkùm* (Kempf 2018). Der Unterschied zwischen beiden ist nicht ganz klar, die Ähnlichkeit zwischen dem Ejaghambegriff *okum* und Bezen *ōkùm* fällt jedoch auf.

Die Untersuchung der Studierendenaufsätze aus dem Westen Kameruns zeigt auf, dass das Bedeutungsspektrum des generischen Nomens *juju* im KPE zum einen ein Pantheon verschiedener übernatürlicher Wesen beschreibt, aber auch auf die Geheimbünde und Aufführungen, in denen die Wesen auftreten, und machtvolle Objekte verweisen kann. Die Begriffsbedeutungen sind metonymisch miteinander verbunden. Die Übernatürlichkeit der Wesen wird durch ihr außergewöhnliches Aussehen und durch ihre übernatürlichen Kräfte markiert: Entweder sind sie für Menschen gar nicht sichtbar, haben eine tierische Gestalt oder die Form von Masken. Sie bewegen sich blitzschnell, können Hexer/n erkennen und bestrafen, Bäume ausreißen und für Regen und Kinder sorgen.

Die vorliegende Studie kann natürlich nicht das abschließende Wort zum Lexem *juju* sein. Da der Begriff in Kamerun auch heute im alltäglichen mündlichen und schriftlichen Gebrauch steht, sind vielfältige Studien zu diesem, zum Beispiel basierend auf Korpora, möglich.

Literatur

- Anchimbe, Eric A. 2005. *Cameroon English. Authenticity, ecology and evolution*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Anchimbe, Eric A. und Stephen A. Mforteh 2011. *Postcolonial linguistic voices. Identity choices and representations*. (Contributions to the sociology of language 100). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Ayto, John. 1990. *Dictionary of word origins. The histories of over 8.000 words explained*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Blench, Roger. 2005. *A dictionary of Nigerian English*. Draft circulated for comments. <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/English/Nigerian%20English%20Dictionary.pdf> [letzter Zugriff 23.06.2020].
- Christophersen, Paul. 1953. Some special West African words. *English Studies* 34. 282–91.
- Corum, Micah. 2015. *Substrate and adstrate. The origins of spatial semantics in West African Pidgincreoles*. (Language contact and bilingualism 10). Berlin: De Gruyter.

- Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2020. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-third edition. Dallas: SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com> [letzter Zugriff 24.06.2020].
- Höftmann, Hildegard in Zusammenarbeit mit Michel Ahohounkpanzon. 2003. *Dictionnaire Fon - Français avec une esquisse grammaticale*. Köln: Köppe.
- Huber, Magnus. 1999. *Ghanaian Pidgin English in its West African context*. (Varieties of English around the world G24). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Igboanusi, Herbert. 2010. *A dictionary of Nigerian English usage*. Berlin: LIT.
- Kempf, Viktoria. 2018. „Jujus im Westen Kameruns - Das Bedeutungsspektrum des Begriffs „juju“ im Kamerunischen (Pidgin) Englisch und dessen Bedeutungsäquivalente *bākān* und *ōkīm* im Bezen.“ Vortrag am 23. Afrikanistentag, 25.–26. Mai an der Universität Hamburg.
- Koloss, Hans-Joachim. 2000. *World-view and society in Oku*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Koloss, Hans-Joachim. 2008. *Traditional institutions in Kembong (Cameroon)*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Kouega, Jean-Paul. 2008. *A dictionary of Cameroon Pidgin English. Pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary*. Munich: LINCOM.
- Kperogi, Farooq A. 2015. *Glocal English. The changing face and forms of Nigerian English in a global world*. (Berkeley insights in Linguistics and Semantics 96). New York: Peter Lang.
- Ngefacs, Aloysius. 2014. The evolutionary trajectory of Cameroonian Creole and its varying sociolinguistic statuses. In: Buschfeld, Sarah, Thomas Hoffmann, Magnus Huber und Alexander Kautsch (Hg.). *The evolution of Englishes. The dynamic model and beyond*. (Varieties of English around the World G49). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 434–447.
- OED Online. 2020. *Oxford University Press*. <https://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=juju&searchBtn=Search> [letzter Zugriff 23.06.2020]
- Polzenhagen, Frank. 2005. *Cultural conceptualisations in West African English*. (Duisburg Papers on Research in Language and Culture 69). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Room, Adrian. 1999. *The Cassel. Dictionary of word histories*. London: Cassel.
- Röschenthaier, Ute. 2004. Transacting Obasinjom: The dissemination of a cult agency in the Cross River area. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 74(2). 241–276.
- Sharifian, Farzad. 2003. On cultural conceptualizations. *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 3(3). 187–207.

- Straumann, Hans Peter. o. D. Leserbrief zu „In Basler Archivkellern lagert ein einmaliges Gedächtnis.“ *Online Reports. Macht bekannt.* 20. Dez. 2008. <https://www.onlinereports.ch/News.99+M5c88c397730.0.html> [Letzter Zugriff 25.06.2020].
- Ungerer, Friedrich und Hans-Jörg Schmid. 2006. *An introduction to cognitive linguistics.* 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Valentin, Peter. 1980. *Jujus in the forest area of West Cameroon.* Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien.
- Zeitlyn, David. 1994. *Sua in Somie. Aspects of Mambila traditional religion.* Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag.

Mäsob: Designing a new Amharic coursebook

Magdalena Krzyżanowska

Universität Hamburg

magdalena.krzyzanowska-2@uni-hamburg.de

Abstract:

This article presents a project to design a new Amharic coursebook which draws upon current approaches to language teaching, and will provide stimulating learning materials for its users. The coursebook will target university students at A1 level, and in its content and structure will aim, for the first time in the history of Amharic language teaching, to conform to the spirit of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Topic-based and task-based syllabi will form the backbone of the coursebook. It will contain a range of activities in which students, while learning grammar, are engaged in using new language in a meaningful, communicative way. Apart from developing the usual four language skills, among which priority will be given to oral practice, the coursebook will help students to acquire cultural competence and support them in improving their language learning strategies.

Keywords: language teaching, teaching materials, teaching African languages

1 Introduction

A coursebook is a central tool in a foreign language class.¹ Although coursebooks have some drawbacks, the majority of teachers use them because a good coursebook spares hours of designing their own teaching materials (Kusiak-Pisowacka 2015: 65–67). Learners, in turn, find a coursebook practical and convenient because it “give[s] a sense of clarity, direction and progress” (Woodward 2001: 146).² In this article I will present my project to develop a new Amharic coursebook which draws upon up-to-date approaches to language

1 I would like to heartily thank Orin Gensler for English proofreading of the final version of this article.

2 See there also for a short discussion on advantages and disadvantages of using a coursebook.

teaching, and will provide interesting and pedagogically efficient materials for its users.

The idea of designing a coursebook occurred to me because as a practising Amharic teacher I face a severe lack of good teaching materials. For many reasons, which I will mention in this article, I am dissatisfied with the materials currently in use. I envisage my coursebook as yet another source of syllabus, texts and exercises rather than an ultimate book to which an Amharic teacher should feel handcuffed to. It is advisable for any teacher to avoid heavy dependence on a coursebook (White 2013: 3–4);³ using additional materials, self-made or ready-made, is highly recommended in a foreign language classroom. However, at the moment, we have few Amharic coursebooks and almost no supplemental materials targeting the learner of Amharic. Thus, my overall goal is to make our need for Amharic teaching materials less acute.

2 A review of selected Amharic coursebooks

Before I embark on describing my project in detail I will present briefly what kind of Amharic coursebooks are available. I will limit myself to those which, to my knowledge, are most often used by Amharic teachers both in Germany and elsewhere. These are *Amharic Textbook* (1967) by Wolf Leslau, *Lehrbuch der amharischen Sprache* (1987 1st ed., 1994 2nd ed.) by Renate Richter and *Colloquial Amharic* (1995 1st ed., 2012 2nd ed.)⁴ by David Appleyard.

What can be noted straightaway is that the three coursebooks were published many years ago (the *Amharic textbook* going back to the 1960's; the second editions of Richter's and Appleyard's books do not differ in any substantial way from their first editions) and, correspondingly, embody out-of-date approaches. All of them are designed for beginners and allow the learner to reach at most the intermediate

3 See there for references.

4 The first edition was reviewed by Azeb Amha (1997), Renate Richter (1997), and by Böll and Getie Gelaye (1998). It is interesting to note that the reviewers focused on the correctness of the Amharic contained in the coursebook rather than on its pedagogical value—whether *Colloquial Amharic* is an efficient teaching tool, and whether a learner can really attain the goals set by the author. The reviews show that, indeed, language pedagogy still has not entered the consciousness of specialists involved in the field of Amharic teaching.

level. None of them has a subsequent book for a more advanced level. As for the syllabus, grammatical syllabus is the backbone of the three coursebooks and, in general, of the majority of the Amharic teaching materials, i.e., they are organized around specific grammatical items: topics and functions of language are subordinate. *Amharic Textbook* is exceptionally grammar-oriented since its fifty units are devoted to particular grammatical items introduced gradually according to their complexity and practised in numerous drills. These units are abstracted from any communicative situation. In contrast, *Lehrbuch der amharischen Sprache* and *Colloquial Amharic* also introduce topics and functions but they too are subordinate to the grammatical syllabus of the course.

A fast pace of introducing new items seems to be a weak point of *Lehrbuch der amharischen Sprache*, and *Colloquial Amharic*. They contain fairly densely packed units where whole paradigms, and even several similar paradigms in tandem are presented. In the case of *Colloquial Amharic*, this is coupled with a smallish number of exercises. Topics included in the coursebooks are fairly conventional, such as greetings, shopping, renting a room, visit to the doctor, etc. However, their presentation is uninteresting and predictable since all teaching units have a homogenous arrangement. In *Lehrbuch der amharischen Sprache* some of the topics are no longer relevant as they deal with the reality of Ethiopia and East Germany during communist times. Also some vocabulary of *Amharic textbook* reflects the feudal relations still obtaining between people in the reign of Haile Selassie I. Texts in the coursebooks are usually dull, devoid of any humour and tinged with naiveté.

The vast majority of activities designed for consolidating new items are based on various kinds of drills. Other activities used in the discussed coursebooks do not go beyond translation exercises, filling in blank spaces with a word in the right form, easy transformation exercises and answering questions to texts. Another limitation of the activities included in the coursebooks is that they are designed to mainly practise grammatical structures. It should be stressed, however, that the grammar is usually described in a very crude manner, as a manipulation of forms, whereas not enough attention is paid to the semantics and to the communicative context. Even though the vocabulary of Amharic differs in many respects (morphologically, semantically and collocationally) and to a considerable extent from

the vocabulary of European languages, very little space is dedicated to learning vocabulary and putting it into practice. They are no activities addressing functions of language, such as asking for information, giving information, excusing oneself, etc.

Although I have levelled much criticism at the three coursebooks I have to do their authors justice. *Amharic textbook* and *Lehrbuch der amharischen Sprache* were products of their time. They used the standard approaches prevalent in the 1960s and 1980s. Appleyard's *Colloquial Amharic* is designed according to the principles prescribed for the *Colloquial Series* and hence imposed by the publisher.

At the end of this short review I should add a few words about Amharic textbooks produced in Russia. Russian teachers of Amharic have a range of books to choose from. There are two full series of coursebooks,⁵ from the beginner to the advanced levels. The syllabus of the majority of the Russian coursebooks is highly grammar-oriented. There is very little space and practice devoted to functions. I find the language of some of the textbooks in-authentic.

3 Mäsob: general characteristics

The principal aim of my project is to design an Amharic coursebook, called *Mäsob*, targeting beginners. The word *mäsob* refers to a culturally important basket which serves for storing and eating injera, Ethiopians' daily bread. It symbolizes productivity and sense of community. Apart from the student's book I am planning to produce a CD and a teacher's booklet, containing teaching notes, additional activities, suggestions, and key to activities.

The Amharic of Shewa, especially Addis Ababa, will be used as a model for grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Because the spelling of Amharic has not been standardized, basically I will employ the orthographic rules laid down in Leslau's *English-Amharic context dictionary* (1973: XI–XIII). Occasionally a “non-standard” item (usually a single word) will be included from a regional variety

5 See, for example, the first part of a series of Russian coursebooks by E.P. Zavadskaya (2007). There is another series of Russian coursebooks, which I have not had a chance to see, whose title *Speaking practice. Textbook for the 1st course. The Amharic language* promises quite a different, speaking-oriented and communicative, approach (Renžin 1983).

of Amharic, to make the students aware of some dialectal differences within the language.

3.1 Target group

Mäsob will target adult learners studying Amharic as a foreign language at the university. The coursebook will cater to the needs of university students for at least three reasons. First of all, because the majority of Amharic courses are provided by universities (in Ethiopia also by various language centres and by private teachers). Secondly, because of my relatively long experience in teaching Amharic to university students in Poland and in Germany. Thirdly, and in connection with the second point, before publishing the coursebook during the process of developing it I will need a constant evaluation of its contents against a certain group of students. As long as I am employed at the university, I can test the coursebook and get feedback from the group of students that I will be teaching at that period.

The fact that my coursebook targets university students has some additional implications. For instance, at my home institution, the department of Asien-Afrika-Institut in Hamburg, Amharic is provided for students who, within a 3- or 4-year study, receive a range of linguistic courses preparing them for analyzing a language. Having this in mind, *Mäsob* will contain a balanced dose of linguistic terms and descriptions which will enable the students to recycle and apply the knowledge gained in general linguistic courses to the sphere of this particular language.

Another issue is the pace of introducing the Ethiopic script. I am in favour of introducing the Ethiopic syllabographs (*fidäl*) at the beginning of the course and then practising them as the students enter the course proper. In that case the transliteration will be used only for a short period of time. However, it is useful for students to get familiar with transliteration in order to be able to follow publications which often employ the transliteration rather than the Ethiopic script. In fact, I advocate learning both systems (*fidäl* and transcription) at the same time. This approach contrasts with a method in which students gradually learn the syllabographs over an extended period of time and so are forced to continue using the transcription for a long period. I believe university students have enough intellectual capacity to absorb the Ethiopic syllabographs in a relatively short time.

I have decided to prepare the coursebook only in English, not in German. This is because I would like my coursebook to be accessible also to Amharic teachers from outside Germany. However, I want to take into consideration the fact that I teach in Germany and provide some hints concerning contrastive German-Amharic items in the teacher's booklet.

3.2 Level

Mäsob is intended to be the first part of a three-level course: A1, A2, B1. The levels of the coursebooks are in agreement with the Common Reference Levels proposed within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* 2001). I think it is useful and even necessary to set and define levels of proficiency in any language teaching (a practice still alien to the teaching of African languages). Establishing levels is helpful for developing curriculum and syllabus, for giving an overall structure to the course, and for assessing students' progress in a relatively objective way. The reference levels serve to discipline the teacher to be explicit and transparent about her/his objectives. They also help the teacher to better articulate what s/he wants her/his students to achieve, at the same time preventing the teacher from teaching at random, covering some material, to her/his liking. From the student's perspective, defining the level of proficiency gives a tangible goal to achieve, which, in turn, helps to maintain her/his motivation. When starting a language course, learners should be informed which level of proficiency they can reach. Thus, using a coursebook or a series of coursebooks with an explicitly established level of proficiency may help to maintain and raise the standard of teaching and create a clear and transparent environment for teaching and learning. The Common Reference Levels is the best tool that we have at hand now, which has been tested and proved to work well with European languages. I cannot see any reason against applying the Common Reference Levels to Amharic.

My project will aim at designing *Mäsob* 1 at A1 level. At this level the so-called Basic User receives the following skills: "Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal

details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help” (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* 2001: 24).

3.3 Goals

I have formulated the goals of *Mäsob* 1 coursebook using the KASA (the acronym stands for Knowledge, Awareness, Skills, Attitude) framework (Graves 2000: 83–84).

Knowledge: By the end of the coursebook, learners will know how to read and write the Ethiopic script.

They will know some aspects of Ethiopian culture.

They will know strategies of how to learn languages.

They will know basic linguistic terminology and how the language works.

Awareness: They will be aware of a language whose system differs greatly from their own.

They will be aware of a different writing system.

They will be aware of cross-cultural differences.

They will be aware that a foreign language needs to be studied regularly.

Skills: By the end of the coursebook, learners will obtain basic skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

They will be able to communicate in basic everyday situations.

Attitude: Learners will develop a positive attitude towards studying Amharic, towards the Ethiopians and their culture.

They will develop their interest in learning a language.

3.4 Syllabus

Mäsob will have, on the one hand, a topic-based syllabus which integrates structural, lexical, notional, functional procedural and situationally oriented syllabi and, on the other hand, a task-based syllabus.⁶ The many kinds of syllabi may give the impression that I had difficulties in deciding on one of them. This eclecticism, however, is

⁶ For the many types of syllabi see, for instance, Nunan (1988), Ur (1996, 2012).

nowadays a standard approach to designing a language syllabus (Ur 2012: 185–196). The course developer tries to take the best of the manifold ways of approaching language teaching, and creates a multifaceted syllabus. In my case, the topics will provide a solid backbone for the organizational structure of the coursebook. I have prepared a list of topics which draws on a list contained in a curriculum for teaching German to high school students (Łuniewska, Tworek & Wąsik, 2015: 9–12). It agrees with the list of topics provided in the book *Threshold level English* (a seminal work which provides a detailed description of language learning objectives; Ek & Alexander 1980).⁷ I will present here only a sample of topics and functions. By “function” is understood “things one can DO with language” (Ur 1996: 178) such as greeting, apologizing, asking and giving different kinds of information.

General Topic	Topic in detail	Function
Person	Personal identification	Asking and giving information about name, age, place of living Introducing oneself and other people; reacting to someone else’s introduction Beginning and ending of conversation Signaling that sth. is unclear, asking for repetition, asking that the interlocutor speak louder, quieter, more slowly Spelling and asking to spell
	Appearance	Describing someone’s appearance Asking and giving information about it
	Character	Describing people’s character Giving one’s own opinion about people’s traits of character
	Feelings and emotions	Asking about emotional state Expressing and describing positive and negative emotional states
	Interests	Asking about interests and hobbies Describing one’s own interests

7 See also its updated version by Ek & Trim (1998).

House and home	Place of living	Asking and giving information about the place of living
	Description of the house, rooms, furniture, household appliances	Describing places and objects in the house and in the neighbourhood; types of accommodation, rooms, furniture, household appliances
University	Subjects	Naming subjects and things concerning the course(s) of study Asking and giving opinions about one's interest in a subject
	University life	Describing events that happen at the university Describing people, places and activities
Work	Common occupations and professions	Asking and giving information about job Describing people, places and activities associated with different occupations Talking about future professional plans
	Work place	Asking and giving information about one's work and place of work Describing activities
Family life	Family members	Asking and giving information about family members Describing people (appearance, personality) and their activities
	Friends and acquaintances	Asking whether one knows a person Describing appearance and character Expressing feelings and emotions
	Everyday activities	Describing one's own day Reporting events
	Free time, entertainment	Asking and giving information about ways of spending free time (about plans); reporting events; describing people, places and activities Telling the time Expressing wishes and likings

Family life	Festivals and holidays	Reporting events (Christmas, other festivals, birthday) Congratulating, giving wishes, condolences Thanking and reacting to saying ‘Thanks’
	Styles of life	Describing people, places and activities
	Conflicts and problems	Reporting events Asking and giving information about problems at home and at the university

I envisage that these topics will be provided in such a way that items from the beginners’ level are presented in a simple manner, and are repeated and extended in successive levels.

The book will revolve around the lives of two Ethiopians, a young woman and a young man. I think that having protagonists who will accompany the learner in the process of studying Amharic will be helpful. The idea behind it is that young university students will be prone to identify themselves with their peers in Ethiopia. They will be keen on confronting their life style and cultural values with those of the two Ethiopians. There is, however, an interesting and paramount question whether the Amharic teaching materials should reflect only Ethiopian culture, or both Ethiopian culture and Western culture. I think that my students should be able to talk in Amharic also about their own life experiences and their own places of living. In other words, the coursebook should also contain personalized content. “Personalization”, a concept used in language pedagogy, “allow[s] students to use language to express their own ideas, feelings, preferences and opinions. [It] is an important part of the communicative approach, since it involves true communication, as learners communicate real information about themselves. [...] It makes language relevant to learners, makes communication activities meaningful, and also helps memorisation.”⁸ Thus, the coursebook should function as a kind of bridge between the two cultures.

I have presented a list of topics and functions on which the coursebook will be based. A challenging and daunting task will be to prepare a list of grammatical structures that should be taught at the A1 level and then to sequence them. The type of structure being taught must each time harmonize with the topic. The topic gives context to

⁸ <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/personalisation> (Accessed 29.04.2020).

the grammar; the grammar helps to build sentences pertaining to a given topic. Researchers dealing with language acquisition talk about developmental sequences, which means “stages” in the development of particular language features (Lightbrown & Spada 2006: 2). Surprisingly, the developmental sequences that native speakers pass through when acquiring a given language are the same for people who learn this language in a classroom setting. However, so far there has been no study concerning the developmental sequence of acquiring Amharic grammatical structures, neither by first language learners nor by second language learners. That is why the sequence of learning Amharic grammatical structures that I am going to propose will be somewhat subjective, based on common sense and the principle: present a simpler and less demanding structure before a more complex or more demanding.

Here I would like to demonstrate how this principle may be applied. Normally, when one teaches any Standard Average European language, but also Arabic and Hebrew, one introduces first the present tense and then other tenses. This allows students to talk about where they live, what they do, what are their routines. This track is not so obvious for Amharic. The point is that the form of the non-past in Amharic is quite complicated, in contrast to the past tense form, because it transparently incorporates an auxiliary. Example:

näggärä – tell (quoted form found in a dictionary)

näggär-ä – he told

näggär-hu – I told

yä-nägr-all-ø – he will tell, he tells

ə-nägr-all-ähu – I will tell, I tell

You can see that the past tense form (*näggär-ä*, *näggär-hu*) is simpler and thus easier to learn than the non-past tense form (*yä-nägr-all-ø*, *ə-nägr-all-ähu*), which has affixes added before and after the stem. That is why I opt for introducing students of Amharic first to the past tense form (as it was done in older Amharic textbooks) and create a suitable communicative context for learning it. Selected non-past tense forms, but not whole paradigms, can be taught in the meantime as lexical items.

3.5 Skills

Equal weighting will be given to all four skills (speaking, writing, reading and listening) but my main intention will be to develop oral communication skill. I think this is the most significant skill in the context of teaching African languages, the most neglected skill when it comes to teaching Amharic, and the most motivating skill for the students. Thus, to offer activities that build up and hone oral skills production will be the priority in designing the coursebook. In connection to this, I shall make a remark about the language contained in *Mäsob*. The Amharic language of *Mäsob* should have real world relevance; this means the language should be as authentic as possible at the given level and draw from authentic sources. In addition to the four skills mentioned above, students should gain some cultural competence in the course of learning the language.

3.6 Exercises

In the coursebook I want to offer grammar practice activities that will have two main features: first, they will be meaningful and engaging, second they will be focused (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 117). Whereas the vast majority of existing Amharic textbooks adopt a highly form-oriented approach, I would like to propose activities in which students while learning grammar will be engaged in using new language in a meaningful, communicative way. It has been shown “that teachers who focus students’ attention on linguistic form during communicative interactions are more effective than those who never focus on form or only do so in decontextualized grammar lessons” (Larsen-Freeman 2001: 251).

As mentioned, a task-based syllabus will be integrated into the coursebook. In this way, I would like to provide learners with more problem-solving activities, to the extent that it is possible at the A1 level, and with tasks. In the course of learning a given grammatical structure, students will first encounter form-oriented activities that focus on accuracy (Ur 1996: 83–84). These will gradually develop into activities focused on fluency that encourage free discourse. Because I am not going to write an additional workbook, the coursebook will contain a range of more controlled activities and activities that can be assigned as homework.

Along with grammar-oriented exercises, the coursebook will offer activities focusing on broadening and consolidating vocabulary. Because there exists no word frequency list for the Amharic language, I have no choice but to consult my own experience in compiling a list of vocabulary items on a given topic that are appropriate for the given level. In the activities emphasis will be put not only on learning the individual words but also words in collocations as well as whole chunks of language.

3.7 Length and organization

As for the length of the coursebook it will embrace around 150 hours of teaching. This means that I assume the book can be covered by the teacher within one year, if Amharic class takes place 6 (academic) hours per week for 30 weeks. That makes 180 hours; the remaining 30 hours are left for the teacher to implement her/his own ideas.

The coursebook will be divided into units and these into smaller parts. The units will basically have a uniform design but with some variety. A similar organization of the teaching material helps students to find the rhythm of learning but on the other hand the course may become too predictable and, consequently, boring. Every 4–5 units there will be a review unit.

4 Conclusion

The first version of this paper was delivered at the 23rd Afrikanistentag (25–26 May, 2018 Hamburg) in the panel “Teaching African languages: Methods and materials”. From the discussions among the panel participants it has become clear that for the majority of African languages (including Amharic) that are currently taught at German universities, there is a severe lack of good teaching materials. This is coupled with the non-existence of language pedagogy training that would support professional development of an African language teacher. This unfortunate situation contrasts with the fact that African languages pose an enormous challenge to both the teacher and students because of their structural, cultural and geographical remoteness. I believe that, as far as Amharic language teaching is concerned, the first, and major, desideratum is to design a comprehensive syllabus. Such a syllabus would contain a specification of lexicon, grammatical structures, topics and functions (also situations

and notions) which could serve as the basis for Amharic language courses of any kind. The Amharic coursebook that I present here will be an attempt to establish at least a part of such a syllabus and then apply it for designing *Mäsob 1*. Contemporary, and most importantly, efficient approaches to foreign language teaching developed for European and some Asian languages can be adopted, in a creative and motivating way, for Amharic and other African languages.

References

- Appleyard, David. 1995. *Colloquial Amharic: A complete language course*. 1st ed. London & New York: Routledge.
- Appleyard, David. 2012. *Colloquial Amharic: The complete course for beginners*. 2nd ed. London & New York: Routledge.
- Azeb Amha. 1997. Review of *Colloquial Amharic: a complete language course*, by David Appleyard. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 18. 171–176.
- Böll, Verena & Getie Gelaye. 1998. Review of *Colloquial Amharic: a complete language course*, by David Appleyard. *Aethiopica* 1. 229–231. <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/aethiopica/article/view/622/633>. (Accessed 28.04.2020)
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. 2001. Strasbourg: Cambridge University Press.
- Ek, Jan A. van & Louis G. Alexander. 1980. *Threshold level English in a European unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults*. Oxford & New York: Pergamon Press.
- Ek, Jan A. van & John L. M. Trim. 1998. *Threshold 1990*. Cambridge, New York & Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. http://www.ealta.eu.org/documents/resources/Threshold-Level_CUP.pdf. (Accessed 28.04.2020)
- Graves, Kathleen. 2000. *Designing language courses: A guide for teachers*. Boston, Albany etc.: Heinle & Heinle, Thomson Learning.
- Kusiak-Pisowacka, Monika. 2015. Ewaluacja podręcznika w nauczaniu języków obcych [Evaluation of a coursebook in foreign language teaching]. *Lingwistyka Stosowana* 14(3). 65–75.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 2001. Teaching grammar. In Marianne Celce-Murcia (ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*, 3rd ed. Boston: Heinle & Heinle. 251–266.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 2003. *Teaching language: From grammar to grammar*. Boston: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1967. *Amharic textbook*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

- Leslau, Wolf. 1973. *English-Amharic context dictionary*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Lightbown, Patsy M., & Nina Spada. 2006. *How languages are learned*. 3rd ed. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Łuniewska Krystyna, Urszula Tworek & Zofia Wąsik. 2015. *Program nauczania języka niemieckiego w liceum ogólnokształcącym i technikum* [Curriculum for German language teaching for high schools and technical schools]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkole i Pedagogiczne. http://loradzyn.pl/programy_nauczania/niemiecki.pdf. (Accessed: 12.10.2018).
- Nunan, David. 1988. *Syllabus design*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Renžin Aleksandr P. 1983. *Rečevaja praktika. Učebnoe posobie dlja 1 kursa. Amcharskij jazyk* [Speaking practice. Textbook for the 1st course. The Amharic language]. Moskva: VKI.
- Richter, Renate. 1987. *Lehrbuch der amharischen Sprache*. 1st ed. Leipzig: VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie Leipzig.
- Richter, Renate. 1994. *Lehrbuch der amharischen Sprache*. 2nd ed. Leipzig etc.: Langenscheidt, VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie Leipzig.
- Richter, Renate. 1997. Review of *Colloquial Amharic: a complete language course*, by David Appleyard. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 87. 345–347.
- Ur, Penny. 1996. *A Course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge, New York & Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Ur, Penny. 2012. *A course in English language teaching*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- White, Andrew. 2013. Evaluation of a ELT coursebook based on criteria designed by McDonough and Shaw: A module three assignment lexis and syllabus and materials. <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/cels/essays/syllabusandmaterials/AWhite-COURSEBOOKEVALUATIONsyllmat.pdf>. (Accessed: 28.04.2020)
- Woodward, Tessa. 2001. *Planning lessons and courses: Designing sequences of work for the language classroom*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zavadskaya, Evgenija P. 2007. *Učebnik amcharskogo jazyka dlja 1 kursa* [Amharic textbook for the 1st course]. Rep. Moskva: MGIMO-Universität.

“Behold, I have written it on parchment...” Two Early Amharic poems from Ms. Ef. 10 (Koriander 2), St. Petersburg

Denis Nosnitsin^a & Maria Bulakh^b

Universität Hamburg^a & HSE University^{b1}
denis.nosnitsin@uni-hamburg.de
mbulakh@mail.ru

Abstract:

The article deals with two short poems in Amharic from Ms. Ef. 10 kept in the Library of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg. Amharic, a Semitic language of Ethiopia, came to function as the second written language of Ethiopian Empire in the course of the 19th century. Samples of Amharic texts prior to this period are scanty and worthy of special study. The poems in question can be dated to the period end of the 17th – beginning of the 18th century. The article provides the texts of the poems with translation and linguistic and philological commentary, accompanied by a short description of Ms. Ef. 10.

Keywords: Amharic, Ethiopian literature, Christian poetry, Manuscript studies

1 D. Nosnitsin carried out the present study within the framework of the long-term project “Beta maṣāḥəft: Manuscripts of Ethiopia and Eritrea”, funded by the Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Hamburg (<https://www.betamasaheft.uni-hamburg.de/>). M. Bulakh’s work on this article was funded by RFBR/РФФИ (grant #17-06-00391). Both authors thank the Library of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg, for making the photographic images of the manuscript Ef. 10 (Koriander 2) available for the research. D. Nosnitsin is grateful to Magdalena Krzyżanowska for fruitful discussion on the translation issues. Both authors sincerely thank Dr Orin David Gensler for English proofreading and a number of insightful comments. Besides, our gratitude is extended to the anonymous reviewers of the submitted version of the paper, who have made numerous critical observations and improvements.

1 Introduction

The present article contributes to the growing corpus of samples of pre-modern Amharic poetry which are being mined from Ethiopian Christian manuscripts, most frequently in the form of additional, supplementary texts and only sometimes as part of the main content. The early Amharic written tradition is a remarkable cultural phenomenon that flowed alongside the mainstream of medieval literacy in Geez, and had its parallels in the vernacular writing traditions of some other parts of Africa.² A significant part of the surviving early Amharic texts is represented by poetic pieces of various kinds.³

In many cases, early Amharic poems are very difficult to understand. Apart from the commonly known linguistic complexities, early Amharic poems partly employ vocabulary and motifs from Geez sources, but also partly from the Amharic oral literature, hardly understandable today even for native Amharic speakers. In many cases deciphering such a poem strongly relies upon the understanding of the context. We have to guess the reasons that prompted the composition of the poem and the cultural situations in which the poem

2 In the 15th–18th centuries, a number of vernacular African languages started to be written in Arabic script in the framework of Islamic culture, on the fringes of the Islamic Arabic literary tradition. The most important among these so-called ‘*ajamī*’ traditions are those of the Tamashek (Berber), Hausa, Fulfulde, Wolof and Swahili languages, but also Old Harari in Ethiopia (Wetter 2012: 176–180; see *ibid.* for ‘*ajamī*’ literature in other languages of Ethiopia).

3 Along with an edition of an Old Amharic *Märgämä kəbr* poem, some considerations on the genres of early Amharic poetic texts are presented in Bulakh & Nosnitsin 2019. After the article was submitted to print, still another witness of the *Märgämä kəbr* was discovered by D. Nosnitsin, in the 18th-century Ms. MBAE-001, *Waddase Amlak* ‘Praises of God’, from the church of May Bä’atti Arba’əttu ʾİnsəsa (Təgray), photographed by the project Ethio-SPaRe (“Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia – Salvation, Preservation, and Research”, 2009–2015, ERC Starting Grant 240720; see <https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/ethiostudies/research/ethiospare.html>). The text contained in this manuscript is akin to that of Ms. EMMML no. 5483 (see Getatchew Haile 2014). The present article offers an occasion to report (in passing) three more recently discovered witnesses of another Old Amharic poem, *Məštirä şəgeyat*, that could not be considered in the edition Goldenberg 2013. These are Mss. TKMG-012, from the church of Tənsəhe Kidanä Məhrät (17th century); SDM-019, Soṭa Däbrä Sälam Qəddus Mika’el (17th century); and AGKM-035, Agulaᶜ Getesemani Kidanä Məhrät (19th century), all digitized by the project Ethio-SPaRe.

could have been used, and also identify historical events or personalities that the poem refers or alludes to.

Looking through the catalogues of Ethiopic manuscripts in search of texts written in older varieties of Amharic, we came across two short poems noted by the Russian scholar Boris Turaev (1868–1920) in his catalogue *Efiopiskija rukopisi v S.-Peterburge* (Sankt Petersburg: Tipografija imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk, 1906), on pp. 74–75, in the description of Ms. Koriander 2 (part III, no. 28 of the catalogue). Today the manuscript is kept in the Library of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg and bears shelf-mark Ef. 10.⁴ The catalogue records the poems as *additiones* and the work *Wəddase Amlak* as the main text of the manuscript.⁵ The two Amharic poems will be the subject of the present article. Below, a short description of the manuscript as a whole will be followed by the presentation of the poems, which will include an introductory note, transcription in Ethiopic script⁶ and translation, orthographic and linguistic commentaries.

2 Ms. Ef. 10 (Koriander 2)

The description of the manuscript prepared by B. Turaev offers only the absolute minimum of information, and is rephrased here in English with a few additions and adaptations.⁷ The manuscript is a parch-

4 See Platonov 2017:190.

5 The work *Wəddase Amlak* is attested in manuscripts starting from the 16th/17th century, see Daniel Aseffa 2010.

6 We have refrained from offering a phonological transcription or transliteration. Direct transliteration, without reconstruction of phonetic shapes behind the Ethiopic graphemes, would obscure the linguistic facts. As for phonological transcription, it would involve not only reconstruction of gemination and presence/absence of the vowel ə, not reflected in the Ethiopic script, but also interpretation of various paleographic and orthographic phenomena of Old Amharic. Such a task is beyond the aims of the present paper. In the linguistic discussion, when necessary, we do provide (tentatively) reconstructed phonological transcriptions of the relevant Old Amharic morphemes. In the discussion of orthography, transliterated elements are given in angle brackets.

7 In the future, an updated description of the manuscript will be accessible in the electronic catalogue of the project “Beta maṣāḥəft” (<https://www.betamasaheft.uni-hamburg.de>).

ment codex, 146 ff., the outer dimensions being 320 x 310 mm;⁸ its handwriting has been estimated by B. Turaev as datable to the 17th century. The name of the owner was Kəflä Sämaʿt. The main text *Wəddase Amlak* (‘Praise of God’) is distributed across the days of the week: the portion for Monday begins on f. 2r, for Tuesday on f. 18r, Wednesday on f. 44v, Thursday on f. 66r, Friday on f. 92r, Saturday on f. 112r, Sunday on f. 128r. Additional notes are recorded as follows: f. 1r: a) the two Amharic poems (presented below); b) two notes probably on tributes, poorly readable; f. 1v: a) a note on the calendar (in Amharic but with admixture of a few Geez words), b) two protective texts; ff. 17v-19v: a Miracle of Christ recounting the Resurrection, in Geez,⁹ a text which begins in the blank space on f. 17vb and fills the margins of this and the next two leaves; f. 127v: a list of the feasts of the Apostles; f. 145v: incantations followed by a couple of magico-medical recipes; f. 146r-v: tax records in Amharic (half of the leaf is cut off).¹⁰ The leaf numbered as f. 1, bearing the Amharic poems and other writings, is physically composed of two halves (see fig. 1) of slightly different shapes, sizes and parchment colors.¹¹ The halves have been loosely stitched together to make a single leaf. Both halves are unruled and might be remnants of original flyleaves or just later insertions.

A few details can be added to Turaev’s description of the manuscript. The manuscript is obviously a high-quality book. It is bound on two boards that are covered with reddish-brown blind-tooled leather (turn-ins also tooled); the inlays are made of fine crimson

8 Indicated as 23x31 cm in the catalogue, “23” (supposed to indicate height) being most probably a mistake for “32”.

9 Incipit (f. 17va): ተአምሪሁ፡ ለእግዚአን፡ ወመድኃኒን፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ በእንተ፡ ትንግሴሁ፡ እሙታን፡... ወበጌሰአተ፡ ሌሊት፡ ዘአሁድ፡ ተንሥኦ፡ እግዚአን፡ እምነ፡ መቃብር፡ ወአድኃኖ፡ ለአዳም፡ እምኃጢአቱ፡ ወሐደሶ፡ ለአምሳሊሁ፡... This unedited miracle may appear, for instance, as 36th, 37th or 38th story in a collection of the Miracles of Jesus (*Täʿammārä Iyäsus*) that encompasses ca. 42 accounts (e.g., Strelcyn 1978: 21, no. 16 [Ms. Or. 8824], possibly also EMMML no. 3005, (36), Getatchew Haile 1985: 8; on the Ethiopic work, see Witakowski 2010).

10 All the notes except the poems on f. 1r are written in inferior later hands.

11 Those additional notes on f. 1 marked above as “a”, including the poems, belong to the upper half leaf; those marked as “b” are written on the lower half. The upper half leaf seems to be closer to the shape of the textblock. It doesn’t seem that a part of the second poem on f. 1r was cut.

textile. The manuscript is not dated. The handwriting is very fine and regular, and reminiscent of the calligraphic script from the so-called Gondärine period, i.e. ca. mid-17th to mid-18th centuries.¹² Decorated quire marks are placed in the upper and bottom left corners of the first page of the quire. The readings for the days of the weeks are marked in the incipit pages of the sections by the names of the days of the week written in red, between two red and black dotted lines, in the center of the upper margin. The readings are also marked by leaf string markers (colored threads) inserted in the outer margin of the folios. The presence of additional notes in Amharic (esp. tax records), and of a few codicological and paleographical features characteristic of Gondärine-period book production, suggests that the origin of the manuscript was somewhere in the Amharic-speaking area, possibly around Gondär.

3 The poems

B. Turaev transcribed the Amharic poems in question in his catalogue, but he left out one line. Below, the poems are transcribed as they appear in the manuscript, with the exception of two cases where an editorial choice had to be made (the last grapheme of ለባርቻቸ in line 2, and the last grapheme of እንድ in line 8; cf. Section 4) and the photographic image of the text should be consulted.

Typically for additional notes, the hand of the poems is hasty, by far not regular and less careful than the hand of the main text, though it belongs to a skilled scribe who used a thinner pen. The script of

¹² The dating of the manuscript to the 17th century, proposed by B. Turaev (see above), can be thus slightly corrected on paleographical grounds, as its script fits the period mid-17th to mid-18th century. The handwriting is calligraphic, very regular and clear, executed by a skilled scribe. The script is slightly (and very uniformly) right sloping, finely rounded, with straight downstrokes. On the handwriting styles of the period (the so-called *gʷālḥ* script), see Uhlig 1988: 545–653. The current article is not a proper place to carry out a full paleographic evaluation of the manuscript, it is sufficient to indicate the general proximity of the handwriting to such samples of the period as Mss. London, British Library Or. 619 (cp. Uhlig 1988: 548, 641), Or. 620 (ibid., 556, 568–570), or Oxford Bodleian Library, Bruce 86 (ibid. 581–582), and some others. On the period in the history of Ethiopia known as the “Gondärine Kingdom” (after Gondär, the then-capital of the state), famous for its refined culture and large cultural production, see, e.g., Crummey 2005 and other related articles in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia*.

the poems is datable to ca. late 17th–18th century, like that of the main text (cp. above), and is marked by more rounded, fluent forms. In Girma Awgichew Demeke’s definition (2014: 3), the term “Old Amharic” only refers to pre-18th century texts. Still, the text of the poems contains several undeniable Old Amharic linguistic features (see Section 4), which justifies our reference to their language as Old Amharic even in the absence of precise date of its creation.

In terms of text arrangement and layout, the poems are separated by an unsophisticated divider, a black horizontal dotted line. However, the status of the uppermost line 1, also separated from the rest by the dotted line,¹³ remains not quite clear. It does not clash with the first poem (lines 2–7) in terms of content; on the contrary it seems to relate to it and, if interpreted in a certain way, can help to elucidate the poem; but it ends in *-(r)o* and thus does not fit the very regular rhyme (in *-tu*) of the following lines. It has no relation to the second poem (lines 8–12). Does line 1 represent an abortive attempt at starting a poem rhymed in *-(r)o*? Did someone write only this one line and separate it from the rest on purpose? Obviously, it is not a remain of another text because the upper margin is not cut. There are no clear indications as to which option should be preferred; still, we tend to think that line 1 is not completely independent, but should be considered as somehow linked to the first poem. Keeping all possibilities in mind, we have introduced numeration of all the lines. To facilitate understanding, corresponding words of the Amharic text and the English translation are marked by numbers. Words given in {curly brackets} are interlinear additions on the manuscript, e.g. in line 8.

Text and translation

- (1) ለካህናት₁፡ ይሰጣል₂፡ ይሰጡኝ₃፡ ዘንድ₄፡ በጽንሐ₅፡ ጨምሮ₆።
 One gives₂ (gifts) to the priests₁ so that₄ they (in turn) will give to you₃, adding₆ (incense) to the incense burner₅.

.....

- (2) ለባሮቻች₁፡ እስኩ₂፡ እሊ₃፡ ማን₄፡ እንኩ₅፡ ብሎ₆፡ የሰጡ₇።
 Behold₂, who₄ (are) those who₃ have given₇ (the Eucharist) to their servants₁, saying₆: Take!₅?

¹³ In a similar way, a chain of dots – the simplest divider – is used in Ms. EMMIL no. 1943, see Getatchew Haile 1979.

- (3) **ሥጋቸን₁፡ መትራቸኑ₂፡ ብሉ₃፡ ደማቸነም₄፡ ቀድቻኑ₅፡ ጠጡ₆።**
 Cut₂ our flesh₁ (and) eat (it)!₃ Draw₅ our blood₄ (and) drink (it)!₆
- (4) **በመሰቸኑበት₁፡ ጉልበት₂፡ ሮግቸኑ₃፡ ከሞት₄፡ እንድታመልጡ₅።**
 So that you would escape₅ from death₄, running₃ with₁ the strength₂ that you (got) from (your meal) that you have eaten!₁!
- (5) **ከአንት₁፡ በቀር₂፡ ክሶስ₃፡ ጉለንታኸ₄፡ ብርሃን₅፡ ያሰጡ₆።**
 Apart from You₁₋₂ (yourself), Christ₃, (the priests are) those who cause₆ Your whole self₄, (which is) light₅, to be given/spread₆,
- (6) **ለመል{ክ}ኸ₁፡ መሀየት₂፡ እሚቈልጡ₃።**
 For those who crave₃ to see₂ Your image₁,
- (7) **የሚዳው₁፡ የውስጡ₂።**
 Whose inner part₂ desires this₁.
-
- (8) **ፍቅርኸ₁፡ ቢጸናብኝ₂፡ ክሶስ₃፡ የመብልፅ₄፡ ውድ₅፡ {በስሱፅ}₆፡ እንድ₇፡ ፀና₈።**
 While₂ (my) love for You₁, Christ₃, is becoming strong in me₂, as₇ the love₅ for food₄ becomes strong₈ in the glutton one₆,
- (9) **አወግልኩ₁፡ በአምሃረኝ₂፡ ፵ድርሰት₃፡ ከባሕር₄፡ ሕሊና₅።**
 I will bring out₁, according to my liking₂, forty treatises₃ from the sea₄ of thought₅.
- (10) **እርሱነም₁፡ እንዲቀር₂፡ ለጥንት₃፡ እነሆ₄፡ ጸሐፍኑ₅፡ በብራና₆።**
 Behold₄, I have written₅ it₁ on parchment₆ so that it may remain₂ in time to come₃.
- (11) **ዋጋዬን₁፡ ግን₂፡ እንድ₃፡ ትወደኝ₄፡ አምሐልጉኸ₅፡ በኢያቂም₆፡ በሐና₇።**
 But₂ I adjure You₅ (to make) my payment₁: (namely) that₃ You should love me₄, for the sake of Joachim₆ and Hannah₇,
- (12) **እናትኸን₁፡ ወላዲትኸን₂፡ ያፈሩ₃፡ በእርግና₄፡ አቤቱ₅።**
 Those who engendered₃ Your mother₁ in (their) old age₄, her who bore You₂, O Master₅!

4 Linguistic and philological comment on the poems

The poems contain a number of forms different from Modern Amharic,¹⁴ some of them well known from other Old Amharic compositions, some others sporadic and perhaps to be explained as scribal errors. Moreover, the sense of some of the lines is obscure and requires additional discussion. This section contains our remarks on some of the linguistic and textual difficulties attendant upon the reading of these poems, followed by a brief summary of those features of the poems which are characteristic of Old Amharic texts in general.

Line 1:

ጽንሐ must stand for **ጽንሐሕ** ‘incense burner’ (cf. 4.1.6, below). **ጨምሮ** corresponds to Modern Amharic **ጨምረው** (cf. 4.1.5).

Line 2:

The shape of the grapheme for <čo> differs from that of its Modern Amharic equivalent (ቻ) inasmuch as the additional horizontal stroke (for palatalization) is placed below the letter under its vertical stem, not on top of the circle marking the 7th-order vowel.

The 3 pl. possessive suffix (‘their servants’, lit. ‘their slaves’) probably refers to the members of the Trinity. It has thus a different referent from the subject of this clause.

እለ corresponds to Modern Amharic **እነ** (cf. 4.1.12).

እስኩ is a Geez insertion, see Leslau 1987: 42.

Line 3:

The form **ቀድቻኑ** is parallel to **መትራችሁ** and both are to be analyzed as 2 pl. gerund. The spelling **ቀድቻኑ** instead of the expected **ቀድታችኑ** is most likely to be explained as a scribal error.

The wording may allude to Mt. 26:26–27, Mk.14:22–24, Lk. 22:19–20, or also Jn. 6:53, or be somehow reminiscent of the Eucharistic liturgy ritual.

Line 4:

(በ)መሰቸኑበት may be corrected to **(በ)መሳቸኑበት**, relative perfect 2 pl. (with the applicative 3 sg. masc.) from the verb *mässa* ‘to dine’ (Kane 1990: 200).

¹⁴ Within the present article, the term Modern Amharic refers to the form of Amharic described in Leslau 1995 and Kane 1990, thus written Amharic, predominantly of the 20th century (cp. above, Section 3).

Line 5:

ክሰስ is a colloquial form of the name **ክርስቶስ** (Christ). It seems to have been wide-spread in the 17th and 18th centuries in Amharic-speaking areas, and predominantly used in compound personal names (such as Ḥawarya Kəsos, Akalä Kəsos, Mälkä'a Kəsos, etc.).

The relative verbal form **ያሰጡ** may be understood either as derived from the verb *assättä* ‘to cause to be given’ (Kane 1990: 589a, linked to *sättä* ‘to give’) or from the verb *asättä* (Kane 1990: 589b, ‘to spread out, lay out or hang out to dry’). The subject of the verb must be the priests (referred to in the lines before) whose work is to offer “the flesh and blood” of Christ (i.e. Eucharist), that is, to spread light to other people. The words ‘your entire self’/‘your entirety’ and ‘light’ are in apposition. The verbal form can be interpreted in two ways; the meaning ‘to give’ can be associated with the direct object **ኩሉንታኸ** ‘your entirety’,¹⁵ and the meaning ‘to spread’ with **ብርሃን** ‘light’. It is tempting to suggest that we are dealing here with an intended ambiguity that was actually a part of the literary technique commonly known as *sämanna wärq* ‘wax and gold’, employed in Geez and Amharic poetry. In particular, the twofold meaning of the verbal form corresponds to what is described in Mondon-Vidailhet 1907: 318 as “équivoques des verbes”, while the apposition of two nouns appears to correspond to “équivoques des noms en général” (Mondon-Vidailhet 1907: 318–320).

Line 6:

The preposition *lä-* precedes the whole relative construction rather than the relativized verb. This relative clause thus corresponds to Modern Amharic መልክህ(?) ማየት ለሚቆልጡ.

Line 7:

The meaning of the line is vague. የሚዳው may be a result of a scribal omission from የሚዳዳው. For the verb *dadda(w)* ‘to have a strong desire’, s. Kane 1990: 1824. The predominant contemporary usage of this verb is different, usually in combination with *lä-* + infinitive, or *l-* + simple imperfect form.

¹⁵ The word **ኩሉንታ** is an obvious borrowing from Geez *kʷəllänta* ‘totality, entirety, the whole person’, used also with the possessive suffixes (Leslau 1987: 281, Dillmann 1865: 816).

Line 8:

ፍቅርኸ means ‘your love’ (to someone) in Modern Amharic, but cp. Getatchew Haile 1991: 522, ቢያሸንፈኝ: እንጅፍቅርኸ:… ‘because love for you has overwhelmed me...’.

The grapheme ጸ in እንጅ has two vowel markers, for the 3rd (cp. ዲ) and the 6th (ድ) orders that possibly reflects the uncertainty of the scribe in dealing with the prefix of the verbal form (yə-). On the separate writing of the conjunction cf. below, Section 4.1.1. On the absence of the element *-mm-* cf. below, Section 4.1.11.

Line 9:

አወግልኑ must correspond to Modern Amharic አወግለሁ. On the preservation of the affricate ሩ cf. below, 4.1.7. The 6th order of the grapheme ለ (instead of expected 1st order ለ) is also noteworthy. Is this peculiar form of the auxiliary element in the 1 sg. “compound imperfect” a feature of the dialect of the author/scribe, a sporadic deviation from the common form, or a scribal error?

በአምሃረኝ must correspond to Modern Amharic ባማረኝ (preposition/conjunction *bä* + relative perfect + object suffix; cf. Kane 1990: 1122–1123).

Line 10:

The translation of ለጥንት is very uncertain here; the context suggests that is to be understood as ‘future time, remote time in the future’. Actually, the word ጥንት means ‘beginning, origin’ etc. in both Geez and Amharic (Leslau 1987: 594; Kane 1990: 2161–2162).

Line 11:

አምሐልኑኸ should correspond to አማላሁህ in Modern Amharic (on the preservation of the guttural cf. below, 4.1.6). Cf. Getatchew Haile 2005: 257, line 4, on the same expression in another Old Amharic poem.

According to Ethiopian tradition, Joachim and Hannah, the parents of St. Mary, had their daughter born at an old age.¹⁶

4.1 Old Amharic features

4.1.1 The conjunction *and(ə)*- is twice separated from the governing verb by the word divider (in lines 8 and 11). Separate writing of conjunctions is recorded elsewhere in Old Amharic (cf. Richter 1997:

¹⁶ Cp., e.g., Getatchew Haile 2007.

550). Note, however, that the same conjunction is not separated from the verb in lines 4 and 10.

4.1.2 In the 2 pl. ending *-ačhu*, the final syllable is consistently spelled as ጉ (cf. lines 3, 4), and the 1 sg. ending *-hu* is spelled as ጉ as well in lines 9, 10, 11. For the same spelling elsewhere in Old Amharic cf. Cowley 1974: 605.

4.1.3 In the 1 pl. ending *-aččən* and 2 pl. ending *-ačhu*, the grapheme ቸ <čä> is employed consistently instead of the ቸ <čə> of Modern Amharic (in lines 3, 4). The use of the first order ቸ instead of the sixth order ቸ has also been observed in other Old Amharic texts (Bulakh – Nosnitsin 2019, III.2.3, with further references).

4.1.4 Word-initial ጠ is (at least graphically) preserved when preceded by the preposition ከ in the form ከጠጉጉ, line 5 (for similar cases elsewhere in Old Amharic texts cf. Cowley 1974: 603; Strelcyn 1981: 74; Bulakh & Nosnitsin 2019, III.3.1).

4.1.5 The spelling < -o > contra Modern Amharic < -äw > is found in three cases. Firstly, in line 2 we find the form ለባሮቻቸ (cf. Modern Amharic ለባሮቻቸው; cf. Cowley 1974: 603, 604 and Girma Awgichew Demeke 2014: 117–118 for similar cases). Secondly, the converb 3 pl. forms appear with the ending < -o > (rather than Modern Amharic < -äw >) in line 1 (ጨምሮ) and line 2 (ብሎ). For the same phenomenon elsewhere in Old Amharic cf. Goldenberg 2017: 553, fn. 1; Bulakh – Nosnitsin 2019, III.4.4.

4.1.6 The historical gutturals are preserved in the verb ‘to see’ (መሀየት in line 6) and ‘to be pleasing’ (በጠምሃረኝ in line 9).¹⁷ For some other words the spelling with historical gutturals may be explained via Geez influence, since they have reliable cognates (or sources of bor-

¹⁷ Note the spelling with < h > rather than the etymologically correct < ḥ > in both cases. For ‘to see’, cf. Arg. *ḥay*, *ḥenḡ* (Girma Awgichew Demeke 2013: 297). For ‘to be pleasing’, cf. Arg. *amḥer* ‘schön sein’ [to be beautiful] (Wetter 2010: 245), Tna. *amḥarä* ‘to suit, fit s.o. well (garment)’ (Kane 2000: 347). The direct Geez cognate, *amḥarä*, is semantically remote (‘move to pity’, cf. Leslau 1987: 336; on the semantic shift ‘to have pity’ > ‘to love’, here in the causative form ‘to cause to have pity’ > ‘to inspire love, to be pleasing’, cf. Syr. *rḥm* ‘to love; to have pity on’, Brockelmann 1928: 723–724). The influence of a formally similar Geez root *mhr* ‘to teach’ is unlikely.

rowing) in Geez (**መብልዕ** in line 8; **ሰሱዕ** in line 8; **ጸሐፍኑ** in line 10, **አምሐልኑኸ** in line 11).

Elsewhere (including some words with parallels in Geez), loss of gutturals ^ʔ, ^ʕ, ^ħ is observed: **ብሉ** (line 3), **ቀድቻኑ** (line 3), **በመሰቸኑበት** (line 4); **ቢጸናብኝ** and **እንዲ፡ፀና** (line 8), **አወፃልኑ** (line 9). In the word **ጽንሐ** (line 1), to be identified with Geez *ṣənḥāḥ* ‘fumigation, incense; censer’ (Leslau 1987: 560; cf. Modern Amh. *ṣəna*, *təna* ‘censer’, Kane 1990: 2254, 2155), the first guttural is preserved, whereas the word-final guttural is omitted. Note also that the root **bl* ‘to eat’ is spelled with ^ʕ in **መብልዕ** (line 8), and without ^ʕ in **ብሉ** (line 3).

This picture is similar to that observed in some other Old Amharic texts (cf. Bulakh – Nosnitsin 2019, III.3.1).

4.1.7 Preservation of ejective affricate *ɕ* (cf. Bulakh – Nosnitsin 2019, III.3.2, with further references) is noted in two cases: **ፎፃቸኑ** in line 4 and **አወፃልኑ** in line 9. Note also **ጸሐፍኑ** in line 10 and **ቢጸናብኝ** and **እንዲ፡ፀና** in line 8 (here Modern Amharic, too, has *ɕ*).

4.1.8 The object marker *-n* appears as *-nä-* when followed by the particle *-m(m)*: **እርሱነም** in line 10, **ደግቸነም** in line 3. Contrast **ዋጋዩን** in line 11 (where the object marker *-n* is in word-final position). The vowel *-ä-* also appears word-internally after the 2 sg. masc. marker *-h* in **እናትኸን**, **ወላዲትኸን** (line 12) and in the above-mentioned **ደግቸነም** (line 3) after the 1 pl. suffix *-aččən-*. For the same phenomena elsewhere in Old Amharic cf. Cowley 1974: 604, Getatchew Haile 1980: 580; Appleyard 2003: 115, Getatchew Haile 1986: 234–235, Girma Awgichew Demeke 2014: 59.

4.1.9 The 2 sg. m. personal pronoun appears as **አንት** (contrast Modern Amharic **አንተ**) in line 5. The same form is documented elsewhere in Old Amharic (Strelcyn 1981: 75, Girma Awgichew Demeke 2014: 206).

4.1.10 The relativizer appears as *ʔamm-* in line 6 (against the modern *yämm-*; but note Leslau 1995: 81 on *ʔamm-* in Modern Amharic). For the same form elsewhere in Old Amharic cf. Cowley 1983: 24, Cowley 1974: 605.

4.1.11 The absence of the relative marker *-mm-* after the conjunction *ʔand-* in line 8 has parallels elsewhere in the Old Amharic corpus, cf. Cowley 1977: 141.

4.1.12 The interrogative pronoun *ʾallä man* ‘who (pl.)’ in line 2 corresponds to Modern Amharic *ʾännä man*. This form is also attested in the Old Amharic treatise *Təmhərtä haymanot* (cf. Cowley 1974: 604). On the Old Amharic plural marker *ʾallä* as equivalent of Modern Amharic *ʾännä* cf. Cowley 1977: 139, 141, Girma Awgichew Demeke 2014: 93.

5 Summary of the poems

Poem 1

All six lines of the poem terminate in *-tu* (the issue of line 1 is discussed above); in five cases this represents the 3 pers. pl. verbal ending. (In fact, line 6 and the short line 7 might be interpreted as one line cut into two pieces). The poem opens with a kind of rhetorical question; it is known that those meant in line 2 are priests. Lines 3 and 4 may be seen as the priests’ “direct speech” (a continuation after the imperative “Take!”). Their role in liturgical life is metaphorically described in “mundane” terms. The priests serve “good food” to the faithful so that they have the strength to run away from death. Distributing “the body (self) of Christ”/light (= Eucharist) the priests spread light and chase away the darkness for those who strive to see the image of Christ.

Poem 2

The poem is composed of five lines each ending in *-na*. The last word of the last line, 12, does not fit the structure, but this may be an exception¹⁸ since the preceding word ends in *-na*, and the sentence would fully preserve its sense without the last word. The author speaks as a professional scribe or writer. The only reward he desires is that Christ should love him; his own love for Christ is explained, curiously, in “lower” physiological terms and compared to a kind of gluttony. The author seems to be about to embark upon a writing enterprise. He speaks about “40 treatises” he is going to copy — or even compose, if we interpret the words ከባሕር፡ ሕሊና ‘from the sea of thought’ as a reference to the intellect as the source of writing. However, he refers to the texts as already completed in the next lines.

¹⁸ Unlikely a later addition, since the word is written in the same hand and the sign marking the end of the sentence (four dots, or *arat näṭəb*) stands after it.

6 Conclusion

The poems seem to have been authored by representatives of the two wide-spread Ethiopian medieval professions. The first poem, possibly reflecting the point of view of a priest, is a poetic statement concerning priests and priesthood, explaining the importance of the priestly work. The second poem reflects the point of view of a scribe/writer; it is a rare case of first-hand evidence as to what medieval Ethiopian scribes thought of the purportedly sacral character of their scribal work, and how they understood their craft in terms of productivity and efficacy.

The existence of any other copies of the poems is unlikely, though it cannot be completely excluded. The poems are quite similar in form. In all probability, they are unique compositions that were improvised and written down by the author; peculiar forms and a general orthographic uncertainty may be a proof for that. Needless to say, combining both occupations – of priest and scribe – was in no way uncommon in medieval Ethiopia.

Despite their small size, translating and analyzing the poems is a challenging task; the translation is tentative and not all details could be sufficiently clarified. Moreover, the meaning of some lines is open to further interpretations and can be understood in more than one way.¹⁹

It is not easy to grasp what the purpose of these specific poems could have been. Were they meant to be used for addressing other people, and at what occasions and in which way? Were they composed for personal use only and reflected the individual’s thoughts of the moment? A few important categories – priesthood, Eucharist, love towards Christ, writing etc. – that are usually addressed in Geez in a sober and solemn way are presented here through the rhetorical means of the vernacular language, with a certain degree of didacticism but also, as we believe, with quite a bit of humor and wit. Was such a way of referring to holy things normal and typical for the “popular culture” or does it represent an isolated exception? There

¹⁹ For instance, we cannot be quite certain as to who is referred to in line 2 through the suffix 3 pl. (‘their servants’/‘their slaves’), the members of the Trinity or priests; it cannot be excluded that lines 3 and 4 are meant as words of Christ about himself (‘Our flesh’, ‘Our blood’), or both meanings were intended by the author. In line 11, the meaning of አምሐሌጉኸ oscillates between ‘adjure’, ‘beseech’ and ‘enjoin’.

are more questions than answers. In any case, as with other pre-modern Amharic texts, the poems speak in the indigenous voices of 17th- or 18th-century Ethiopian culture and give us a rare occasion to get a glimpse into the medieval Ethiopian mind that bypasses the filter of the Geez texts.

Abbreviations

Amh. - Amharic, Arg. - Argobba, Syr. - Syriac, Tna. - Tigrinya

References

- Appleyard, David. 2003. An ‘Old Amharic’ commentary on the Nicene Creed. *Aethiopica* 6. 111–136.
- Brockelmann, Carl. 1928. *Lexicon Syriacum*. Hallis Saxonum: Niemeyer.
- Bulakh, Maria & Denis Nosnitsin. 2019. An Old Amharic poem from northern Ethiopia: One more text on condemning glory. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 82(2). 315–350.
- Cowley, Roger. 1974. A text in Old Amharic. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37(3). 597–607.
- Cowley, Roger. 1977. Additional sources for a copula *-tt* in Old Amharic. *Israel Oriental Studies* 7. 139–143.
- Cowley, Roger. 1983. Ludolf’s Fragmentum Piquesii: An Old Amharic tract about Mary who anointed Jesus’ feet. *Journal of Semitic Studies* 28(1). 1–46.
- Crummey, Donald. 2005. Gondärine kingdom. In Siegbert Uhlig (ed.): *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, II: D–H. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 845–848.
- Daniel Aseffa. 2010. Wæddase Amlak. In Alessandro Bausi et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, IV: O–X. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 1172–1173.
- Dillmann, Christian Friedrich August. 1865. *Lexicon linguae aethiopicae, cum indice latino. Adiectum est vocabularium tigre dialecti septentrionalis compilatum a W. Munziger*. Lipsiae: T. O. Weigel.
- Getatchew Haile. 1979. Panegyrics in Old Amharic, EMMML 1943, f. 3v. *Israel Oriental Studies* 9. 228–236.
- Getatchew Haile. 1980. Some notes on ‘A Text in Old Amharic’ of Roger Cowley. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43(3). 578–580.
- Getatchew Haile. 1985. *A catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa, and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegetown, VIII: Project numbers*

- 3001–3500. Collegeville, MN: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, St. John’s Abbey and University.
- Getatchew Haile. 1986. Materials on the theology of Qəb‘at or Unction. In Gideon Goldenberg (ed.), *Ethiopian studies. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Tel-Aviv, 14–17 April 1980*. Rotterdam & Boston: A.A. Balkema. 205–250.
- Getatchew Haile. 1991. Qəne poems in Older Amharic. In Alan S. Kaye (ed.), *Semitic studies in honor of Wolf Leslau on the occasion of his eighty-fifth birthday*, vol. I. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 521–530.
- Getatchew Haile. 2005. An archaic Amharic poem on condemning wealth and glory. In Geoffrey Khan (ed.), *Semitic studies in honour of Edward Ullendorff*. Leiden & Boston: Brill. 255–275.
- Getatchew Haile. 2007. Mary. In Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Vol. 3: *He–N*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 808–809.
- Getatchew Haile. 2014. One more archaic Amharic poem on Christian virtues and vices. In Alessandro Bausi, Alessandro Gori & Gianfrancesco Lusini (eds.), *Linguistic, oriental and Ethiopian studies in memory of Paolo Marrassini*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 445–475.
- Girma Awgichew Demeke. 2013. *Amharic-Argobba Dictionary*. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Girma Awgichew Demeke. 2014. *Grammatical changes in Semitic: A diachronic grammar of Amharic*. (Afroasiatic Studies 4). Princeton & Addis Ababa: WibTaye Publishers.
- Goldenberg, Gideon. 2013. ምሥጢረ፡ ጽጌያት። The Old Amharic mysteries of the rosary. In Gideon Goldenberg (ed.), *Further studies in Semitic linguistics*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag. 155–175.
- Goldenberg, Gideon. 2017. Old Amharic object suffixes and the formation of the ሰያፍ፡ አንቀጽ. In Adam Carter McCollum (ed.), *Studies in Ethiopian languages, literature, and history. Festschrift for Getatchew Haile presented by his friends and colleagues*. (Aethiopistische Forschungen 83). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 553–561.
- Kane, Thomas Leiper. 1990. *Amharic-English dictionary*, I–II. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Kane, Thomas Leiper. 2000. *Tigrinya-English dictionary*, I–II. Springfield: Dunwoody Press.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1987. *Comparative dictionary of Ge‘ez (Classical Ethiopic)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1995. *Reference grammar of Amharic*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

- Mondon-Vidailhet, François Marie Casimir. 1907. La rhétorique éthiopienne. Le ሰዎና ወርቅ. *Journal asiatique* ser. 10, 10. 305–329.
- Platonov, Vjacheslav. 2017. *Rukopisnaja kniga v tradicionnoj kulture Efiopii*, ed. by Ekaterina Gusarova. Sankt-Peterburg: Rossijskaja Nacionalnaja Biblioteka.
- Richter, Renate. 1997. Some linguistic peculiarities of Old Amharic texts. In Katsuyoshi Fukui, Eisei Kurimoto & Masayoshi Shigeta (eds.), *Ethiopia in broader perspective, papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Kyoto, 12–17 December 1997*. Vol. I. Kyoto: Shokado Book Sellers. 543–551.
- Strelcyn, Stefan. 1978. *Catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts in the British Library acquired since the year 1877*. London: British Museum.
- Strelcyn, Stefan. 1981. Les mystères des Psaumes, traité éthiopien sur l’emploi des Psaumes (amharique ancien). *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44(1). 54–84.
- Turaev, Boris. 1906. *Efiopskija rukopisi v S.-Peterburge*. (Pamjatniki efiopskoj pismennosti 3). Sankt-Peterburg: Tipografija imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk.
- Uhlig, Siegbert. 1988. *Äthiopische Paläographie*. (Äthiopistische Forschungen 22). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Wetter, Andreas. 2012. Rhetoric means of a didactic Amharic poem from Wärrä Babbo. *Aethiopica* 15. 176–203.
- Witakowski, Witold. 2010. Tä’ammärä Iyäsus. In Siegbert Uhlig & Alessandro Bausi (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, IV. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag. 788a–789b.

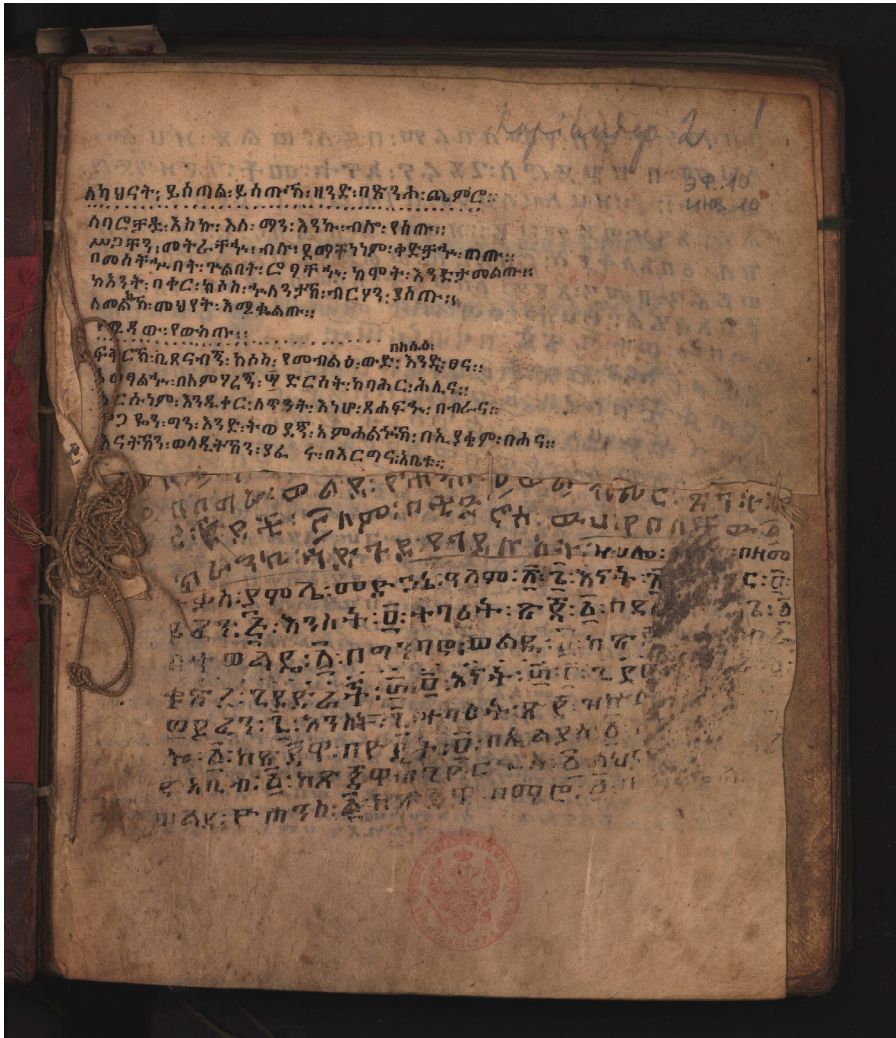


Fig. 1. Ms. Ef. 10 / Koriander 2 (f. 1r) © Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences.

The expression of diminutivity in Central Ring Grassfields Bantu¹

Pius W. Akumbu^a & Roland Kießling^b

Universität Hamburg^{ab}
akumbu.pius@uni-hamburg.de
roland.kiessling@uni-hamburg.de

Abstract:

Studies on the expression of diminutivity in Bantoid languages of the Cameroonian Grassfields have tended to focus on the role that noun class derivation plays within the familiar Bantu paradigm. A closer look at individual branches of Bantoid, however, reveals a more complex picture, which rather suggests a division of labour between derivational strategies and compounding and/or periphrasis. This contribution zooms in on the languages of the Central Ring (CR) branch of Grassfields Bantu, presenting an overview of diminutivisation strategies found here: the notorious transfer to gender 19/6a, which is at times, accompanied by the addition of a semantically bleached suffix –CV, and periphrasis in associative constructions headed by nouns with inherent diminutive meanings such as ‘child’.

Keywords: Central Ring Grassfields Bantu languages, diminutivity, diminutives, noun classes, gender

1 Introduction

While diminutives have been studied extensively for their forms and meanings both from a universal perspective (Jurafsky 1996, Bakema & Geeraerts 2000, Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015) and in Bantu specifically (Gibson, Guérois & Marten 2017), they have been largely neglected in studies on Grassfields Bantu languages, beyond the general statement that gender 19/6a is employed for this purpose (Hyman 1979: 24, Hyman 1980: 234, Tamanji 2009: 31, Akumbu

1 We gratefully acknowledge the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a Georg Forster Research Fellowship for Experienced Researchers granted to the first author (2019–2021) and which has allowed for greater collaboration and research on this paper.

& Chibaka 2012: 54, Möller 2012: 12, Asohsi 2015: 68, Voll 2017: 90). Diminutives are grammatical “elements which make a semantic contribution pertaining to size” (Gibson et al. 2017: 344) in that they primarily express ‘physical smallness’ (Schneider 2003: 10). Other – derived – semantic functions include young age, insignificance or incompleteness, as well as relation or descent (Jurafsky 1996). Moreover, “diminutives can also be used to convey perspectives and subjective viewpoints, as well as to encode pejorative meanings along the lines of disdain or contempt, or ameliorative meanings encoding affection and admiration” (Gibson et al. 2017: 344). This study investigates the forms and functions of diminutives in the Central Ring (CR) branch of Grassfields Bantu, drawing primarily on data from six of the seven CR languages, i.e. Babanki, Kom, Kung, Kuk, Men and Oku.² After a brief overview of the expression of diminutives in Bantu in section 2, section 3 discusses the morphological strategies of diminutivisation in CR. Section 4 sketches a prominent alternative strategy of diminutivisation attested in CR, i.e. periphrasis by an associative construction headed by the noun ‘child’ or ‘tiny item’. A conclusion is provided in section 5.

2 Diminutives in Bantu

Diminutives in Bantu are “thought to have been historically expressed as part of the noun class system, and several noun classes have been

2 Although closely related to Narrow Bantu, Grassfields Bantu languages show remarkable differences in all parts of their grammar. CR languages themselves have many features in common and a comparison of vocabularies between immediate neighbours, such as Babanki and Kom (Brye 2001) show that they share at least 70% of their vocabulary. Until recently, only five languages (Kom, Oku, Babanki, Men and Bum) have been listed as CR (Dieu & Renaud 1983, Breton & Fohtung 1991, Watters 2003). However, it has now been proposed that Kuk and Kung also belong to this subgroup (Tatang 2016, Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2019). There are nearly 400,000 people who speak these languages, as follows: Kom 233,000, Oku 40,000, Babanki 39,000, Men 35,000, Bum 21,000, Kuk 3,000, and Kung 1,750 (Eberhard et al. 2019). Bum has been left out of this study because we were unable to obtain substantial data from the limited existing literature on the language and also because we did not have access to any Bum speaker at the time we could have collected the necessary data (2018–2019). This was due, in part, to the political crisis in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon that started in October 2016 and significantly prevented movement to the area, as well as led to the displacement of speakers into more remote areas for their safety.

reconstructed as including diminutive meaning” (Gibson et al. 2017). In this regard, the Proto-Bantu class 12 prefix **ka-* is most often associated with diminutives while the class 13 prefix **tu-* acts as the corresponding diminutive plural class marker (Bleek 1862/9, Meinhof 1910[1899], Meeussen 1967, Maho 1999, Demuth 2000). Synchronic use of gender 12/13 for diminutives in Bantu is seen in Chindamba (1) and Kimbundu (2).

- (1) Chindamba (G52, Edelsten & Lijongwa 2010: 36–38, Gibson et al. 2017: 348)

<i>li-piki</i>	‘tree’	(class 5)
<i>ma-piki</i>	‘trees’	(class 6)
<i>ka-piki</i>	‘small tree’	(class 12)
<i>tu-piki</i>	‘small trees’	(class 13)

- (2) Kimbundu (H21, Quintão 1934: 18, Gibson et al. 2017: 348)

<i>di-tadi</i>	‘stone’	(class 5)
<i>ma-tadi</i>	‘stones’	(class 6)
<i>ka-di-tadi</i>	‘small stone’	(class 12 + class 5)
<i>tu-ma-tadi</i>	‘small stones’	(class 13 + class 6)

Nevertheless, as noted by Maho (1999: 252, 262), class 12 is not evenly distributed in the whole Bantu area, as class 20 **yù-* (3), gender 7/8 **kì-/ *βì-* (4) and class 19 **pì-* (5) compete for diminutive meaning.

- (3) Venda (S53, Poulos 1986: 289, 1990: 38, Gibson et al. 2017: 375)

<i>ku-thavha</i>	‘small mountain’	(class 20)
<i>ku-thavh-ana</i>	‘very small mountain’	(class 20 + -ana)

- (4) Tsonga (S53, Poulos 1999: 206, Gibson et al. 2017: 375)

<i>muti</i>	‘village’	(class 3)
<i>xi-mut-ana</i>	‘small village’	(class 7 + -ana)
<i>swi-mut-ana</i>	‘small villages’	(class 8 + -ana)

- (5) Nomaánde (A46, Wilkendorf 2001: 15, Gibson et al. 2017: 351)

<i>o-túmbe</i>	‘walking cane’	(class 3)
<i>hì-túmbétumbe</i>	‘small cane’	(class 19)

In fact, Proto-Bantu **pi-* might have a Proto-Benue-Congo ancestor in **pi-* (de Wolf 1971: 170–1) which is assumed to have been grammaticalised from a prior independent noun *pi* or *bi* ‘child’, reflexes of

which are attested in other branches of Niger Congo (Kähler-Meyer 1971: 347–348). The diminutive prefix either replaces the ‘original’ noun class prefix in most languages or it is added on top of it in a few cases (Maho 1999). Diminutive classes in Bantu are typically used for secondary classification (Meeussen 1967, Maho 1999). For this purpose, “a noun typically found in a different class is used in the diminutive class for a specific semantic effect” (Gibson et al. 2017: 359). However, there are also instances where nouns are primarily members of the diminutive class without necessarily being physically small. While Bantu languages predominantly employ their noun class system for the expression of diminutivity, other strategies such as derivational suffixes and compounding processes are also used (Maho 1999, Gibson et al. 2017: 348).

3 Diminutives in Central Ring Grassfields Bantu

Diminutives in Central Ring (CR) primarily express physical smallness, but can also encode an offspring relationship, young age, inferiority and/or deficiency. As in other Bantu languages, a shift from one class to the diminutive class in CR also results in an interpretation of the noun concerned as physically small, that is, as falling short of the prototypical size of the referent class member. Therefore, the entities referred to by diminutives are regarded as smaller members of the category. Thus, *fātsôtà* (19/6a) in Men refers to a brook, creek or rivulet which is smaller in size than what is perceived as standard for its derivative source noun, i.e. *tsò* (9/10) ‘river’.³ This is not to say that the referents of diminutive forms are small by an absolute standard. Speakers represent a referent as small for a particular communicative purpose, i.e. “smallness is not necessarily perceived, but in fact ascribed” (Schneider 2003: 11).

Derived diminutives may undergo semantic specialisations, e.g. Men *ēkyû* (3/6a) ‘bed’ derives the diminutive *fākîā* (19/6a) ‘stool’ and Babanki *kàtí?áí?á* ‘ear’ derives the diminutive *fātí?áí?á* ‘mushroom (sp.)’, as motivated by similarity in form. As seen in (6) diminutive derivation of the concept VEIN from the concept ROOT is recurrently observed in CR, e.g. in Men, Kom and Babanki.

3 The morphological derivation of diminutives such as this will be dealt with in sections 3.1 and 3.2 in more detail.

(6) CR diminutive derivation of VEIN from ROOT

PR * <i>-yàŋ</i> ´	Babanki	Kom	Men	gloss
*5/6	à- <i>yáŋ</i>	ĩ- <i>yâŋ</i>	ē- <i>yâŋ</i> (5/13)	‘root’
*19/6a	fà- <i>yáŋ</i>	fĩ- <i>yâŋ</i>	fē- <i>yâŋ</i>	‘vein, artery’

Diminutives may also entail pejorative or derogatory meanings. Thus, *fàŋgàŋtâ* ‘small house’ (< *àŋgàŋ* (3~5/6) ‘house’), to a Babanki speaker, can express a negative attitude toward the referent, reflecting the view that the owner could have built a much bigger house. It could also mean that someone else will eventually build a bigger house than the diminutivised one. Linked to pejorative connotations is the notion of inability or incapability of a person or group of people and things. For example, Babanki *fàwì?tâ* (< *wì?* (1/2) ‘person’) normally means ‘small person’, but can also be used to designate someone who has not achieved much, be they physically small or big. Such pejorative connotations can be adduced for the rest of CR, e.g. in Kung *fāfū* ‘small and feeble thing’ (< *kāfū* (7/8) ‘thing’) (Kießling 2019: 149). When used on body parts, diminutives can also be a form of insult, e.g. Babanki *fāfìlà* ‘small eye’ (< *àfì* (5/6) ‘eye’) does not really mean that the eye is physically small but could be a way to simply humiliate the person concerned. In the next two subsections we focus on the morphological strategies of diminutivisation in CR, i.e. the transfer to gender 19/6a (3.1), and concomitant suffixation (3.2).

3.1 Shift to gender 19/6a

The most common strategy of diminutive formation in CR is derivation by which a noun is shifted to gender 19/6a, as described for Babanki (Akumbu & Chibaka 2012), Oku (Yensi 1996), Men (Möller 2012), Kuk (Kießling 2016) and Kung (Kießling 2019: 149).⁴ Class prefixes of gender 19/6a which are used for diminutivisation might

4 The data used in this study have mostly been taken from the following sources: Babanki (Akumbu & Chibaka 2012), Kom (Jones 2001), Oku (Yensi 1996, Blood & Davis 1999), Men (Chiatoh 1993, Mua 2015, Möller 2012, Björkestedt 2011, Bangha 2003), Kuk (Kießling 2016, Pleus 2015) and Kung (Kießling 2019: 149; Schlenker 2012). Babanki data have been supplemented by the first author. Men, Kuk and Kung data have been supplemented based on fieldnotes by the second author. Surprisingly, published sources on Kom and Oku do not seem to provide any information on diminutives and we had to collect supplementary data to fill the gap. Proto-Ring reconstructions are taken from Hyman (2007).

attach to nouns of class 1 or 9 which come without a class prefix as shown in (7) or they replace a pre-existent class prefix as in (8).⁵ Remarkably, stem alternations which characterize the base forms of gender 1/2 and 9/10, e.g. consonant alternations such as $v \sim \gamma$ and $w \sim \gamma$, are absent in their diminutive counterparts.

(7) CR diminutive derivation in 19/6a of nouns without a class prefix

	Base	diminutive 19/6a
Babanki	<i>wàn</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>vúná</i> <i>gè</i> (9/10) ‘voice’, pl. <i>gʰsá</i>	<i>fəwàntâ</i> ‘little child’, pl. <i>məwàntâ</i> <i>fəgètà</i> ‘tiny voice’, pl. <i>məgètâ</i>
Kom	<i>wáin</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>wóindā</i> <i>ŋgvī</i> (9/10) ‘chicken’, pl. <i>ŋgvīsā</i>	<i>fəwáintî</i> ‘little child’, pl. <i>mīwáintî</i> <i>fīŋgvīṭī</i> ‘small chicken’, pl. <i>mīŋgvīṭī</i>
Kuk	<i>wāe</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>āwāe</i> <i>byī</i> (9/10) ‘goat’, pl. <i>sābyí</i>	<i>fəwāe</i> ‘tiny feeble child’, pl. <i>m̄wāe</i> <i>fābyí</i> ‘smallish goat’, pl. <i>m̄byí</i>
Kung	<i>wāe</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>ā(γ)wāe</i> <i>bà°</i> (9/10) ‘goat’, pl. <i>sābā</i>	<i>fəwāe</i> ‘tiny feeble child’, pl. <i>m̄wāe</i> <i>fābā̀lā</i> ‘small feeble goat’, pl. <i>m̄bā̀lā</i>
Men	<i>váin</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>āγóin</i> <i>tsò</i> (9/10) ‘river’, pl. <i>sētso</i>	<i>fēγóintâ</i> ‘little child’, pl. <i>m̄γóintâ</i> <i>fātsôtâ</i> ‘brook, small river’, pl. <i>m̄tsôtâ</i>
Oku	<i>wíl</i> (1/2) ‘person’, pl. <i>γīlī</i> <i>ŋgváá</i> (9/10) ‘chicken’, pl. <i>ŋgváasē</i>	<i>fəwíl</i> ‘small person’, pl. <i>məwíl</i> <i>fēŋgváátē</i> ‘small chicken’, pl. <i>mēŋgváátē</i>

(8) CR Diminutive derivation in 19/6a of nouns with class prefixes

	Base	diminutive 19/6a
Babanki	<i>átó</i> (5/13) ‘hut’, pl. <i>tàtó</i> <i>kàwú</i> (7/6) ‘foot’, pl. <i>àwú</i>	<i>fătótâ</i> ‘tiny hut’, pl. <i>màtótâ</i> <i>fəwú̀tâ</i> ‘small foot’, pl. <i>məwú̀tâ</i>

⁵ All CR languages employ a noun class system of the Bantu type with either 12 (Babanki, Bum, Kuk, Kung) or 13 (Kom, Men, Oku) agreement classes (Akumbu 2019: 2). All of them distinguish class 19 marked by *fV-* and its corresponding plural class 6a (also the class for liquids) marked by *m(V)-*.

Kom	<i>ātú</i> (7/8) ‘head’, pl. <i>ītú</i> <i>isáj</i> (5/6) ‘corn’, pl. <i>āsáj</i>	<i>fitúni</i> ‘small head’, pl. <i>mītúni</i> <i>fisájli</i> ‘small corn’, pl. <i>mīsájli</i>
Kuk	<i>isáb</i> (5/6) ‘maize cob’, pl. <i>āsáb</i> <i>kākóí</i> (7/8) ‘chair’, pl. <i>ūkóí</i>	<i>fāsáb(là)</i> ‘smallish maize cob’, pl. <i>māsáblà</i> <i>fākóí</i> ‘small chair’, pl. <i>mākóí</i>
Kung	<i>kābē</i> (7/4) ‘thigh’, pl. <i>ibē</i> <i>kāfúo</i> (7/8) ‘thing’, pl. <i>ūfúo</i>	<i>fābē(là)</i> ‘tiny feeble thigh’, pl. <i>mābē(là)</i> <i>fāfúo</i> ‘tiny thing’, pl. <i>māfúo</i>
Men	<i>ētíí</i> (5/6~13) ‘stone’, pl. <i>ātíí~tētíí</i> <i>āfiá</i> (7/8) ‘thing’, pl. <i>ēfiá</i>	<i>fāfílá</i> ‘small stone’, pl. <i>māfílá</i> <i>fāfiá</i> ‘small thing’, pl. <i>māfiá</i>
Oku	<i>ābkún</i> (3/6a) ‘bed’, pl. <i>āmkún</i> <i>ēfáj</i> (5/6) ‘corn’, pl. <i>ēyfáj</i>	<i>fēkúntè</i> ‘small bed’, pl. <i>mēkúntè</i> <i>fēfájntè</i> ‘small corn’, pl. <i>mēfájntè</i>

The addition of noun class prefixes of 19/6a in diminutive function on top of the original ones, establishing a secondary layer of class prefixes, seems to be restricted to instances where the original noun class prefix has started to merge with the root.

A possible candidate is Men *fēyóintâ* ‘small children’ where the diminutive prefix is added onto an alleged class 2 prefix *y-* (Möller 2012: 12).⁶

Nouns borrowed into CR can also be diminutivised by being shifted to gender 19/6a, as shown in (9), which proves that this strategy is indeed very productive in CR.

6 Even more remarkable is the fact that this diminutive is derived from the plural form *āyóin*, not the singular *váin*. From this perspective, however, it is dubious whether the segment *y* is actually to be analysed as plural prefix, since the prefix in the plural form *ā-yóin* ‘children’ is *ā-*, while the segment *y* seems to belong to the root. This is probably due to the special nature of the noun ‘child’ – not only in Men, but in a number of Ring languages – in that number distinction is not only expressed by change in NPx but also by suppletion of roots or rather by two distinct forms of one and the same root whose allomorphic relation has become intransparent by idiosyncratic fusions.

(9) CR Diminutive derivation in 19/6a of borrowed words

	Base	diminutive 19/6a
Babanki	<i>bwótè</i> (1/2) ‘bottle’, pl. <i>və̀bwótè</i> <i>bùfí</i> (1/2) ‘cat’, pl. <i>və̀bùfí</i> <i>tʃɔ̀s</i> (1/2) ‘church’, pl. <i>və̀tʃɔ̀s</i>	<i>fə̀bwótè</i> ‘small bottle’, pl. <i>mə̀bwótè</i> <i>fə̀bùfí</i> ‘small cat’, pl. <i>mə̀bùfí</i> <i>fə̀tʃɔ̀yètè</i> ‘tiny church’, pl. <i>mə̀tʃɔ̀yètè</i>
Kom	<i>lám̄bās</i> (9/10) ‘orange’, pl. <i>lám̄bāysī</i> <i>bés</i> (9/10) ‘cat’, pl. <i>béysī</i> <i>tʃɔ̀s</i> (9/10) ‘church’, pl. <i>tʃɔ̀ysī</i>	<i>fílám̄bās</i> ‘small orange’, pl. <i>mílám̄bās</i> <i>fíbés</i> ‘small cats’, pl. <i>mībés</i> <i>fítʃɔ̀s</i> ‘tiny church’, pl. <i>mítʃɔ̀s</i>
Kuk	<i>lám̄âs</i> (9/10) ‘orange’, pl. <i>səlám̄âs</i> <i>bùsí</i> (9/10) ‘cat’, pl. <i>sə̀bùsí</i>	<i>fəlám̄âs</i> ‘small orange’, pl. <i>mílám̄âs</i> <i>fə̀bùsí</i> ‘small cats’, pl. <i>m̄bùsí</i>
Kung	<i>lám̄âs</i> (9/10) ‘orange’, pl. <i>səlám̄âs</i> <i>bùsí</i> (9/10) ‘cat’, pl. <i>sə̀bùsí</i> <i>tsɔ̀s</i> (9/10) ‘church’, pl. <i>sə̀tsɔ̀s</i>	<i>fəlám̄âs</i> ‘small orange’, pl. <i>mílám̄âs</i> <i>fə̀bùsí</i> ‘small cat’, pl. <i>m̄bùsí</i> <i>fə̀tsɔ̀s</i> ‘tiny church’, pl. <i>m̄tsɔ̀s</i>
Oku	<i>bwótè</i> (1/10) ‘bottle’, pl. <i>bwótèsè</i> <i>bùsé</i> (1/10) ‘cat’, pl. <i>bùsésé</i> <i>tsɔ̀s</i> (1/10) ‘church’, pl. <i>tsɔ̀sé</i>	<i>fə̀bwótè</i> ‘small bottle’, pl. <i>mə̀bwótè</i> <i>fə̀bùsé</i> ‘small cats’, pl. <i>mə̀bùsé</i> <i>fə̀tsɔ̀stè</i> ‘small church’, pl. <i>mə̀tsɔ̀stè</i>

While 19/6a is employed for secondary diminutive classification, there are nouns that are primarily members of this gender in CR, without necessarily being physically small. Even those 19/6a nouns whose referents might be regarded as physically small in comparison to some absolute standard do not appear to be derived from any other non-diminutive class, as pointed out for other Bantu languages (Gibson et al. 2017: 359).

(10) CR nouns primarily affiliated to gender 19/6a

Babanki	Kom	Kuk	Kung	Men	Oku	gloss
<i>fə̀nín</i>	<i>fɪ̀núin</i>	<i>fə̀nín</i>	<i>fə̀nīm</i>	<i>fḗnɪ́ŋ</i>	<i>fḗnán</i>	‘bird’
<i>fə̀kà?</i>	<i>fíkà?</i>	<i>fə̀kà?</i>	<i>fə̀kà?</i>	<i>fḗkà?</i>	<i>fḗkà?</i>	‘tree’
<i>fə̀nì</i>	<i>fɪ̀nù</i>	<i>fə̀nì</i>	<i>fə̀nìə</i>	<i>fḗnì</i>	<i>fḗfiak</i>	‘knife’
<i>fə̀kù</i>	<i>fíkù</i>	<i>fə̀kùə</i>	<i>fə̀kô</i>	<i>fḗkù</i>	<i>fḗkóo</i>	‘belt’

Babanki	Kom	Kuk	Kung	Men	Oku	gloss
<i>f̄ambv́án̄</i>	<i>f̄iŋgẃán̄</i>	<i>f̄āŋgb́án̄</i>	<i>f̄āmbǵán̄</i>	<i>f̄ēŋgẃán̄</i>	<i>f̄ēŋgẃán̄</i>	‘salt’
<i>f̄əl̄é?</i>	<i>f̄il̄é?</i>	<i>[k̄āŋí?]</i>	<i>[k̄āŋí?]</i>	<i>f̄ēndá?</i>	<i>f̄ēl̄ik</i>	‘smoke’
<i>f̄əl̄àm</i>	<i>f̄il̄àm</i>	?	<i>f̄āw̄ô</i>	<i>f̄èl̄àm</i>	<i>f̄èl̄àm</i>	‘net’

The nouns in (10) are primarily members of gender 19/6a since there is no evidence of their derivational shift from another source gender on the synchronic level. Note that the absolute size of referents of primary 19/6a nouns such as ‘bird’, ‘tree’, or ‘knife’ is, in principle, no argument against their potential historical origin in derived diminutives, since the contemporarily productive derivational process is also not guided by orientation towards any absolute standard of size, but rather depends on the size which is perceived as prototypical of a given class member. Therefore, it might be that these nouns which are today – and most probably already in proto-(C)R times – primarily affiliated to gender 19/6a actually represent historical diminutives derived at pre-Ring times from a non-diminutive root which has disappeared from (C)R.

3.2 Suffixation

Shifting nouns to gender 19/6a for diminutivisation is, at times, accompanied by the addition of a -CV suffix. CR languages differ with respect to the scope of application of the -CV suffix across the lexicon (lexical coverage), the optionality of its presence in diminutives, the available forms of its (lexically conditioned) allomorphs (-t, -l, or -n) and the degree to which they undergo phonological reduction, as briefly summarized in table (11).

(11) Overview of CR suffixation

	Babanki	Kom	Oku	Men	Kuk	Kung
lexical coverage	total	total	total	partial	partial	partial
presence of suffix:	oblig.	option.	option.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
number of allomorphs:	3	3	3	2 (<i>tə</i> , <i>lə</i>)	1 (<i>lə</i>)	1 (<i>lə</i>)
full vs. reduced shape:	full	full	full	reduced	reduced	reduced

The suffix is obligatorily present in derived diminutives in Babanki but lexically conditioned in Kom, Kung, Kuk, Men, and Oku such that some nouns take a suffix in forming the diminutive while others do not, e.g. Kuk *fābyí* ‘smallish goat’, Oku *fāwíl* ‘small person’. In Kung there is also variation with respect to application of the suffix, e.g. *kābê* ‘thigh’ derives the diminutive singular *fābê-là* which varies freely with *fābê*, whereas the diminutive plural *m̄bê-là* does not allow for omission of the suffix in **m̄bê*.⁷ Concomitant suffixation for diminutive derivation in CR is exemplified in (12).

(12) CR diminutive derivation in 19/6a and suffixation⁸

	Base	diminutive 19/6a
Babanki	<i>wàn</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>vúná</i> <i>àfwín</i> (5/6) ‘leg’, pl. <i>àfwín</i> <i>kàfí</i> (7/8) ‘piece’, pl. <i>àfí</i>	<i>fāwàntâ</i> ‘little child’, pl. <i>màwàntâ</i> <i>fāfwíntâ</i> ‘small leg’, pl. <i>màfwíntâ</i> <i>fāfílà~fāfínà</i> ‘tiny piece’, pl. <i>màfílà~màfínà</i>
Kom	<i>wáin</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>wóindā</i> <i>ísáj</i> (5/6) ‘corn’, pl. <i>āsáj</i> <i>átú</i> (7/8) ‘head’, pl. <i>ātú</i>	<i>fēwáin(tì)</i> ‘little child’, pl. <i>mēwáin(tì)</i> <i>fīsáj(lē)</i> ‘small corn’, pl. <i>mīsáj(lē)</i> <i>fītú(nì)</i> ‘small head’, pl. <i>mītú(nì)</i>
Kung	<i>iyāŋ</i> (5/10) ‘root’, pl. <i>sāyāŋ</i> <i>kābê</i> (7/4) ‘thigh’, pl. <i>ibê</i> <i>sāf</i> (9/10) ‘maize’, pl. <i>sāsāf</i>	<i>fāyāŋâ</i> ‘small root’, pl. <i>māyāŋâ</i> <i>fābê(là)</i> ‘tiny feeble thigh’, pl. <i>m̄bêlâ</i> <i>fāsāblâ</i> ‘tiny feeble maize plant’, pl. <i>m̄sāblâ</i>

⁷ The datasets on which these claims are based vary with respect to individual languages. The datasets for Kuk and Kung are quite limited comprising some 20 diminutives which have been checked with two consultants, respectively. Regarding Kom and Oku, 25 items were taken from secondary sources and checked systematically with two consultants each. The Men dataset is a bit larger including some 40 items from various sources. While the Kuk dataset stems from elicitation exclusively, Kung and Men data are based on elicitation and narrative discourse. 80 Babanki items were provided by the first author and checked by two other native speakers. In all cases diminutives have not been checked for their potential range of variation across different individuals.

⁸ Bracketing of the suffix indicates its optional presence.

Kuk	<i>zùyù</i> (9/10) ‘snake’, pl. <i>sázùyù</i>	<i>fǎzùglà</i> ‘smallish snake’, pl. <i>m̄zùglà</i>
	<i>jàm</i> (9/10) ‘animal’, pl. <i>sǎjám</i>	<i>fǎjàmà</i> ‘small animal’, pl. <i>m̄jàmà</i>
	<i>ìsǎb</i> (5/6) ‘maize cob’, pl. <i>ásǎb</i>	<i>fǎsǎb(là)</i> ‘smallish maize cob’, pl. <i>m̄sǎblà</i>
Men	<i>áfíá</i> (7/8) ‘thing’, pl. <i>ēfíá</i>	<i>fēfíá</i> ‘little thing’, pl. <i>m̄fíá</i>
	<i>váin</i> (1/2) ‘child’, pl. <i>áyóin</i>	<i>fēyóintà</i> ‘little child’, pl. <i>m̄yóintà</i>
	<i>tsám</i> (9/10) ‘dream’, pl. <i>séttsám</i>	<i>fǎtsámà</i> ‘small dream’, pl. <i>m̄tsámà</i>
Oku	<i>ǎbkún</i> (3/6a) ‘bed’, pl. <i>ǎmkún</i>	<i>fēkún(tè)</i> ‘small bed’, pl. <i>mēkún(tè)</i>
	<i>kétíé</i> (7/8) ‘chair’, pl. <i>ǎbtíé</i>	<i>fētíé(lé)</i> ‘small chair’, pl. <i>mētíé(lé)</i>
	<i>ntòn</i> (9/10) ‘pot’, pl. <i>ntònsè</i>	<i>fèntòn(nè)</i> ‘small pot’, pl. <i>mèntòn(nè)</i>

In Babanki, Kom, and Oku, all three suffix allomorphs can occur in both the singular and plural and it is possible for some words to take *-là* or *-nà* in Babanki without any semantic difference. In Kom and Oku, it is possible to leave out a suffix and still obtain the diminutive meaning only by transfer to gender 19/6a. In Kung and Kuk suffixation for diminutivity is more restrictive than in Babanki, Kom and Oku in two respects. First, only one suffix allomorph, i.e. *-(l)à* (along with various types of reduction) has been observed so far. Second, the distribution of this suffix is constrained by semantically intransparent lexical criteria, i.e. some diminutives require the suffix obligatorily, others apply it optionally, while some lack it altogether.

Of all CR languages Kuk is the one with the most limited use of the suffix. In all 10 examples given in Kießling (2016), only one, *fǎzùglà* ‘smallish snake’, requires the suffix *-là*. Another one, *fǎjàmà* ‘small animal’, contains the reduced form of the suffix, i.e. *-ə*, and in a third one, *fǎsǎb(là)* ‘smallish maize cob’, it is optionally present.

In Kung the suffix *-lə* seems to be reduced to schwa, as soon as it appears with a velar nasal, e.g. in *fēyáŋ-ə* ‘small root’ (< **fēyáŋ-là*) and *fǎpfǎndóŋ-ə* ‘small pig, piglet’ (< **fǎpfǎndóŋ-là*). Occasional alternations in root final consonants, as in *fǎ-sǎb-là* ‘small maize plant’ (< *sǎf* ‘maize cob’), suggest that suffixation of *-lə* must have protected a prior root final plosive **b* from lenition to *f* (Kießling 2019: 149).

The surface tones of some nouns are also realized differently as compared to their derivational base, e.g. *fāyê* ‘tiny feeble person’ (< *yù* (1/2) ‘person’, pl. *āyî(ə)*). Some nouns, e.g. *īyāŋ* (5/10) ‘root’ derive two distinct forms in gender 19/6a in which the presence vs. absence of the suffix produces a difference in meaning, i.e. *fāyāŋ-â* ‘small root’ (< **fāyāŋ-lâ*) vs. *fāyāŋ* ‘edible root’.

In Men there are instances where it looks as if the diminutive is derived exclusively by suffixation. This is the case for a few nouns which are primarily affiliated to 19/6a, e.g. *fēnīŋ-tâ* ‘small bird’ (< *fēnīŋ* ‘bird’), *fēsīy-lâ* ~ *fēsīy-tâ* ‘small pepper’ (< *fāsīs* ‘pepper’), *fāŋī-tâ* ‘small knife’ (< *fāŋī* ‘knife’). Derived diminutives in this language may retain only tonal traces of prior suffixation, e.g. the final L component in *fēfīâ* ‘small thing’ (< *āfīâ* (7/8) ‘thing’).

As mentioned above, suffixation in the course of diminutive derivation triggers morphophonological effects in some root terminal consonants, though it is difficult to generalize on these, since in some cases suffixation seems to block lenition which otherwise affects terminal consonants in non-suffixed forms, e.g. Kung *fēsāb-lâ* ‘small maize plant’ (< *sāf* (9/10) ‘maize cob’), Kuk *fāzūg-lâ* ‘smallish snake’ (< *zūyù* (9/10) ‘snake’), while in other cases it is just the other way round, i.e. suffixation causing lenition, e.g. Men *fēsīy-lâ* ~ *fēsīy-tâ* ‘small pepper’ (< *fāsīs* (19/6a) ‘pepper’), Babanki *fāsāy-lâ* ~ *fāsāy-tâ* ‘small buttock’ (< *āsās* (5/6) ‘buttock’).

The tone in the suffix seems to be lexically determined in that some diminutives apply a low tone and others a high tone e.g. Oku *fē-tū-lè* ‘small head’ (< *kē-tū* (7/8) ‘head’) vs. *fē-tē-lé* ‘small chair’ (< *kē-tē* (7/8) ‘chair’).⁹ Falling contour tones might be a result of two tones merging to one in a single tone bearing unit, either a high root tone spreading on a low suffix tone, e.g. Kom *fūŋgví-tî* ‘small chicken’ (< *ŋgví* (9/10) ‘chicken’) and Men *fāŋī-tâ* ‘small knife’ (< *fāŋī* (19/6a) ‘knife’), or a low suffix tone docking to a high root tone, e.g. Kung *fāfū* ‘tiny thing’ (< *kāfū* (7/8) ‘thing’). In Babanki, however, the tendency is for H tone roots to take a L tone suffix, e.g. *fâtó-tâ* ‘small

9 These tonal variations in the suffix might reflect a contrast of different final floating tones associated to the root as reconstructed for Proto-Grassfields (Hyman 2007). Thus, the low tone suffixes in Oku *fē-tū-lè*, Men *fā-tū-à*, and Babanki *fē-tū-lâ* ‘small head’ might reflect the final floating low tone of the Proto-Grassfields root **tú* ‘head’, whereas the high tone suffix in Men *fā-fó-lâ* ‘very small rat’ (< *āfól* (7/8) ‘rat’) rather reflects the terminal floating high tone of the Proto-Grassfields root **fól* ‘rat’.

hut' (< àtó (5/13) 'hut'), fāmbvú-là 'small chicken' (< mbvú (9/10) 'chicken'), while L tone roots take a falling tone suffix, e.g. fāwì?-tâ 'small person' (< wì? (1/2) 'person'), fānàm-tâ 'small animal' (< nàm (9/10) 'animal'). This suggests that the diminutive suffix in Babanki must be low-toned with a preceding floating high tone which is absorbed by final high tones in the nominal root, but creates a contour tone in the suffix when preceded by a low tone in the nominal root.

Borrowed nouns do not accept suffixation of -CV along with transfer to gender 19/6a for diminutive formation, as seen in (4) above. The exceptions found so far are in Babanki and Oku where monosyllabic bases can also receive a suffix, e.g. Babanki fātʃȳtâ 'tiny church' (< tʃs 'church'), and Oku fētsóstè 'tiny church' (< tsós 'church').

Remarkably, two of these suffixes, namely -tV and -lV, which accompany diminutive derivation of nouns in CR resemble the verbal extensions -tV, and -lV commonly found in Bantoid and in Grassfields (Watters 2003: 245, Hyman 2018: 180) to derive attenuative meanings in verbs (Akumbu & Chibaka 2012: 137, Tamanji & Mba 2003, Mba & Chiatoh 2003, Harro 1989, Mba 1997), i.e. a reduced degree of quality in states and intensity in actions and events. Semantically, the effect is parallel to diminutivisation with nouns. While the suffix -nV serves diminutive function, it is not attested in the attenuative. On the other hand, -kV is attested in the attenuative but has not been found in diminutives. In Babanki, for example, -tâ and -kâ function as attenuative suffixes often combined with a frequentative or iterative function, as shown in (13).

(13) Babanki verbal diminutive suffixes -tâ and -kâ

Base	diminutive in -tâ	Base	diminutive in -kâ
<i>nú</i> 'drink'	<i>nútâ</i> 'drink a bit'	<i>pfí</i> 'die'	<i>pfíkâ</i> 'die bit by bit'
<i>wyé</i> 'pour'	<i>wyé-tâ</i> 'pour a little'	<i>sá?</i> 'scatter'	<i>sá?kâ</i> 'scatter in bits'
<i>ló</i> 'lick'	<i>lótâ</i> 'lick a bit'	<i>ká?</i> 'turn'	<i>ká?kâ</i> 'turn a bit'
<i>dì</i> 'cry'	<i>dítâ</i> 'cry a little'	<i>bàs</i> 'tear'	<i>bây-kâ</i> 'tear into pieces'
<i>tʃò</i> 'pass'	<i>tʃò-tâ</i> 'pass a little'	<i>fwàs</i> 'fart'	<i>fwây-kâ</i> 'fart little by little'
<i>bvù</i> 'grind'	<i>bvù-tâ</i> 'grind a little'	<i>fwè</i> 'rot'	<i>fwè-kâ</i> 'rot bit by bit'

Mba and Chiatoh (2003: 94, 98) demonstrate that -tî and -lî function as diminutive suffixes in Kom (14).

(14) Kom verbal diminutive suffixes *-tì* and *-lì*

Base	diminutive in <i>-tì</i>	Base	diminutive in <i>-lì</i>
<i>kàf</i> ‘scratch’	<i>kàbtì</i> ‘scratch a bit’	<i>tàs</i> ‘push down’	<i>tàylì</i> ‘push down a bit’
<i>séf</i> ‘carry’	<i>sébtì</i> ‘carry a bit’	<i>tás</i> ‘sharpen’	<i>táyli</i> ‘sharpen a bit’
<i>nyíŋ</i> ‘run’	<i>nyítì</i> ‘run a bit’	<i>tjé?</i> ‘rob’	<i>tjé?lì</i> ‘rob a bit’
<i>káj</i> ‘fry’	<i>kájtì</i> ‘fry a bit’	<i>káj</i> ‘fry’	<i>kájlì</i> ‘fry a bit’

Depending on the situation in individual CR languages, attenuation is often also linked to repetitive and frequentative notions, due to the common experience that distributive repetition and parcellation tends to entail a diminution of intensity. Thus, in Men, the cognate suffix *-te* has attenuative function which is often combined with a frequentative, iterative, distributive or pluractional notion, as shown in (15).

(15) Men verbal diminutive suffix *-te*

Base	diminutive
<i>kó?</i> ‘climb, go up’	<i>kó?té</i> ‘climb up a little’
<i>m[á]</i> ‘drink’	<i>máté</i> ‘take sips’
<i>ŋgó?</i> ‘give one knock’	<i>ŋgó?té</i> ‘knock slightly several times’
<i>ndzì</i> ‘take’	<i>ndzítè</i> ‘take a little, take bit by bit’
<i>tím</i> ‘shoot; dig’	<i>tímté</i> ‘dig in a disorderly fashion (flinging up earth here and there)’

In Kom some lexemes seem to distinguish frequentative and attenuative, e.g. *tʃá* ‘kick’ allows for a contrast of the frequentative *tʃá-lì* ‘kick repeatedly’ vs. the attenuative *tʃá-tì* ‘kick a little’, whereas others derive polysemous stems with *-tì*, e.g. *mzì-tì* (< *mzì* ‘swallow’) ‘swallow a bit; swallow repeatedly’ (Jones 2001).

In Kung, the suffixes *-nə* and *-lə* are marginally attested in attenuative function: *mwàe-nə* ‘twinkle’ (< *mwàe* ‘shine’), *ɲò?-lə* ‘roast a bit’ (< *ɲò?* ‘roast’), *zú?-lə* ‘make warm’ (< *zú?* ‘heat’). In Kuk, the widespread pluractional suffix *-kə* is marginally attested in *lím-kə* ‘wait for a long time’ (< *límá* ‘wait for’).

The application of these verbal extensions to nominal bases, obviously motivated by the functional parallelism of diminution and attenuation, thus represents an instance of morphological strategies

crossing word class boundaries. In a diachronic perspective, this might be analysed as a spillover of verbal derivational morphology into the nominal domain which could have been triggered or promoted by nominalisation of verbs extended by the attenuative, as is suggested by examples such as the Men diminutive *fātsámṭə* ‘small dream’ (< *tsəm* (9/10) ‘dream’) which coexists with a verb *tsəmṭə* ‘dream’ obviously including the attenuative suffix *-ṭə*.

Kuk presents another strand of derivational morphology where the suffix *-lə* which occasionally accompanies diminutive derivation is also involved in other types of denominal noun derivation, e.g. in deriving *iyá?lə* (5/10) ‘wing’ (pl. *sāyá?lə*) from *iyá?à* (5/10) ‘upper arm’ (pl. *sāyá?à*).

4 Associative construction for diminutive formation

Diminution is also achieved in CR by periphrasis in associative constructions headed by various nouns of gender 19/6a which encode a diminutive notion either in their lexical meaning as with nouns meaning ‘tiny item’ or by a combination of their lexical meaning with a diminutive derivation as in the case of *fāwán* (Babanki), *fāwáe* (Kung) and *fēwán* (Oku), all meaning ‘little child’. Other nominals that can be used in head position are *fāndé?* (Babanki) and *fífúin* (Kom) both meaning ‘tiny item’. In Babanki both *fāwán* ‘little child’ and *fāndé?* ‘tiny item’ can be used interchangeably for the same diminutive function. While Kuk and Men also have distinct lexical items for this meaning, i.e. *fāfwátə* (Kuk) and *fānāŋ* (Men), it is not clear to which extent they are also used in constructions such as the ones in (16) and which type of division of semantic labour pertains with respect to the usage of ‘child’.

(16) CR diminutive derivation using associative constructions

	Base	diminutive 19/6a
Babanki	<i>àyám</i> (5/13) ‘mat’, pl. <i>tàyám</i>	<i>fāwán</i> ~ <i>fāndé?</i> <i>fá yám</i> ‘small mat’
	<i>kàŋù</i> (7/8) ‘thing’, pl. <i>àŋù</i>	<i>fāwán</i> ~ <i>fāndé?</i> <i>fá kàŋù</i> ‘small thing’
	<i>ǰù</i> (9/10) ‘fish’, pl. <i>ǰú’sá</i>	<i>fāwán</i> ~ <i>fāndé?</i> <i>fá ǰù</i> ‘tiny fish’

Kom	<i>ŋgvī</i> (9/10) ‘chicken’, pl. <i>ŋgvīsā</i> <i>īsáj</i> (5/6) ‘corn’, pl. <i>āsáj</i> <i>ātú</i> (7/8) ‘head’, pl. <i>ūtú</i>	<i>fīfūin fī ŋgvī</i> ‘tiny chicken’ <i>fīfūin fī sáj</i> ‘small corn’ <i>fīfūin fā tū</i> ‘small head’
Kung	<i>mbvā</i> (9/10) ‘chicken’, pl. <i>sāmbvā</i> <i>tsàʔ</i> (9/10) ‘trap’, pl. <i>sàtsàʔ</i> <i>kāpfāndúŋ</i> (7/8) ‘pig’ pl. <i>ūpfāndúŋ</i>	<i>wāe fā mbvā fā</i> ‘small feeble chicken’ <i>wāe fā tsàʔ fā</i> ‘small trap’ <i>wāe fā fāpfāndúŋ fā</i> ‘small feeble pig’
Oku	<i>ābkún</i> (3/6a) ‘bed’, pl. <i>āmkún</i> <i>kētíe</i> (7/8) ‘chair’, pl. <i>ābtíe</i> <i>ntòn</i> (9/10) ‘pot’, pl. <i>ntònsè</i>	<i>fēwán é ābkún</i> ‘small bed’ <i>fēwán é kētíe</i> ‘small chair’ <i>fēwán é ntòn</i> ‘small pot’

The syntax of the examples presented above follows the pattern of CR associative constructions, i.e. the preceding head noun (N_1) is linked to the following modifier noun (N_2) by an associative marker (AM) which agrees with the class of the head noun according to the formula given in (17) and illustrated by the Kung example in (18).

(17) CR Formula of associative constructions

$$[NP_x - R]_{N_1} AM_{N_1} [NP_x - R]_{N_2} ENCL_{N_1}$$

(18) Kung associative construction

<i>wāe</i>	<i>fā</i>	<i>mbvā</i>	<i>fā</i>
19.little.child	19	9.chicken	19
‘small feeble chicken’			

In some CR languages such as Kung and Kuk, the prefix of the head noun (NP_x) is dropped, as soon as a modifier follows (Kießling 2016, 2019). Thus in (18), the head noun *fāwāe* ‘little child’ loses its noun class prefix *fā-* due to the fact that it is modified by the noun *mbvā* ‘chicken’ which is linked to the head noun by the associative concord of class 19 *fā*. Under certain conditions, some CR languages such as Kung require an additional noun phrase terminal enclitic (ENCL) which indexes the class of the head noun and which is reminiscent of the determiner enclitic in the West Ring languages Aghem (Hyman 2010) and Isu (Kießling 2010). While the West Ring determiner enclitic largely serves to mark the non-focalised status of nouns, the morphosyntactic and pragmatic conditions of its distribution in Central Ring, however, remain completely unclear so far.

From a wider comparative perspective, lexical items meaning ‘child’ are quite commonly employed for diminutive functions, even-

tually following a universal path of grammaticalisation (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 65–7). In various Bantu languages such as Cuwabo, Nzadi, Eton and Bafia (Gibson et al. 2017: 358–359), in Kikongo (Huth 1992) and in Sotho-Tswana and Nguni (Güldemann 1999), reflexes of Proto-Bantu **jánà* ‘child’ seem to have been developed to diminutive markers, probably independently of each other. Beyond Bantu, the same process operates in various branches of Niger-Congo, e.g. on Susu *díi* ‘child’ (Anderson, Green & Obeng 2018) and on Ewe *ví* ‘child’ (Heine & Hünnemeyer 1988, Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer 1991: 79–89), reflex of a Niger-Congo root **bi* ‘child’ (Kähler-Meyer 1971: 347–348) which is assumed to be the ultimate source of Proto-Benue-Congo **pi-* (de Wolf 1971: 170–1), the ancestor of Proto-Bantu class 19 **pi-*. A remarkable detail about the CR situation is that in none of the CR languages it is simply the noun ‘child’ which is employed for periphrastic diminution purposes in associative constructions, but rather its diminutive stem in 19/6a.

Borrowed words can also be diminutivised in CR by means of the associative construction (19).

(19) CR diminutive derivation of borrowed words using associative constructions

	Base	diminutive 19/6a
Baban-ki	<i>bwótà</i> (1/2) ‘bottle’, pl. <i>vàbwótà</i>	<i>fəwán ~ fəndé? fə bwótà</i> ‘small bottle’
	<i>bùfí</i> (1/2) ‘cat’, pl. <i>vàbùfí</i>	<i>fəwán ~ fəndé? fə bùfí</i> ‘small cat’
Kom	<i>bés</i> (9/10) ‘cat’, pl. <i>béysí</i>	<i>fífúin fí bás</i> ‘small cat’
	<i>tʃɔs</i> (9/10) ‘church’, pl. <i>tʃɔysí</i>	<i>fífúin fí tʃɔs</i> ‘tiny church’
Kung	<i>lámâs</i> (9/10) ‘orange’, pl. <i>sàlámâs</i>	<i>wāe fə lámâs fə</i> ‘small orange’ <i>wāe fə búsí fə</i> ‘small cat’
	<i>búsí</i> (9/10) ‘cat’, pl. <i>sàbúsí</i>	
Oku	<i>tsʊs</i> (1/10) ‘bed’, pl. <i>tsʊsē</i>	<i>fəwán é tsʊs</i> ‘tiny church’
	<i>bùsé</i> (1/10) ‘cat’, pl. <i>bùsésē</i>	<i>fəwán é búsé</i> ‘small cat’

Nouns primarily assigned to gender 19/6a form diminutives preferably by means of such associative constructions headed by nouns which include the diminutive notion in their lexical meaning, as illustrated in (20).

(20) CR diminutive derivation of 19/6a nouns using associative constructions

	Base	diminutive 19/6a
Babanki	<i>f̄k̄k̄?</i> (19/6a) ‘tree’, pl. <i>ŋk̄k̄?</i>	<i>f̄wán</i> ~ <i>f̄andé?</i> <i>f̄á f̄k̄k̄?</i> ‘small tree’
	<i>f̄ɲín</i> (19/6a) ‘bird’, pl. <i>m̄ɲín</i>	<i>f̄wán</i> ~ <i>f̄andé?</i> <i>f̄á f̄ɲín</i> ‘small bird’
	<i>f̄sés</i> (19/6a) ‘pepper’, pl. <i>m̄sés</i>	<i>f̄wán</i> ~ <i>f̄andé?</i> <i>f̄á f̄sés</i> ‘small pepper’
Kom	<i>f̄ɲúin</i> (19/6a) ‘bird’, pl. <i>m̄ɲúin</i>	<i>f̄fúin f̄i f̄ɲúin</i> ‘small bird’
	<i>f̄k̄á?</i> (19/6a) ‘tree’, pl. <i>m̄k̄á?</i>	<i>f̄fúin f̄i f̄k̄á?</i> ‘small tree’
	<i>f̄ɲù</i> (19/6a) ‘knife’, pl. <i>m̄ɲù</i>	<i>f̄fúin f̄i f̄ɲù</i> ‘small knife’
Kung	<i>f̄ɲúm</i> (19/6a) ‘bird’, pl. <i>m̄ɲúm</i>	<i>wāe f̄á ɲúm f̄á</i> ‘small bird’
	<i>f̄ék̄á?</i> (19/6a) ‘tree’, pl. <i>m̄k̄á?</i>	<i>wāe f̄á k̄á?</i> <i>f̄á</i> ‘small tree’
	<i>f̄ɲítá</i> (19/6a) ‘knife’, pl. <i>m̄ɲítá</i>	<i>wāe f̄á ɲítá f̄á</i> ‘small knife’

This preference is probably due to the fact that the ordinary diminutivisation strategy by transfer to gender 19/6a would create no visible effect in contrast to the base form which is already assigned to 19/6a. Alternatively, the simple addition of one of the diminutive suffixes *-tV*, *-lV* or *-nV* is not sufficient in most cases. Thus, diminutives such as **f̄ɲín-t̄á* ‘small bird’ or **f̄k̄k̄-t̄á* ‘small tree’ which are simply formed by adding the suffix to the basic 19/6a noun forms (as elaborated in section 3.1), are not acceptable in Babanki. However, precisely this case is attested in Men where nouns primarily affiliated to gender 19/6a such as *f̄ɲín* ‘bird’, *f̄sés* ‘pepper’ and *f̄ɲí* ‘knife’ derive their diminutives, i.e. *f̄ɲín-t̄á* ‘small bird’, *f̄ésít̄á* ~ *f̄ésít̄á* ‘small pepper’ and *f̄ɲít̄á* ‘small knife’, respectively, only by additional suffixation.

So far, it has been assumed that every noun can be diminutivised through nominal affixation, but this is not always the case. In Babanki, for instance, the nouns in (21) can only be diminutivised by means of the associative construction with *f̄wán* ‘little child’ or *f̄andé?* ‘tiny item’ as head noun, since a morphologically derived diminutive in gender 19/6a is not available for them. So, the associative construction appears as a compensatory strategy here.

(21) Babanki associative constructions as compensation for absence of morphologically derived diminutives

Base	diminutive
<i>kàntsì</i> (7/8) ‘cricket’	<i>fāwán~ fāndé? fā kàntsì</i> ‘small cricket’ * <i>fāntsì</i>
<i>kàntfí?</i> (7/8) ‘lid’	<i>fāwán~ fāndé? fā kàntfí?</i> ‘small lid’ * <i>fāntfí?</i>
<i>kàfí</i> (7/8) ‘place’	<i>fāwán~ fāndé? fā ká’fí</i> ‘small place’ * <i>fāfí</i>
<i>kàtsó?</i> (7/8) ‘mud’	<i>fāndé?~ fāndé? fā ká’tsó?</i> ‘small mud’ * <i>fātsó?</i>
<i>àkwén</i> (5/6) ‘bean’	<i>fāwán~ fāndé? fā ‘kwén</i> ‘small bean’ * <i>fākwén</i>
<i>kàtí?áí?á</i> (7/8) ‘ear’	<i>fāwán~ fāndé? fā ká’tí?áí?á</i> ‘small ear’ * <i>fātí?áí?á</i>

The range of nouns that do not lend themselves to morphological diminutivisation by transfer to gender 19/6a in Babanki is varied, including, but not limited to insects, household items and body parts. While the motivations for these restrictions are still unclear, instances such as *kàtí?áí?á* ‘ear’ suggest that morphological diminutivisation might be blocked by the presence of semantic specialisations of parallel forms in gender 19/6a such as *fātí?áí?á* ‘mushroom (sp.)’.

While diminutives are formed by the morphological and morpho-syntactic operations outlined above, it appears that augmentatives do not receive a similar treatment in CR. In Babanki, for example, augmentatives are expressed by an attributive usage of inchoative-stative verbs such as *yó?* ‘be(come) big’ (*yó?ká* pl.) illustrated in (22).

(22) Babanki augmentative periphrasis with *yó?* ‘be(come) big’ (*yó?ká* pl.)

Base	Augmentative
<i>bú</i> (9/10) ‘dog’, pl. <i>bú’sá</i>	<i>bú áyó?ó</i> ‘big dog’, pl. <i>bú’sá yó?ká sá</i>
<i>kàkí</i> (7/8) ‘chair’, pl. <i>àkí</i>	<i>kàkí káyó?ó ká</i> ‘big chair’, pl. <i>àkí áyó?ká vá</i>
<i>àlém</i> (5/6) ‘yam’, pl. <i>àlém</i>	<i>àlém áyó?ó yá</i> ‘big yam’, pl. <i>àlém áyó?ká yá</i>

Augmentation is also achieved in Babanki by the alternative strategy of periphrasis in associative constructions headed by nouns with inherent augmentative meanings such as *kàmpfí* ‘huge thing’, illustrated in (23) – which is parallel to the periphrastic diminutivization strategy with *fāwán* ‘little child’ and *fāndé?* ‘tiny item’, exemplified above in (19–20).

(23) Babanki augmentative periphrasis with *kàmpfí* ‘huge thing’

Base	Augmentative
àyàm (5/13) ‘mat’, pl. tàyàm	kàmpfí ká yàm ‘big mat’
fî (9/10) ‘fish’, pl. fî́sá	kàmpfí ká fî ‘big fish’

5 Conclusion

Diminutivisation in Central Ring languages is generally achieved by a widely attested shift of nouns from various genders to gender 19/6a marked by prefixes *fV-/m(V)-* which replace the original noun class prefixes. The productivity of this strategy is manifested in its recurrent application to borrowed nouns. Sometimes, diminutivisation in gender 19/6a is accompanied by the addition of a semantically bleached suffix CV. Remarkably, some of the allomorphs of this suffix, i.e. *-tV*, *-lV*, resemble the verbal extensions *-tV*, and *-lV* commonly used in Bantoid and in Grassfields to derive attenuative meanings in verbs. From a diachronic perspective, this might be analysed as a spillover of verbal derivational morphology into the nominal domain which could have been promoted by nominalisation of verbs extended by the attenuative. Another diminutivisation strategy discussed is periphrasis in associative constructions headed by various nouns of gender 19/6a which encode a diminutive notion either in their lexical meaning as with nouns meaning ‘tiny item’ such as *fàndé?* (Babanki) and *fífúin* (Kom) or by a combination of their lexical meaning with a diminutive derivation as in the case of *fàwán* (Babanki), *fāwáe* (Kung) and *fēwán* (Oku), all meaning ‘little child’. More finegrained generalisations about the limits of morphological diminutivisation in CR and regularities regarding its division of labour with syntactic strategies will only be possible on the basis of a much more extensive corpus of diminutives which includes data from all under-researched CR varieties, especially from Bum for which diminutive data have not been available at all so far.

Abbreviations

AM associative marker, CR Central Ring, ENCL enclitic, N noun, NPx noun class prefix, pl. plural, PR Proto-Ring, sg. singular. Numbers refer to noun classes/genders.

References

- Akumbu, Pius W. 2019. Noun class 9/10 tone in Central Ring Grassfields Bantu: An overview. In Pius W. Akumbu & Esther P. Chie (eds.), *Engagement with Africa: Linguistic essays in honor of Ngessimo M. Mutaka*. Köln: Köppe. 1–13.
- Akumbu, Pius W. & Evelyn F. Chibaka. 2012. *A pedagogical grammar of Babanki*. Köln: Köppe.
- Anderson, Jonathan C., Christopher R. Green & Samuel G. Obeng. 2018. On the expression of diminutivity in Susu. *Journal of West African Languages* 45(1). 59–77.
- Asohsi, Melvice. 2015. *Structural and typological approaches to Obang grammar*. Köln: Köppe.
- Bakema, Peter & Dirk Geeraerts. 2000. Diminution and augmentation. In Armin Burkhardt, Hugo Steger & Herbert Ernst Wiegand (eds.), *Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft – Handbook of linguistics and communication science 17.2: Morphology*. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter. 1045–52.
- Bangha, George F. 2003. The Mmen noun phrase. Yaoundé: MA thesis.
- Björkestedt, Lena. 2011. *Mmen-English lexicon*. Yaoundé: CABTAL.
- Bleek, Wilhelm Heinrich I. 1862. *A comparative grammar of South African languages. Part 1: phonology*. Cape Town & London: J. C. Juta and Trübner & Co.
- Bleek, Wilhelm Heinrich I. 1862. *A comparative grammar of South African languages. Part 2: the concord: Section 1: the noun*. Cape Town & London: J. C. Juta and Trübner & Co.
- Blood, Cynthia L. & Leslie Davis. 1999. *Oku-English provisional lexicon*. Yaoundé: SIL.
- Breton, Roland & Bakia Fohung. 1991. *Atlas administratif des langues nationales du Cameroun*. Yaounde & Paris: CERDOTOLA, ACCT.
- Brye, Ed. 2001. Rapid appraisal sociolinguistic research among the Babanki ALCAM 824. Yaoundé: SIL International.
- Chiatoh, Blasius A. 1993. The noun class system of Mmen. Yaoundé: University of Yaoundé MA thesis.
- Wolf, Paul de. 1971. *The noun class system of Proto-Benue-Congo*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Demuth, Katherine. 2000. Bantu noun class systems: Loan word and acquisition evidence of semantic productivity. In Gunter Senft (ed.), *Classification systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 270–292.
- Dieu, Michel & Patrick Renaud. 1983. *Atlas linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM): Inventaire préliminaire*. Paris & Yaoundé: ACCT/CERDOTOLA.

- Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2019. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-second edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.
- Edelsten, Peter. & Chiku Lijongwa. 2010. *A grammatical sketch of Chindamba: A Bantu language (G52) of Tanzania*. Köln: Köppe.
- Gibson, Hannah, Rozenn Guérois & Lutz Marten. 2017. Patterns and developments in the marking of diminutives in Bantu. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 26(4). 344–383.
- Grandi, Nicola & Lívía Körtvélyessy L. (eds.). 2015. *Edinburgh handbook of evaluative morphology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Güldemann, Tom. 1999. Head-initial meets head-final: nominal suffixes in eastern and southern Bantu from a historical perspective. *Studies in African Linguistics* 28. 49–91.
- Harro, Gretchen. 1989. Les extensions verbales en yemba (Bamiléké-Dschang). In Daniel Barreteau & Robert Hedinger (eds.), *Description de langues camerounaises*. Paris: ORSTOM. 239–269.
- Heine, Bernd & Friederike Hünnemeyer. 1988. On the fate of Ewe *ví* ‘child’ – the development of a diminutive marker. *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 16. 97–121.
- Heine, Bernd, Ulrike Claudi & Friederike Hünnemeyer. 1991. *Grammaticalization. A conceptual framework*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heine, Bernd & Tania Kuteva. 2002. *World lexicon of grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huth, Karin. 1992. Mwa-: a new nominal prefix in Koongo? Paper presented at the 22nd colloquium on African languages and linguistics, Leiden.
- Hyman, Larry M. 1979. *Aghem grammatical structure*. SCOPIL 7. University of Southern California.
- Hyman, Larry M. 1980. Babanki and the Ring group. In Larry M. Hyman & Jan Voorhoeve (eds.), *Noun classes in Grassfields Bantu*. Vol. 1 of Actes du Colloque ‘Expansion Bantoue’. Paris: C.N.R.S. 225–258.
- Hyman, Larry M. 2007. Index of Proto-Grassfields Bantu Roots. Ms. University of California, Berkeley. (Original draft 1979, retyped 1993, refonted 2007) [<http://comparalex.org/index.php?page=query&w1=133>].
- Hyman, Larry M. 2010. Focus marking in Aghem: Syntax or semantics? In Fiedler, Ines & Anne Schwarz (eds.), *The expression of information structure. A documentation of its diversity across Africa*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 95–116.
- Hyman, Larry M. 2018. Common Bantoid verb extensions. In John R. Waters (ed.), *East Benue-Congo: Nouns, pronouns, and verbs*. Berlin: Language Science Press. 173–198.
- Jones, Randy. 2001. *Provisional Kom-English lexicon*. Yaounde: SIL.

- Jurafsky, Daniel. 1996. Universal tendencies in the semantics of the diminutive. *Language* 72(3). 533–578.
- Kähler-Meyer, E. 1971. Bantu noun class 19 pi- in Benue-congo. In *Actes du huitième congrès international de linguistique africaine*, Abidjan 24–28 mars 1969, volume 2. Abidjan: Université d'Abidjan. 347–365.
- Kießling, Roland. 2010. Focalisation and defocalisation in Isu. In Fiedler, Ines & Anne Schwarz (eds.), *The expression of information structure. A documentation of its diversity across Africa*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 145–163.
- Kießling, Roland. 2016. Kuk. Hamburg: Universität Hamburg Ms.
- Kießling, Roland. 2019. Salient features of the noun class system of Kung in a Ring perspective. In Pius W. Akumbu & Esther P. Chie (eds.), *Engagement with Africa: Linguistic essays in honor of Ngessimo M. Mutaka*. Köln: Köppe. 139–161.
- Maho, Jouni F. 1999. *A Comparative study of Bantu noun classes*. (Orientalia et Africana Gothoburgensia 13). Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Mba, Gabriel. 1997. Les extensions verbales en ghomala'. *Journal of West African Languages* 26(1). 77–101.
- Mba, Gabriel & Blasius Chiatoh. 2003. Verbal extensions in Kom. In Daniel F. Idiata & Gabriel Mba (eds.), *Studies on voice through verbal extensions in nine Bantu languages spoken in Cameroon, Gabon, DRC and Rwanda*. München: Lincom. 81–112.
- Meeussen, Achiel E. 1967. Bantu grammatical reconstructions. *Africana Linguistica* 3. 79–121.
- Meinhof, Carl. 1899. *Grundriss einer Lautlehre der Bantusprachen*, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus. Revised edition, 1910. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Möller, Mirjam. 2012. The noun and verb in Mmen, a center Ring Grassfields Bantu language. Yaoundé: SIL.
- Mua, Benjamin N. 2015. Mmen language grammar sketch. MELANCO.
- Pleus, Martin. 2015. Das Nominalklassensystem im Kuk. Hamburg: Universität Hamburg BA thesis.
- Poulos, George. 1986. Instances of semantic bleaching in South-Eastern Bantu. In Gerrit J. Dimmendaal (ed.), *Current approaches to African linguistics* 3. Dordrecht: Foris. 281–296.
- Poulos, George. 1990. *A linguistic analysis of Venda*. Pretoria: Via Afrika Limited.
- Poulos, George. 1999. Grammaticalisation in South-Eastern Bantu and the linguistic 'dynamics' underlying this process. *South African Journal of African Languages* 19. 204–214.
- Schlenker, Rebecca. 2012. Das Nominalklassensystem des Kung (Graslandbantu). Hamburg: Universität Hamburg BA thesis.

- Schneider, Klaus P. 2003. *Diminutives in English*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Tamanji, Pius N. 2009. *A descriptive grammar of Bafut*. Köln: Köppe.
- Tamanji, Pius N. & Gabriel Mba. 2003. A morphological study of verbal extension in Bafut. In Daniel F. Idiata & Gabriel Mba (eds.), *Studies on voice through verbal extensions in nine Bantu languages spoken in Cameroon, Gabon, DRC and Rwanda* 15–38. München: LINCUM.
- Tatang, Joyce. 2016. Aspects of Kung grammar. Buea: University of Buea MA thesis.
- Voll, Rebecca. 2017. *A grammar of Mundabli: A Bantoid (Yemne–Kimbi) language of Cameroon*. LOT: Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics.
- Watters, John R. 2003. Grassfields Bantu. In Derek Nurse & Gerard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu languages*. London: Routledge. 225–256.
- Wilkendorf, Patricia. 2001. *Sketch grammar of Nomaánde*. Yaounde: SIL Cameroon.
- Yensi, Agnes M. 1996. The noun class system of Oku. Yaoundé: University of Yaoundé 1 MA thesis.

Préliminaires à une étude du saba, langue tchadique orientale du Tchad (région de Melfi)¹

Herrmann Jungraithmayr

Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
jungraithmayr@em.uni-frankfurt.de

Abstract:

The article provides first information on Saba, an Eastern Chadic minority language spoken in the Melfi district of the Guéra region, northeast of Melfi by some 1,500 speakers. The main focus is on the grammatical structures of the verb, which are based on a binary aspect system, i.e. a perfective – imperfective distinction. A considerable percentage of verbs are “strong” in that they display internal ablaut, e.g. the verb meaning ‘to kill’: perfective: *dègè* (past), imperfective: *díggà* (present) and *dàagà* (future). According to the different vocalic patterns, seven classes of strong verbs may be distinguished. Phonologically, Saba belongs to the rather small group of Chadic languages which display two centralized vowel phonemes, i.e. *ə* and *ɛ*.

Keywords: Saba, East-Chadic, preliminary (descriptive) notes, Afroasiatic

Résumé :

L'article fournit les premières informations sur le saba, une langue minoritaire tchadique de l'Est, parlée par environ 1500 locuteurs dans le district de Melfi, région du Guéra, au Nord-Est de Melfi. L'accent principal est mis sur les structures grammaticales du verbe, qui sont basées sur un système aspectuel binaire, c'est-à-dire avec une opposition perfectif-imperfectif. Un pourcentage considérable de verbes sont «forts» dans la mesure où ils affichent des alternances vocaliques internes, par exemple le verbe signifiant «tuer»: perfectif: *dègè* (passé), imperfectif: *díggà* (présent) et *dàagà* (futur). Selon les différents systèmes vocaliques, sept classes de verbes forts peuvent être distinguées. Phonologiquement,

1 Les données suivantes ont été recueillies entre le 25 février et le 14 mars 2001 à N'Djaména. Mes informateurs et collaborateurs étaient M. Ahmat Haroun, né en 1976, fils de Haroun Hamdan, né à Bodom, et de Madame Diare, née à Yarwa dans le canton de Sorki, ainsi que M. Ahmat Adef. Je voudrais exprimer ma gratitude pour leur patience et la qualité de leur coopération. Mes remerciements vont aussi à la Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft à Bonn pour le soutien continu qu'elle a apporté à nos recherches linguistiques au Tchad.

le saba appartient plutôt au petit groupe de langues tchadiques ayant deux phonèmes vocaliques centralisés, c'est-à-dire ə et ʌ.

Mots clés : Saba, Est-tchadique, Notes préliminaires (descriptive), (Les) langues afroasiatiques

1 Introduction

La langue saba qui appartient au groupe sokoro de la branche orientale du tchadique² est parlée dans la région de Melfi dans les villages suivants : Yarwa, Bara, Foss (village de Margai), Goboro, Sorki, Bodom, Mak, Sala, Bandaro, Karfiso, Djagi, Girintie et Magnam (50% Saba). En 2001, le chef était Ahmat Amane; ses prédécesseurs étaient Haroun Abakar, Abakar Amane, Amane Diare et Diare Malgaou.

Autant que je puisse en juger, il n'existe pas encore d'étude linguistique sur le saba. C'est pourquoi j'ai décidé de publier mes observations, malgré leur quantité et qualité modestes, dans les présents préliminaires.

Les Saba s'appellent eux-mêmes, au singulier comme au pluriel, *sàbbôŋ*. Par exemple :

Tableau 1. Nom propre des Saba

<i>nò</i>	<i>sàbbôŋ</i>	'je suis un Saba'
<i>àkà</i>	<i>sàbbôŋ</i>	'il est un Saba'
<i>áŋ</i>	<i>sàbbôŋ</i>	'elle est une Saba'
<i>àŋ</i>	<i>sàbbôŋ</i>	'ils sont des Saba'

2 D'après le Handbook of African Languages II, p. 169, le « dialect cluster? » du sokoro comprend trois dialectes, à savoir le sokoro, le barein et le saba. En réalité, les différences entre le sokoro et le saba sont considérables, comme une comparaison des données présentées ci-dessous avec celles publiées sur le sokoro (Jungraithmayr 2005) le fait apparaître. Mes informateurs m'ont assuré que l'intercompréhension sokoro-saba est d'à peu près 50%, tandis que les Saba et les Barein ne se comprennent nullement. Le nombre des locuteurs du saba se monte à 1725 d'après le Handbook de Westermann & Bryan (1952). D'après Newman (1977), le saba appartient à la branche III : branche orientale, groupe B, sous-groupe sokoro.

2 Notes phonologiques

2.1 Les voyelles

L'inventaire vocalique est assez différencié. Il y a quatre niveaux d'articulation. Pour les voyelles centrales deux niveaux existent, à savoir bas et haut. Les neuf phonèmes vocaliques apparaissent brefs et longs.

Tableau 2. Les voyelles

<i>i</i>		<i>u</i>		<i>ii</i>		<i>uu</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>ə</i>	<i>o</i>		<i>ee</i>	<i>əə</i>	<i>oo</i>
<i>ɛ</i>	<i>ʌ</i>	<i>ɔ</i>		<i>ɛɛ</i>	<i>ʌʌ</i>	<i>ɔɔ</i>
	<i>a</i>				<i>aa</i>	

Voici ci-après quelques exemples.

(1) Les voyelles dans le contexte lexical

<i>mèʔè</i>	‘femme’	<i>ər̥kà</i>	‘dix’
<i>síntù</i>	‘mon frère’	<i>màgár</i>	‘chef’
<i>pàaʔà</i>	‘quatre’	<i>sóonè</i>	‘rever’
<i>sùbbà</i>	‘trois’	<i>wággè</i>	‘piler’

(2) Paires minimales vocaliques

<i>àr-gùŋ</i>	‘votre sœur’	:	<i>àr-gəŋ</i>	‘leur sœur’
<i>sîn-gèŋ</i>	‘ton frère’	:	<i>sîn-gəŋ</i>	‘leur frère’

2.2 Les consonnes

L'inventaire consonantique du saba comprend 20 (21?) unités, comme le montre le tableau 3.

Tableau 3. Les consonnes

	Bila- bial	Labi- dental	Den- tal/ Alvéo- laire	Post- alvéo- laire	Pala- tal	Vé- laire	Uvu- laire	Glott- tal
occlusives sourdes	p		t			k		ʔ
occlusives sonores	b		d			g		
occlusives injectives	ḃ		ḋ					

	Bila- bial	Labio- dental	Den- tal/ Alvéo- laire	Post- alvéo- laire	Pala- tal	Vé- laire	Uvu- laire	Glotal
fricatives sourdes			s					(h)
fricatives sonores				ð̃				
nasales	m		n		ɲ	ŋ		
latéral			l					
semi-con- sonnes	w				y			

2.3 Les tons

Le système tonal du saba distingue deux niveaux, à savoir bas (à) et haut (á). En plus, il y a un ton modulé haut-bas (â). Il existe quelques paires minimales :

(3) Paires minimales tonales

<i>ràa</i> ‘fille’	:	<i>ráa</i> ‘fils’
<i>ròobùdù</i> ‘ma fille’	:	<i>róobùdù</i> ‘mon fils’
<i>àŋ</i> ‘ils/elles’	:	<i>áŋ</i> ‘elle’

Les données disponibles ne montrent pas d’autres cas.

3 Notes morphologiques

3.1 Le nom

La majorité des noms attestés, à peu près 70 pour cent, présente une structure triradical (CVCVC-, CVCC-), y compris la structure CVVC-. Voici quelques exemples : *gòlmò* ‘case’, *mògór* ‘chef’, *mòttà* ‘homme’, *íkkò* ‘feu’, *úmbò* ‘eau’, *bàrsà* ‘champ’, *dòómè* ‘potiron’, *móòrù/sín-* ‘frère’. Seuls quelques-uns montrent les structures bi- ou monoradicales, à savoir CVC- ou CVV ; p. ex. *sín-* ‘frère’, *?ar-* ‘sœur’, *sáwì* ‘arbre’, *dàà* ‘maison’, *ràa* ‘fille’.

3.1.1 Genre et nombre du nom

Il semble que le genre grammatical n’est pas marqué expressément ; d’autre part le genre sexuel peut être distingué par différents lexèmes,

p. ex. *mòttà* ‘homme’ : *mè?è* ‘femme’, ou, comme dans le cas suivant, par une opposition tonale : *ràa* ‘fille’ : *ráa* ‘fils’.

En ce qui concerne la catégorie du nombre, le petit nombre de formes attestées ne permet pas de formuler de règles. Outre les suffixes, l’apophonie interne (ablaut) semble aussi jouer un certain rôle. Voir les exemples dans le tableau suivant.

Tableau 4. La formation du pluriel

Signification	Singulier	Pluriel
‘femme’	<i>mè?è</i>	<i>mè?ǽnè</i>
‘homme’	<i>mòttà</i>	<i>móttòŋ</i>
‘frère’	<i>móòrù</i> (‘mon f.’ <i>síntù</i>)	<i>màarín-</i> (‘mes frères’ <i>màaríntù</i>)
‘champ’	<i>bàrsà</i>	<i>bùrsó</i>

La forme au pluriel de *ràa/ráa* ‘fille/fils’ est *gútàŋ* ‘enfants’.

3.1.2 Les nombres

Une liste des nombres cardinaux figure dans le tableau (5) ci-dessous. Les nombres 6-9 sont composés d’une base *bení-* (‘cinq?’) et les nombres 1-4. À partir de vingt le morphème *bátí* est inséré.

Tableau 5. Les nombres cardinaux

1 <i>pépò</i>	20 <i>ás pēŋ</i>
2 <i>mú?ù</i>	21 <i>ás pēŋ bátí pēŋ</i>
3 <i>sùbbà</i>	<i>etc.</i>
4 <i>pàa?à</i>	30 <i>àrkà sùbbà</i>
5 <i>bée?à</i>	31 <i>àrkà sùbbà bátí pēŋ</i>
6 <i>bénípēŋ</i>	<i>etc.</i>
7 <i>bénímú?ù</i>	40 <i>àrkà pàa?à</i>
8 <i>bénísùbbà</i>	50 <i>àrkà bée?à</i>
9 <i>bénípàa?à</i>	60 <i>àrkà bénípēŋ</i>
10 <i>àrkà</i>	70 <i>àrkà bénímú?ù</i>
11 <i>àrkà bátí pēŋ</i>	80 <i>àrkà bénísùbbà</i>
12 <i>àrkà bátí mú?ù</i>	90 <i>àrkà bénípàa?à</i>
<i>etc.</i>	100 <i>ráabìŋ</i>

3.2 Les pronoms

Le paradigme pronominal comprend neuf pronoms personnels. Au singulier, la deuxième et la troisième personne distinguent les formes masculines et féminines ; au pluriel, l'on distingue une forme inclusive d'une forme exclusive de la première personne.

3.2.1 Les pronoms sujet préposés

Les deux thèmes de base, le passé et le présent (pour les temps cf. 3.3), emploient la même série de pronoms sujets qui se présentent comme suit :

Tableau 6. Les pronoms sujets (passé et présent)

Personne	Pronom	Exemple	
SG	1	<i>nòo</i>	<i>nòo tèe únù</i> 'j'ai mangé de la nourriture (<la boule)'
	2m	<i>kii</i>	<i>kii tèe únù</i> etc.
	2f	<i>kàa</i>	<i>kàa tèe únù</i>
	3m	<i>àkà</i>	<i>àkà tèe únù</i>
	3f	<i>áǵá</i>	<i>áǵá tèe únù</i>
PL	1in	<i>kéê</i>	<i>kéê tèenì únù</i>
	1ex	<i>kên</i>	<i>kên tèenì únù</i>
	2	<i>kùn</i>	<i>kùn tèenì únù</i>
	3	<i>àǵ/kùnè</i>	<i>àǵ tèenì únù</i>

Voici à titre de comparaison deux exemples de la conjugaison du présent.

Tableau 7. Les pronoms sujets au présent

Personne	Pronom	Exemple	
SG	1	<i>nòo tà</i>	<i>nòo tà únù</i> 'je mange de la nourriture'
	2m	<i>kii tà</i>	<i>kii tà únù</i> 'tu manges de la nourriture'
			etc.

Au futur les pronoms sujets se distinguent de ceux du passé/présent, surtout par un changement du ton. Le tableau suivant récapitule les pronoms sujets au futur.

Tableau 8. Les pronoms sujets (futur)

Personne		Pronom	Exemple	
SG	1	<i>nòó</i>	<i>nòó mìtà</i>	‘je mourrai’
	2m	<i>kĩĩ</i>	<i>kĩĩ mìtà</i>	etc.
	2f	<i>kàá</i>	<i>kàá mìtà</i>	
	3m	<i>àká</i>	<i>àká mìtà</i>	
	3f	<i>àḡá</i>	<i>àḡá mìtà</i>	
PL	1in	<i>kéèʔá</i>	<i>kéèʔá mìtàḡ</i>	
	1ex	<i>kèná</i>	<i>kèná mìtàḡ</i>	
	2	<i>kùná</i>	<i>kùná mìtàḡ</i>	
	3	<i>àkànʔá</i>	<i>àkànʔá mìtàḡ</i>	

En principe, le ton bas (ou haut) des pronoms employés au présent et passé est modulé à un ton bas-haut ; au pluriel, un suffixe *-á* est ajouté aux formes de base.

3.2.2 Les pronoms possessifs suffixés

Les racines des suffixes possessifs se distinguent considérablement de celles des pronoms sujets préposés (cf. 3.2.1).

Tableau 9. Les pronoms possessifs

Personne		Pronom	Exemple			
SG	1	<i>-tù, -dù</i>	<i>àr-tù</i>	‘ma sœur’	<i>sín-tù</i>	‘mon frère’
	2m	<i>-təḡ, -dəḡ</i>	<i>àr-təḡ</i>	‘ta sœur’	<i>sín-təḡ</i>	‘ton frère’
	2f	<i>-gèḡ</i>	<i>àr-gèḡ</i>	etc.	<i>síḡ-gèḡ</i>	etc.
	3m	<i>-tì</i>	<i>àr-tì</i>		<i>sín-tì</i>	
	3f	<i>-gì</i>	<i>àr-gì</i>		<i>síḡ-gì</i>	
PL	1	<i>-gèw</i>	<i>àr-gèw</i>		<i>síḡ-gèw</i>	
	2	<i>-gùḡ</i>	<i>àr-gùḡ</i>		<i>síḡ-gùḡ</i>	
	3	<i>-gəḡ</i>	<i>àr-gəḡ</i>		<i>síḡ-gəḡ</i>	

Pour la première personne au pluriel, la distinction entre forme inclusive et exclusive manque à nos données.

3.3 Le verbe

Notre collection de verbes saba comprend 49 unités dont la majorité, à savoir 70% présente la structure triradical, à savoir CVCVC et CVCC, mais aussi CVVC, dont la syllabe lourde peut cacher un radical «perdu». Par exemple: *pitir*- ‘enlever’, *ákál*- ‘cueillir’, *seyy*- ‘danser’, *deeg*- ‘tuer’, *siid*- ‘élargir’. La majorité des autres verbes ont la structure biradical ; p. ex. *mit*- ‘mourir’, *ley*- ‘chanter’. Les seuls monoradicaux sont *t*- ‘manger’ et *s*- (ou *sy*- ?) ‘boire’.

3.3.1 Le système verbal

Une phrase verbale saba se compose d’un pronom sujet préposé (cf. 3.2.1) et du thème verbal qui peut apparaître sous trois formes, à savoir au passé, au présent ou au futur. Comparer l’exemple suivant :

(4) Passé	Présent	Futur
<i>nòo pìrsigè</i>	<i>nòo pìrsó</i>	<i>nòó pìrsigà</i>
‘j’ai fendu’	‘je fends’	‘je fendrai’

Le système verbal est basé sur l’opposition aspectuelle binaire se composant de thèmes de l’accompli et de l’inaccompli. L’accompli est représenté par le temps du passé, l’inaccompli par le présent et le futur. Le moyen essentiel de marquage de cette opposition est l’apophonie, c’est-à-dire le changement des schèmes vocaliques entre les thèmes verbaux. Le caractère fondamental, la tendance de ce changement est une opposition des voyelles hautes (*i, e, ə, u*) pour l’accompli aux voyelles basses (*a, ɛ, ʌ, o, ɔ*) pour l’inaccompli. Ce comportement se manifeste comme processus interne (type Aa) ou externe/suffixal (type Ab). Le type Aa n’apparaît pas seul, il est toujours accompagné par des traits du type Ab, c’est-à-dire par un changement de la voyelle suffixée. En ce qui concerne le schème tonal, il semble que celui du passé corresponde plutôt à celui du futur, qu’à celui du présent, p. ex. *dúugè* (passé)/*dúugà* (fut.) ‘déployer’, *bò??è* (passé)/*bò??à* (fut.) ‘allumer’. Les formes du présent sont *dúúnd* et *bòòʔ*. Quelquefois l’inaccompli est en plus marqué par une gémination du R2 ; p. ex. *dòkè* (passé) vs *dòkkó* (prés.) et *dòkkà* (fut.) ‘battre’. Dans quelques rares cas les deux formes de l’inaccompli ne se distinguent pas ; p. ex. *báakàgà* (prés. et fut.) ‘rôtir’. Exemples :

Tableau 10. Le système aspectuel binaire

Type	Passé (accompli)	Présent (inaccompli)	Futur	Traduction
Aa	<i>dèegè</i>	<i>díggà</i>	<i>dàagà</i>	‘tuer’
Ab	<i>dóopè</i>	<i>dóopò</i>	<i>dóopà</i>	‘couper’

3.3.2 Les classes verbales

Les verbes à l’apophonie interne (Aa) sont nommés « verbes forts », ceux sans apophonie interne, mais avec un changement des voyelles suffixées, « verbes faibles ».

3.3.2.1 Les verbes forts

Les verbes forts présentent les modèles vocaliques suivants :

Tabelau 11. Les verbes forts

Type	Modèles	Passé (accompli)	Présent (inaccompli)	Futur	Traduction
Aa/1a	<i>a-a-a</i>	<i>dáássè</i>	<i>dáássò</i>	<i>dáássà</i>	‘fondre’
		<i>pállgàlè</i>	<i>páaglílyó</i>	<i>páagólà</i>	‘rouler par terre’
		<i>áangè</i>	<i>áangà</i>	<i>áangà</i>	‘saisir’
		<i>báakàgè</i>	<i>báakàgà</i>	<i>báakàgà</i>	‘rôtir’
Aa/1b	<i>a-a-a</i>	<i>sàwìlè</i>	<i>sàaló</i>	<i>sàalà</i>	‘chasser’
		<i>ákálgè</i>	<i>àkílyó</i>	<i>ákàlà</i>	‘cueillir’
		<i>àwgè</i>	<i>àwgà</i>	<i>àwgà</i>	‘recevoir’
		<i>tákkíngè</i>	<i>tàkkìnyó</i>	<i>tàkkìngà</i>	‘ramasser’
		<i>bàarígè</i>	<i>báaríyó</i>	<i>báarígà</i>	‘tresser’
		<i>gá?è</i>	<i>gá?ò</i>	<i>gá?à</i>	‘courir’
Aa/1c	<i>o-a-a</i>	<i>gównì</i>	<i>gàwníyò</i>	<i>gáwnà</i>	‘cultiver’
Aa/1d	<i>o-ɔ-ɔ</i>	<i>sóonè</i>	<i>sóonò</i>	<i>sóonà</i>	‘rêver’
		<i>sòorgè</i>	<i>sòoró</i>	<i>sòorgà</i>	‘mettre de côté’
Aa/1e	<i>e-a-a</i>	<i>tèe</i>	<i>tà</i>	<i>tàa</i>	‘manger’
Aa/1f	<i>e-e-e</i>	<i>sée?è</i>	<i>sée?ó</i>	<i>sée?à</i>	‘pétrir’
Aa/1g	<i>e-i-a</i>	<i>syèeyè</i>	<i>síinò</i>	<i>sàa</i>	‘boire’

Type	Modèles	Passé (accompli)	Présent (inaccompli)	Futur	Traduction
Aa/1g	<i>e-i-a</i>	<i>lèyè</i>	<i>línò</i>	<i>làa</i>	‘chanter’
		<i>wèyè</i>	<i>wínò</i>	<i>wàa</i>	‘enfanter’
		<i>dèyè</i>	<i>dínò</i>	<i>dàagà</i>	‘construire’
		<i>lèegè</i>	<i>línò</i>	<i>làagà</i>	‘mettre dedans’
		<i>dèegè</i>	<i>díggà</i>	<i>dàagà</i>	‘tuer’

3.3.2.2 Les verbes faibles

Si la qualité des voyelles thématiques ne change pas entre la forme de l’accompli (passé) et celle de l’inaccompli (présent et futur), nous parlons de verbes faibles. La distinction entre les deux aspects s’effectue surtout par les suffixes vocaliques *-e* (accompli) et *-o/-a* (inaccompli). Voici la liste des verbes faibles que nous avons recensés recueil.

Tableau 12. Les verbes faibles

Type	Modèles	Passé (accompli)	Présent (inaccompli)	Future	Traduction
Ab/1a	<i>i-i-i</i>	<i>súdígè</i>	<i>súidò</i>	<i>súidà</i>	‘élargir’
		<i>mìtè</i>	?	<i>mità</i>	‘mourir’
		<i>díñè</i>	<i>díñó</i>	<i>díñgà</i>	‘partager’
		<i>jíngè</i>	<i>jíngò</i>	<i>jíngà</i>	‘puiser’
		<i>wílè</i>	<i>wílò</i>	<i>wílà</i>	‘révolter’
		<i>íñè</i>	<i>íñínò</i>	<i>íñà</i>	‘mûrir’
		<i>wìjngè</i>	<i>wìjñó</i>	<i>wìjngà</i>	‘ouvrir’
		<i>bísíñè</i>	<i>bìsìñyó</i>	<i>bísíñà</i>	‘planter (potiron)’
		<i>pítirè</i>	<i>pítiríyó</i>	<i>pítirà</i>	‘enlever’
		<i>díjngè</i>	<i>díjñó</i>	<i>díjngà</i>	‘séparer’
		<i>típílgè</i>	<i>típílyó</i>	<i>típílgà</i>	‘aiguiser (lame)’
Ab/1b	<i>e-e-e</i>	<i>séyyè</i>	<i>séyyò</i>	<i>séyyà</i>	‘danser’
		<i>ète</i>	<i>ètínò</i>	<i>ètà</i>	‘planter (mil)’
		<i>kèrñigè</i>	<i>kèrñyó</i>	<i>kèrñigà</i>	‘aiguiser (forge)’

Type	Modèles	Passé (accompli)	Présent (inaccompli)	Future	Traduction
		<i>dérémgè</i>	<i>dèrmíyò</i>	<i>dèrmà</i>	‘frire’
		<i>tèjè</i>	<i>tèjò</i>	<i>tèjgà</i>	‘mesurer’
		<i>té??è</i>	<i>té?té?à</i>	<i>té??à</i>	‘émigrer’
		<i>émèskè</i>	<i>émsó</i>	<i>émsà</i>	‘fermer’
Ab/1c	<i>ε-ε-ε</i>	<i>kékékè</i>	<i>kéékò</i>	<i>kéékà</i>	‘désheber’
		<i>jé?è</i>	<i>jé?ò</i>	<i>jé?à</i>	‘moudre’
Ab/1d	<i>o-o-o</i>	<i>kóyè</i>	<i>kòyínò</i>	<i>kóyà</i>	‘entrer’
		<i>mòssìngè</i>	<i>mòssìnyó</i>	<i>mòssìngà</i>	‘remuer’
		<i>dóopè</i>	<i>dóopò</i>	<i>dóopà</i>	‘couper’
		<i>dòkè</i>	<i>dòkkó</i>	<i>dòkkà</i>	‘battre’

3.3.3 Quelques caractéristiques de la formation des thèmes aspectuels

Le suffixe de l’accompli est – à l’exception du verbe *gówni* – toujours /-è/; celui du présent est presque toujours /-o/ ou /-ɔ/, si la voyelle interne est ouverte ; rarement aussi /-a/; celui du futur est exclusivement /-a/.

La différence de comportement entre les sous-groupes de Aa et Ab provient certainement du fait qu’il s’agit de différentes classes verbales ; c’est-à-dire parmi les verbes forts (Aa) on pourrait probablement définir sept classes verbales (1a-1g) ; les verbes faibles (Ab) auraient ainsi quatre classes (1a-1d).

Dans le sous-groupe Aa/1g, on est surpris par le fait que l’apophonie qualitative entre le thème du passé et celui du présent (-e- → -ii-) est accompagnée par une apophonie quantitative, à savoir le -e- bref est remplacé par le -ii- long : p. ex. *lèyè* : *līnò* (< *léynò?*) ‘chanter’. Cette opposition de longueur des voyelles entre les deux thèmes correspond au prolongement de la consonne dans l’exemple *dègè* : *dīgǵà* ‘tuer’.

Le sous-groupe Aa/1g est remarquable pour une autre raison. La majorité des verbes de ce sous-groupe se sert d’un morphème inattendu, à savoir le suffixe -nò pour former le thème du présent ; p. ex. *wèyè* : *wīl-nò* ‘enfanter’.

En tchadique l’aspect de l’inaccompli comprend en général les deux temps, à savoir le présent et le futur. Il est surprenant que le

saba distingue les deux par des moyens minimaux ; les voyelles basses /a/ et /o/ indiquent toujours qu'il s'agit de l'inaccompli. En ce qui concerne la voyelle suffixée, le présent préfère le /-o/, /-ɔ/, le futur le /-a/, dans quelques cas tous les deux utilisent le /-a/.

Il existe quelques cas où le suffixe /-e/ de l'accompli (passé) est 'renforcé' par la consonne /g/, produisant -ge, comme en témoignent les exemples figurant dans le tableau ci-dessous.

Tableau 13. Le passé en -gè-
ákál-gè 'avoir cueilli'
súdí-gè 'avoir élargi'
dérím-gè 'avoir frit'
émès-kè (< -gè) 'avoir fermé'

Alors que ce suffixe, naturellement, n'apparaît pas à l'inaccompli, il existe quand même des cas inattendus comme suit :

Tableau 14. Verbes en -g- au passé et au futur

Passé (accompli)	Présent (inaccompli)	Futur	Traduction
<i>łwgè</i>	<i>àwgà</i>	<i>àwgà</i>	'recevoir'
<i>sòorgè</i>	<i>sòɔɔɔ</i>	<i>sòɔɔgà</i>	'mettre de coté'
<i>jíngè</i>	<i>jíngò</i>	<i>jíngà</i>	'puiser'
<i>wìngì</i>	<i>wìngó</i>	<i>wìngá</i>	'ouvrir'
<i>típílgè</i>	<i>típítyó</i>	<i>típílgà</i>	'aiguiser (lame)'
<i>kèrɔngè</i>	<i>kèrɔnyó</i>	<i>kèrɔngà</i>	'aiguiser (forge)'
<i>mòssìngè</i>	<i>mòssìnyó</i>	<i>mòssìngà</i>	'remuer'

Il existe même un cas totalement irrégulier où le /g/ n'apparaît pas à l'accompli mais seulement au futur, comme en témoigne l'exemple (5).

(5) Le verbe signifiant 'mesurer'

Passé (accompli)	Présent (inaccompli)	Futur
<i>tèɔnè</i>	<i>tèɔnó</i>	<i>tèɔngà</i>

3.3.4 Substantif verbal

Les deux substantifs verbaux suivants formés par le suffixe -*łɔ* sont attestés.

- (6) a. *týλη* ‘nourriture’ < *tèe* ‘manger’
 b. *sýλη* ‘boisson’ < *syèe* ‘boire’

3.3.5 Les conjugaisons

Le saba distingue trois séries de conjugaisons que nous appelons provisoirement passé, présent et futur. Leur formation est basée sur la binarité aspectuelle accomplie (I) et inaccomplie (II). L’indice essentiel du passé (I) est la voyelle suffixée *-e*, celui de l’inaccompli (II) *-o* (prés.)/ *-a* (fut.) : C’est-à-dire, l’aspect I est marqué par une voyelle de la position antérieure et mi-haute, l’aspect II par une voyelle basse (*-a* au futur) ou mi-haute et postérieure (*-o* au présent). Pour des exemples, voir les paragraphes 3.2., 3.3.1 et 3.3.2.

Il est important de noter que dans les conjugaisons du passé et du futur le thème verbal distingue une forme au singulier et une forme dérivée au pluriel. La dernière est élargie par un morphème nasal suffixé (*-nè ~ -nì ou -n ~ -əŋ*) à la forme au singulier. Voir les deux exemples (7a + b) à notre disposition.

(7) Thème verbal au passé/futur

	Singulier	Pluriel
a. ‘manger’	<i>tèe/tàa</i>	<i>tèenì/tèen</i>
b. ‘mourir’	<i>mìtè/mità</i>	<i>mìtnè/mitàŋ</i>

Pour illustrer l’usage des conjugaisons, nous citons ci-après quelques phrases simples que nous avons dans nos données.

<i>nòo étè nórri</i>	‘j’ai planté du mil’
<i>nòo bísìñè dðómè</i>	‘j’ai planté du potiron’
<i>nòo wìjngè áarò</i>	‘j’ai ouvert la porte’
<i>nòo émèskè áarò</i>	‘j’ai fermé la porte’
<i>nòo gównì bársà</i>	‘j’ai cultivé le champ’
<i>àkà síñò úmbò</i>	‘il boit de l’eau’
<i>àká sàa úmbò</i>	‘il boira de l’eau’
<i>áŋá syèeyè úmbò</i>	‘elle a bu de l’eau’
<i>nòo tà únù</i>	‘je mange de la nourriture’
<i>nóó tàa únù</i>	‘je mangerai de la nourriture’
<i>kàa tèe únù</i>	‘tu (f.) as mangé de la nourriture’
<i>màgár tèe únù</i>	‘le chef a mangé de la nourriture’
<i>kùn tèenì únù</i>	‘vous avez mangé de la nourriture’
<i>kìi áanó búusè</i>	‘tu pêches des poissons’

<i>nòò dèrmà búkì</i>	‘je vais frire la viande’
<i>àkà dèyè gólòmò</i>	‘il a construit une case’
<i>àḡá wà</i>	‘elle va naître’
<i>nòò báarígè síppi</i>	‘j’ai tressé une corde’
<i>nòò báaríyó síppi</i>	‘je tresse une corde’

4 Remarque générale

Il est évident que nous ne nous trouvons qu’au début de l’étude de cette langue tchadique orientale qui se situe, dans l’histoire du développement des langues tchadiques, à un point de transition des langues archimorphes à un état plus avancé et novateur.

5 Vocabulaire

Ordre alphabétique: a, ʌ, b, ɓ, d, ɗ, e, ə, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, ɲ, ɔ, p, r, s, t, u, w.

Les verbes sont présentés de la manière suivante : thème de l’accompli (aoriste-passé), suivi – entre parenthèses – par la forme du présent et celle du futur ; p. ex. *dègè (dígǵà, dàagà)* ‘tuer’.

a

<i>áarò</i>	porte
<i>àr-</i>	sœur; <i>àrtù</i> ma sœur

ʌ

<i>ʌngè (áangà, áangà)</i>	saisir
<i>ʌsimè (àasimíyó, àasàmǵà)</i>	calculer
<i>ʌkʌlgè (àkʌlíyó, ákʌlà)</i>	cueillir
<i>ʌwgè (àwgà, àwgà)</i>	recevoir

b

<i>bʌkʌgè (báakàgà, báakàgà)</i>	rôtir
<i>bʌʔè (báʔà, báʔà)</i>	rester longtemps
<i>bʌgìlè (bàgìlíyó, bàgólà)</i>	retourner
<i>bàrsà, pl. bùrsó</i>	champ; <i>bùrustù</i> mon champ
<i>búikì</i>	viande

<i>bísiɲè (bisɲíyó, bísɲà)</i>	planter (ex. potiron)
<i>bòʔʔè (bòʔʔó, bòʔʔà)</i>	allumer
<i>búusè</i>	poisson
ḃ	
<i>báarígè (báaríyó, báarígà)</i>	tresser
d	
<i>dáà</i>	concession; <i>dóorù</i> ma concession
<i>dèegè (díggà, dàagà)</i>	tuer
<i>dèyè (dĩnò, dàanà)</i>	bâtir, construire
<i>dûgè / dũɲè (dũjón, dũɲgà)</i>	partager, séparer
<i>dúugè (dùúnò, dúugà)</i>	déployer
d̥	
<i>dássè (dássò, dássà)</i>	fondre
<i>dérémgè (dèrmíyò, dèrmà)</i>	frire
<i>dòkè (dòkkò, dòkkà)</i>	battre
<i>dóopè (dóopò, dóopà)</i>	couper
<i>dóomé</i>	potiron
<i>dùsé</i>	marmite
e	
<i>émèskè (émsó, émsà)</i>	fermer
<i>ète (ètínò, étà)</i>	planter
ə	
<i>ânnè (ánnó, ánnà)</i>	pêcher
g	
<i>gáʔè (gáʔò, gáʔà)</i>	courir
<i>gòlmò</i>	case, maison; <i>gòlmúdù</i> ma case/maison
<i>gòndâ</i>	tête; <i>gòndù</i> ma tête
<i>gútàɲ</i>	enfants; <i>gútúntò</i> mes enfants
<i>gównì (gàwníyò, gáwnà)</i>	cultiver
i	
<i>ìirígè (ìiró, ìirígà)</i>	montrer

<i>ʒnè (ʒnínò, ʒnà)</i>	mûrir
j	
<i>jíngè (jínghò, jíngà)</i>	puiser
<i>jìpkè (jìppó, jìpkà)</i>	lancer
k	
<i>kêrɲìgè (kêrɲíyó, kêrɲìgà)</i>	aiguiser
<i>kékékè (kéékò, kéékà)</i>	désherber
<i>kóyè (kòyínò, kóyà)</i>	entrer
l	
<i>lègè (línò, làgà)</i>	mettre dedans
<i>lèyè (línò, là)</i>	chanter
m	
<i>mèʔè, pl. mèʔɲè</i>	femme; <i>mèddû</i> ma femme; <i>mèʔɲtù</i> mes femmes
<i>mìtè (? , mîtà)</i>	mourir; <i>àkà mîtè</i> il est mort
<i>mòttà, pl. móttòɲ</i>	homme
<i>mòdrù, pl. màarín-</i>	frère; <i>síntù</i> mon frère; <i>màaríntù</i> mes frères
<i>mòssìngè (mòssíníyó, mòssìngà)</i>	remuer
<i>màgár / mògór</i>	chef
n	
<i>néyyè (néyyò, néyyà)</i>	sentir
<i>nárrì</i>	mil
ɲ	
<i>ɲéʔè, (ɲéʔó, ɲéʔà)</i>	moudre
ɔ	
<i>ókkò</i>	feu
<i>òrkà</i>	dix
p	
<i>pálgàlè (páagílíyó, páagólà)</i>	se rouler par terre
<i>pìrsìgè (pìrsó, pìrsìgà)</i>	fendre

<i>pítìrè</i> (<i>pìtìrýó, pítìrà</i>)	enlever
r	
<i>ràa</i>	filles; <i>ròobùdù</i> ma fille
<i>ráa</i>	fil; <i>ròobùdù</i> mon fils
s	
<i>síppì</i>	corde
<i>sáwì</i>	arbre
<i>séeʔè</i> (<i>séeʔí, séʔʔà</i>)	pétrir
<i>séyyè</i> (<i>séyyò, séyyà</i>)	danser
<i>sə̀wlè</i> (<i>sàaló, sàalà</i>)	chasser
<i>síidìgè</i> (<i>síidò, síidà</i>)	élargir
<i>sín-</i>	frère; <i>síntù</i> mon frère
<i>sóonè</i> (<i>sóonò, sóonà</i>)	rêver
<i>sòorgè</i> (<i>sòoró, sòorgà</i>)	mettre à côté
<i>sùun</i>	beurre
<i>syèeyè</i> (<i>sùndò, sàa</i>)	boire; <i>sýlɔ</i> boisson
t	
<i>tèe</i> (<i>tà, tàa</i>)	manger; <i>týlɔ</i> nourriture
<i>téʔʔè</i> (<i>téʔtéʔà, téʔʔà</i>)	émigrer
<i>tènɲè</i> (<i>tènɲó, tènɲà</i>)	mesurer
<i>tákkíngè</i> (<i>tàkkíníyó, tàkkìngà</i>)	ramasser
<i>típílìgè</i> (<i>típílíyó, típìlìgà</i>)	aiguiser
u	
<i>úmbò</i>	eau
<i>únù</i>	nourriture (boule de mil)
w	
<i>wággè</i> (<i>wàagó, wàagà</i>)	piler
<i>wèyè</i> (<i>wùndò, wà</i>)	naître, mettre au monde
<i>wíilè</i> (<i>wíilò, wíilà</i>)	récolter
<i>wìɲgè</i> (<i>wìɲó, wìɲgà</i>)	ouvrir

Remerciements

Je remercie Mme Michèle Laplace, Paris, d'avoir eu l'amabilité de regarder et de corriger le français de ce texte. J'adresse également mes remerciements à Mme Sonja Bräscher, Francfort-sur-le-Main (Allemagne), pour la mise en forme de ce document.

Bibliographie

- Jungraithmayr, Herrmann. 2005. Notes sur le système verbal du sokoro (République du Tchad). *Afrika und Übersee* 88. 175–186.
- Newman, Paul. 1977. Chadic classification and reconstructions. *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 5(1). 1–42.
- Westermann, Diedrich & Margaret Arminel Bryan. 1952. *The languages of West Africa*. (Handbook of African Languages, Pt. 2). London, New York & Toronto: OUP.

A sketch of Akum (Southern Jukunoid)

Viktoria Kempf^a & Tamara Prischnegg^b

Universität Hamburg^a & University of Vienna^b
viktoria.kempf@uni-hamburg.de
tamara.prischnegg@univie.ac.at

Abstract:

This article presents data on the little researched Southern Jukunoid language Akum which is spoken in five villages of the Cameroon-Nigerian border area. Akum shows the typical Benue-Congo syllable structure (CV, CVC) as well as typical sounds of the Benue-Congo consonant inventory (double and secondary articulation). As is known from other Southern Jukunoid languages, only the consonants *r*, *b*, *g*, and nasals are permitted in word-final position and – because they are unreleased – the distinction voiced/voiceless is neutralized. The number and qualities of phonemically distinct vowels remains debatable.

Concerning the nominal morphology, the Akum nominal prefix system is reduced in several aspects compared to its Southern Jukunoid relatives: it only has a set of 4 different nominal prefixes which are vocalic in form and it shows only marginal agreement on adjectives. The quinary numeral system and SVO basic word order are similar to its Southern Jukunoid relatives Bezen, Yukuben and Kuteb.

Keywords: Southern-Jukunoid, language description, endangered language

1 Introduction

Akum is a little described language spoken in five villages of the Cameroon-Nigerian border area. Three of the five villages, Upkack, Idzong and Konkum are located in the Furu-Awa subdivision in Cameroon, and the other two villages, Shibong 1 (Igba) and Shibong 2 are found in the Takum local government area in Nigeria (Akumbu & Brye 2002: 2). Akum is classified as a Southern Jukunoid or Yukuben-Kuteb language and the number of speakers ranges between 1400 (Eberhard et al. 2021) and 7000 (Akumbu & Brye 2002: 2).

This is a preliminary sketch of the Akum language, based on data (altogether ca. 20 hours of recordings) gathered by Tamara Prischnegg between 2004 and 2007 and Viktoria Kempf in 2013 and 2014. Prischnegg elicited her language material during three visits in Shibong 1 with Musa, a middle-aged, blind primary school teacher, who was born and raised in this village; David, a Yukuben whose mother was Akum and who grew up bilingually; and three housewives, whose names unfortunately were not noted, but who kindly offered their time for one recording session. Kempf recorded her Akum data in Bezen, a village in Furu-Awa. In October 2013, she elicited lexical material with Tampa, an elderly lady who grew up in Idzong and has been living in Bezen for 20 years. In September 2014, when a football team from an Akum community was visiting Bezen, she took the chance to record a conversation between two speakers. The conversation, which revolves around the football game, was partly translated with Tukura William, an Akum speaker who was working in Bezen at that time.

2 Phonology

This section is a tentative approach to the phonology of the language, due to the restricted volume of the data.

2.1 Consonants

We find typical consonants of the Benue-Congo languages in Akum, as the labiovelars /kp/, /gb/ and /ŋm/. Furthermore, there is a set of prenasalised stops as /mb/, /nd/ and /ɲɲ/ and labialised sounds as /b^w/, /k^w/, /m^w/, /s^w/, /ɲ^w/. Apart from labialisation, Akum also shows palatalisation, as in following phonemes: /m^j/, /kp^j/, /mb^j/. Our data includes e.g. the pair *kpār* ‘be barren’ vs. *kp^jár* (CA) ~ *kpár* (NA) ‘to answer’ suggesting a possible phonemic contrast between the simple labiovelar /kp/ and its palatalised counterpart /kp^j/. However, the volume of our data is too restricted to finally determine whether labialisation and palatalisation are triggered by their phonetic surroundings or whether they are true phonemes.

Table 1. Preliminary table of consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labio-velar
Plosive	b		t d	c ɟ	k g	kp gb
Nasal	m		n	ɲ	ŋ	ŋm
Prenasalised	mb		nd	ɲɟ	ŋg	
Trill			r			
Fricative		f	s ʃ			
Affricate			ts (tʃ) dz (dʒ)			
Approximant				j		w
Lateral Approximant			l			

Akum lacks the voiced counterparts of the phonemes /s/ and /ʃ/, the sounds [z] und [ʒ]. However, they occur as components of affricates in /dz/ and /dʒ/. The voiceless counterparts of these affricates, /ts/ and /tʃ/ are also part of the phonemic inventory of the language. [p] only occurs word-finally. However, since word-final bilabials are, as all final plosives, not released, we treat [p] as irrelevant for the consonant inventory of Akum (see below); we instead interpret it as a voiced bilabial /b/.

There seems to be a variation between /f/ and /ʃ/ in the Cameroonian and the Nigerian varieties, as can be seen in the following examples (1).

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|---------------|
| (1) | Akum Cameroon | Akum Nigeria |
| | ‘new’ <i>āfi</i> | <i>āfi</i> |
| | ‘child’ <i>álámfi</i> | <i>álámfi</i> |

2.1.1 Minimal pairs

In the following, minimal pairs are presented that account for the consonant inventory proposed above.

g/ŋ	<i>tság</i> ‘be hard’	<i>tsáŋ</i> ‘dig’
	<i>ātɔg</i> ‘palm wine’	<i>ātɔŋ</i> ‘cocoyam’
	<i>ìbɔg</i> ‘farm’	<i>ìbɔŋ</i> ‘hot time’
	<i>kúg</i> ‘touch’	<i>kùŋ</i> ‘scratch’
	<i>ùcòg</i> ‘guest’	<i>ùcòŋ</i> ‘lip’

	<i>jíg</i> (CA)~ <i>ǰǰg</i> (NA) 'to play'	<i>ǰǰ</i> 'search'	
dz/ts	<i>ādzí</i> 'names' <i>ādzàb</i> 'forests'	<i>átsì</i> 'some' <i>àtsāb</i> 'tortoises'	
f/w/b	<i>āfǰǰ</i> 'fingers' <i>āfā</i> 'calabashes'	<i>àwúǰ</i> 'liver' <i>āwà</i> 'armpits'	<i>ábūǰ</i> 'cloud' <i>ábá</i> 'feet'
g/gb/ǰg	<i>àgō</i> 'those'	<i>āgbǰ</i> 'arms'	<i>āǰgò</i> 'drum'
l/j/ǰ	<i>ālǰm</i> 'rainy season'	<i>ájǰmí</i> 'my female friends' <i>āǰǰǰ</i> 'body' <i>āǰǰǰ</i> 'honey'	
n/ǰ	<i>ánǰǰ</i> 'noses'	<i>ōǰmā</i> 'salt'	
m/ǰm	<i>ōmā</i> 'red'	<i>wùr</i> 'ascend'	
g/r	<i>wúg</i> 'hear; listen' <i>àtǰg</i> 'beans' <i>ǰǰǰg</i> 'sour taste'	<i>átàr</i> 'garments' <i>ǰkwǰr</i> (CA) ~ <i>ǰǰr</i> (NA) 'cheek'	
ǰ/r	<i>tāǰ</i> 'think' <i>ábūǰ</i> 'cloud' <i>ācǰǰ</i> 'five' <i>òkùǰ</i> 'rivers'	<i>tàr</i> 'change' <i>ábùr</i> 'bite' <i>ácòr</i> 'stars' <i>àkùr</i> 'crocodiles'	
m/ǰ	<i>ǰfǰm</i> 'property' <i>lǰm</i> 'jump' <i>òkǰpǰm</i> 'far' <i>āwúǰm</i> 'seed' <i>àtsǰm</i> 'Kuteb people'	<i>ǰfǰǰ</i> 'chests' <i>lǰǰ</i> 'lick' <i>òkǰpǰǰ</i> 'elbow' <i>àwúǰ</i> 'liver' <i>ātsǰǰ</i> 'pots'	
mⁱ/ǰ	<i>ōmⁱám</i> 'tongue'	<i>òǰnǰǰ</i> 'good taste'	
t/ts	<i>tǰǰ</i> 'again'	<i>tsǰǰ</i> 'dig'	
t/d	<i>ōtǰǰ</i> 'right'	<i>ōdǰǰ</i> 'chief'	
c/ǰ	<i>ícá</i> 'fish'	<i>ǰǰā</i> 'house'	
	<i>òcùg</i> 'guest'	<i>òǰūg</i> 'vein'	
ǰ/s	<i>úǰí</i> 'few'	<i>òsǰ</i> 'soul, spirit'	

2.1.2 Distribution of consonants

Not all consonants occur in all positions within a word. As shown in table 2, most of the consonants may occur at the beginning of the syllable onset. The first column mainly contains verbs, which can have a consonant at the beginning of the word. The second column mainly contains nouns, where the root is obligatorily preceded by a vocalic nominal prefix. The coda-position is reserved for the phonemes /r/, /b/, /g/, /m/ and /ǰ/. The phoneme /ǰ/ only occurs in this position. Optionally, it may be dropped and the preceding vowel is nasalized,

as in *íbòŋ* ‘hot season’, which is pronounced as [íbò̃]. Word-final bilabial plosives /b/ and /g/ are devoiced and not released.

Table 2. Consonants in different surroundings

	#CV	VCV	VC#
b	<i>bá</i> ‘come’	<i>ábúr</i> ‘fight’ (n)	<i>īsáb</i> ‘heel’
m	<i>máy</i> ‘only’	<i>òmòŋ</i> ‘meat’	<i>kām</i> ‘meet’
f	<i>fī</i> ‘be dry’	<i>īfàŋ</i> ‘chest’	XX ¹
t	<i>tāŋ</i> ‘think’	<i>ōtá</i> ‘arrow’	XX
d	<i>dóŋ</i> ‘thank’	<i>ōdāb</i> ‘heart’	XX
n	<i>nè</i> ‘for’	<i>ònà</i> ‘fufu’	XX
r	<i>rá</i> future tense	XX	<i>īkúr</i> ‘hole’
s	<i>sōŋ</i> ‘know’	<i>ìsáŋ</i> ‘neck’	XX
ʃ	<i>ʃm̄kābār</i> ‘rice’ (Hausa loan)	<i>ōʃb</i> ‘wind’	XX
l	<i>lóg</i> ‘say’	<i>ōlāb</i> ‘load’	XX
ɲ	<i>ɲì</i> ‘leave’	<i>āɲōŋ</i> ‘body’	XX
j	<i>jīr</i> ‘stand’	<i>ājìŋ</i> ‘blood’	XX
c	<i>cú</i> ‘descend’	<i>ōcōŋ</i> ‘pain’	XX
ʒ	<i>ʒíg</i> (CA) ~ <i>íʒóg</i> (NA) ‘to play’	<i>òʒōg</i> ‘vein’	XX
k	<i>kūg</i> ‘hold’	<i>īkūr</i> ‘ten’	XX
g	<i>gé</i> ‘that’	<i>égì</i> ‘yesterday’	<i>wóg</i> ‘hear’
ŋ	no evidence	no evidence	<i>ōtōŋ</i> ‘ear’
w	<i>wòr</i> ‘ascend’	<i>ówà</i> ‘wife’	XX
ts	<i>tsām</i> ‘kill’	<i>ōtsī</i> ‘hair’	XX
dz	<i>dzá</i> ‘steal’	<i>ìdzī</i> ‘name’	XX
tʃ	<i>tʃáb</i> ‘be quiet’	<i>ítʃà</i> ‘lake’	XX
dʒ	<i>dʒí</i> ‘eat; win’	<i>ádʒār</i> ‘dream’ (n)	XX
kp	<i>kpú</i> ‘die’	<i>īkpàŋ</i> ‘spear’	XX

1 XX = probably not possible.

gb	<i>gbī</i> ‘break’	<i>ḡgbó</i> ‘arm’	XX
mb	<i>mbág</i> ‘to help’	<i>ĩmbár</i> ‘stomach’	XX
nd	<i>ndār</i> ‘see’	<i>ĩndàr</i> ‘elephant’	XX
ŋm	<i>ŋmá</i> ‘drink’	<i>ĩŋmí</i> ‘breast’	XX
ɲɲ	no evidence	<i>ĩɲɲár</i> ‘person’	XX
b^w	no evidence	<i>āb^wī</i> ‘rain’	XX
k^w	<i>k^wḡŋ</i> (CA) ~ <i>kḡŋ</i> (NA) ‘do’	<i>ĩk^wī</i> ‘many’	XX
m^w	no evidence	<i>ām^wī</i> ‘water’	XX
s^w	<i>s^wī</i> ‘be cold’	<i>ēs^wī</i> ‘shame’	XX
ɲ^w	no evidence	<i>ĩɲ^wè</i> ‘bird’	XX
m^j	no evidence	<i>ũm^jám</i> ‘tongue’	XX
kp^j	<i>kp^jár</i> ‘to answer’	no evidence	XX
mb^j	no evidence	<i>úmb^jè</i> ‘in-law’	XX

2.2 Vowels

Akum contrasts at least 6 vowels - /a/, /ɔ/, /u/, /ə/, /ɪ/, /ɛ/. All of these vowels are [-ATR] and seem not to be lexically contrastive with a [+ATR] variant. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that we found a few examples where the position of the tongue root is [+ATR]. This particularly occurs when a high front [-ATR] vowel is followed by a sibilant and the next following vowel is a high front one, too (f.e. *í-sí-ná* ‘He is sleeping.’). In this case both vowels are pronounced as [+ATR]. [i] does not seem to contrast with a [-ATR] variant and the [+ATR] pronunciation is possibly caused purely by the phonetic surroundings, i.e. a sibilant between two high front vowels and is thus phonemically not significant. The noun prefix *ɪ-* can be pronounced as [i], [ɪ] and sometimes even a very closed [e]. The more open mid vowel [ɛ] is never pronounced as [i] or [ɪ]. Whether a [+/-ATR] distinction is significant for grammatical constructions or not has to await future research.

It seems that in Cameroonian Akum (CA) mid vowels are more prominent than in Nigerian Akum (NA). This is particularly true for noun prefixes and pronouns (see below).

The phonemic status of nasal vowels remains unclear at this stage of research: We tend to interpret them as allophones of a vowel followed by a word final nasal /ŋ/ or /n/. In the probably closely related languages Kuteb and Yukuben, nasal vowels have been interpreted in different ways: Koops (2009) analyses them as being phonemic in Kuteb, whereas for Yukuben they are interpreted as phonemic by Anyanwu (2013), but considered free variants of V[ŋ]#/V[n]# by Prischnegg (2021).

The central vowel is phonetically best described as [ə] but shall be transcribed with the more customary grapheme <ə> henceforth. It mainly occurs in closed syllables. In the corpus of the Nigerian variety, the vowel qualities [a], [ɪ], [ʊ], [ɔ] and [ɛ] seem to be restricted to open syllables. The Cameroonian variety of Akum shows a few instances of [ə] in coda position. Whether these instances of [ə] might be analysed as allophones of [ɪ] or [ɛ] cannot be said at this stage of research. The Nigerian corpus suggests that the central vowel is simply an allophone of the front mid vowel in closed syllables. The assumption that [ɛ] and [ə] are allophones would explain the fact that the only phonetic contrasts for which no minimal pairs could be found are [ɛ]/[ɔ], [ɛ]/[ə] and [ɛ]/[ʊ]. The unclear status of the central vowel [ə] is known from Yukuben (Prischnegg 2021) and Kuteb (Koops 2009) as well and seems to be characteristic for the whole Southern Jukunoid language group (Bezen, Bete, Lufu, Akum, Kuteb, Yukuben, Kapyra).

2.2.1 Minimal pairs

The following minimal pairs account for the phonemic status of the above-mentioned vowels.

ə/a	səm 'live'	səm 'turn'
	òfám 'brain'	òfāmn 'sunshine, daylight'
ɛ/a	ōmē 'war'	ōmā 'red'
ɔ/a	āfɔŋ 'fingers'	āfāŋ 'rocks'
ʊ/a	ōmbūg 'place, direction'	ōmbāg 'help'
ʊ/ɪ	ōdžú 'funeral'	ōdžì 'food'
ə/ʊ	tsəŋ 'dig'	tsòŋ 'sew'
	āndàr 'elephants'	àndòr 'hills'
ə/ɪ	ábâr 'black'	àbír 'claws'
ɛ/ɪ/ʊ	īwé 'nose'	íwī 'tear'
		īwù 'snake'

	<i>ìtsì</i> ‘beard’	<i>ĩtsù</i> ‘family’
	<i>àtsé</i> ‘tails’	<i>átsì</i> ‘some’
ɔ/ʊ	<i>àgɔ́</i> ‘those’	<i>ágù</i> ‘there’
	<i>ògbó</i> ‘arm’	<i>kpú</i> ‘die’
a/ɔ/ʊ	<i>cā</i> ‘laugh’	<i>cò</i> ‘sing’
		<i>cú</i> ‘descend’

2.3 Tone

Akum has a three-tone system. At this stage of research, we only find lexically distinctive tones in Akum. However, as data from other Jukunoid languages suggests (Storch 1999; Kempf 2017), tone may also play a significant role at the grammatical level.

2.3.1 Minimal pairs

The following minimal pairs show the role of tone in distinguishing lexical items. For some of the examples, the pitch values are indicated. However, it was not possible to measure them for all the lexemes due to surrounding noise in the recordings. Where the recordings were clear, the pitch values are indicated next to the lexemes, together with the gender of the speaker.

L vs. M

kàm [110Hz (m)] ‘tell’

kām [155 (m)] ‘meet’

LL vs. MM

òtār [147Hz; 143Hz (f)] ‘garment’

ūtāŋ [183Hz; 181Hz (f)] ‘back’

LL vs. HL

àtāg ‘beans’

átāg ‘shoulders’

LL vs. LM

ìdzì ‘tooth’

ìdzī ‘name’

LM vs. MH

òlā ‘fire’

ōlá ‘sleep’

LM vs. HL

àgbōr ‘dogs’

ágbòr ‘caterpillars’

ML vs. MH

ḡbòŋ [155Hz; 135Hz (f)]

‘wall’

ḡbóŋ [170Hz; 196Hz (f)]

‘song; fruit’

ML vs. LH

īwò ‘snake’

īwú ‘walking stick’

ML vs. MM

ōnà ‘gift’

ōnā ‘food’

MH vs. LH

ātá ‘three’

àtá ‘buttocks’

MH vs. MM*íkáb* ‘compound’*íkāb* ‘bones’**HL vs. MH***átsàŋ* [170Hz; 150Hz (f)]

‘smoke’

ātsám [136Hz; 145Hz (m)]

‘beer’

HL vs. LH*íkḗ* ‘axe’*íkḗ* ‘chicken’**HH vs. MH***ékám* [183Hz; 187Hz]

‘twenty’

ékák [166Hz; 186Hz]

‘wrist’

HH vs. LH*íkám* ‘twenty’*íkám* ‘dead person’**HL vs. LL***ák^wè* ‘horns’*àk^wè* ‘villages’**HL vs. MM***ǰkpà* [190Hz; 155Hz (f)] ‘harmattan’*ǰkpā* [170Hz; 170Hz (f)] ‘skin’**HL vs. ML***ájà* ‘mothers’*ājà* ‘flowers’**HH vs. MM***íkí* ‘trees’*íkí* ‘head’**HH vs. LL***ókúŋ* ‘river’*òkùŋ* ‘hunting’**Tonal triplets***cò* [165Hz (f)] ‘sing’*cō* [190Hz (f)] ‘fall’*cú* [200Hz (f)]

‘descend’

ǎfàŋ ‘rocks’*ǎfàŋ* ‘chests’*ǎfáy* ‘lands’*íkùr* ‘crocodile’*íkùr* ‘hole’*íkūr* ‘ten’*òkàb* ‘opposite’*òkāb* ‘bone’*òkáb* ‘cooking spoon’**Dynamic tones****Falling***dzá* [167Hz (m)] ‘steal’*dzâ* [194/143Hz (f)] ‘blow’**Raising***èk^wàk* [151Hz; 152Hz (f)]

‘collarbone’

èkwàk [214/240Hz 157Hz (f)] ‘man’**3 Basic clause structure**

Similar as in the other Jukunoid languages, the basic order of syntactic constituents within the clause in Akum is SVO. The following examples in (2) show two basic sentences. In (2a), the subject is

encoded in the 1pl pronoun $\bar{\epsilon}$. The verb $d\bar{z}\acute{í}$ ‘win’ is a semantic extension of $d\bar{z}\acute{í}$ ‘eat’ and has the same semantic role structure as the source verb. Thus, $\bar{a}\bar{y}\bar{i}\eta$ ‘Bezen’ acts as the direct object, following the verb. In (2b), $\bar{\epsilon}s^w\acute{í}$ ‘shame’ is encoded as the subject that affects the experiencer, encoded in the 3pl pronoun $b\hat{o}$ and following the verb $k\bar{u}g$ ‘hold’.

(2a) $\bar{\epsilon}$ - $d\bar{z}\acute{í}$ $\bar{a}\bar{y}\bar{i}\eta$ $m\acute{a}\eta$
 1PL-win Bezen only
 ‘We have only won against the Bezen.’

(b) $\bar{\epsilon}s^w\acute{í}$ $k\bar{u}g$ $b\hat{o}$
 shame hold 3PL.O
 ‘They are ashamed!’

4 Nominal morphology

In the following two subchapters we describe the morphological composition of singular and plural nouns, together with the only instance of agreement in Akum that was found so far, agreement marked on adjectives.

4.1 Singular and plural marking

The Akum noun consists of a nominal root with the syllable structure CVC or CV and a nominal prefix expressing singular and plural respectively. The form of the nominal prefixes in Akum is always vocalic, as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Combination of singular and plural prefixes

SG	PL
u -	a -
i -	i -

The singular prefix u - has the allomorph \bar{u} - and the prefix i - the allomorph $\bar{\epsilon}$ -. Most of the nouns carrying an u - prefix in the singular form the plural with an a -prefix. Only a few nouns combine the prefixes u - and i - in Akum. These are nouns denoting long and thin objects, as it is also known from Yukuben and Bezen (Prischneegg 2021; Anyanwu 2013; Kempf 2013). The vast majority of nouns form their plural with the a -prefix, which also occurs with mass nouns and nouns

denoting abstract concepts. A comparison with the better described Southern Jukunoid languages Yukuben, Kuteb and Bezen (see Prischnegg 2021; Anyanwu 2013; Koops 2009; Kempf 2013) shows that the numeral prefixes of Akum may be attributed to a former noun class system which has been drastically reduced. In table 4, the Proto Benue-Congo class prefixes are compared with the numeral prefixes of Akum, both in form and meaning.

Table 4. Semantic domains of nouns co-occurring with certain prefixes

	PBC	Akum	Semantic domains
Class 1 (SG)	*ù	u-	humans, abstract concepts, body parts, natural phenomena, long objects
Class 4 (PL)	*í	ɪ-	plural of long, thin objects, such as ‘rope’, ‘root’
Class 6 (PL)	*a	a-	abstract concepts, numerals, names of ethnic groups
Class 9 (SG)	*ì	ɪ-	various

Class 1 (abstract concepts without PL):

ǒfáj ‘hunt’, *ǒkpà* ‘harmattan’, *ǒmá-ēsàk* ‘thunder’ *ǒsūr* ‘sun’, *ǒfǒb* ‘wind’

Class pair 1/4:

ǒkǎb pl. *ǐkǎb* ‘bone’, *ǒlǎg* pl. *ǐlǎg* ‘rope’, *ǒkʷǎb* pl. *ǐkʷǎb* ‘root’

Class pair 1/6:

ǒbún pl. *ǎbún* ‘song’, *ǒtún* pl. *ǎtún* ‘ear’, *ǒgbó* pl. *ǎgbó* ‘arm’, *ǒkpùb* pl. *ǎkpùb* ‘bat’, *ǒkùŋ* pl. *ǎkùŋ* ‘river’, *ǒkí* pl. *ǎkí* ‘leg’, *ǒsù-kpí* pl. *ǎsù-kpí* ‘door’, *ǒtá* pl. *ǎtá* ‘arrow’, *ǒtāŋ* pl. *ǎtāŋ* ‘back’, *ǒtār* pl. *ǎtār* ‘garment’, *ǒjūg* pl. *ǎjūg* ‘vein’, *ǒwà* pl. *ǎwà* ‘wife’, *ǒlám* pl. *ǎlám* ‘husband’

Class 6 (abstract concepts without SG): *ǎbúr* ‘fight’, *ǎdzār* ‘dream’, *ǎsáŋ* ‘smell’, *ǎbūŋ* ‘cloud’, *ǎyì* ‘one’, *ǎfâ* ‘two’, *ǎtà* ‘three’, *ǎŋù* ‘four’, *ǎcǒŋ* ‘five’, *ǎkúm* ‘Akum’, *ǎŋŋ* ‘Bezen’

Class pair 9/6:

ǎbà pl. *ǎbà* ‘bag’, *ǎŋmà* pl. *ǎŋmà* ‘leaf’, *ǐkʷè* pl. *ǎkʷè* ‘village’, *ǐdzí* pl. *ǎdzí* ‘tooth’

4.2 Agreement

There are traces of number agreement marked on adjectives in Akum. In our corpus we find the prefixes *u-* for SG and *ɾ-* for PL, compare:

SG	PL
<i>ĩkĩ úfĩ</i> ‘small head’	<i>ākĩ ífĩ</i> ‘small heads’
<i>ĩgbúr úfĩ</i> ‘small dog’	<i>āgbúr ífĩ</i> ‘small dogs’

However, in the majority of cases, adjectives do not show agreement anymore. They carry either *u-* or *a-* in both singular and plural forms, as presented in the following examples.

SG	PL
<i>èbà āfĩ</i> ‘new bag’	<i>àbà āfĩ</i> ‘new bags’
<i>ĩjā ūtám</i> ‘big house’	<i>ājā ūtám</i> ‘big houses’
<i>ĩcôŋ úfĩ</i> ‘small stone’	<i>ācôŋ úfĩ</i> ‘small stones’
<i>òkʷáb ádzè</i> ‘sharp knife’	<i>àkʷáb ádzè</i> ‘sharp knives’

In one case, there is a discrepancy between the Nigerian and the Cameroonian variety: whereas in Nigerian Akum the adjective agrees with the number of the noun, in Cameroonian Akum the adjective does not change its form in the plural.

SG	PL
<i>ákàb úfĩ</i> ‘small woman’	NA: <i>ákàb ífĩ</i> ‘small women’
	CA: <i>ákàb úfĩ</i> ‘small women’

The traces of adjective concordance may be a further indication of a former fully developed noun class system.

5 Pronouns

The pronominal system of the Akum language is presented in the following, focussing on personal and demonstrative pronouns.

5.1 Personal pronouns

Akum has a set of independent and dependent subject pronouns which are presented in table 5. The object and possessive pronouns have only one set each. It needs to be further explored, whether these are dependent or independent pronouns.

Table 5. Independent and dependent pronouns

	Subject independent	Subject dependent	Object	Possessive
1sg	èjí	ì-/è-	mì	nám, m
2sg	ówí/úwí	ó-/ú-	mú	ná/nú-
3sg	íjí	í-/é-	mí	jí
1pl	ējí	ī-/ē-	rā	rā/ró
2pl	òmì/òwí	ō-, ū-	rū	rū
3pl	ābō	ā-	bó	ābō

Whereas the independent subject pronouns have a VCV structure, the dependent pronouns only consist of the initial vowel of the independent counterparts. However, a slight variation in the vowel may occur. For example, the independent 1sg pronoun is èjí, but the vowel quality of the dependent pronouns varies between ì- and è-. Different from the other sets, the tone of the dependent 2pl subject pronoun ò-/ò- deviates from the tone of the initial vowel of the independent pronoun òmì/òwí. The dependent 1sg, 3sg and 1pl subject pronouns are differentiated solely by tone, just as the 2sg and 2pl pronouns.

The object pronouns have a CV-syllable structure. The plural pronouns of the object and possessive sets are structurally very similar, except for the variation ró for the 1pl pronoun. All independent 3pl pronouns contain the root bɔ with varying tones.

5.1.1 Subject pronouns

In the following table 6, the independent and dependent subject pronouns are presented in context.

Table 6. Independent and dependent subject pronouns in context

	Subject independent	Subject dependent
1sg	èjí sî-dzî ūnā 1SG IMPFV-eat fufu 'I am eating fufu.'	ì-sî-dzî ūnā 1SG-IMPFV-eat fufu 'I am eating fufu.'
	èjí sâ-bā 1SG FUT-come 'I will come.'	ì-fóŋ bó 1SG-like 2PL.O 'I like them.'

	Subject independent	Subject dependent
2sg	<i>úwí fǒŋ bɔ</i> 2SG like 3PL.O 'You like them.'	<i>ú-fǒŋ bɔ</i> 2SG-like 3PL.O 'You like them.'
	<i>śwí sá-īŋmā ām^wì</i> 2SG IMPFV-drink water 'You are drinking water.'	<i>ś-ābā ~ ú-ābā</i> 2SG-come 'You are coming'
3sg	<i>íjí īmbár</i> 3SG be.pregnant 'She is pregnant.'	<i>í-fǒŋ m̀</i> 3SG-like 1SG.O 'He likes me.'
		<i>í-mbā ìfì</i> 3SG-deliver twins 'She gave birth to twins.'
1pl	<i>ējí ākóm sóciál clúb ēdzí</i> 1PL akum social club win 'We, 'Akum social club' have won.'	<i>ī-fǒŋ bɔ</i> 1PL-like them 'We like them.'
		<i>ī-sī-ìdzí ūdzí</i> 1PL-IMPFV-eat food 'We are eating food.'
2pl	no data elicited	<i>ī-dzǐ āyīŋ n̄</i> 2PL-win bezen Q 'You won against the Bezen people?'
3pl	<i>ābō sī-ábā</i> 3PL IMPFV-come 'They are coming.'	<i>ā-sā-bā</i> 3PL-FUT-come 'They will come'
	<i>ābō ŋmá ātsám = m̀</i> 3PL drink beer = PERF 'They have drunk beer.'	<i>ā-gán ābá</i> 3PL-want come 'They want to come.'

5.1.2 Object pronouns

The object pronouns are presented in context in the following:

1sg: *í-sūŋ m̀ òlā*
3SG-make 1SG.O fire
'He makes the fire for me.'

- ōkí* *nó* *ŋwá* *mì*
 tree DEM.PROX scratch 1SG.O
 ‘This tree scratched me.’
- 2sg: *í-sūŋ* *mó* *òlā*
 2SG-make 2SG.O fire
 ‘He makes the fire for you.’
- 3sg: *í-tí* *mí*
 3SG-lost 3SG.O
 ‘He lost it.’
- 1pl: *āb̄* *nā* *ró* *ìfá*
 3PL give 1PL.O calabash
 ‘They gave us a calabash.’
- 2pl: *ègbār* *dzám* *rō = m̄*
 dog bite 2PL.O = PERF
 ‘The dog has bitten you (pl).’ (CA)
- 3pl: *ī-sā-nā* *bó* *ìfá*
 1PL-FUT-give 3PL.O calabash
 ‘We will give them a calabash.’

5.1.3 Possessive pronouns

There are two different 1sg possessive pronouns. At this stage of analysis, we may conclude that if a noun ends with a vowel, the simple form *m̄* is used. Whenever a noun ends with a bilabial nasal, the complex form *nám* is used instead.

- 1sg: *éj̄ ñ m̄* ‘my female friend’
īdā m̄ ‘my father’
ʒwà m̄ ‘my wife’
āgbēm nám ‘my male friend’
áfàm nám ‘my property’
ōlám nám ‘my husband’
- 2sg: *éj̄ ñ ná* ‘your female friend’
īdā ná ‘your father’
ībā ná ‘your house’
- 3sg: *īdā ní* ‘his/her father’
ībā ní ‘his/her house’

ábã ní ‘his/her footprints’

1pl: *īdā ró* ‘our father’
īyā ró ‘our house’
ītám ró ‘our work.’

2pl: *īyā rō* ‘your house’

3pl: *īdā ābô* ‘their father’
ādā ābô ‘their fathers’
īyā ābô ‘their house’

Nominal subjects may or may not be repeated in a dependent pronoun. In accordance with pragmatics and speaker intention there seems to be free variation in agreement. In examples (3a–b), the nominal subject is repeated in the 3pl dependent pronoun *á-* and the 3sg pronoun *í-*. In examples (3c–d), it is possible to omit the 3sg agreement morpheme *í-*.

(3a) *búndá īyē mósīs gán á-kár īkōŋ*
 Bunda with Moses want 3PL-walk farm
 ‘Bunda and Moses want to go to the farm.’

b) *īgbījí í-kúg īgbàr*
 child 3SG-catch caterpillar
 ‘The child caught a caterpillar.’

c) *īgbūr (í-)tūr mí ábán ní*
 dog (3SG-)follow 3SG.O footprints 3SG.POSS
 ‘The dog follows his footprints.’

d) *ákàb (í-)ná òmòŋ īyē òkʷáb*
 woman (3SG-)cut meat with knife
 ‘The woman cuts the meat with a knife.’

5.2 Demonstrative pronouns

The meaning and underlying phonemic shape of Akum demonstratives is not well understood yet. At this stage of research, it is uncertain, whether the different forms of demonstratives are the result of noun class agreement or of vowel harmony triggered by the stem vowel of the head noun. It seems that the particle *nú* is used to express demonstrative singulars proximate to the speaker. *ná* seems to be a determiner unspecified for number and distance and can be

translated by the definite article ‘the’. If the demonstrative pronoun stands on its own, the forms *íné* and *ònú* is used respectively. *néjá* ~ *nújó* is used for demonstrative plurals proximate to the speaker. *gú* and *wó* are demonstratives used with singular nouns to express ‘over there’. The former is used when the object is not visible, and the latter is used with objects in great distance to the speaker. *wó* is also used as relative pronoun (see 8.2). The plural form of these two pronouns seems to be *gó*. The sets are shown in table 7:

Table 7: Demonstrative pronouns

	DET	DEM.PROX	DEM.DIST
SG	<i>ná</i>	<i>nú</i>	<i>gú</i> ~ <i>wó</i>
PL		<i>nújó</i> ~ <i>néjá</i>	<i>gó</i>

In the following, the demonstrative pronouns are presented in combination with different nouns. An example with the demonstrative pronoun *ònú* is given in (18e) below.

DEM.PROX

ēgbī ná èkì ‘The child cries.’
āgbī ná ēkì ‘The children cry.’
ákàb nú/ nú-á ‘this woman’
ákàb nújó ‘these women’
ōkī nú ‘this tree’
īkī néjá ‘these trees’
kùg ìṅā nú ‘hold this thing’

ḡ-rá-dzī *íné* *ó-sá-àkpυ*
 2SG-FUT-eat DEM.PROX 2SG-FUT-die
 ‘If you eat this, you will die.’

DEM.DIST

ákàb gú ‘that woman’
ákàb gó ‘those women’
ìṅàr wó ‘that man’

6 Numerals

Akum has a quinary number system. The numerals up to *ācǒṅ* ~ *ācǒṅ* ‘five’ are simple lexemes, whereas the numbers from ‘six’ to ‘nine’ are compounds of 5 + x. The decimals denoting 10 and 20 are again

simplex lexemes. Decimals above ‘twenty’ *íkám* are expressed either through a simple multiplication of ‘twenty’ plus eventual addition of *íkūr* ‘ten’. The numeral ‘hundred’ is again a simplex lexeme, *ifá*.

<i>ájì</i> ‘one’	<i>ācǝŋ-ījì</i> ‘six’
<i>áfâ</i> (CA) ~ <i>āfâ</i> (NA) ‘two’	<i>ācǝŋ-áfâ</i> ‘seven’
<i>àtà</i> (CA) ~ <i>ātā</i> (NA) ‘three’	<i>ācǝŋ-ātā</i> ‘eight’
<i>āɲì</i> ‘four’	<i>ācǝŋ-āɲì</i> ‘nine’
<i>ācǝŋ</i> ‘five’	<i>íkūr</i> ‘ten’
<i>íkūr kâ ájì</i> ‘eleven’	11
<i>íkūr kâ āfâ</i> ‘twelve’	12
<i>íkūr kâ ācǝŋ āɲì</i> ‘nineteen’	19
<i>íkám</i> ‘twenty’	20
<i>íkám kâ ájì</i> ‘twenty-one’	21
<i>íkám kâ íkūr</i> ‘thirty’	30
<i>íkám kâ íkūr kâ ájì</i> ‘thirty-one’	31
<i>ákám āfâ</i> ‘forty’	40
<i>ákám āfâ kâ íkūr</i> ‘fifty’	50
<i>ákám ātā</i> ‘sixty’	60
<i>ákám ātā kâ íkūr</i> ‘seventy’	70
<i>ákám āɲì</i> ‘eighty’	80
<i>ákám āɲì kâ íkūr</i> ‘ninety’	90
<i>ifá</i> (<i>ájì</i>) ‘hundred’	100

7 Verbal morphology

The verbal root in Akum has the syllable structure CV or CVC. Further research may reveal the presence of additional possible structures. The root vowel bears one of the three lexical tones: L, M or H.

	CV	CVC
Low tone	<i>ɲì</i> ‘leave’	<i>kʷǝŋ</i> ‘do’
	<i>cò</i> ‘sing’	<i>wàm</i> ‘slide’
Mid tone	<i>sʷɪ</i> ‘be cold’	<i>kām</i> ‘meet’
	<i>cã</i> ‘laugh’	<i>tsəm</i> ‘kill’
High tone	<i>dʒí</i> ‘eat; win’	<i>lóg</i> ‘say’
	<i>bá</i> ‘come’	<i>kár</i> ‘trek’

7.1 TAM

The tense-aspect morphemes found so far are few, however, considering the complex tonally dominated TAM-system in Bezen (Kempf 2017), we expect the Akum system to be much more elaborate than presented here.

7.1.1 Aorist

Akum has an unmarked Aorist which may refer to present or past situations. The lexical tone of the verb (L, M or H) remains stable. In (4a), the H-tone verb *bá* ‘come’ is combined with the 1sg pronominal prefix *ì-*. The described event took place in the past, just as in example (4b). Here, the subject is expressed in a complex noun phrase and the verb *kā* ‘carry’ is morphologically unmodified. In examples (4c) and 4d), events are described which are ongoing at the time of speaking.

- 4a) *ì-bá* *égì* *àsùrdzì*
 1SG-come yesterday evening
 ‘I came yesterday evening.’
- b) *ìgbī* *ījē* *īdā* *jí* *kā* *ūdžī*
 child with father 3SG.POSS share food
 ‘The boy and his father shared the food.’
- c) *īnwè* *sām* *ifām* *úbág*
 bird sit roof on.top.of
 ‘A bird sits on the roof.’
- d) *í-kár* *ījā* *jí*
 3SG-walk house 3SG.POSS
 ‘He walks to his house.’

7.1.2 Perfect

The perfect tense is marked by a clause enclitic = *m̄* in Akum of Cameroon and = *kī* in Akum of Nigeria. The verbal root carries its lexical tone.² In (5a), the perfect enclitic = *m̄* is directly attached to the verb *bá* ‘come’, whereas in (5b) it follows the adverb *ké* ‘very’. In (5c), the enclitic follows the direct object *ātsām* ‘beer’.

² In Bezen, the perfective aspect is indicated by the clause enclitic = *mí* which also follows the direct object whenever it is mentioned in a sentence (Kempf 2017: 27).

- 5a) *ì-bá = ì*
1SG-come = PERF
'I have come.'
- b) *èjík sâb ké = ì*
game be.good very = PERF
'The play was very good!'
- c) *í-ημά ātsám = ì*
3SG-drink beer = PERF
'S/he has drunk beer.'

Similar to (5a), the enclitic =*kī* is directly attached to the verb in (6a), whereas in (6b-c) it follows the direct object *ūdžī* 'food' (6e) and the 3sg object pronoun *mí* (6f).

- 6a) *ābō bá = kī*
3PL come = PERF
'They have come.'
- b) *ī-dží ūdžī = kī*
1PL-eat food = PERF
'We have eaten food.'
- c) *í-kòη mí = kī*
3SG-do 3SG = PERF
'He has done it.'

7.1.3 Future

The future tense is marked by two verbal prefixes *sa-* or *ra-*. Whether there is a difference in meaning between the two morphemes, has to be clarified yet. In (7a), the 3pl is expressed in the independent pronoun *ābō* and in (7b) in the bound prefix *ā-*. In both cases, the future prefix *rá-* directly precedes the verbal root.

- 7a) *ābō rá-lóg gé nâη ja*
3PL FUT-say that what again
'What will they say again?'
- b) *ā-rá-cō dīzēmba*
3PL-FUT-descend December
'They will go down in December.'

In elicitation, only the prefix *sa-* was used to indicate future activities. The morpheme occurs with a low tone with the 1sg pronoun and a falling tone with all other pronouns. The lexical tone of the verb seems to remain stable in inflection. In (8a), the H-tone verb *ημά* 'drink' is presented in combination with the Future prefix *sa-*. Whereas in the 1sg, the prefix carries a low tone, a falling tone is observed in 2sg, 1pl, and 3pl. In the Nigerian example, the 2sg form also carries a low tone. In (8b), the L-tone verb *jì* 'leave' is inflected.

Here, the Future-prefix also carries a falling tone with the 3sg form, a form in which was not elicited in the (8a) paradigm.

- 8a) 1sg *èjí sà-ηmá ām^wì* ‘I will drink water.’
 2sg *ōwí sâ-ηmá āmwì* ‘You will drink water.’
 NA: *ówí sà-ηmá āmwì* ‘You will drink water.’
 1pl *ējí sâ-ηmá āmwì* ‘We will drink water.’
 3pl *ābō sâ-ηmá āmwì* ‘They will drink water.’
- b) 1sg *ì-sà-ηù* ‘I will leave.’
 3sg *éjí sâ-ηù* ‘He will leave.’
 3pl *ābō sâ-ηù* ‘They will leave.’

7.1.4 Imperfective

An unbounded activity is indicated by the prefix *sr-*. This grammatical morpheme does not carry its own tone, either, but seems to take over the tone of the bound personal pronoun preceding it, as presented in (9a-b) with the low-tone verb *kòη* ‘do’ and the high-tone verb *dzɪ* ‘eat’. The examples also show that the lexical tone of the verb remains stable. When preceded by the 1sg bound pronoun *è- ~ ì-*, the imperfective prefix *sr-* carries a low tone, whereas with the 2sg and 3sg prefixes *ú-* and *í-* it bears a high tone. When accompanied by a 1pl or 3pl bound pronoun, the imperfective prefix carries a mid tone. We do not have an example of the imperfective prefix in combination with the 2pl pronoun. However, since all bound pronouns in the plural carry a mid tone, we expect the imperfective prefix also to carry a mid tone there.

- 9a) 1sg *è-sì-kòη* ‘I am doing something.’
 2sg *ú-sí-kòη àdzɪ* ‘What are you doing?’
 3sg *í-sí-kòη mí* ‘He is doing it.’
 3pl *ā-sī-kòη àdzɪ* ‘What are they doing?’
- b) 1sg *ì-sì-dzɪ ùdzɪ* ‘I am eating.’
 3sg *í-sí dzɪ ùnā* ‘He is eating.’
 1pl *ī-sī ìdzɪ ùdzɪ* ‘We are eating.’

The imperfective prefix *sr-* and the perfect enclitic *=m̀* may also be combined, as shown in (10). However, it is interesting that the enclitic occurs directly after the imperfective marker. More examples are needed to fully understand the combinatory potential of different TAM-morphemes.

- 10) $\acute{f}\text{-s}\grave{a} = \acute{m}$ $\acute{f}\text{-g}\acute{b}\grave{u}$ $\acute{u}k\acute{u}\eta$
 3SG-IMPV = PERF 3SG-cross SG.river
 ‘He was crossing the river.’

7.1.5 Imperative

The Imperative singular is indicated by the bare verbal root (11a–c)). When addressing several people, the 2pl subject prefix \acute{s} - is added to the root (11d)).

- 11a) $\acute{k}\acute{p}\acute{r}$ ‘Answer!’
 b) $\acute{b}\acute{a}$ ‘Come!’
 c) $\eta\acute{m}\acute{a} \acute{a}m^w\acute{i}$ ‘Drink water!’
 d) $\acute{s}\text{-}\eta\acute{m}\acute{a} \acute{a}m^w\acute{i}$ ‘Drink water (pl.)!’

7.1.6 Negation

Negation is marked by the clause enclitic = $k\acute{s}$. The vowel quality varies between the closed vowel [o] and the open [ɔ] but may also be reduced to a mere [ə]. In examples (12a–c), the negation enclitic is directly attached to the verb, whereas in (12d) it follows the direct object.

- 12a) $\acute{e}\text{-}\acute{b}\acute{a} = k\acute{s}$ b) $\acute{i}t\acute{s}\acute{s}\eta$ $n\acute{u}$ $\acute{b}\acute{a}g = k\acute{s}$
 3SG-come = NEG pot DEM.PROX be.big = NEG
 ‘She did not come.’ ‘This pot is not big.’
- c) $\acute{e}j\acute{i}g$ $k\acute{a}r$ $\acute{e}\text{-}\acute{s}\acute{a}b = k\acute{o}$
 game trek ?-be.good = NEG
 ‘Was the game not good?’
- d) $\acute{i}\text{-}\acute{s}\acute{s}\eta$ $\acute{i}n\acute{a}$ $\acute{e} = k\acute{s}$
 1SG-know SG.thing ? = NEG
 ‘I don’t know why!’

8 Syntax

8.1 Verbal serialisation

As other Southern Jukunoid languages, Akum features verbal serialisation: a single event is encoded by two or more verbs without coordinating or subordinating particles in between them. Furthermore, it is obligatory that the subject is shared by the verbs in sequence.

However, it is yet to find out, how exactly verbal serialisation works in Akum. For example, how often the subject can or must be marked on the verbs in series. Whereas in (13a–b) the subject is only indicated on the first verb in series (as it is also the case in Bezen (Kempf 2017)), in (13c) the subject is marked on both verbs. In (13d) the first verb *dží* ‘eat’ and second verb *kám* ‘finish’ seem to form a closer unit, sharing one subject marker, whereas the third verb *ɣmá* ‘drink’ encodes a separate event, introduced by a renewed marking of the subject.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 13a) <i>ì-bá</i> <i>kà = n̄</i>
1SG-come go-PERF
‘I have come.’ | b) <i>ī-dží</i> <i>ɣmá</i>
1PL-eat drink
‘We ate and drank.’ |
| c) <i>ì-kù</i> <i>ì-nā</i> <i>mí</i>
1SG-take 1SG-give 3SG.O
‘I give it to him.’ | d) <i>ī-dží</i> <i>kám</i> <i>ī-ɣmá</i>
1PL-eat finish 1PL-drink
‘We ate and drank’. |

8.2 Relative clauses

Relative clauses seem to be indicated by a clause-final *wó* in Akum, irrespective of the number of the subject, as shown in (14a–b and 15b–c).

- | | |
|--|---|
| 14a) <i>ék^wāk</i> <i>wó</i> <i>n̄</i> <i>bá</i> <i>wó</i>
SG.man DEM.DIST ? come REL
‘That man who came, [...]’ | b) <i>āɣjār</i> <i>jí</i> <i>n̄</i> <i>bá</i> <i>wó</i>
PL.people ? ? come REL
‘The people who came, [...]’ |
|--|---|

In (15), a simple clause structure containing a subject and the intransitive verb *èkì* ‘cry’ (15a) is compared to subordinate clauses in the singular (15b) and plural (15c), both marked by *wó*. Comparing the two types of clauses, a tonal difference on the initial vowel of the verb becomes evident. Whereas in the simple clause, it carries a low tone, it has a mid tone in the subordinate clause.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 15a) <i>ēgbī</i> <i>ná</i> <i>èkì</i>
SG.child DET cry
‘This child cries.’ | b) <i>ēgbī</i> <i>ná</i> <i>ēkì</i> <i>wó</i>
SG.child DET cry REL
‘This child that cries, [...]’ |
|--|---|

- c) *āgbī* *nó* *ēkì* *wó*
 PL.children DET cry REL
 ‘These children that cry, [...].’

Since these are the only examples available to us, it is too early to make a final statement about the tonal marking of relative clauses in Akum. However, in Bezen, the relative clause is marked by a pronoun and a tonal change on the initial vowel of the verb (Kempf 2017).

8.3 Reported speech

Reported speech is introduced by a particle *gé*. In example (7a) *gé* follows the verb of utterance *lóg* ‘say’. In the following examples in (16) this verb of utterance is omitted. We find a similar structure in Bezen, where the verbs of utterance *āryáŋ* ‘say’ or *ótān* ‘tell’ may be omitted and the complement clause is introduced solely by the quotative marker *kò* (Kempf 2017: 62).

- 16a) *ābō* *gé* *à-cū* *ākòm*
 3PL that 1PL?-descend Akum
 ‘They said that we will go down to Akum.’
- b) *í-gé* *ú-ŋmá* *āmwì*
 3sg-that 2sg-drink water
 ‘He said that you should drink water.’
- c) *í-gé* *ì-ŋì*
 3sg-that 1sg-leave
 ‘He said that I should leave.’
- d) *í-gé* *ú-bā*
 3sg-that 2sg-come
 ‘He said that you should come.’

8.4 Questions

Polar questions are formed by a sentence-final vowel with a falling tone (17a). If the last word of the sentence ends with a vowel, this vowel is lengthened (17b). This process is well known from Bezen and Bazim (Kempf 2017; Lovegren 2012: 11).

- 17a) *ākpaŋ* *ś-ndār* *ś*
 Akpəŋ 2SG-see Q
 ‘Akpəŋ, didn’t you see it?’

- b) \bar{s} - $s\bar{a}$ - $b\acute{a}$ \grave{a}
 2SG-FUT-come Q
 ‘Will you come?’

Content questions are formed by interrogative pronouns such as $\grave{a}j\bar{i}r\acute{o}$ / $\grave{a}j\bar{i}$ ‘who?’, $\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$ / $\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ ‘what?’, $l\grave{o}\eta$ ‘when?’ and $\grave{a}m\grave{a}\eta$ ‘how many?’. They remain uninflected and may occur either at the end or the beginning of the clause.

Interrogative pronouns for subject and object remain *in situ*, i.e. interrogative pronouns in preverbal subject position are not shifted after the verb and interrogative pronouns in postverbal object position are not fronted (18b, d–e). Interrogative pronouns for time and quantity also remain *in situ* (18a, c).

18a) $l\grave{o}\eta$ ‘when?’

\acute{s} - $b\acute{a}$ $l\grave{o}\eta$
 2SG-come when
 ‘When did you come?’

b) $\acute{a}j\bar{i}r\acute{o}$ / $\acute{a}j\bar{i}$ ‘who?’

$\acute{a}j\bar{i}r\acute{o}$	\bar{e} - $d\bar{z}\bar{i}$	$\acute{a}j\bar{i}$	$d\bar{z}\acute{a}m$	$\bar{i}g\bar{b}\acute{a}t\bar{s}\acute{e}$	$\bar{i}j\bar{i}$
who	3SG-win	who	kill	lion	3SG
‘Who has won?’		‘Who killed the lion?’			

$\bar{i}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ $n\acute{a}$ $\acute{a}j\bar{i}$
 name 2SG.POSS who
 ‘What is your name?’

c) $\grave{a}m\grave{a}\eta$ ‘how many?’

\bar{s} - $d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ $\grave{a}m\grave{a}\eta$
 2PL-win how.many
 ‘How much did you win?’

d) $\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$ ‘what?’

\bar{s} - $k\bar{w}\grave{o}\eta$	$\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$	$j\grave{e}$	$b\bar{s}$	\acute{s} - $w\acute{u}g$	$\acute{i}n\acute{a}\eta$
2PL-do	what	with	3PL.O	2SG-hear	what
‘What will you (pl.) do to them?’				‘How are you?’	
				(lit. What did you hear?)	

e) $\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$ ‘what?’

\bar{a} - $s\bar{i}$ - $k\grave{o}\eta$	$\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$	\acute{u} - $t\bar{a}\eta$	$\acute{a}d\bar{z}\bar{i}$
3PL-IMPV-do	what	2SG-think	what
‘What are they doing?’		‘What do you think?’	

ònú ðd̥zĩ
 DEM.PROX what
 ‘What is this?’

9 Conclusion

Akum shows the typical Benue-Congo syllable structure (CV, CVC) as well as typical sounds of the Benue-Congo consonant inventory (double and secondary articulation). As is known from other Southern Jukunoid languages, only the consonants *r*, *b*, *g* and nasals are permitted in word-final position and – because they are unreleased – the distinction voiced/voiceless is neutralized. The number and qualities of phonemically distinct vowels remain debatable. There are traits of an ATR-distinction, but they are not consistent across idiolects. Whether ATR is contrastive in the morphosyntax of the language cannot be said now. Rather, at this stage of research it seems that a former ATR contrast has broken down and left behind erratic traces. The dissolution of a former ATR harmony could have paved the way towards neutralization of the prior ATR contrast in a central vowel whose phonemic status remains debatable synchronically. These phenomena are also shared by other Southern Jukunoid languages such as Bezen and Yukuben.

The Akum pronominal system consists of a set of independent and dependent subject pronouns and object and possessive pronouns. Three dependent subject pronouns are distinguished only by tone.

Concerning the nominal morphology, the Akum nominal prefix system is reduced in several aspects compared with its Southern Jukunoid relatives: it only has a set of 4 different nominal prefixes which are vocalic in form and it shows only marginal agreement on adjectives. Yukuben and Bezen have far larger sets of prefixes with a CV- or V- syllabic structure and agreement on numerals, adjectives and demonstratives. The quinary numeral system and SVO basic word order are similar to its Southern Jukunoid relatives Bezen, Yukuben and Kuteb (Kempf 2017; Prischnegg 2021; Anyanwu 2013; Koops 2009). There is yet much to do concerning the description of Southern Jukunoid languages and we hope that this article invites more research.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the Akum speakers in Nigeria and Cameroon for sharing their knowledge with us: Musa and David, Tampa, Tukura William, Malam Godlove and Imutsim Armstrong. Arama Fidelis, a Bezen speaker assisted in translating Kempf's questions to the Akum speakers. The Akum data was collected during the Yukuben documentation project (2004-2007) and the Bezen documentation project (2011-2015). We are very grateful to the Austrian Science Fond for financing research on the Yukuben language from 2004 to 2007 and the Volkswagen Foundation for enabling research on the Bezen language since 2011. We further thank John Rennison from the Department of Linguistics, University of Vienna, for storing the Akum data from Nigeria and two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on this article.

Abbreviations

ATR = advanced tongue root; CA = Cameroonian Akum variety; DEM = demonstrative; DET = determiner; DIST = distant; FUT = future; IMPFV = imperfective; NA = Nigerian Akum variety; NEG = negation; O = object; PBC = Proto Benue-Congo; PERF = perfect; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PROX = proximate; Q = question; REL = relative; SG = singular.

References

- Akumbu, Pius & Elizabeth Brye. 2002. *A rapid appraisal language survey of Akum*. Yaounde: Ministry of scientific and technical research.
- Anyanwu, Rose-Juliet. 2013. *Reference grammar of Yukuben (Jukunoid, Nigeria)*. (Westafrikanische Studien 36). Köln: Köppe.
- Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2021. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Twenty-fourth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.
- Kempf, Viktoria. 2013. Remnants of a noun class system in Bezen. *Afrikanistik-Aegyptologie-Online. Tagungsband Afrikanistentag 2012*. <https://www.afrikanistik-aegyptologie-online.de/archiv/2014/3834>. [last access: 16.05.2017]
- Kempf, Viktoria. 2017. *Verbal serialisation in Bezen (Southern Jukunoid) - with a prelude on verbal morphosyntax*. Köln: Köppe.
- Koops, Robert. 2009. *A grammar of Kuteb. A Jukunoid language of East-Central Nigeria*. African languages monographs 1. Cologne: Köppe.
- Lovegren, Jesse. 2012. Sparse notes on Baazəm. Ms., 1–12. <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~lovegren/baazem.pdf> [last access: 27.01.2014].

- Tamara Prischnegg. 2021. *Das Yukuben und seine Bedeutung für die Legitimierung eines Südjukunoid*. SVH: Düsseldorf.
- Storch, Anne. 1999. *Das Hone und seine Stellung im Zentral-Jukunoid*. Westafrikanische Studien 20. Köln: Köppe.

Book reviews

Creissels, Denis & Konstantin Pozdniakov (eds.) 2015. Les classes nominales dans les langues atlantiques. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.

Viktoria Apel, Humboldt-University of Berlin

This volume edited by Denis Creissels and Konstantin Pozdniakov comprises 16 papers dealing with noun class systems in Atlantic languages (Niger-Congo phylum). It is part of the typological results of five years of collaborative work within the project *Sénélangues* (2009–2014).¹ The aim of this project was to document and describe in-depth little or undescribed Senegalese languages of which most belong to the Atlantic branch. The importance of this project is reflected in the selection of the languages: of the 25 languages that were covered by the researchers, about 40% are considered endangered. Since most of these languages have been integrated into the volume under discussion, this one does not only make a major contribution to the typology of Atlantic languages, but it also conduces to the reconstruction of the noun class system of Proto-Atlantic.

The foremost goal of this collection is to provide a synchronic description of the noun class systems in selected Atlantic languages. In total, it covers fourteen single languages and one dialect continuum. These very detailed and accurate descriptions are completed by one contribution highlighting variations and typological traits of different noun class systems within Atlantic, as well as by one paper presenting a diachronic analysis of noun classes in this branch. There are no articles dealing with a diachronic study of the noun class system within a single language. However, since many of the languages under investigation have received only little or no attention in the past, any diachronic approach might be secondary at the moment.

Apart from the fact that this volume accounts for the understanding of poorly documented languages within Atlantic, it essentially closes an important gap in the documentation of this particular aspect of this branch. For the first time, the noun class systems of a range of

1 The project “*Sénélangues : documentation, description et typologie des langues du Sénégal*” included the institutions LLACAN and DDL of the CNRS, as well as the participation of Sorosoro. It has been supported by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR-09-BLAN-0326). <http://senelanguages.huma-num.fr/>.

smaller and bigger Atlantic languages are comprehensively examined and presented in a way that allows a synchronic comparison of single aspects. Another noteworthy aspect is the fact that the vast majority of papers on single languages use first hand data (except for one). Some of the data might not be new; however, they have never been presented in such rigour and detail, as the editors point out in the preface.

The preface is followed by the 16 papers briefly mentioned above. In the first contribution, Denis Creissels gives a thorough synchronic typological overview of noun class systems within Atlantic. After some definitions and terminological remarks, the author takes a closer look at variation with respect to agreement with depending elements, class marking on nouns, class alternation, verbal nouns, reduction processes, and the semantic content of classes. The second paper by Konstantin Pozdniakov deals with the challenging enterprise of a diachronic analysis and the reconstruction of the systems within this branch of Niger-Congo. Pozdniakov discusses specific phenomena in single languages and sub-branches in impressive detail, and relates them to a possible reconstruction thereof.² These two global papers are followed by the descriptions of single languages (or dialect continua): Keerak/Joola of Kabrousse (Guillaume Segerer), Bayot Kugere (Mbacké Diagne), the Joola dialect continuum (Alain-Christian Bassène), Manjaku (Guillaume Segerer), Balant Ganja (Sékou Biaye & Denis Creissels), Palor and Ndut (Anna Marie Diagne), Laalaa/Léhar (El Hadji Dieye), Kobia (Sylvie Voisin), Nyun Gunyamolo (Sokhna Bao Diop), Nyun of Djifanghor (Nicolas Quint), Biafada (Alain-Christian Bassène), Sereer (Marie Renaudier), Basari (Loïc-Michel Perrin), and Wolof (Konstantin Pozdniakov & Stéphane Robert), in that order. Two papers are noteworthy since they diverge from the simple description of noun class systems. Firstly, the discussion of Palor and Ndut (Diagne) shows that despite the possible presence of nominal affixes there are no agreement classes being associated with these affixes. Thus, speaking of noun classes in these two languages does not seem to be justified (cf. Creissels, p. 49). Secondly, the paper on the Joola dialect continuum (Bassène) focuses on

2 The first two papers by Creissels and Pozdniakov define the two major branches within Atlantic as *Atlantique-nord* and *Atlantique-centre*. Newest research based on lexicostatistics by Segerer (2016), who uses the labels *North* and *Bak* instead, proposes a slightly different internal classification.

the relation between generic nouns and agreement rather than on a global description of its noun class system.

The single languages that are discussed in this volume are from almost all subgroups of Atlantic. About one third of these languages are spoken uniquely in Senegal, while about two thirds additionally spread onto the territories of the neighbouring countries Guinea-Bissau, Mauretania, and Gambia. The only exception is Biafada which is spoken exclusively in Guinea-Bissau. When it comes to the number of speakers, this one ranges from 200 (Nyun of Djifanghor) to over 5 million (Wolof). Although some languages have a couple of thousands of speakers, they are of course not necessarily well documented. Therefore, I truly welcome the decision to concentrate on such poorly or undocumented languages in this volume in the first place. Not only do these data represent new information on these languages, they also contribute to a better understanding of the controversial group of Atlantic on a more global level. In this respect, the choice of leaving apart Senegal's second largest language Pulaar which is – compared to other languages – already well documented, is beyond doubt appropriate.³ Furthermore, the languages that are part of this volume display different degrees of complexity of noun class systems. While some languages have no agreement classes at all (Palor and Ndut), some have ten or less agreement classes (Balant Ganja, Laalaa, Wolof) and some even 26 or more (Biafada, Kobiana, Nyun). This wide range gives a very good impression of the diversity of systems within the branch.

The structure of the individual papers has not been stipulated by the editors. The authors were thus free to organise and present their data in a way that they find suitable for the system of the language under discussion. On the one hand, this approach allows the highlighting of specific phenomena that might be present in one language but not necessarily in another, resulting in considerable variation of length of the papers (from Joola on 11 pages to Wolof on 84 pages). On the other hand, a uniform “skeleton” of the papers would help the reader to compare different languages more easily.

3 Pulaar is the Senegalese variety of the macrolanguage Fula. Fula – which is spoken in 18 countries on the continent being thus the most widespread language in Africa – can be split into ten major dialects (cf. Harrison 2003). The noun class systems of particular varieties, including Pulaar, are well described in numerous contributions (e.g. Arnott 1970, Breedveld 1995, Leger 1998, Sylla 1982).

However, the labelling of the noun classes was standardised in that numbers were excluded and letters – mostly reflecting noun prefixes or affixes on agreement targets – have been used instead. This is a highly useful strategy because any identical number would suggest cognacy of classes, especially within one volume. Since the reconstruction of the noun class system of Proto-Atlantic still faces different serious problems in accounting for synchronic phenomena in individual languages, indeed, class numbers do not seem to be an advantageous tool.

In my final remarks, I shall address some issues related to the terminology used in this volume. Primarily, the term “noun class systems” has been coined by Africanists who basically define complex systems of nominal classification. In other languages outside of Africa the term “gender systems” is much more common. In general, the papers in this volume deal with three concepts related to gender: (1) class markers – usually affixes – that indicate the (head) noun class on the respective (head) noun (*marqueurs nominaux de classe* or *affixes nominaux*), (2) agreement classes that define agreement between the (head) noun and different types of targets, e.g. determiners and pronouns (*schèmes d'accord* or simply *accord*), and (3) the singular-plural pairings of nouns marked by an affix (*appariements*). Although the first paper contributed by Denis Creissels provides transparent definitions of these different concepts, there is not always a clear-cut use of these terms throughout the volume. At numerous places, it remains ambiguous whether an author defines noun class by the noun affixes or whether he or she rather relates to agreement that the nouns establish. Also, the term *appariement* is not used homogeneously. Sometimes it refers to the singular-plural pairing of noun affixes and sometimes to the singular-plural pairing of agreement classes. The inclusion of some terminological remarks at the beginning of each article, as done by Nicolas Quint on Nyun of Djifanghor, could have considerably increased the transparency in this respect. Last but not least, more frequent cross-reference between articles and/or a summarising paper at the end of the volume would have nicely rounded off this great contribution to the understanding of Atlantic languages.

In conclusion, this volume represents an overall valuable input to the description of Atlantic languages in general and to nominal classification therein in particular. It not only covers little or undocu-

mented languages, but also provides detailed studies of noun classes of these languages, including class marking on nouns and agreement targets, the semantic content of classes, and in some cases also the classification of loan words, verbal nouns, and generic nouns. This, together with the two synchronic and diachronic descriptions provided by the first two contributions, makes the current volume a significant resource for any further research on this topic.

References

- Arnott, D. W. 1970. *The nominal and verbal system of Fula*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Breedveld, J. O. 1995. *Form and meaning in Fulfulde: A morphological study of Maasinankoore*. Leiden: Research School CNWS.
- Harrison, Annette. 2003. *Fulfulde language family report*, SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2003-009. <http://www-1.sil.org/silesr/2003/silesr2003-009.html> (15 October 2016).
- Leger, Rudolf. 1998. Noun classes in Fulfulde: The ‘Pulaar’ of Guinea and the ‘Fulfulde’ of Sudan. In Valentin Vydrin & Aleksandr Kibrik (eds.), *La langue, l’Afrique, les Peuls. Volume dédié à Antonina Koval*. Sankt-Peterburg & Moskva: Espace Européen. 323–334
- Segerer, Guillaume. 2016. *A new, innovation-based classification of Atlantic languages*. Paper presented at the 47th Annual Conference on African Linguistics (ACAL), University of California, Berkeley, 25th March, 2016.
- Sylla, Yèro. 1982. *Grammaire modern du pulaar*. Dakar, Abidjan & Lome: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines.

Köhler, Bernhard. 2015. Form und Funktion von Fragesätzen in afrikanischen Sprachen. (Schriften zur Afrikanistik 25). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Viktoria Kempf, Universität Hamburg

Das Ziel der vorliegenden Arbeit ist es, mit Beispielen aus afrikanischen Sprachen zur Theorienbildung in der Linguistik beizutragen. Im Fokus stehen hierbei Fragesätze, wobei Köhler sich in erster Linie auf Sprachen konzentriert, die vermeintlichen Universalien bezüglich Fragesätzen widersprechen.

Köhlers umfangreiches Werk ist in 5 Kapitel eingeteilt. Während im ersten Kapitel auf die Ziele und Vorgehensweise der Studie eingegangen wird, bietet das zweite Kapitel eine allgemeine Einführung in die Thematik der Fragesätze, wobei schon hier eine Zweiteilung in Inhalts- und Ja/Nein-Fragen (J/N-Fragen) etabliert wird. Dementsprechend werden im dritten Kapitel Inhaltsfragen behandelt, vom Autor W-Fragen genannt, und im vierten Kapitel J/N-Fragen. Das letzte Kapitel fasst die Ergebnisse der Arbeit zusammen.

Im ersten Kapitel beschreibt Köhler das Ziel seiner Arbeit: Er möchte eine Forschungslücke schließen, die darin besteht, dass morphologische und syntaktische Daten aus afrikanischen Sprachen kaum bei der Theorienbildung berücksichtigt werden (S. 7). Dabei betreibt der Autor „konfrontative Linguistik“ (S. 8), indem er eben solche Daten Universalien entgegenstellt. Diese Universalien sind Aussagen über Fragesätze, die ForscherInnen aus den unterschiedlichsten Teilbereichen der Linguistik als allgemein gültig postulieren (S. 13). Köhler gliedert die Universalien thematisch und nummeriert sie. Universalien 1–14 sind zum Beispiel der Abgrenzung von Fragen als einem Zustand, in dem ein Mensch sich eines Sachverhaltes nicht sicher ist, von Fragesätzen als konkrete Ausformulierung der Frage gewidmet (S. 28).

Das erste Kapitel beinhaltet eine sehr detaillierte Literaturzusammenstellung zu Fragesätzen in afrikanischen Sprachen (auf insgesamt 10 Seiten, S. 17–27), darunter auch viele nicht publizierte Werke aus afrikanischen Universitäten.

Im zweiten Kapitel „Allgemeine Systematik der Fragesätze“ stellt der Autor mehrere Ansätze zur Klassifikation von Fragesätzen vor, die von einer basalen Zweiteilung in W-Fragen und J/N-Fragen (Kap. 2.1) bis zu einer Einteilung in 9 Satztypen (Kap. 2.4) reichen. Diese hohe Anzahl von Fragesatztypen wurde von Ndimele (1999) in der

igboiden Sprache Echie identifiziert. Seine Analyse widerlegt Köhler in einer fundierten Diskussion und zeigt auf, dass es auch im Echie formal nur zwei basale Fragesatztypen gibt. Nicht alle AutorInnen gehen so weit wie Ndimele (1999) und etablieren 9 Fragesatztypen. Es gibt aber Ansätze, in denen Alternativfragen zusammen mit J/N-Fragen den W-Fragen gegenübergestellt werden. Diese Ansätze werden in Kap. 2.2. diskutiert. Andere Forscherinnen gehen zwar von mehr als zwei basalen Fragesatztypen aus, hier gibt es jedoch keinen Konsens über die grundlegenden Satztypen (Kap. 2.3). Köhler bemängelt die Vermischung von „formalen“, „semantischen“ und „pragmatischen“ Kriterien für die Einteilung von Fragesatztypen und betont, dass er sich auf den kleinsten „gemeinsamen Nenner“ (S. 52) konzentriert, die zwei eingangs benannten basalen Fragesatztypen W-Fragen und J/N-Fragen.

Diese zwei Fragesatztypen werden in Kapitel 3 und 4 jeweils im Detail behandelt. Beide Kapitel sind ähnlich aufgebaut: zunächst werden die Universalien vorgestellt (Kap. 3.1.1 und Kap. 4.1), daraufhin Beispiele aus Khoisansprachen präsentiert, die diese Universalien bestätigen (Kap. 3.1.2 und Kap. 4.2), und danach Sprachen diskutiert, die die vorher genannten Universalien widerlegen. Anschließend werden die Konsequenzen für die Postulierung etwaiger Universalien diskutiert.

Kapitel 3 hat insgesamt zwei Unterkapitel: in Kapitel 3.1 befasst sich der Autor generell mit der Semantik von W-Wörtern, während in Kapitel 3.2 mögliche Positionen von W-Wörtern im Satz erörtert werden. Wie oben erwähnt, folgt auf die Universalien in Kap. 3.1.1 die positive Evidenz aus den Khoisansprachen (Kap. 3.1.2). Kapitel 3.1.3 ist generalisierten W-Wortstämmen gewidmet und 3.1.4 auffälligen Ähnlichkeiten zwischen „wer?“ und „was?“. In Kapitel 3.1.5 werden „W-Wörter für Verben“ behandelt, die insbesondere in nilo-saharanischen Sprachen verbreitet sind, und in Kap. 3.1.6 wird auf „weitere Besonderheiten von W-Wörtern“ eingegangen. Das letzte Unterkapitel 3.1.7 schließt den Abschnitt mit einem Fazit ab.

In Kapitel 3.1.2 „Gewöhnliche Muster: Evidenz aus dem Khoisan“ wird schnell ersichtlich, dass die Khoisansprachen nicht so gewöhnlich sind, wie der Titel es vermuten lässt. Der Autor zählt zwar eine Reihe von Fragewörtern aus |Xam, †Khomani und ||Ani auf (S. 89–91), zeigt aber auch Fragesätze, die eine Fragepartikel gänzlich vermissen lassen, wie zum Beispiel die Ausdrücke, die im !Xū und !Xóō mit der

Bedeutung ‚wann?‘ gebraucht werden: /*ām-à nèè* (!Xū) lässt sich mit ‚gib mir die Sonne‘ übersetzen und *kí dào tí āh’āki* (!Xóö) bedeutet wörtlich ‚auf dem Weg, der irgendwo ist‘ (S. 95).

Zu den weniger universellen Bildungsmöglichkeiten für Inhaltsfragen gehören generalisierte Wortstämme, wie sie in Kapitel 3.1.3 behandelt werden. Das sind Silben, die in gleicher Form in verschiedenen Fragewörtern, mindestens jedoch in „wer?“ und „was?“ vorkommen. In atlantischen Sprachen treten sie in Verbindung mit Nominalklassenmarkern auf. Generalisierte W-Wortstämme grenzt Köhler von dem in Kapitel 3.1.4 behandelten Phänomen dadurch ab, dass in ersteren diese Stämme in mehr als den zwei grundlegenden Fragesätzen nach „wer“ und „was“ vorkommen (S. 117).

Kapitel 3.1.5 ist Fragewörtern mit verbalen Eigenschaften gewidmet, bei Köhler kurz „W-Verben“. Fünf Unterkapitel (Kap. 3.1.5.1–3.1.5.5) sind allein für nilosaharanische Sprachen aus der Kadugli-Krongo-Gruppe reserviert. Für Kadugli (Kap. 3.1.5.4) und Tuntum (Kap. 3.1.5.5), die atlantische Sprache Wolof (3.1.5.8) und die nicht klassifizierte Sprache Hadza (3.1.5.9) widerlegt Köhler die Existenz von W-Verben. Im Unterkapitel zu kordofanischen Sprachen (3.1.5.6) zeigt er, dass von den 9 untersuchten Sprachen nur eine einzige, das Otoro, ein W-Verb *-aḏa* oder *-aṭa* ‚be where‘ aufweist. Jedoch merkt der Autor an, dass die Datenlage für kordofanische Sprachen oft auf Wortlisten beschränkt ist (S. 156), sodass in diesem Bereich zunächst weitere Grundlagenforschung vonnöten ist. Insgesamt ist unter den Sprachen, die W-Verben aufweisen, die Frage nach dem Ort am häufigsten in einem Verb lexikalisiert (S. 189).

In Kapitel 3.1.6 geht es um Besonderheiten von W-Wörtern, die nach der Zeit fragen, wie der Markierung von Tempus und Aspekt an W-Adverbien, wie sie zum Beispiel in den surmischen Sprachen Didinga und Murle und in der Guragesprache Chaha vorkommen. Hier gibt es unterschiedliche W-Adverbien, je nachdem ob man nach einem Ereignis in der Vergangenheit oder in der Zukunft fragt. Darüber hinaus widerlegt Köhler in diesem Kapitel die Beobachtung Visers (1998), dass im Naro nur Fragewörter silbische Nasale aufweisen können, indem er die nicht-Fragewörter *m̄* ‚he/she/it‘ und *n̄* ‚on‘ präsentiert, die aus silbischen Nasalen bestehen (S. 208).

In Kapitel 3.2 steht die syntaktische Position von W-Wörtern im Fokus. Die in Kapitel 3.2.1 vorgestellten Universalien zur Wortstellung in W-Fragen werden im folgenden Kapitel 3.2.2 anhand von

Khoisansprachen exemplifiziert. So ist die Annahme, dass Fragewörter meistens satzinitial stehen, sehr weit verbreitet, ebenso die Hypothese, W-Wörter stünden an gleicher Stelle, an der das erfragte Element in einem Aussagesatz steht, also in situ (S. 231). In Kapitel 3.2.3 stellt Köhler Sprachgruppen vor, in denen diese zwei prominenten Annahmen nicht zutreffen (Kap. 3.2.3.1; Kap. 3.2.3.2; Kap. 3.2.3.4–3.2.3.9). Die bevorzugte Wortstellung in W-Fragen nach dem Subjekt ist in den westtschadischen Bole-Tangale- (Kap. 3.2.3.1) und Bade-Ngizim-Sprachen (Kap. 3.2.3.2) zum Beispiel VOS, während die basale Wortstellung SVO ist. Somit steht das Fragewort hier weder satzinitial, noch in situ. Die folgenden Beispiele aus dem Bole zeigen die Verschiebung des Fragewortes nach rechts bei der Abfrage des Subjektes (S. 251f.).

Aussagesatz mit Basiswortstellung SVO (Benton 1912: 4)

andrai-ye wo-ni rimu
 rich.person-the gave-him camel
 ‘the rich man gave him a camel’

W-Frage nach dem Subjekt mit nach rechts verschobenem W-Wort *lò* ‚wer?‘ (Lukas 1970–71: 245)

?ñi ?émé lò
 do this who
 ‚wer hat das getan?‘

W-Frage nach dem Objekt mit in situ stehendem W-Wort *le* ‚was?‘ (Benton 1912: 8)

ka ina (ye)le
 you see what
 ‘what do you see?’

Für Biu-Mandara-Sprachen (Kap. 3.2.3.3), Bantu-Sprachen (Kap. 3.2.3.10) und das Sango (Kap. 3.2.3.11) widerlegt Köhler die Existenz ungewöhnlicher W-Wortpositionen. Ein Vergleich der Sprachen, die außergewöhnliche Fragewortpositionen aufweisen, führt zu dem Schluss, dass die Besonderheiten stets bei der Erfragung des Subjekts auftreten (S. 327f.): Das Fragewort wird hier unabhängig von der Basiswortstellung, SVO oder VSO, nach rechts verschoben, während das Objekt in situ abgefragt wird.

Kapitel 4 ist J/N-Fragen gewidmet und hat insgesamt acht Unterkapitel. Anhand von Beispielen aus den Khoisansprachen werden in

Kap. 4.2 typische Bildungsmuster für diesen Fragetyp präsentiert. Hier sind entweder Fragepartikeln für die Bildung dieser Fragen zuständig oder die weltweit verbreitete steigende Intonation. In den Kapiteln 4.3.3 und 4.3.4 werden Beispiele aus Kwa- und Gur-Sprachen gezeigt, die der weit verbreiteten Annahme widersprechen, J/N-Fragen wiesen universell eine steigende Intonation auf (S. 347ff.). Die meisten der von Köhler hier gezeigten Sprachen weisen entweder einen Fragetiefton am Satzende oder eine fallende Frageintonation auf (S. 447).

Die in Kapitel 4.4.2–4.4.5 vorgestellten Sprachen widersprechen der Annahme, dass Fragesätze morphologisch komplexer seien als Aussagesätze. Köhler zeigt anhand von zehn afroasiatischen und einer nilotischen Sprache, dass Fragesätze durchaus morphologisch einfacher sein können als Aussagesätze. Das ist in erster Linie dem Vorhandensein von Deklarativ-, Fokus- oder Indikativmarkern in Aussagesätzen geschuldet: Morpheme, die in J/N-Fragesätzen in diesen Sprachen fehlen (S. 471).

In Kapitel 4.5 präsentiert Köhler Beispiele aus den omotischen Sprachen für das weltweit eher seltene Phänomen einer interrogativen Morphologie an Verben. Hier übernehmen komplexe Portman-teaumorpheme, die als Suffixe für die Markierung von TAM, Person, Genus und Numerus zuständig sind, auch die Aufgabe der Frage-markierung. Ebenfalls selten ist das Phänomen der Inversion in J/N-Fragen (Kap. 4.6). Dieses wurde durch die Fokussierung auf indogermanische Sprachen in der Vergangenheit überschätzt (S. 495). So findet Köhler auch nur Beispiele aus zwei afrikanischen Sprachen, Hamar und Dinka, die eine Inversion in J/N-Fragen aufweisen.

Kapitel 4.7 ist der Widerlegung der Hypothese gewidmet, dass in der Bantusprache Akɔɔse Fragesätze obligatorisch mit dem Verb *kèn* „fragen“ gebildet werden müssten. Köhler zeigt, dass es sich bei *kèn* nicht um ein Verb handelt, und das Morphem auch nicht obligatorisch in allen Fragen vorkommt. Vielmehr handele es sich hier um eine Fragepartikel mit wahrscheinlich verbalem Ursprung, so Köhler (S. 509).

Insgesamt ist Köhlers Werk ein herausragendes und akribisch ausgearbeitetes Buch. Dank seiner expliziten und zugänglichen Schreibweise lässt es sich wunderbar lesen. Der Aufbau ist klar und übersichtlich, nicht zuletzt durch die in den Kapiteln 3.1, 3.2 und 4 wiederholte Abfolge von (a) Universalien, (b) Evidenz aus dem

Khoisan, (c) Gegenbeispielen und (d) Fazit. Köhlers Verzeichnisse und Listen ermöglichen einen schnellen und unkomplizierten Zugang zu den Beispielen, Tabellen, Universalien und zur Literatur. Die Zusammenfassungen am Ende jedes längeren Kapitels bieten einen schnellen Überblick über die Ergebnisse. Somit ist das Werk sowohl für Studierende, als auch für fortgeschrittene LinguistInnen geeignet.

Zu Beginn des Werkes wäre eine Diskussion der ausgewählten Sprachen wünschenswert gewesen. Zwar schreibt Köhler, dass er auf Sprachen eingeht, deren Strukturen nicht mit den vermeintlichen Universalien vereinbar sind (S. 9), und listet zudem ein umfangreiches Korpus von Literatur zu Fragesätzen in afrikanischen Sprachen auf (S. 17–27). Es wird daraus jedoch nicht ersichtlich, welche dieser Sprachen in seinem Werk berücksichtigt werden und wie die Auswahl begründet ist. In einigen Kapiteln überwiegen Sprachen aus einer Untergruppe, wie zum Beispiel die atlantischen Sprachen in der Diskussion um generalisierte W-Wortstämme (Kap. 3.1.3) und die nilosaharanischen Sprachen im Abschnitt über verbale W-Wörter (8 von 13 Sprachen, davon fünf Sprachen allein aus der Kadugli-Krongo Gruppe; vgl. Kap. 3.1.5). Hier hätte man sicherlich einige Sprachen in einem Kapitel zusammenfassen können, wie es zum Beispiel in Kapitel 3.1.5.6 zu den kordofanischen Sprachen geschehen ist. Auch regelmäßiger Verweise auf die vorher eingeführten Universalien wären bei der Vorstellung der Sprachen wünschenswert, spätestens in den Zusammenfassungen. So könnten die Abweichungen noch einmal deutlich gemacht werden.

Das Ziel, Daten aus afrikanischen Sprachen für die linguistische Theorienbildung zusammenzustellen, hat Köhler mehr als erreicht: Er zeigt eine Vielzahl von Universalien abweichender Bildungsweisen von Fragesätzen aus allen vier auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent vertretenen Phyla. Zudem widerlegt er mehrmals Hypothesen von ForscherInnen, wie in Kapitel 2.4, 3.1.3.7, 3.1.5.4 und einigen weiteren Kapiteln. Darüber hinaus stellt Köhler Regelmäßigkeiten innerhalb der Sprachen fest, die abweichende Muster aufweisen: So zeigt er bei der Untersuchung außergewöhnlicher W-Wortpositionen die Tendenz einer Rechtsverschiebung von W-Pronomina bei Fragen nach dem Subjekt auf, während Objekte in denselben Sprachen in situ abgefragt werden (S. 327f.).

Die Tatsache, dass Köhler mit den Universalien keine Essenzen aus verschiedenen Thesen präsentiert, sondern die unterschiedlichen

AutorInnen für sich sprechen lässt, zieht die Arbeit zwar einerseits in die Länge, gleichzeitig wird darin aber deutlich, dass Analysen vom Standpunkt der ForscherInnen beeinflusst sind. Dies wird besonders anschaulich, wo Köhler zum Teil widersprüchliche Analysen eines Phänomens in einer Sprache vergleicht und damit noch einmal vor Augen führt, dass Wissenschaft sich der Wahrheit stets nur nähern kann.

Bibliographie

- Benton, Philip A. 1912 (Reprint 1968). *Notes on some languages of the Western Sudan*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
- Lukas, Johannes 1970-1971. Die Personalia und das primäre Verb im Bolanci (Nordnigerien). Mit Beiträgen über das Karekare. *Afrika und Übersee* 54(4). 237–286.
- Ndimele, Ozo-Mekuri. 1999. On the typology of questions: the Echie example. *Journal of Asian and African studies* 58. 203–220.
- Visser, Hessel. 1998. The phonological system of Naro. In Mathias Schladt (Hg.), *Language, identity and conceptualization among the Khoisan*. Köln: Köppe. 117–136.

Friedrich, Patricia. 2014. Afrikanische Silbenspiele. Betrachtet im Kontext von Sondersprachen. (Schriften zur Afrikanistik 21). Frankfurt et al.: Peter Lang.

Yvonne Treis, CNRS-LLACAN

Auf der ganzen Welt spielt man mit Sprache und manipuliert man Sprache auf kreative Weise. Sprecher tun dies ganz bewusst aus Spaß an der Freude, um Nachrichten verschlüsselt weiterzugeben oder Wörter zu vermeiden. Das vorliegende Buch von Patricia Friedrich (PF) widmet sich einer besonderen Form von Sprachmanipulation, den Silbenspielen in Afrika, die durch das folgende Hausa-Beispiel illustriert werden.

Hausa (Alidou 1997: 34; zit. n. Friedrich 2014: 31)

góo.mà-shâa-dá.yá
,elf^f

gó.bò.má.bà.shá.bà.dá.bà.yá
(verschlüsselte Form) ,elf^f

PF untersucht die formalen Merkmale dieser Sprachspiele im Sprachvergleich, beschäftigt sich mit den soziolinguistischen Aspekten ihres Gebrauchs und vergleicht ihre Formen und Funktionen mit anderen Arten von Sprachmanipulation in Afrika.

Die Einleitung (S. 13–19) fasst die Ziele des Buchs zusammen, führt den Begriff Silbenspiel ein, gibt einen kurzen Überblick über den Forschungsstand und macht Anmerkungen zum Aufbau und zur Datenpräsentation. PF legt dar, dass sich bisher insbesondere Phonologen für Silbenspiele interessierten, um sog. „externe“ Evidenz für die Gültigkeit von phonologischen Einheiten und Regeln einer Sprache zu bekommen. Soziolinguistische Studien zu Silbenspielen und eine systematische, sprachvergleichende Aufarbeitung ihrer formalen Merkmale fehlen jedoch. Diese Lücke möchte PF schließen.

Das zentrale Kapitel 2 der Arbeit (S. 21–80) beginnt mit einer Diskussion der Silbendefinition und geht dann anhand von zahlreichen Beispielen der Frage nach, welche Verschlüsselungstechniken in Silbenspielen übereinzelsprachlich geteilt werden. Zu den häufigsten Strategien phonologischer Manipulation – entweder allein oder in Kombination mit anderen Strategien angewendet – zählen die Affigierung von zusätzlichen Silben an einen Wortteil (siehe Beispiel oben) und die Permutation von Silben. Daneben sind Reduplizierungen, Substitutionen und Verkürzungen zu beobachten. Die semitische Sprache Amharisch verwendet zur Verschlüsselung eine bestimmte

Schablone aus Wurzelkonsonanten. Aus Sprachen mit einer Schrifttradition sind außerdem Sprachspiele bekannt, die auf der orthografischen Realisation von Wörtern basieren, sog. Buchstabierspiele. Der letzte Teilabschnitt diskutiert, wie Sprecher verschiedener Sprachen in ihren Silbenspielen mit bestimmten segmentalen oder autosegmentalen Einheiten, z.B. Diphthongen, Geminaten, Tönen, umgehen.

Kapitel 3 (S. 81–103) widmet sich den bisher stiefmütterlich behandelten soziolinguistischen Aspekten. PF trägt aus vorhandenen Veröffentlichungen die verstreuten und spärlichen Informationen zu den Nutzern, zu den Funktionen und zu den Kontexten der Verwendung von Silbenspielen zusammen. Als hauptsächliche Nutzer kristallisieren sich Kinder und Jugendliche, meist weiblichen Geschlechts und aus dem ländlichen Raum, heraus. Allen Nutzern, egal welcher Sprachgemeinschaft sie angehören, scheint gemeinsam, dass sie Silbenspiele aus Freude an sprachlicher Kreativität, zur geheimen Weitergabe von Informationen und zur Schaffung von Gruppenzugehörigkeit pflegen. Da die Verschlüsselung von Informationen durch Silbenspiele eigentlich unzureichend und mit der Zeit leicht durchschaubar ist, können Silbenspiele nicht nur zur Geheimhaltung dienen, sondern auch erst Geheimnisse schaffen. Wie PF zeigt, ist Geheimhaltung auch gar nicht die primäre Motivation von Silbenspielen, sondern die gemeinsame Beherrschung und Verwendung von sprachlichen Verschlüsselungstechniken ermöglicht einer Gruppe, sich nach außen abzugrenzen und unter ihren Mitgliedern Identität zu stiften.

In dem wichtigen Kapitel 4 (S. 105–136), das dem vorliegenden Buch den Untertitel verliehen hat, betrachtet PF Silbenspiele vor dem Hintergrund anderer Formen sprachlicher Manipulation. Ausgehend von einer Fallstudie zum Pulaar-Silbenspiel *haala junnitti* („verdrehte Sprache“), in der noch einmal auf kompakte Weise die phonologischen Manipulationsstrategien und die Funktionen von Silbenspielen zusammengefasst werden, arbeitet PF die strukturellen und funktionalen Unterschiede zwischen Silbenspielen und sozial gebundenen Sondersprachen (Respektsprachen, rituellen Sprachen, Argots und Jugendsprachen) heraus. PF zeigt, dass sich die meisten funktionalen Überschneidungen im Bereich der Jugendsprachen ergeben. Sowohl Silbenspiele als auch urbane Jugendsprachen dienen zur Konstruktion von Gruppenzugehörigkeit und dem Verbergen gruppeninterner Konversation; in beiden spielt der kreative Umgang mit Sprache eine

wichtige Rolle. Im Gegensatz zu Silbenspielen sind die Nutzer von Jugendsprachen jedoch eher männlich und urban, ihre Sprachvarietät überbrückt zudem interethnische Unterschiede. Während in Silbenspielen (wie der Name bereits sagt) ausschließlich phonologische Manipulationsstrategien zur Anwendung kommen, greifen Sondersprachen neben diesen auch in großem Maße auf lexikalisch-semantische Strategien zurück, um Wörter zu ersetzen und zu verschleiern. Die Sprecher bedienen sich dabei u.a. Lehnwörter, semantischer Verschiebungen, Ableitungen, Periphrasen und in Respekt- und rituellen Sprachen auch Archaismen.

PF fasst die wichtigsten Ergebnisse ihrer Arbeit im Kapitel 5 (S. 137–148) zusammen, erarbeitet eine Gesamtdefinition von „Silbenspiel“ bestehend aus formal-linguistischen und funktional-soziolinguistischen Kriterien (S. 138). Abschließend skizziert sie offene Forschungsfragen, z.B. zum Zusammenhang zwischen dem morphologischen System einer Sprache und der Existenz bestimmter Verschlüsselungsstrategien, zur Veränderlichkeit von Silbenspielen durch die Zeit. PF hebt besonders hervor, dass die Dokumentationslage zu Silbenspielen in afrikanischen Sprachen sehr mangelhaft ist. Das Werk endet mit einer Bibliografie, einem Index und einem kurzen Anhang, der einen von der Autorin transkribierten, glossierten und übersetzten Text zur ‚verdrehten Sprache‘ des Pulaar enthält.

Das vorliegende Buch ist ein sehr klar formuliertes, angenehm zu lesendes, übersichtlich strukturiertes und informatives Überblickswerk zu Silbenspielen in Afrika. Es bietet einen guten Einstieg für alle, die sich in weiterführenden Forschungen mit diesem Thema auseinandersetzen wollen. Der nützliche Index erleichtert das Auffinden von Informationen. Die Arbeit enthält explizite Definitionen, die im Laufe der Beschreibung entwickelt werden, und präsentiert gut nachvollziehbare Argumente für die Analysen und Kategorisierungen, die von der Autorin vorgenommen werden. Das Werk ist mit größter Sorgfalt redigiert worden, einzig Bender & Demisse (1983) müsste Teshome & Bender (1983) zitiert werden. Die Übersetzung der amharischen *Azmari*, umherziehender professioneller Musiker, mit ‚Minnesänger‘ (S. 127) ist vielleicht etwas unglücklich. Die Bezeichnung der südafrikanischen Respektsprache *Hlonipha* sollte nicht synonym für alle Sprachen oder Register stehen, mit denen Respekt gegenüber der Schwiegerverwandtschaft ausgedrückt wird (S. 113), da diese Meideregister – wie wir seit einigen Jahren wissen (siehe Kolbusa 2000,

Treis 2005, Mitchell 2015) – auch in Tansania und Äthiopien (und dort natürlich unter anderen Namen) zu finden sind.

In der Einleitung wählt PF für den neuen Begriff „Silbenspiel“ für das Phänomen der spielerischen Sprachverschlüsselung, das in der englischsprachigen Literatur mit „play language“, „language game“, „secret language“ und vielen weiteren Begriffen sehr uneinheitlich bezeichnet wird. PF entscheidet sich für „Silbenspiel“, da sich die Verschlüsselungsstrategien fast alle auf die Silbe beziehen. Ich hätte vermutlich in Anlehnung an Begriffe wie „Sondersprachen“, „Jugendsprachen“ und „Respektsprachen“, dem Begriff „Spielsprache“ den Vorzug gegeben, auch um den Eindruck zu verhindern, dass sich alle phonologischen Manipulationen auf die Silbe beziehen müssen – was nämlich nicht der Fall ist, wie das Kapitel 2.5 zeigt.

Es ist sicher der schlechten Dokumentationslage zu afrikanischen Silbenspielen geschuldet, dass die Diskussion von Beispielen aus nicht-afrikanischen Sprachen in den Kapiteln 1 bis 3 einen großen Raum einnimmt; nur etwa die Hälfte der Beispiele stammt dort aus Afrika. In der Arbeit fehlen auch Informationen, wie verbreitet Silbenspiele auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent eigentlich sind – aber auch diese Lücke ist m.E. nicht der Autorin, sondern dem noch lückenhaften Forschungsstand anzulasten. Die Literatur zu Silbenspielen wird akribisch durchforstet und aufgearbeitet, jedoch nur bis zum Jahre 2009. Da das vorliegende Werk 2014 erschienen ist, irritiert es, dass die neueste Literatur zu Sprachmanipulation in Afrika (beispielsweise Storch 2011) nicht berücksichtigt wurde. Dies erklärt sich jedoch zum Teil daraus,¹ dass PF's Monografie die veröffentlichte Version einer Magisterarbeit aus dem Jahre 2009 ist. Unter ihrem früheren Namen Patricia Korte verfasste PF die Arbeit mit dem Titel *Kidahid kiiwiad kiilahad kinnittjud*?² *Silbenspiele und ihre Kontexte* an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität im Institut für Afrikanische Sprachwissenschaften (Betreuer: Rainer Voßen). Diese Information hätte unbedingt in dem vorliegenden Werk erwähnt werden müssen.

Bibliographie

Alidou, Ousseina D. 1997. *A phonological study of language games in six languages of Niger*. Bloomington: Indiana University PhD thesis.

-
- 1 Ich danke Bernhard Köhler für diese Auskunft.
 - 2 Übersetzung von PF: ‚Kannst Du die verdrehte Sprache sprechen?‘

- Kolbusa, Stefanie 2000. *Ingamwana nyakyusa Schwiegermeidung*. Bayreuth: Universität Bayreuth Magisterarbeit.
- Mitchell, Alice 2005. Extra-ordinary morphology in an avoidance register of Datooga. In Ruth Kramer, Elizabeth C. Zsiga & One Tlale Boyer (eds.), *Selected proceedings of the 44th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla. 188–198.
- Storch, Anne 2011. *Secret manipulations. Language and context in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Teshome Demisse & M. Lionel Bender 1983. An argot of Addis Ababa unattached girls. *Language in Society* 12. 339–347.
- Treis, Yvonne 2005. Avoiding their names – avoiding their eyes: How Kambaata women respect their in-laws. *Anthropological Linguistics* 47(3). 292–320.

