

Nupoid reconstructions: a temporary handlist

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THE AUTHOR**

Roger Blench
Mallam Dendo
8, Guest Road
Cambridge CB1 2AL
United Kingdom
Voice/ Fax. 0044-(0)1223-560687
Mobile worldwide (00-44)-(0)7967-696804
E-mail R.Blench@odi.org.uk
<http://www.rogerblench.info/RBOP.htm>

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1. Introduction

This is a partial list of reconstructions proposed for proto-Nupoid. It is based on the original elicitation list used for fieldwork. As a result, therefore, items such as cassava or mirror, which do not reconstruct are omitted, thereby leaving gaps in the numbering. I first compiled this in the 1980s so it is definitely a bit out of date. Also, it stops half-way through for some reason. I am trying to complete. The datasheets are only partly typed into the computer, so you have to take my reconstructed forms on trust.

No index is yet available, so you'll just have to look through till you find the word that interests you. It is, however, organized by semantic fields, broadly.

Broadly speaking, the arrangement is as follows;

Gloss
Scientific name, if appropriate
Proposed reconstruction(s)

Each reconstruction is followed by a Roman numeral indicating the level of Nupoid to which a certain term reconstructs. The key is as follows;

I all branches
II Nupe, Gwari & Gade only
III Nupe and Gwari only
IV Nupe only

It has not proved possible to reconstruct the second syllable of certain nominals; these are left with CV in the slot at present.

A major defect of the reconstructions is that they do not include the class-prefix. The reason for this is that Ebirá, Gwari and Nupe are exceedingly bare of indications as to their nature; the prefixes in Ebirá are demonstrably later additions. We are therefore compelled to assume those in Gade may in part represent the original prefix system. However, this topic is reserved for further investigation.

The reconstructions are very conservative about prosodic features; labialization and palatalization are only reconstructed where their attestation is so consistent as to make their presence in PN reasonably certain. However, it is likely that these features were more widespread in PN than the reconstructions suggest.

The next column indicates the data availability. If attestations of a lexical item are available for all four main branches of Nupoid then a '+' is marked. Anything less complete is indicated with '-'.

Reliability of reconstruction

The reliability of the reconstruction is graded 1,2 or 3. Three is almost certain, whereas 1 and 2 are less so. Initial consonants in Nupoid appear to be remarkably mutable for certain lexical items. All reconstructions are as it were, starred items, i.e. pseudo-reconstructions, since they are not based on a rigorous examination of the sound correspondences.

In cases where the second syllable is unreconstructable I have graded the reconstruction of the first syllable.

This section should not be taken too seriously, the tedious business of searching a myriad of languages for potential cognates is long and also dogged by incomplete data.

Roger Blench Handlist of Nupoid reconstructions

There are several assumptions made here about the phonology of Proto-Nupoid (PN) here. The first is that there were nine vowels, representing those preserved in Gade and Ebira today. The second is that none were nasalized; secondary nasalization of vowels appears to have arisen after Gade split away from PN, and often appears to derive from metathesis in CVCV stems.

An observation that can be made with some assurance about PN is that there were many less verbal nouns than are attested today. Many abstract nouns retain a virtually unchanged stem but develop a noun with a bewildering variety of affixes, suggesting that the nouns cannot be reconstructed to PN.

Underlining is used throughout in place of subdots to distinguish the expanded and non-expanded vowel series.

Table 1. Nupoid reconstructions by gloss

No.	English gloss	Reconstruction	Data	Proposed reconstru	Nupoid outside Cognates	Comments
1.	Guinea-yam (Dioscorea guineensis)	<u>eci</u> (I)	+	3	PAC	Originally a term for wild yam
2.	Aerial yam (Dioscorea bulbifera)	adu (III)	-	3	PBC	Also exists in a wild form
3.	Red yam (Dioscorea cayenensis)	n/a	+			Perhaps not regarded as a species distinct from D. Guineensis
4.	Water-yam (Dioscorea alata)	n/a	+			The date of introduction of D. alata is disputed, but certainly not proto--Nupoid.
5.	Taro (Old cocoyam/Colocasia esculenta)	koko (I)	+	3	PBC	Might be an ubiquitous loanword
6.	Sorghum (Sorghum bicolor)	aky <u>u</u> (I)	+	1	PBC	Originally a term for wild grain
7.	Bulrush millet (Pennisetum spp.)	mayi (II)	+	1	PBC	Several races of millet have a rather kuyi (IV) +3 confused terminology -but all appear as a compound with 'grain'.
8.	Fonio (Digitaria exilis)	fulu (III)	-	3		not certain -loanword in Yoruba?
9.	Cowpea (Vigna unguiculata)	<u>eza</u> (I)	+	3	PAC	Wild plant indigenous to W. Africa
10.	Flood-land bean (as above)	ri-kapa (II)	-	3	?	Not quite certain what this bean is
11.	Bambara groundnut (V. subterranea)	<u>ibu</u> (III)	-	2	PBC	'-kpa' attested in vendors' cries
12.	Gourd (Generic)	pa(pa) (I)	+	1	?	'ebo', 'babo' & u-gba might all be ebo (III) +2?connected
13.	Gourd-bottle (Lagenaria siceraria)	u-gba (II)	+	2?		Confused glosses
14.	Gourd-bottle (Lagenaria siceraria)	babo (III)	+	2?		
15.	Gourd (spherical)	koCV (I)	-	3	?	second syllable unreconstructable

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No.	English gloss	Reconstruction	Data	Proposed reconstru	Nupoid outside Cognates	Comments
16.	Tiger-nut (Cyperus esculentus)	<u>efa</u> (I)	+	3	?	assuming correct species identified
17.	Garden egg (Solanum melongena)	nyaku (I)	+	2	?	metathesized to 'kunya' outside Ebira
18.	Okra (Hibiscus esculentus)	kpeCV (I)	+	3	?	second syllable unreconstructable
19.	Egusi melon (Citrullus lanatus)	para (I)	+	3	?	eci (III) +2?
20.	Edible squash (Cucurbita pepo)	epe (II)	+	2	PBC	'kambu' may be a loanword kambu (III) +2?
21.	Sorelle (Hibiscus sabdariffa)	ama (III)	-	3	?	
22.	Sesame seeds (Sesamum indicum)	eso (IV)	-	3	PBC	but might be a loan into Nupe group
23.	Sesame leaves	lala (III)	-	3	?	loan?
24.	Bitterleaf (Vernonia amygdalina)	latsu (III)	-	2	?	
25.	Kenaf (Hibiscus cannabinus)	n/a				
26.	Plantain/banana	yaba (III)	-	3?		unless Hausa loanword?
27.	Cow-itch (Mucuna pruriens)	n/a				
28.	Horse bean (Canavalia ensiformis)	gbalagbala(III)	-	2?		probably loaned into Hausa
29.	Canarium tree (Canarium schweinfurthii)	kushe (III)	-	2?		
30.	Cola	<u>ebu</u>	+	2	PBC	not attested in Gwari
31.	Oil-palm (Elaeis guineensis)	zunyi(III)	-	1?		unless Gade <u>utu</u> is cognate
32.	Palm kernel-oil	edin (III)	-	3	PBC	unless a loan from Yoruba
33.	Raphia palm (Raphia spp.) ('bamboo')	eba (III)	-			2?This and the next entry are very confused
34.	Fan-palm (Borassus aethiopum)	egba (III)	-	2?		See above
35.	Monkey-guava (Diospyros mespiliformis)	n/a				
36.	Wild date-palm (Phoenix reclinata)	ifu (IV)	-	2?		
37.	Baobab (Adansonia digitata)	kaCV (III)	-	1?		How does this relate to Hausa 'kuka'
38.	Ackee apple tree (Blighia sapida)	yila (IV)	+3?			
39.	Silk-cotton Tree (Ceiba pentandra)	kuci (IV)	-	2	PAC	
40.	Shea tree	koCV	-	3	PBC	
41.	Locust tree (Parkia biglobosa)	<u>elo</u> (I)	-	1	PAC	

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No.	English gloss	Reconstruction	Data	Proposed reconstru	Cognates outside Nupoid	Comments
42.	Tamarind (Tamarindus indica)	daCV (III)	-	3?		second syllable unreconstructable
43.	Camwood	eza (III)	-	3?		
44.	Mushroom	muru (I)	-	2?		
45.	Tree (Generic)	oci (I)	+	1	PBC	
46.	Leaf	finte (I)	+	2?		
47.	Root	gbegbe (II)	+	2?		
48.	Grass (generic)	ego (I)	+	3?		
49.	Seed, stone, pip	n/a				
50.	Bark (of tree)	kpa (II)	+	2?		
51.	Thorn	keyi (I)	+	2?		
52.	Charcoal	eka (I)	+	2	PVC	
53.	Dust	riri (II)	+	1?		Depends on whether Ebira 'dudu' is related or is simply a version of tutu' -ashes.
54.	Rubbish-heap	tutu (I)	-	3	PBC	See above
55.	Algae	ura (I)	-	3?		
56.	Dew	ami (I)	+	1	PAC	
57.	Stone	kuta (I)	+	2	PBC	
58.	Sand	ishe (I)	+	2	PBC	
59.	Smoke	neyi (I)	+	1?		
60.	Fire	ira (I)	+	3	PAC	
61.	Water	enyi (I)	+	2	PBC	
62.	Ashes					Apparently the same reconstruction as 'rubbish-heap'
63.	Day	efi (I)	+	2?		
64.	Night	tuko (II)	+	2	PBC	
65.	Moon/month	upe (I)	+	2	PBC	
66.	Sun	oyi (I)	+	2	PBC	
67.	Star(s)	zomi (I)	+	1?		
68.	Wind	efe (I)	+	2	PBC	
69.	Rain	n/a				
70.	Sky/God	soko (III)	+	1		
71.	Earth	ete (I)	+	2?		
72.	Large River	edu (III)	+	2?		
73.	Forest	kuCV (I)	-	2?		
74.	Hill, mountain	epe (III)	+	1?		
75.	Bush	n/a				
76.	Farm	efa (III)	+	1?		older ka- stem survives in Nupe
77.	Market	gigye (II)	+	1?		
78.	Mud, clay	udo (I), umo (I)	+	2,2 ?		
79.						

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No.	English gloss	Reconstruction	Data	Proposed reconstru	Cognates outside Nupoid	Comments
80.	Compound	gami (II), efi (I)	+	3,2 ?		
81.	Room	naku (I)	+	2?		
82.	Wall (of room)	n/a				
83.	Road/doorway	woze (I)	+	1?		
84.	Village	ire (I), ezhi (III)	+	2,3 ?		
85.	River-bank	kpan (III)	-	3?		
86.	Swamp, wet-land	pasi (I)	-	1?		Is Yoruba 'bata' a loan from Nupe?
87.	Place, chance, opportunity	aba (I)	-	2?		
88.	Today	ani (I)	-	1?		
89.	Yesterday	esu (III)	-	3?		
90.	Morning	nene (I), labi (III)	+	2,2 ?		Probably 'early' and 'late' morning have distinct cognate sets.
91.	Evening	ruba (I)	-	2?		
92.	Tomorrow	esu (III)	-	2?		Same as 'yesterday' (!)
93.	Dawn	fefe (III)	-	1?		Appears to be intertwined with 'moon'
94.	World, life	nyize (III)	-	3?		
95.	Person, people	oza (I)	+	3	PBC	
96.	Man	oro (I), gba (III)	+	2,2 ?		
97.	Woman	nyene (I)	+	2	PBC	Originally a root for 'person'
98.	Child	ebi (I)	+	1?		
99.	Old person	zakwo (I)	+	2?		A compound -person + 'great'
100.	Father	nda (I)	+	2?		
101.	Mother	nina (I)	+	1	PAC	Root confused with 'mma' - mother's brother
102.	Friend/guest/stranger	ega (I)	+	2?		A similar root 'eya' is intertwined with this, giving two glosses
103.	Relations	nada (I)	-	2?		cf. Hausa 'dangi'
104.	Affinal relatives	yele (I)	-	3?		
105.	King, chief, ruler	esu (III)	+	3		Gade retains the older 'g ^w om' root
106.	Hunter	zunu (I)	+	2?		
107.	Thief	yigbe (I)	+	2?		
108.	Doctor	boci (I)	+	3	PBC	Oddly, the PBC root only retained in Nupe group
109.	Witch	boci (I)	+	1?		Unclear if there is some connection with the preceding root this would explain its disappearance in Ebara..

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110.	Corpse	eku (I)	+	3	PBC	Contains old root for death
111.	Iron-worker, blacksmith	n/a				
112.	Ancestors	ciku (I)	+	1?		Contains old root for death
113.	Carpenter, woodworker	egba (III)	-	3	PI	
114.	Husband	oba (I)	+	2	PBC	Cognate with Yoruba 'Oba'?
115.	Wife	seme (I)	+	2?		
116.	Grandchild	yayi (III)	-	2?		Old root 'ya-' for child?
117.	Sibling (same father)	n/a				
118.	World of the dead	kura (I)	-	3?		Apparently ancient
119.	Prophecy	ise (I)	-	2?		
120.	Fear, fright	sunda (III)	+	2?		
121.	Guilt, to be guilty	ivi (I)	-	2?		Perhaps survives as a verb throughout with independently derived nouns
122.	Race, running	eci (I)	-	3?		
123.	Death	isu (I)	-	2?		
124.	Name	ri-ye (II)	+	2?		
125.	News	eza (III)	-	2?		
126.	Hunger	miku (I)	+	2	PBC	
127.	Wing	bakpa (I)	+	1?		
128.	Beak (of bird)	n/a				
129.	Lightning	nyanya (I)	-	2?		
130.	Hole in ground	rogbo (III)	-	2?		
131.	Poison	nace (III)	-	2?		
132.	Firewood	oku (I)	-	3	PAC (I suppose)	
133.	Thing	enya (I)	+	3?		
134.	Strength	kaCV (I)	-	3?		Common verb 'ka' -'be strong'
135.	Length	ekpa (III)	-	3?		
136.	Land, country	n/a				
137.	Sore, wound	eci (III)	-	2?		
138.	Sleep	bara (I)	+	2?		
139.	Fist	ekun (III)	-	2?		
140.	Breath	esun (III)	-	2?		
141.	Disease (generic)	iku (I)	+	2?		
142.	Smallpox	n/a				
143.	Diarrhoea	n/a				
144.	Eczema	gburu (I)	-	2?		
145.	Goitre	boro (III)	-	2?		
146.	Leprosy	kuto (I)	-	1?		
147.	Tear	egi (I)	-	2?		
148.	Sweat	eni (I)	-	1?		

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No.	English gloss	Reconstruction	Data	Proposed reconstru	Cognates outside Nupoid	Comments
149.	Urine					No reconstruction, though terms seem to be mixed with those for 'faeces' (q.v.)
150.	Liver	ayi (I)	-	3	PI	
151.	Skull	kpokporo (I)	-	3?		
152.	Cheek	gbama (I)	-	1?		
153.	Head	tukpo (II)	+	2	PBC	
154.	Face/eye	eyi (I)	+	3	PBC	
155.	Forehead	yikun (III)	-	3?		
156.	Nose	afe (I)	+	1?		
157.	Ear	tokpa (I)	+	3	PBC	
158.	Mouth	enu (I)	+	2	PBC	
159.	Tooth	ganyi (I)	+	2	PVC	
160.	Tongue	lara (I)	+	1	PBC	
161.	Throat	gbere (I)	+	2	PBC	Roots for 'throat and 'neck' are almost inextricably confused
162.	Neck	koro (I)	+	2	PBC	
163.	Shoulder	agba (III)	-	2	PBC	
164.	Arm/Hand	ugbo (I)	+	2	PAC	
165.	Leg/Foot	futa (I)	+	1?		
166.	Female breast	eba (I)	+	3	PBC	
167.	Stomach	gine (I)	+	2?		
168.	Navel	kpokpo (II)	+	1?		
169.	Thigh	busi (I)	+	2?		
170.	Knee	tunku (I)	+	1		Ebira forms 'dunku' might be a compound that includes the Nupe element 'dun' for 'thigh'
171.	Nail (Finger, toe)	budun (III)	+	2?		
172.	Back	rema (I)	+	3	PBC	Roots for 'back' and 'hips' are very mixed
173.	Hips	eshin (I)	-	2	PBC	
174.	Buttocks	nuvo (I)	+	2?		
175.	Penis	napa (I)	+	2?		
176.	Vagina	efu (I)	+	2?		
177.	Skin	epa (I)	+	3	PBC	
178.	Bone	cuku (I)	+	2	PBC	
179.	Blood	anya (I)	+	2	PBC	
180.	Rib	agba (I)	-	2?		
181.	Faeces	ene (I)	+	2?		
182.	Armpit	n/a				
183.	Hair	eyi (I)	+	3?		
184.	Jaw	agbo (II)	+	3?		
185.	Chin					glosses conflated with previous entry

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No.	English gloss	Reconstruction	Data	Proposed reconstru	Cognates outside Nupoid	Comments
186.	Beard	ge-zhe (II)	+	2?		
187.	Heart	n/a				
188.	Body	ewu (I), naga (I)	+	2,2 ?		
189.	Meat	uye (I)	+	2?		Conflated with both 'body' and 'meat'
190.	Animal (Bush)	ina (III)	+	2	PAC	Connected with the old root for 'cow'?
191.	Cow	onu (I)	+	2		See previous entry
192.	Goat	ebu (I)	+	3	PNC	
193.	Sheep	CVgba (I)	+	3?		
194.	Dog	ezhi (I)	+	2?		
195.	Cat	bala (I)	+	1?		
196.	Pig	kusu (III)	+	2?		Unless a loanword
197.	Elephant	dagba (I)	+	2?		Widely loaned in the south
198.	Buffalo	eya (I)	+	3	PBC	
199.	Lion	gaba (III)	+	3?		
200.	Leopard	ezu (I)	+	2?		
201.	Hyena (Crocuta crocuta)	odumi (I)	+	3?		
202.	Hippo	kaku (IV)	-	3?		
203.	Wart-hog (Phacochoerus aethiopus)	ori (I)	-	1?		
204.	Bush-pig (Potamochoerus Porcus)	n/a				
205.	Kob antelope (Kobus kob)	elo (IV)	-	3?		
206.	Roan antelope (Hippotragus equinus)	edo (I)	-	2?		
207.	Giant rat (Cretomyces sp.)	kute (I)	-	1?		
208.	Monkey (generic)	kana (I)	+	2	PBC	
209.	Baboon	vagbu (I)	+	1?		
210.	Patas monkey (Erythrocebus patas)	ebe (I)	+	3	PBC	
211.	Squirrels (Generic)	gbodun (III)	+	3?		
212.	Rat (generic)	isu (I)	+	3?		
213.	Cane Rat (Thryonomys Swinderianus)	izhe (I)	+	2?		
214.	Hare (Lepus Crawshayi)	ezhi (I)	-	2?		
215.	House-bat Fruit-bat	gana (I)	-	1?		The two types of bats are confused in the glosses
216.	Nile crocodile	onye (I), kuku	+	2,2		

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No.	English gloss	Reconstruction	Data	Proposed reconstru	Nupoid outside Cognates	Comments
		(I)		?		
217.	Chameleon	gama (I)	+	1?		
218.	Agama lizard	upe (I)	+	2?		
219.	Skink	marwarwa (IV)	-	3?		
220.	Gecko	lesulesu (IV)	-	2?		
221.	Toad	tankp <u>o</u> (II)	+	2?		
222.	River frog	kere (I)	+	3	PBC	or widely loaned
223.	Land tortoise	kpak <u>u</u> (I)	-	2	PAC	
224.	Snake (Generic)	<u>e</u> wa (I)	+	2	PAC	
225.	Spitting cobra	<u>i</u> su (I)	-	2?		
226.	River turtle	yara (III)	-	2?		
227.	River crab	kakara (I)	+	3	PBC	
228.	Fish (generic)	kpanyi (I)	+	1	PBC	
229.	Bird (generic)	ino (I)	+	2	PBC	
230.	Chicken (General term)	pise (III)	+	3?		
231.	Pigeon (Domestic)	lukuku (I)	-	2?		
232.	Guinea-fowl (Domestic)	<u>u</u> shu (I)	+	2?		
233.	Hooded Vulture (Neophron monachus)	gunu (II)	+	3?		loaned into Hausa?
234.	Village Weaver (Ploceus cucullatus)	ega (III)	-	3	PBC	
235.	Swallow	kpandede (I)	-	2?		
236.	Owl (various spp.)	gugu (I)	-	2?		
237.	Insect (Generic)	efu (I)	-	3?		
238.	Scorpion	ana (III)	-	2?		
239.	Butterfly	papa (III)	-	3?		
240.	Mosquito	ami (III)	-	2	PBC	
241.	Bee	<u>e</u> su (I)	+	3	PBC	