

The Temein languages

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1. The Temein cluster

The Temein cluster consists of three languages spoken in the Nuba Hills, Sudan, NE of Kadugli. Little has been published on these languages, but Roland Stevenson (†) elicited substantial lexical data during the 1970s and 1980s, mostly from Khartoum-based informants¹. For further information about the Stevenson papers see Blench (1997). This paper is based on Stevenson's material, on unpublished notes made by Gerrit Dimmendaal² and on SIL files Khartoum contain significant lexical data contributing towards a phonology of Tese (cf. also Yip 2004).

Table 1 shows the three members of the Temein cluster with their ethnonyms and the names of the language;

Table 1. Temein cluster; ethnonyms and language names

Common name	People	Language
Temein (Stevenson)	ḏróḡḡòʔ	lóḡḡ na rḡḡḡ
Temein (Dimmendaal)	ḡràntèt pl. kààkíní ḡrḡḡḡ	ḡḡnḡt ná ḡrḡḡḡ
Keiga Jirru	Ḍóni	alḡak na Ḍóni
Teisei umm Danab	Ṭḡeséʔ	ilək ka Ṭḡeséʔ

Sources: Stevenson and Dimmendaal mss.

The Ethnologue conflates these last two as a single language.

Teisei is an Arabic name meaning 'little he-goat, mother of a tail' and may thus not be a true ethnonym. In this paper, the common reference names are used to provide easy reference to existing publications. According to Yip (2004), this etymology is dispreferred and a derivation from 'These', purportedly meaning 'scattered' in Temein, has been adopted.

Table 2 shows the locations and populations of the Temein cluster. The Temein are in the SPLA area in the south of the Nuba Hills and so have been less affected by the war than some of their neighbours. Even so, many Temein have been displaced to Khartoum and elsewhere and may have been returning since peace was signed.

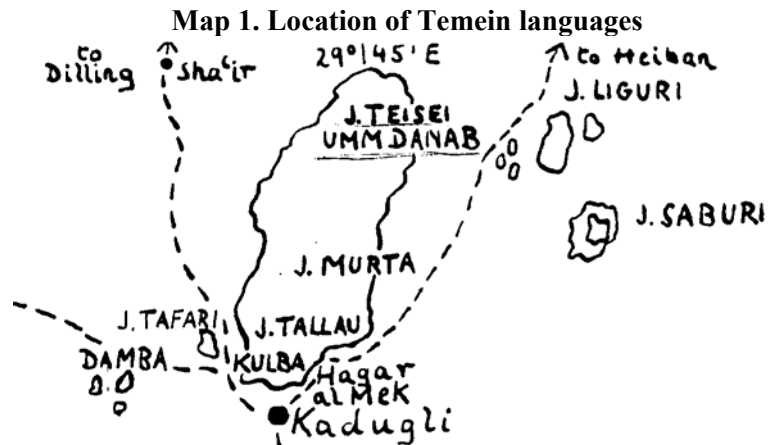
¹ Following Roland Stevenson's death in 1992, his mss. were dispersed for potential editing. The Temein data was held by Robin Thelwall but noting came of this and in 2006, this data was passed to me. Following a request by Tyler Schnoebelen of Stanford University, scans were made of the original datasheets with a view to typing the material. This was begun but had to be completed by Roger Blench in mid-2007. Stevenson's originals can be downloaded from my website, as also the retyped data, re-arranged in a comparative format. Among the files is a comparative wordlist of transcriptions made by Franz Rottland, Angelika von Funck [now Jakobi] and Rainer Vossen using Stevenson's informants.

² Thanks to Gerrit Dimmendaal for making his unpublished materials on Temein available.

Table 2. Temein cluster; locations and populations

Group	Location	Population
Temein	Temein hills southwest of Dilling, between Jebels Ghulfan Morung and Julud (Gulud)	10,000
Keiga Jirru	Keiga Jirru west of Debri, and in 6 villages, northeast of Kadugli	1000 ?
Tese	Tesei Hills	1000 ?

Map 1 shows the approximate location of the Temein languages.



2. The classification and coherence of the Temein cluster

2.1 Classification

The Temein cluster has posed a problem for classification although it is generally agreed to be part of Eastern Sudanic. In the Ethnologue (2005) it is put together with Nyimang and Daju as part of the Nuba hills group of Eastern Sudanic. Bender (2005), the most recent review of East Sudanic, places Temein with reservations in his Ek grouping along with Surmic, [Eastern] Jebel, Daju and Nilotic. Ehret (2001:70) groups Temein with Nyimang within his 'Kir' group, a classification which suggests the author has not seriously considered at the relevant data (none of which is referenced in the bibliography). Temein displays numerous features characteristic of Nilo-Saharan languages in the Nuba Hills, including morphophonemic alternation of stops, t- singulatives and 'moveable' k- affixes its classification remains problematic due to the limited numbers of clear cognates with neighbouring languages.

2.2 Coherence

The three languages of the Temein cluster are quite diverse, but share enough lexemes for them to be regarded as a single genetic group. Table 3 shows some typical sets of closely related words;

Table 3. Common lexemes justifying a Temein cluster

Gloss	Temein	Tese	Keiga Jirru
mud	ʈɔk	ʈɔk	ʈɔk
split	kórù	kóru	kórù
fish pl.	kálálàʔ	kálálaʔ	káála
to hear	ʈɔŋwà	ʈɔŋwa	ʈɔŋwa

A crucial factor in differentiating these languages is that both Tese and Keiga Jirru have come under extensive Kadu influence, especially from languages like Tulishi. Where Temein differs from the other two languages, it often retains the Nilo-Saharan root, whereas Tese and Keiga Jirru have replaced it with a borrowing from the Kadu languages (often with fossil morphology intact, making the analysis of number marking more complex).

3. Phonology

3.1 Vowels

It is likely that all the Temein languages all show typical \pm ATR vowel sets with either nine or ten vowels as in numerous other related Eastern Sudanic languages. These tend to participate in cross-height vowel harmony, where vowels of one or other set co-occur in individual words. However, if so, this is somewhat obscured by Stevenson's transcriptions where all varieties of vowels occur together. Stevenson has a note that he is sceptical of a noun-vowel system and although he sometimes marks the additional close-mid vowels and schwa, the transcription is wayward at best. As a consequence he did not realise that change in ATR status of vowels can mark number. It may also be that the pervasive processes of segment deletion and re-affixing have now made these underlying patterns difficult to see. According to Yip (2004), the vowels of These are as follows (Table 4);

Table 4. These vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
	ɪ		ʊ
Mid	e	ə	o
	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

Dimmendaal (p.c.) records a broadly similar inventory for Temein and a similar pattern may well be reconstructible for proto-Temein.

High back vowels probably are responsible for non-phonemic labialisation especially of velars;

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Gloss	Temein	These	Keiga Jirru
buy	kólóʔbà		kwól̀bà
chicken	kókoròk	kóókoròk	k(w)óóròk
where?	k ^w óó		
ewe		k ^w óǵomìk	

However, Yip (2004) shows that /kw/ and /ɲw/ are contrastive in initial and medial position in These. For example;

kálá	eagle	ʔáká	forehead
kwálá	bull	ʔǵkwàŋ	to plant
ɲàl̀	neck	ɲwánífk	ear
ètáŋá	big house	tǵwàŋ	to listen

3.2 Consonants

Temein languages show considerable allophony due to the morphophonemic alternations typical of the region. As a consequence, the consonant inventory could be treated as quite reduced. A typical representation might be;

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar	Glottal
Plosive	p (b)	(ʔ)	t (d)	ʈ (ɖ)	j	k (g)		k ^w
Implosive	ɓ		ɗ					
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ		ŋ ^w
Trills			r	(ɽ)				
Fricative		(f)	s					(h)
Approximant					y		w	
Laterals			l					

where the bracketed symbols are positional allophones of their counterparts. Final – k is often unreleased or realised as a glottal stop. Stevenson marks ʈ in his data to represent the alveolar /t/. d/ð are usually allophones. Temein languages contrast retroflex d/ʈ/ɖ with dentals d/t/r. The operations of this type of allophony can be seen in Keiga Jirru;

Gloss	Unmarked	Plural
hare	ʔɛk	kɪɖɛk
knife	ʔoroŋ	kuɖoroŋɛ?
grave	ʔuaŋàk	kuʔuaŋè
ram	ʔuŋwá?	kuʔuŋwìk

The contrast between ɓ/ɗ and b/d is not well established and these may exist in free variation as is common in Niger-Congo. Geminate consonants occur in all three languages. Yip (2004) gives contrastive examples of geminate consonants in These as follows;

Nouns /tʰ/, /nn/, /mm/, /ll/, /ss/
 Verbs /pp/, /kk/, /tʰ/, /tʰ/, /ll/
 Adjectives /ll/, /rr/

3.3 Tone

Stevenson considered all three languages have a three-tone system a claim repeated in Yip (2004). RCS notes the following contrasts for Keiga Jirru;

álè I hoe
 álé I say
 ále to suck

Stevenson transcribed his data without glides but these are almost certainly present. Yip (2004) notes for These;

Falling tone **mâl** porcupine **âr** path
 Rising tone **ďâl** child

However, Dimmendaal (p.c.) considers a system of High/Low plus non-automatic Downstep a better description of the system and inconsistencies in Stevenson's tone-marking suggest this would be a more credible interpretation.

4. Morphology

4.1 Number marking in nouns

Surface forms for number marking are highly diverse and not easy to predict, even though the basic elements are relatively few. Temein languages, as with other East Sudanic and Nilo-Saharan languages operate a three-way system of number-marking with an unmarked form plus singulatives and pluratives (see e.g. Dimmendaal 2000; Andersen 2000; Blench 2006). However, the erosion of this system has meant that nouns where three terms occur are relatively rare. Traces of characteristic Nilo-Saharan 'replacive' systems are shown in Table 5;

Table 5. Temein cluster 'three term' number marking

Language	Gloss	Singulative	Unmarked	Plurative
Temein	dura	mórinɿŋɿɿ (one grain)	mórinɿs (head of grain)	mórinɿ (dura plant)
Keiga Jirru	meat	bılandàk (one piece)	ındàk	kındàdɿk
Keiga Jirru	medicine	móreɖàk		komóro (roots)
These	fat n.	nányéɖàk	nányà?	knányà?

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4.2 Number marking strategies: nouns

Number marking in Temein displays a typical Nilo-Saharan characteristics, although these are combined in ways that are difficult to predict for individual nouns. The most common elements are;

- ‘moveable k-’ (with an underspecified vowel), prefixed, suffixed or both, where prefixed kV- is a typical strategy for Arabic loanwords
- Addition of final –NV
- Addition of final –a[ʔ]
- Vowel lengthening and unpredictable changes in vowel quality (often due to consonant deletion)
- changes in ATR quality of the vowel
- Suppletion is present although not always easy to identify due to vowel changes and shortening
- Combinations of these

Moveable k-

Moveable k- is one of the best-identified affixes in Nilo-Saharan. Greenberg (1981) calls it a ‘stage III article’ and Ehret (2001: 176, 181) both an ‘adjective suffix’ and a ‘noun particularizing prefix’. Bender (1996:75), who considers it a ‘noun-class formative remnant’, notes that it is widespread but not universal in Nilo-Saharan.

In the Temein cluster k- is strongly associated with plurals and can occur before, after and at both ends of a word. The underspecified vowel often results in a copy of the stem vowel, though not in every case. The vowel can disappear when the stem begins with an approximant. The example shows surface forms in Temein;

<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Unmarked</u>	<u>Plural</u>
belly	óòm	kómík
big	mbù	kímbík
hill, stone	kúreɽ	kukúreɽ
shield	wór	kwòráʔ

However, this affix has an allomorph –Vk that can mark singulative as in These;

<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Singulative</u>	<u>Unmarked</u>
firewood	márenyík	máreɲ
ear	ɲwáník	kwεeɲ
eye	nááník	kenyɲ
fish	keɛɛɔak	káála

In the case of the singulative for ‘fish’, it appears that it has already been marked once as a singulative with –ɽ and the –Vk has been subsequently affixed.

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Less common is –NI or –IN in final position where –I- stands for a high front vowel from either ATR set. Temein examples are as follows;

<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Unmarked</u>	<u>Plural</u>
friend	wórmyà	kórmyàni
hanging frame	sesilàŋ	sesilàŋi
moon	kóù	kikówin

Bender (1996:75) also discusses N- affixes in Nilo-Saharan, reprising observations by Tucker & Bryan (1966:22-24). Storch (2005:46) also takes up the issue of N/K and T/K alternations in relation to Nilotic noun morphology. However, those identified appear to be principally n- prefixes that alternate with k- plurals, which is clearly not the case in Temein.

Another rarer affix is final –à[ʔ] marking plurals. Some examples from Temein are shown in the table;

<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Unmarked</u>	<u>Plural</u>
gourd	təŋ	kitəŋàʔ
dikdik	wɪr	kuwɪrəŋɪk
heart	óòm	tɔɔmà
fly n.	óŋɪs	kóŋàʔ

Bender (1996:76) mentions cases of an a- prefix that was perhaps originally a singulative marker and a few cases of this occur in Temein for example **àmɪs** ‘bone’. Prefixed a- is probably and allomorph of –àʔ. The identity of the consonant that has been reduced to ʔ is not clear but it could well be –t, generally occurring as a singulative affix elsewhere in the group. In two cases it has been lost completely. ‘Dikdik’ appears to have three plural affixes, –a[ʔ], NI- and –k applied sequentially.

Singulatives

Temein cluster languages also have singulatives –IT, –IS. Some examples from Temein are shown in the table;

<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Singulative</u>	<u>Unmarked</u>
grass	ɔyɔmɪʔ	ɔyɔm
horn	kmɪʔ	km
seed	ʔɛɛʔɪʔ	ʔɛɛʔ
tree	mɛrɛŋɪs	mɛrɛŋ
fly n.	óŋɪs	kóŋàʔ

–VS is probably a (rare) allomorph of –VT or a relic of a 3 –term plural system.

Lengthening of V₁ vowels. The first vowel is lengthened following initial k-. The examples shown are from These;

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Gloss	Unmarked	Plural
Toad	kwudóʔ	kwúúdóʔ
Navel	kwúllóʔ	kwúúllóʔ
Net	kömík	köömík
Cloth	káqàʔ	kááqàʔ

A comparison between Temein and These shows how this pattern may have developed. A prefix is added to a word with initial kV-. The intervocalic -k- is then lost (possibly with its attendant labialisation) and the result in doubled vowel in the first syllable.

	Temein		These	
	Unmarked	Plural	Unmarked	Plural
frog, toad	kwúdóʔ	kúkwúdóʔ	kwudóʔ	kwúúdóʔ

Stevenson notes that this is common in Tulishi, a Kadu language, the source of some borrowings into Temein cluster languages. For example;

Tulishi mountain nina niina

There are some cases of change in ATR quality marking number as noted by Dimmendaal (p.c.) for Temein;

mountain bǝbǝrǝt ki-bóbóǝrǝt-ì

Suppletive plurals occur in the Temein cluster. For example,

Table 6. Temein suppletive plurals

Gloss	sg.	pl.
person	dééni	nεεʔ
arm, hand	nínàt	kén
goat (f.)	nâ	kàí
cow	ńtèŋ	kítúk
eye	níninàt	kèén
woman	líkámè	lúgîŋ
rope	mìs	máà
spear	ŋsǝ	kɪn
slave	ǝdǝn	desoʔ

Their analysis is made more difficult by a pervasive process of syllable deletion. Erosion of central segments can lead to suppletive appearance. For example;

tree bǝrǝrǝŋ kuŋŋ

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It is possible that the -sír of the singular has been deleted in the plural and a standard ku- prefix added. However, explaining suppletives in this way would require that each plural undergo an entirely idiosyncratic process of deletion and re-analysis, which is possible, but not easily demonstrable.

Even where the singular/plural pairing is not the same, the strategy of forming plurals by suppletion appears in all three languages. Suppletives for ‘house’ in the Temein cluster show cognacy between singulars for Tese and Keiga Jirru and plurals for Temein and Keiga Jirru (Table 7);

Table 7. Temein cluster suppletive plurals of ‘house’

<u>Language</u>	<u>sg.</u>	<u>pl.</u>
Temein	nyáà	kwî?
Tese	ḡók	kubóóḡḡ
Keiga Jirru	ḡok	kwik

Seriation of number marking strategies

From some of the more complex plurals it is possible to establish a hypothetical seriation of number marking strategies. In the Temein example given above

dikdik wɪr kuwɪrɪŋɪk

the order is likely to be;

1. a?
2. NI-
3. -k
4. ku-

Another complex Temein example;

bone àmìs kóma?

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1.	-Is	-a?
2.	a-	kV-

In this case, all that remains of the root is m-. Such a pairing might well seem suppletive at first glance, but comparative evidence for affixes argues that the two forms are cognate.

4.3 Verbs: number marking

Number marking on verbs is less elaborate than nouns. Nonetheless, Temein languages seem to have a fairly comprehensive system of verbal plurality, expressing plural subjects, objects of iteratives. Stevenson gives the following example of an iterative.

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Tese Cough ʒólèi (once) ʒlɔ (often)

Verbs typically add t/dV to the stem in where V often copies the last vowel of the stem. The examples show + final -TV (or infix) in Temein;

<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Unmarked</u>	<u>Plural</u>
eat	láma	lámaʔà
catch (v.)	kòmùk	kòmɔʔɔk
fear (v.)	wɔnò	wɔʔɔnò
say	ileŋéi	ileŋeʔéi

There is more fragmentary evidence for a partly productive –I suffix usually added after the t/dV. The datasheets show numerous examples of a ‘frozen’ t/dV + I suffix.

Temein	come	móón	móóʔàì
These	pull	ájjirì	ájjiraʔàì
Keiga Jirru	take for oneself	séŋ	séʔeì

5. Conclusions

This paper represents a preliminary look at the Temein languages, making particular use of Stevenson’s material, as well as other manuscript sources. particularly comparing these three languages (and there are three languages and not two). All of the Temein languages have clearly undergone the same sequences in terms of phonology and nominal and verbal morphology. However, all have subsequently undergone independent processes of elision and borrowing which have resulted in highly diverse outcomes.

Scans of Roland Stevenson’s original worksheets are available on my website, as are retyped versions with commentary and the PowerPoint given during the conference.

<http://www.rogerblench.info/Linguistics%20papers%20opening%20page.htm#Nilosaharan>

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