

Recent research in Northwest Nigeria: new languages, unknown sounds

Jos Linguistic Circle

23rd February 2011

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Kainji languages survey

- For a quarter of a century I have been sporadically surveying the Kainji languages of NW Nigeria and also collecting unpublished field materials.
- The survey of Kainji was given a great boost by the late Clark Regnier, and SIL researcher who began surveys in the 1980s and began compiling a comparative West Kainji based on his own and other researchers



Kainji languages survey II

- Also important have been the survey reports of Steve and Sonia Dettweiler, who visited many communities in the 1980s and 1990s and whose reports are now available online, but who also safeguarded the original files of Clark Regnier
- Key to further work has been the various literacy projects in the area, notably cLela, Dukanci, Reshe, ut-Ma'in, Kambari, Cicipu, Kamuku, Hungwarya, Pangu [=TaRin] and Basa (in Benue State).
- In the light of this, KWEF has sponsored two West Kainji workshops (2008, 2010), to help literacy teams meet and discuss their problems. Another workshop is planned for next dry season

Kainji languages survey III

- Finally, there has been a recent survey of some of the Kamuku lects, with the goal of determining which are suitable for language development
- Nonetheless, this leaves a large number of languages with no modern or no basic data at all
- To remedy this, I have been collaborating with Stuart McGill to try and visit all the remaining communities and collect a wordlist of around 700 words. This presentation focuses on our joint fieldwork in February 2011.
- The intention is to combine this with materials on well-documented languages (cLela, Salka Kambari) to produce a comparative wordlist, a historical reconstruction and an internet database
- All materials, both raw and analysed, will be posted on the internet

THE WEST KAINJI LANGUAGES

- One of the major subgroups of Benue-Congo are the Kainji languages
- Because of their extremely diverse lexicon and morphology, it is only comparatively recently that their unity has been recognised.
- In 1919, Johnson (1919-22, I:732-746) noted that the noun-class systems of the 'Semi-Bantu' languages of northwestern Nigeria showed marked resemblances to those of the Bantu languages and published comparative wordlists linking Kamuku, Gurmana and Basa.
- Thomas (in Meek 1925, II:137) put many of the West Kainji languages into 'Nigerian Semi-Bantu' but joined Lopa and Laru with Bariba in 'Volta' i.e. Gur.

THE WEST KAINJI LANGUAGES II

- The recognition that the group now known as West Kainji forms a genetic unit is due to Bertho (1952:264-6) who asserted its coherence on the basis of unpublished wordlists.
- Bertho rejected the Gur affiliations of Lopa and Laru proposed by Thomas and stated that the affiliations of the '*groupe Kamberi*' were with central Nigerian Plateau languages.
- A nearly simultaneous classification was proposed by Greenberg (1955) who created a large Plateau group encompassing what would now called East and West Kainji (as Plateau 1a and b) as well as Tarokoid and Jukunoid.

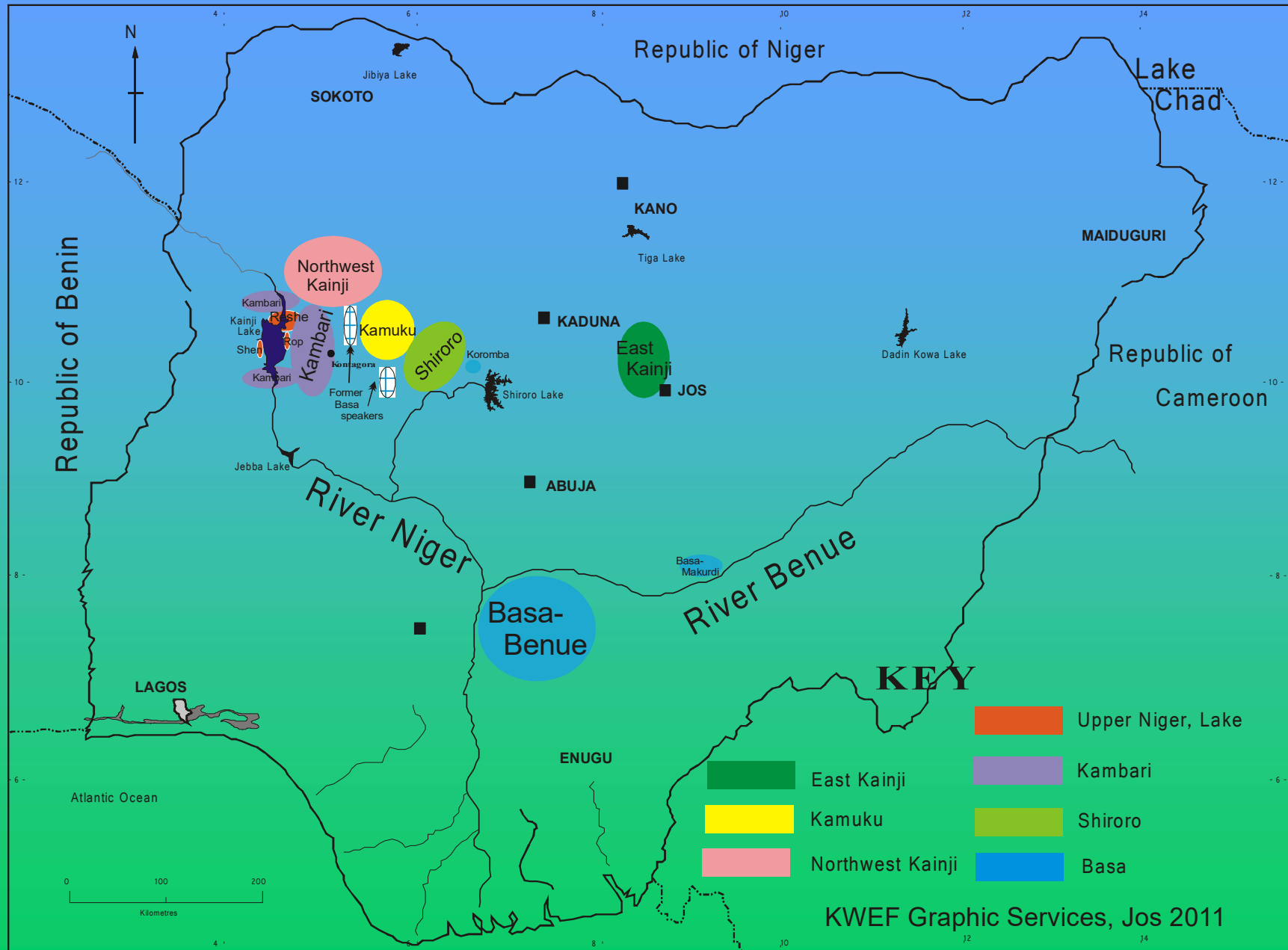
THE WEST KAINJI LANGUAGES III

- Rowlands (1962) first demonstrated the links between some languages of the Jos region with the Benue-Congo languages of northwestern Nigeria but proposed no clear genetic model to account for this situation.
- The division of Plateau 1 languages into Eastern and Western appears first in the appendix to the Index of Nigerian Languages (Hansford *et al.* 1976).
- The term Kainji was informally introduced in the 1980s but was established in article on Plateau in the reference volume on Niger-Congo published at the end of the decade (Gerhardt 1989).
- No argument has ever been given in print for the division between East and West, and it is highly likely the grouping is based on geography, not linguistics. This presentation will henceforth refer to the Kainji family of Benue-Congo

Where are the Kainji languages?

- **The main concentration of Kainji languages is in northwestern Nigeria, immediately due south of the Hausa-speaking region.**
- **The broader context of West Kainji languages is shown in the map accompanying Crozier and Blench (1992).**
- **The main West Kainji languages are situated in modern-day Kebbi, Niger and Kaduna states, with a small extension into Sokoto State**
- **However, the scattered Basa peoples are found east of the Niger Confluence in Benue and Nasarawa States**
- **The East Kainji languages are found in Kaduna, Plateau and Bauchi States**

Where are the Kainji languages?



Caveats

- It has been argued that Lopa and Laru form a subgroup related to Reshe at a higher level, although the evidence for this is somewhat tenuous
- There is no published evidence for the 'Kamuku-Bassa' subgroup which appeared in earlier publications and the grouping is dropped here
- Kamuku is in itself the largest and most complex of these subgroups, and whether the 'Baushi' languages are really part of the same group remains doubtful
- Baushi etc. is here given the provisional name of 'Shiroro' after the nearby lake
- East Kainji has numerous small languages, many of which are moribund and its unity remains far from proven.

Kainji subgroups

- There are no clearly agreed names for the subgroups of Kainji, so this table is highly provisional;

Subgroup	Includes
Lake	Lopa, Laru
Upper Niger	Reshe
Kambari	Salka, Tsuvadi, Cicipu
Kamuku	Cinda, Rege,
Shiroro	Baushi, Fungwa, Gurmana
Northwest	cLela, tHun, Wuri, utMa'in
Basa	Basa-Benue, Koromba
East Kainji	Boze, Chawai, Map

Rerang-Shen [Lopa and Laru]

- **The Lopa and Laru are two small fishing peoples who originally lived on islands in the wetlands which were there before the creation of Lake Kainji**
- **When the lake was created in 1974, they were split, with the Laru on the west side and the Lopa on the east side**
- **Data on Laru has been confined to a short ms. Wordlist taken in 1926 and another in 1989. The impression has been that this population is extremely small.**

Shen [Laru]

- We were able to record basic sociolinguistic data on Laru on February 13th, 2011 from Mr. Màgínó Mámmâm, at Papiri
- The Laru are resident in some twelve towns, centred on Shagunnu on the west shore of Lake Kainji. They only live in quarters of these towns; however, there may be several thousand speakers
- Despite its encapsulation, Islam and the fluency of individuals in Hausa, Laru appears to be thriving
- The correct name of Laru appears to be Shen, with the language Shen-Gwe
- According to Mr. Mammam, there are three dialects which are mutually intelligible

Shen [Laru]



Shen [Laru] II

- The language, Shengwe, has undergone remarkable morphological changes from a basic Kainji prototype
- The system of nominal prefixes has disappeared completely and been replaced with a generalised number marking suffix
- The roots have undergone erosion from the front, often leaving words, sometimes losing C1 and C2, creating words consisting only of vowels
- The tonal system is correspondingly more elaborate
- Is this a result of contact with Mande languages such as Kyenga which have a similar shape?
- Further analysis is forthcoming

Rerang-Rop [Lopa] I

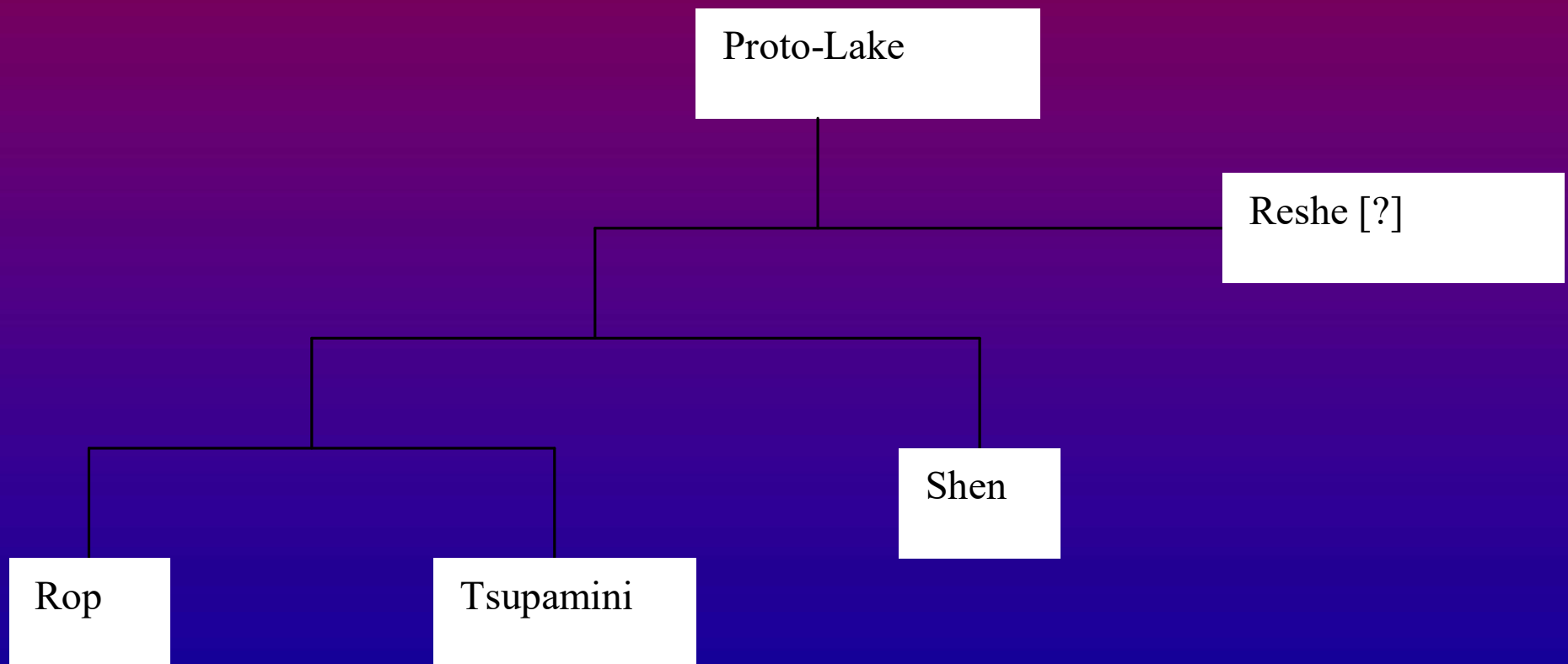
- The Lopa live in a number of settlements on the east shore of Lake Kainji, surrounded by Kambari
- Existing materials on Lopa were collected by Roger Blench in 1992 in Tsupamini
- A field visit to 'new' Lopa was undertaken on 9th February 2011, and approximately 700 words collected from a variety of speakers, principally Mr. Salihu Mohammodu
- The people are known as *doRop* pl. *orRop*, language *ollop*. The reference name adopted is Rop
- However, Lopa is divided into two major groups, known collectively as Rerang. The self-name of the group centred on Tsupamini is still unclear
- However, strikingly, the language of Tsupamini appears to have a quite different affix system from Rop and many divergent lexemes

Rerang-Rop sessions



Rerang-Rop [Lopa] II

- As a consequence the two Lopa languages are regarded as distinct. Speakers report using Hausa to communicate with one another
- The Figure shows the likely configuration of the 'Lake' subgroup



The Northwest Kainji languages

- The most well-known member of this cluster is cLela, and it was known as the Lela or Dakarkari cluster in earlier sources
 - The name 'Northwest Kainji' is proposed here
 - It has four basic members, cLela, the Hun-Saare [=Dukanci] languages, the ut-Ma'in [=Fakai] cluster and the Wəri-Gwamhyə-Mba [= Gwamhi-Wuri]
 - All have the distinctive reduction of the Benue-Congo prefix system to single consonants
 - The only published data on the Wəri cluster a few nouns in Rowlands (1962) under the name Bangawa. Clark Regnier also recorded short wordlists
 - The cluster turns out to consist of three languages, all of which are very close to one another, Wəri, Gwamhyə and Mba. This last has not previously been reported, but is locally known as Kokonanci
- The cluster is very distinct; immediate impressions are that it is closest to the Fakai cluster, but this remains to be confirmed

Recording Wuri



A bit of Wuri history

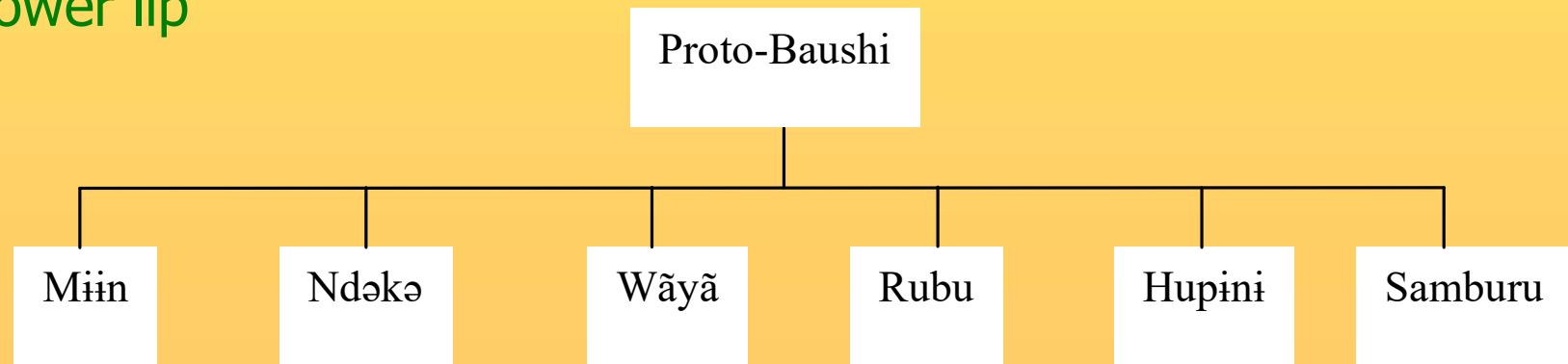


Contributions to Kamuku

- In Igwama town, three languages are spoken, including 'Zubazuba', Tushyabe and Turubaruba.
- Turubaruba seems to be entirely new; but this is probably not its real name
- An extensive list of Zubazuba was compiled on February 12th, 2011 from Mr. Kabiru Umar
- The speakers called their language Tusəgəṃuku. This is almost certainly the origin of the general name 'Kamuku'.
- There is no data for the other two languages, but speakers of Tusəgəṃuku suggested that they were relatively similar.
- The population of Igwama are all fluent in Hausa, but nonetheless, all these languages seem to be currently spoken.
- We confirmed that Makici was spoken in a cluster of hamlets east of Igwama; there seem to be a number of speakers remaining according to our informant, but this was not directly tested

More on the Baushi languages

- The Baushi are treated in earlier sources as a single language, but there appear to be six related languages, as shown in the diagram
- New data has been collected on Wayan, Rubu and Hupini [=Supana]. Samburu is said to be very close to one of these
- The Baushi languages have a remarkable phonological feature, named by us 'linguo-labials' but apparently similar to interdental approximants found in the Philippines etc. (Olson et al. 2010). Ben Gimba first drew attention to these, but this emphasises the value of holding workshops.
- Even in comparison to videos of these, the Baushi sounds can be realised in a remarkable way, with the tongue protruding over the lower lip



Guda interdental approximants



The final days of TuWəgə

- The TuWəgə language was spoken among the Pongu [TaRin] in the villages due east of Zungeru
- All reports suggest that it is now spoken fluently by one old couple who live in an isolated compound we were not able to reach
- We were able to record a reasonably long list of nouns, but without plurals from a 'rememberer' as well as some songs
- TuWəgə is clearly affiliated to TaRin, although the tendency to cite Pongu forms when the speaker could not remember the TuWəgə may exaggerate the relationship

TuWəgə music



Issues: the predatory nature of Hausa

- Many Kainji languages are on the northern frontier with Hausa and it is likely that other languages existed which have been assimilated
- East Kainji languages have proven particularly vulnerable and many are on the point of extinction
- However, one alternative consequence has been high levels of borrowing from Hausa; Cicipu is one example.
- Tusəgəməku shows a large number of apparently old and well-assimilated Hausa loans
- Wayan has apparently adopted many Hausa loans recently and these are largely unassimilated; noun-class prefixes are simply added. In fact Wayan could almost be called a creole

Issues: why are some languages still vital?

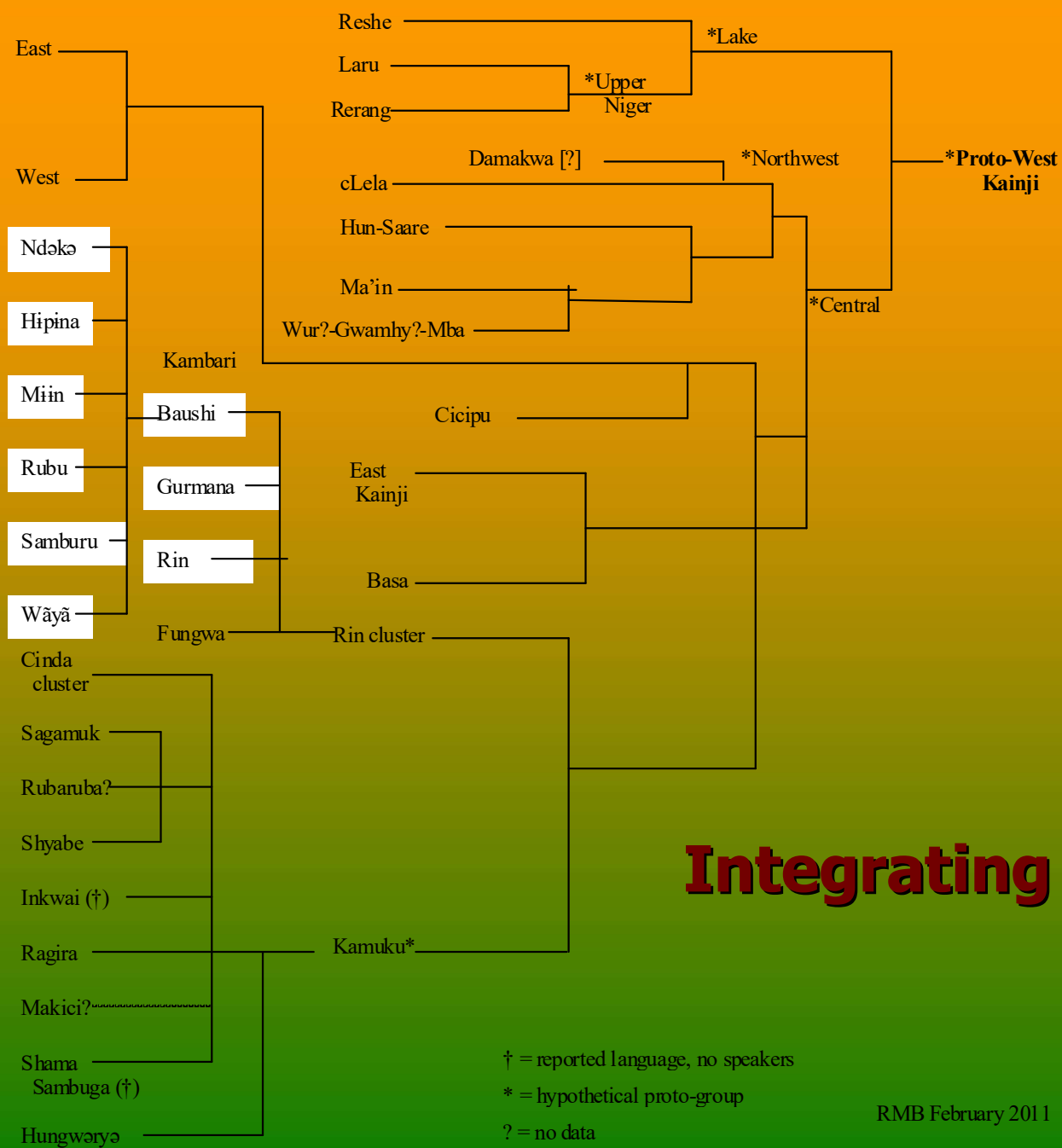
- The issue can be looked at another way; why are some languages that might well have disappeared still vital?
- The Wuri cluster is a good example; as the northernmost representative of Northwest Kainji, nearly encapsulated by Hausa, and with all adults fluent in Hausa and Islam widespread, a switch to Hausa might seem an obvious strategy
- Yet we were assured that adults take good care that Wuri is embedded in children before they begin to speak Hausa, and from casual observation this appears to be true
- Other similar languages which appear to be vital are Shen and Rop, interestingly, despite the massive disruption caused by their resettlement

Developing sociolinguistic survey tools

- Despite a great deal of writing about classifying ethnolinguistic vitality, it seems hard to explain the varying situations we find, even among West Kainji languages
- Few of the descriptive accounts seem to consider the issue of large predatory languages, such as Hausa or (outside Nigeria) Chadian Arabic
- So far these are casual observations and therefore it is important *not* to assign these situations in terms of numbers on some imaginary scale
- But there is clearly now a great need to establish better predictive tools which will help understand why some languages appear to be surviving and others are headed for the dustbin of history, if only because this has serious implications for the allocations of resources, especially in terms of literacy

Integrating East Kainji

- Our knowledge of East Kainji languages is very weak, despite their accessibility from Jos. Many are moribund or highly threatened
- They seem to form a very coherent group, and conserve the characteristic CV-CVCV structures of Benue-Congo
- There is no evidence that the East Kainji languages, despite being very numerous, constitute a primary branching of Kainji
- They are much closer, lexically and morphologically to core branches such as Basa, than are Reshe and Sen-Rerang
- This suggests that they are best treated as a coordinate branch with Basa, pending further research
- The figure presents a synthesis of Kainji classification following this principle



Integrating East Kainji

Where next?

- The priorities for survey in the coming dry season are;
- Recording;
 - the second Lopa language
 - sSaare
 - Kamuku lects, including Tushyabe, Turubaruba, Makici etc.
 - Kambari lects, including Agwara, TsuVadi and others
 - TiFungwa, Gurmana and TuWəgə
 - Recheck Basa dictionary, record Koromba
- If this can be completed, then a representative sample of Kainji languages will have been recorded

Language development

- One of the clear findings of the survey is that many languages whose status was unknown are in fact thriving and could well be targets for language development if resources permit
- In many areas, Islam, Christianity and traditionalists are about equal proportions. Muslims are involved in literacy, so there is every need to proceed evenhandedly
- Languages such as Shen, Rerang, Wuri, Baushi, other Kambari and Kamuku lects are all worthy of attention
- We hope to invite representatives of some of these languages to the 3rd Kainji languages Workshop, to be held in Kontagora, February 2011

Conclusions

- The Kainji languages represent one of the most dispersed families of Benue-Congo, spreading from the Benin border to Makurdi
- The geographical split between the numerous, closely related languages of the East Kainji group and the others is probably due to a later expansion of Nupoid northwards
- West Kainji is split into a small number of branches, each of which have eroded the underlying CV-CVCV formula in different ways; only Basa has retained this unchanged
- Kainji languages represent formidable challenges in phonological and morphological analysis; and are of considerable typological importance
- A number are also suitable for language development
- Considerably more survey is required to understand distributional and dialect issues
- Much more work has been done than has been published