Documentation, development, and ideology in the northwestern Kainji languages
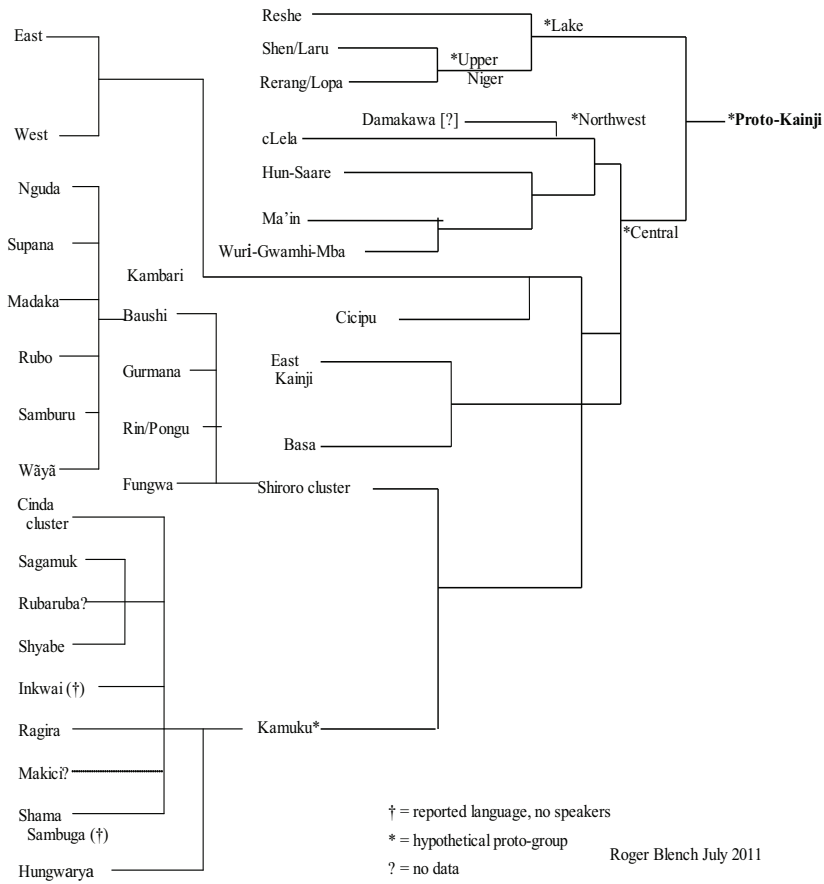
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1. Introduction

The Kainji languages of north-central Nigeria, which constitute a major branch of the Benue-Congo language subgroup (Gerhardt 1989, Williamson & Blench 2000), have been largely ignored by academic linguists. The group includes approximately 60 languages divided geographically into three main areas. The Eastern Kainji languages are spoken north and west of Jos, while the Basa subgroup is found at the Niger-Benue confluence. The remainder are spread across northwest Nigeria, around Lake Kainji, which gives the group its name. It was previously thought that the Eastern Kainji languages constituted a primary division of Kainji as a whole, but there is no linguistic evidence for this. However, the sociolinguistic situation, degree of endangerment, and attitude to development in these languages is wholly distinct from the northwestern languages. This article will discuss the branches of Kainji found in the northwest, namely Reshe, Lake, Kambari, Northwest, Kamuku and Shiroro, and reserve discussion of East Kainji and Basa for another paper. Figure 1 shows the location of the main branches of Kainji.

Figure 1: The Kainji languages

East
West

Reshe
Shen/Laru
Rerang/Lopa   *Upper
Niger
                                        *Lake

Nguda
Supana
Madaka
Rubo
Samburu
Wãyã

Damakawa [?]
cLela
Hun-Saare
Ma'in
Wuri-Gwamhi-Mba
                                        *Northwest   *Proto-Kainji

Kambari
Baushi
Gurmana
Rin/Pongu
Fungwa

Cicipu
East
Kainji
Basa
Shiroro cluster
                                        *Central

Cinda
cluster
Sagamuk
Rubaruba?
Shyabe
Inkwai (†)
Ragira
Makici?
Shama
Sambuga (†)
Hungwarya

Kamuku*

† = reported language, no speakers
* = hypothetical proto-group
? = no data

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Northwest Kainji languages present several features of interest to general linguistics:

   a.   they show remarkable morphological diversity within even a very restricted geographical area, ranging from languages with extremely short lexemes with highly complex tonal systems to languages with long phonological words and restricted tone systems;

   b.   they have retained extremely complex verbal forms with multiple affixes in systems previously thought of as characteristic of the Bantu branch of Niger-Congo;

   c.   many languages co-exist with a dominant lingua franca, Hausa, in which adult speakers are fluent, and yet the Kainji languages remain vital, contrary to typical predictions of the sociolinguistics of language endangerment. Despite this, there are some examples of heavy lexical interference from Hausa, where many native lexemes are replaced, while retaining vernacular morphology;

   d.   their speakers have, in general, shown remarkable enthusiasm for language development, and Muslims and Christians have joined together to develop literacy materials.

To look for striking counter-examples to this picture, it is only necessary to go to the East Kainji languages, where none of this holds true. East Kainji languages:

   a.   are virtually identical morphologically, with (C)V-CVCV nouns throughout;

   b.   do not have affix-incorporating verbs;

   c.   most languages are moribund or declining, due to a switch to Hausa;

   d.   language development is virtually non-existent with the exception of εBoze.

An article such as this cannot provide answers to all the questions that arise from this contrast, but it can draw attention to the current situation and suggest that the academic neglect of Kainji languages is both unwarranted and unjustified in view of their importance. Given the endless recycling of

material on already well-known Bantu languages in the descriptive and theoretical linguistics literature, a greater focus on the Kainji languages and their analytic challenges is surely to be encouraged.

This article, however, concentrates on the fourth point listed above – the setting aside of religious differences to collaborate on language development projects. We suggest in Section 5 below that this collaboration is partly driven by an ideological divide, but not the usual Muslim/Christian opposition. Instead, due to past persecution and present domination by the Hausa, speakers of Kainji languages, at least in part, define their identity in opposition to the Hausa, regardless of religion. Evidence for this can be seen in interviews with individual speakers, the readiness of Muslims to collaborate with both indigenous and foreign Christians in language development, and in the attitudes shown by participants in orthography workshops. This presents an environment which should be attractive to language documenters, particularly those looking for their work to have direct applications in the area of language support.

The article is organised as follows: Section 2 introduces the Kainji languages and provides some background on their speakers and the linguistic and language development work that has been carried out there. Section 3 discusses two important dimensions of ideological conflict in northern Nigeria, ethnicity and religion, while Section 4 outlines the shared historical background and cultural practices of the Kainji language communities. Section 5 provides evidence for the anti-Hausa language ideology held by many rural speakers of Kainji languages, and Section 6 makes recommendations for applied language documentation in the Kainji area. Roger Blench conducted his first period of fieldwork on a Kainji language (Salka Kambari) in 1975 and has worked sporadically on different groups since then. He is responsible for the overview features in this article. The Cicipu language features prominently in the discussion, since this is the language and sociolinguistic setting documented by Stuart McGill, who has worked on Cicipu since 2006. The sociolinguistic setting of the other northwestern Kainji languages is similar, and examples from these languages and projects are used where appropriate[1].

2. The northwest Kainji languages

2.1. Overview

The Nigerian Middle Belt is a region of enormous linguistic diversity lying between the Hausa-dominated north and the Yoruba and Igbo-dominated south. It is home to approximately 300 languages (Blench 1998), with Hausa (and to a lesser extent Fulfulde, the language of the Fulani) serving as a lingua franca. More than 70 of these languages belong to the Kainji subgroup of Benue-Congo. Blench and McGill (n.d.) observe that Kainji languages are very diverse, both in their lexicon and morphology. Consequently the genetic unity of the Kainji languages was not recognised until Bertho (1952), who used 'Kambéri' as a cover term for the Northwest, Lake, and Kambari branches. Greenberg's (1955) Plateau 1a and 1b (the Eastern branch of Kainji) were promoted to a separate Kainji group on the same level as Platoid by Gerhardt (1989).

A basic overview of Kainji, along with a comparative wordlist, can be found in Blench and McGill (n.d.). No serious reconstruction work has been done as yet and any internal classification is thus provisional. The major differences from Gerhardt (1989) are the demotion of 'East Kainji' to a branch parallel to Basa, the switching of Cicipu from the Kamuku branch to the Kambari branch, the proposal for a 'Shiroro' branch consisting of several languages previously classified with Kamuku, and the discovery of a number of new varieties. Figure 2 shows a tentative subclassification of the Kainji languages. We propose some new names for the classificatory levels represented by different nodes. If further work confirms the tree outlined here then they can either be adopted or replaced by something more culturally appropriate. Eastern Kainji is left as an undifferentiated group for the present classification, although, given that it consists of more than 30 languages, it clearly must have a complex internal substructure.

Figure 2 Subclassification of Kainji Languages
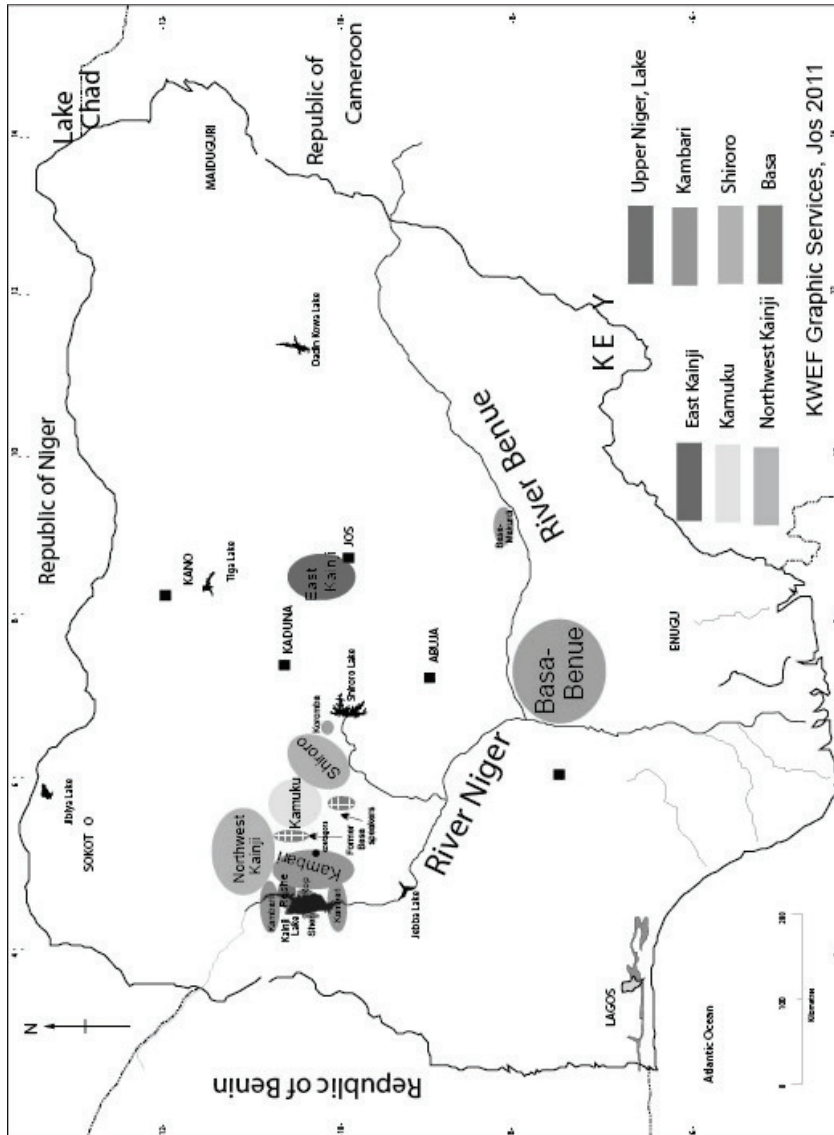
Academic linguists, both Nigerian and foreign, have largely ignored Kainji languages, and the only publications dealing with individual languages are two short sketch grammars (Di Luzio [1972] on Amo and Bendor-Samuel et al. [1973] on Duka), together with a dozen or so journal articles. A measure of the poverty of the available documentation on the family can be seen by inspecting the World Atlas of Language Structures (Dryer and Haspelmath 2011). Of the 2,678 languages represented in WALS, only two are from the Kainji group, Amo and Duka. Even then the available data points are sometimes inaccurate – for example, Duka is said to have 'little affixation' while Amo is 'weakly prefixing'. In fact both are robust noun class languages of the Bantu type. These kinds of errors reflect:

a. the paucity of documentation;

b. the lack of local language experts who might have assisted the compilers; and

c. the fact that no-one has cared enough to correct these mistakes since the first edition in 2006

A striking feature of northwest Kainji is that is has received considerable attention from missionary linguists, notably those from Wycliffe, Nigeria, as well as independent groups. As a consequence, in addition to published sources there are unpublished descriptive sketches of varying quality by missionary linguists as well as several PhD and MA theses, mostly dealing with the Kambari branch of the family (Crozier 1984, Lovelace 1992, Janie P. Stark 2000, John E. Stark 2000, Smith 2007, McGill 2009, Wade 2010, Gimba 2011). Apart from brief sketches by Roger Blench and recent research on Cicipu by Stuart McGill, the last non-missionary linguist to work on a Kainji language was Carl Hoffmann in the 1960s. Of course missionary linguists often do good descriptive work, but they inevitably have different goals from academic researchers, as discussed in Section 2.3. In particular, they are rarely concerned with secure long-term archiving of audiovisual corpora. Since 2006, funding from the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project has enabled the compilation of a sizeable documentary corpus on Cicipu, as well as a number of descriptive works (McGill 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, forthcoming). Cicipu remains the only Kainji language with an archived documentary corpus of annotated audiovisual recordings. Carl Hoffmann collected a remarkable body of Cishingini texts, which were typed up in Ibadan, Nigeria, following his fieldwork, but remain unused in the archive of the University of Bayreuth, Germany, whence they were transferred after his death.

As for lexicography, the picture is slightly better, with locally-published dictionaries available for C'Lela (Rikoto 2001), Tsᵢkimba (Stark 2003), Western Kambari (Stark 2004a), Central Kambari (Stark 2004b), and Duka (Bako 2002). Online dictionaries of Bassa (Blench 1991), ɛBoze (Blench 2012) and Reshe (Blench & Agamalafiya 2011) are also available for viewing and downloading. However, most of these materials were published for the local speech communities, and omit important information for linguistic researchers such as plural forms, tone, vowel quality, vowel length, and even consonant length in the case of the three Kambari dictionaries (Stark 2003, 2004a, 2004b), which make use of an idiosyncratic and highly-underspecified orthography.

The number of Kainji languages is still unclear. The *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009) counts 58, but relatively little survey work has been done compared to neighbouring West African countries such as Ghana and Cameroon: to a large extent this is due to the expulsion (never formally rescinded) of the Summer Institute of Linguistics from Nigeria in the 1970s[2]. Clark Regnier, a Wycliffe Bible Translators linguist, began a survey of West Kainji languages in the late 1980s and made the first record of several previously unknown languages. Unfortunately, he was the victim of a fatal motor accident in 1992. He had compiled most of his wordlist data, using the somewhat laborious text editing systems available at that time. Luckily, he also made a printout which shows what special characters were intended. Through the good offices of Steve and Sonia Dettweiler, the computer files were saved and made available to us, as well as some individual wordlists which were not integrated with the existing dataset.

From the dry season of 2010, a joint programme to physically visit and record the speech of as many Kainji communities as possible has been undertaken by the authors. The audio files have been submitted to the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) at SOAS (the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) , as well as supporting materials such as images of the speakers and their communities. Transcriptions are also gradually being typed up and archived. The data collected is based around a 700-item wordlist; languages which have been visited as part of this survey are marked with KJ700 in Table 1 below.

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[2] The survey tradition has been revived since 2007 under the auspices of Wycliffe Bible Translators and unpublished surveys of the Kamuku group and part of Kambari exist in manuscript. These are valuable, but the practice of not investigating languages deemed unsuitable for language development and thus Bible translation will not commend itself to academic linguists.

The current count of languages, excluding East Kainji and Basa, is approximately 29. Further Kainji languages no doubt remain to be identified by linguists – this has happened even by accident, quite literally in the case of the motorcar breakdown which brought the Damakawa language to light (McGill 2008). A summary of the major subgroups within Kainji is given in Table 1, along with a listing of the available documentation. The first column gives the subgroup along with an approximation of the total number of languages assigned to that subgroup; the second gives the autonym of the individual language where known (Hausa names are in brackets). The better-known languages are in **bold**. See Blench and McGill (n.d.) for further information. The symbol † indicates an extinct or nearly-extinct language.

Table 3: Kainji documentation state-of-the-art

Subgroup	Languages	Level of description
Reshe (1)	Tsureshe (Gungawa)	One published article (Harris 1946), two unpublished grammatical sketches (Boettger and Boettger 1967, Agamalafiya and Blench 2009), unpublished lexicon (Blench and Agamalafiya 2011)
Upper Niger (3)	Sengwe (Laru)	Blench (n.d. a, KJ700)
	Olleran (Lopa)	Unpublished wordlists/grammatical sketch (Blench n.d. b, KJ700)
	Tsupamini (Lopa)	KJ700

Kambari (7)	**Cicipu**	Published articles (McGill 2007, 2011, 2012, forthcoming), PhD thesis (McGill 2009), 50,000-word corpus
	Tsuvaɗi	MA thesis (Lovelace 1992), unpublished wordlist (Lovelace n.d.)
	Cibaangi	KJ700
	Cishingini	Published articles Hoffmann (1963, 1965), Crozier (2012), published dictionary (Stark 2004b), three PhD theses (Crozier 1984, Stark 2000/2010, Stark 2001)
	Tsigaushi	Published dictionary (Stark 2004a)
	Tsikimba	Published dictionary (Stark 2003)
	Tsuwanci	Unpublished grammatical sketch (Mierau 1967)
Basa (7)	(Basa-Kontagora)†	
	(Basa-Gumna)†	Interview with last rememberer (Blench 1976)
	Tukɔrɔmba (Basa-Gurmana) (Basa-Gurara)	Unpublished wordlist (Blench 1976)
	(Basa-Kwali)	Unpublished wordlist (Sterk 1978)
	Rubasa (Basa-Benue)	Unpublished dictionary (Blench 1991), published New Testament
	(Basa-Makurdi)	Unpublished wordlist (Blench 1989)

Kamuku (7)	Cəhungwəryə (Ngwoi)	Unpublished phonological and grammatical sketches (Hackett & Davey 2004, Davey 2009)
	Tu'yara (Kamuku)	MA thesis (Wade 2010), unpublished phonological and grammatical sketch (Mort 2011a, 2011b)
	Tu zubazuba	Unpublished wordlists (Dettweiler & Dettweiler 2002, KJ700)
	Turogo	KJ700
	Tushama	Unpublished wordlists (Dettweiler & Dettweiler 2002, KJ700)
	Tusambuga†	
	(Inkwai)†	
Shiroro (6)	Tarin (Pongu/Pangu)	Unpublished grammatical sketch (MacDonell 2007)
	Tuwəgə	Unpublished wordlist (Blench and McGill fieldnotes)
	Cifungwa (Ura)	KJ700
	(Gurmana)	Published wordlist (Johnston 1919), KJ700
	Timun (Bauchi-Nguda) / Tiwãyã (Wayam)	BA thesis (Gimba 2011), Unpublished wordlists (Gimba fieldnotes, KJ700)
	Tirubo (Rubu) / Tuhɨpɨna (Supana) / (Samburu)	KJ700

Northwest (5)	**C'Lela (Dakarkarci)**	Published articles (Hoffmann 1967, Dettweiler 2000; 2012), published dictionary (Rikoto 2001)
	tHun/sSaare (Duka)	Published grammatical sketch (Bendor-Samuel et al. 1973), Published draft dictionary (Bako 2002)
	Utma'in (Fakai)	Published article (Paterson 2012), MA thesis (Smith 2007)
	Wuri-Gwamhyə-Mba	KJ700
	(Damakawa) †	Unpublished wordlist (McGill 2008)
Eastern (31)	**Timap (Amo)**	Published grammatical sketch (Di Luzio 1972), one other published article (Anderson 1980)
	Ibunu	Unpublished sketch (Shimizu 1968)
	Eboze	Unpublished dictionary (Blench 2012)
	Others	Various short wordlists. At least 10 languages thought to be extinct or nearly extinct.

2.2. Endangerment status

In terms of estimated[3] speaker numbers, while still small by European standards, Kainji languages are often actually in excess of the median for Nigeria. There is one sense in which all of them are losing ground to *lingua francas*, in that the percentage of the ethnic group who are fluent speakers of their heritage language is decreasing (although see Section 4.1 on 'becoming Hausa'). This is because for each language there are many families (and even whole towns) in which the heritage language is no longer being transmitted intergenerationally. Several Kainji languages have become moribund in the last two generations without ever being described, let alone documented in the sense of Himmelmann (1998), for example Tuwəgə, Damakawa (McGill 2008), Basa-Gumna, Bassa-Kontagora (Blench 1991), Sambuga, Inkwai (Yoder et al. 2009), and several languages from the East Kainji subgroup on the Jos plateau (Blench in press a).

Apart from declining numbers, younger speakers of many of the languages are heavily influenced by the main *lingua franca*, Hausa. The only exceptions to this are the Basa languages, which are now encapsulated in a quite different geolinguistic region among the Tiv (Basa-Makurdi) and the Igala (Basa-Benue), and perhaps Shen [=Laru] spoken to the west of Lake Kainji, where the Mande language Busa also functions as a *lingua franca*. Virtually all native speakers of a northern Kainji language also speak fluent Hausa as a second language. Old women in remote places are usually able to understand it well, even if they do not use it much. When individuals from different Kainji peoples (or even from mutually-intelligible but distant dialects) meet, it is Hausa they converse in, and conversation with the Fulɓe is almost always in Hausa. In the case of the Cicipu, greetings between men of any age are almost exclusively in Hausa. Many individuals in the Kainji area speak a third or fourth language well, but these languages are rarely sufficiently widespread to be useful as a *lingua franca* (although see below).

Certainly in Cicipu this influence is prominent due to the spread of Hausa into sociolinguistic domains such as casual conversation which were previously the preserve of the vernacular. The speech of young men and children (particularly boys) is markedly different to that of old men, with a much higher incidence of Hausa loanwords and calqued constructions. This kind of 'death by a thousand cuts' has been observed for other African languages, for example Mous (2003: 160) on the effect of Swahili on Bowe [Bantu F34] and other Bantu languages.

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[3] All the figures in the *Ethnologue* must be taken with a large pinch of salt when it comes to Nigerian languages.

On the other hand, the very high birth-rate in Nigeria[4] means that the absolute numbers of fluent speakers may well be stable, or even increasing for some of the languages. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Nigeria has one of the world's highest urbanisation rates – thus even when children do learn to speak their heritage language, as young adults they may well move away from the language's heartland, which of course decreases the likelihood of further intergenerational transmission.

Despite these complexities and the uncertainties with respect to population figures, most western Kainji languages seem to be fairly vital, at least in rural areas, with children still learning the languages as their mother tongue[5]. The relative vitality of these languages (e.g. with respect to the eastern branch of Kainji, or with Plateau) is one of the reasons that Kainji has attracted the attention of missionary linguists, many of whom have as their primary goal the translation of the Bible and are therefore likely to be drawn to languages where as many people as possible will be able to benefit from the finished product. Kainji projects have therefore tended to focus on activities that might be called 'language development' rather than 'language revitalisation', for example orthography development, literacy, and the production of dictionaries and various kinds of reading material.

Finally, it should also be noted that despite the overall ascendancy of Hausa within the Middle Belt, it is not always to Hausa that speakers shift. For example, Damakawa (McGill 2008) has all but disappeared due to shift to the neighbouring Kainji language C'Lela (also known as Dakarkarci), and the Tuwəgə ethnic group have likewise switched to the medium-sized Kainji language Tarin[6] (also known as Pongu), which they use in communication with members of the Tarin ethnic group. It is at least possible that speakers of the various Bauchi-cluster languages will in time shift to Tarin, since they too use it as a local *lingua franca*.

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[4] 5.41 children per woman in 2008 according to the Library of Congress Federal Research Division (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Nigeria.pdf).

[5] In fact we are only aware of one instance of a rural community whose ethnic identity is (western) Kainji but who have switched to Hausa: the Makici division of Tuzubazuba, found near Igwama town. Despite the remote location only a few elders can speak Tuzubazuba. The reason given was the coming of Islam and the desire to be accepted by Hausa Muslims. As in similar situations worldwide (cf. Dorian 1993), the grandchildren's generation expressed regret at both the loss of their heritage in the forms of songs and traditional knowledge and the inability to switch to another language when amongst Hausas.

[6] Many Kainji languages have a high central vowel ə. This is usually written as a in their orthographies.

2.3. Importance of documenting the Kainji languages

The paucity of reliable linguistic description on Kainji languages was pointed out in Section 2.1. Although much work has been done by missionaries, almost all of it remains unpublished (although see Blench & McGill 2012), and it is often framed using unconventional terminology, making it difficult to use. Moreover, the analysis is often done as a means to an end (typically the production of orthographies and literacy materials). Consequently, in the sketches that are available, topics of importance to linguistic researchers may be glossed over or omitted altogether. Similarly, the long-term archiving of audiovisual material is not a matter of concern for most missionary linguists. This situation is unlikely to improve without active targeting of Kainji languages by language documenters, since ongoing unrest in northern Nigeria is unlikely to make it an attractive destination for foreign fieldworkers. Nigerian linguists are largely unconcerned with the smaller languages of their country. Even a university such as Uyo, which does take language documentation seriously, is understandably concentrating on the nearby Delta region languages (which really *are* off-limits for outside researchers). Given the profession's track record to date, the general prospects for the timely documentation of even a small number of Kainji languages are very poor, and although the languages are for the most part relatively robust at the moment, their long-term survival is far from assured. Certainly at the current rate of two published sketch grammars every fifty years, comprehensive documentation of the family is a chimaera.

If these languages do disappear without proper documentary records, it will be a great loss to linguistics, the more so because of the internal diversity of the group. Lexically, inspection of cognates based on 200 items of core vocabulary suggests a low background lexical similarity of around 20% (McGill n.d.). This contrasts markedly with the picture presented by the Bantu languages, minus A (Bastin et al. 1983). Vowel systems include 6, 7, 8, and 9-vowel symmetric and asymmetric systems, with quite different kinds of vowel harmony systems: harmony in height, in backness, 'total' harmony (Aoki 1968), and none at all. Rarer sounds include the interdental approximants of Nguda/Timun (Harley 2012) and the post-nasalised plosives (e.g. /tⁿ/) found in Laru/Sengwe[7]. Syllable structure ranges from the Kambari group where it is possible to argue for CV only, to the Northwest languages such as C'Lela

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[7] These (non-phonemic) sounds are sometimes called 'prestopped nasals' (Ladefoged and Maddieson 1996: 128-129). They are also found in the Mande language Busa (Jones 1998: 31), from which Laru speakers presumably borrowed them, and in the east of Nigeria in the Adamawan language Mumuye (Shimizu 1979: 21) and the Chadic language Karekare (Schuh 2008).

where complex clusters are common (e.g. b*a*tks*a* [bɨtk.sɨ́] 'expose' (Dettweiler n.d.)). Noun words in the Kambari languages are usually trisyllabic, whereas in others such as Shen [=Laru] they are more often monosyllabic with correspondingly more complex tonal inventories. As for morphology, most languages have Bantu-style robust prefixing noun class systems, although the individual systems are highly divergent from each other. In Shen, however, most plurals are formed by the addition of an enclitic to the noun phrase. For comparison, western Kainji languages show more morphological diversity than all the thousand or so Austronesian languages (Blust 2009) (although less than the five languages within Tarokoid, a single branch of Plateau (Blench and Longtau, forthcoming)). The complexity of the verbal morphology in some branches of Kainji stands out in Nigeria, and is clearly ancestral to Benue-Congo[8]; a thorough description of the Kainji family has the potential to provide important evidence for Benue-Congo reconstruction (see Hyman 2011). Other morphosyntactic peculiarities which are known about include class-marker 'flipping' in the Northwest languages (where individual nouns occur with either prefixes or suffixes depending on their grammatical function, e.g. Smith 2007), the co-existence of both a sex-based gender system and a typical Niger-Congo noun class system in Hungwəryə (Davey 2009) and Reshe (Agamalafiya & Blench 2009), as well as the competition (seemingly ubiquitous in Kainji) between two different paradigms of agreement morphology (McGill 2010).

Undoubtedly there is a great deal of theoretical linguistic interest still to be discovered. The brief summary above should be sufficient to dispel any suspicion amongst non-Africanists that there is nothing to be gained from the study of *yet another* 60 Benue-Congo languages. Researchers familiar with Nigerian languages will hardly need convincing of this.

2.4. Current Kainji language development efforts

In the last two decades there has been a resurgence of interest in the group, with language development projects of four broad kinds springing up. The majority of these are fairly well established (having been operating for a decade or more) and part of Bible translation projects – unsurprisingly this has implications for how the projects are received by the non-Christian members of these speech communities. Secondly, and more recently, other projects have been started by Christian missionaries along with Muslim indigenes – in

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[8] The similarities with Bantu were observed by Johnston (1919), who included three Kainji languages in his 'semi-Bantu'.

these cases the projects are concerned with language support and development rather than Bible translation, although they benefit by receiving funds through Christian organisations such as SIL International. Thirdly, the Kay Williamson Educational Foundation (KWEF) has funded a series of West Kainji Workshops every two years since 2008, to bring together project teams concerned with literacy and language issues. Fourthly, one project has arisen from Stuart McGill's research into Cicipu, funded by the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, the University of London, and KWEF.

3. Ethnicity and religion in northern Nigeria

Why attitudes to language maintenance and development should vary so radically from one area to another requires an understanding of attitudes towards ethnicity and religion. The Nigerian Middle Belt is enormously diverse ethnolinguistically, with around 300 distinct languages spoken there (Blench 1998). Prior to the introduction of Islam and Christianity, each ethnic group had its own religious practices and ritual cycle (Fuller 2001, Mendonsa 2002 chapter 3, Isichei 1983 chapter 9). Although these bear some family resemblances, they were adapted to individual environments and socio-economic systems. While Islam has long had an important cultural impact on the area, it is only relatively recently (i.e. in the last two hundred years or so) that conversion has been widespread (Isichei 1983: chp. 10). In the western Middle Belt, where most Kainji languages are to be found, Islam is dominant. More recently, in the last fifty years or so, Christianity has started to make inroads as the peoples of the Middle Belt gradually convert to one of the two world religions (Kastfelt 1994, 2003). Christianity is strongest in the centre, especially near the Jos Plateau where the Eastern Kainji languages are spoken.

In recent years, violence in the Middle Belt has generated much adverse publicity. Some of the higher profile conflicts have been the riots in Jos and elsewhere in Plateau State, in 2001, 2008, and 2010-2011 (Higazi 2008, 2011), and at the time of writing (July 2012) there are almost daily reports of killings. While these and other disturbances are often reported as religious clashes, even in the popular media it is sometimes recognised that the roots of such conflicts are more complex[9], involving ethnicity, political power, and access to land and other resources.

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[9]　See, for example, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8468456.stm. The headline writer presumably failed to see the irony of giving the title 'Nigerian religious riots kill 200 in Jos' to an article which states 'Correspondents say such clashes in Nigeria are often blamed on sectarianism. However, poverty and access to resources such as land often lie at the root of the violence.'

The tendency to privilege religion as the source of this violence is found in both international and local media. Concerning Nigeria as a whole, Blench writes:

> Although in principle, individuals are free to adopt what religion they like, in reality, particular ethnic groups tend to either adopt Islam or one species of Christianity. *As a consequence, ethnic conflicts often become rewritten as religious conflicts*, because this suits the agenda of urban elites [author's italics] (Blench 2003a: 9).

The danger of such a re-interpretation is that conflicts then become more likely to spread beyond the boundaries of the ethnic groups, potentially to any part of the Nigeria. Blench (2003a) gives the following example involving the Tyap people of the Middle Belt:

> ...the conflicts in Zangon Kataf in 1992, were essentially between the indigenous people, the Tyap, and the Hausa traders who had been resident in the town since the nineteenth century. Old resentments about unequal access to resources and the relative wealth of the migrants came to a head in violent riots with loss of lives and property. However, this was soon interpreted as a religious conflict and in Kaduna there were further riots which had a Christian/Muslim character (Blench 2003a: 9).

Similarly, violence involving Christian farmers and Fulani pastoralists (almost all of whom are Muslims) often has as its root cause conflict over natural resources (Blench 2003b, 2004). Certainly conflict also occurs between different ethnic groups who share a single religion – see Blench (2004) for the fraught relations between the Hausa farmers and Fulani herders in northern Kebbi State (i.e. north of the Kainji-speaking area), virtually all of whom are Muslims.

It would not be true to say that religion is irrelevant to such disputes. Differences in culture arising from the religious divide may make it harder to resolve the initial competition for resources, and increase the likelihood that it will result in violence (Blench 2004: 28) – and rewriting such conflicts as religious quarrels can serve to transform them into just that. Since 2005, emissaries from other regions of Africa and the Middle East have ensured the financing of radical urban groups whose agenda is far from the ethnic issues more characteristic of the zone. The terrorist activities of militant Islamist groups such as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (better known as *Boko Haram* 'Western education is forbidden') have little to do with the ethnolinguistic makeup of Nigeria. The cumulative effect of decades of

violence between Muslims and Christians (whether religiously-motivated or not) is a fraught atmosphere in many towns and cities of northern Nigeria, against a background of rumour and counter-rumour. Collaboration between Muslims and Christians involved in language documentation and development (Section 5.1) is thus all the more remarkable.

4. Historical and Cultural background

The Kainji-speaking peoples are linked to each other not just by the fact that they speak related languages, but also by a variety of historical and cultural ties, and it is this which makes it reasonable to discuss them as a unit as is being done here. Unsurprisingly, past conflict with the Hausa is important in understanding the present-day ethnic identity of the Kainji peoples, as discussed in Section 5.

4.1. Shared history

A recurrent trope in Nigerian oral traditions is the arrival of a hunter or other heroic traveller, who, on being offered the chieftaincy by the leaderless indigenes, decides to stay and establish a kingdom. Isichei (1983: 179) calls this the 'hunter-king paradigm', and writes that 'the history of most states associates the change from small-scale to large-scale government with an invading hero from outside'. Kainji peoples are no exception, and stories based on this paradigm have been reported in a number of them, including Cicipu (Mathews 1926), Bassa (Tukura 2006 part 2 chapter 1) and Tsureshe (Agamalafiya 2008).

In the case of Kainji peoples, these legends probably contain a kernel of truth. For example, the Cicipu oral history collected by Mathews (1926) mentions Katsina and Kwatarkwashi as the route taken from Mecca by the founding hero Damasa, and in a recently-recorded text[10] the founders of Korisino (the seat of the Cicipu *wɔmɔ*, or king) were said to be hunters from Katsina. This tallies with the historical account given by Usman (1981), who describes the establishment of various Kainji kingdoms to the south of Katsina:

> On the borders of the [*Katsina*] kingdom to the south-west, were certain polities whose governments, by the late eighteenth century, had become dependent on the state of Katsina...They were all

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[10] http://www.cicipu.org/texts/sayb001.xml#sayb001.183

located in areas, which, from an early period, received a
considerable number of immigrants from Katsina...As more
immigrants moved in from Katsina, attracted by the iron resources
of the area and the trade route to Nupe and the west, these
Katsinawa became involved in the formation of kingdoms which
came to incorporate disparate clans of the Kamuku, Achipawa
[*Acipu/Cicipu*], Dakarkari [*Lelna/C'Lela*], and Kambari, living in
this area. The role of these Katsinawa in the political and economic
development of this area oriented the trading and cultural networks
of the area towards Katsina, even though the kingdom of Kebbi
continued to exercise some influence. Kwatarkwashi came to be a
major religious shrine for the numerous worshippers of Magiro
inhabiting this region (Usman 1981:83-84).

As well as these shared origins sometime before the eighteenth century, the
various Kainji kingdoms all suffered greatly at the hands of the emirs of
Kontagora in the 19th century, Umaru Nagwamtse and his grandson Ibrahim[11].
While their slave-raiding has not had the same lasting effects as, say, the
treatment of Australian Aborigines by European colonisers, it has nevertheless
contributed significantly to the ethnic identity of the western Kainji peoples
today. Blench (2011) has described the origin of the slave trade in West
Africa, its impact in the Nigerian Middle Belt, and the response of Nigerian
academic historians in some detail. The brief overview given below
concentrates on the Kainji area.

4.1.1 Slave-raiding by Kontagora

The outstanding figure in the history of northern Nigeria in the 19th century is
the Fulani scholar Usman ɗan Fodio, a devout religious reformer and
instigator of the Fulani *jihad* (1804-1810) against the rulers of the various
Hausa states. This resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate in the
far northwest of present-day Nigeria. As significant for the Kainji peoples was
the rise to prominence of the notorious slave-raider (and grandson of Usman
ɗan Fodio) Umaru Nagwamatse (1806-1876). In an apparent ploy to get a
dangerous soldier out of the way of the Sokoto court, Nagwamatse was sent

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[11] Tukura (2006) claims the Basa-Benue may have already migrated south beyond the
orbit of Kontagora before this period. However, this is unlikely, since the fragmented
Basa populations are spread far into traditional Kainji territory and other groups such
as the Koromba clearly link their isolated location with the slave raids (Blench
fieldnotes).

south to administer a frontier district, given the title Sarkin Sudan ('lord of the blacks'), and permitted to found a new emirate at Kontagora, in the 'empty' country a couple of hundred miles to the south of Sokoto.

Historians have not generally been kind to Nagwamatse, described by Rodriguez (1997: 454) as 'the destroyer, the raider, and the conqueror'. His grandson Ibrahim Nagwamatse (who ruled Kontagora from 1880-1922) has a similar reputation. In 1901 when captured by the British and ordered to stop slaving, his memorable retort was 'Can you stop a cat from mousing? When I die I will be found with a slave in my mouth' (Hogben & Kirk-Greene 1966: 508).

Isichei (1983) puts the effect of Kontagora's slave-raiding on the Middle-Belt in perspective as follows:

> If the *jihad* at the centre was characterised by a genuine concern for reform and religious renewal, the *jihad* as experienced in the 'Middle Belt' was often essentially predatory, marked by the destruction of long-established polities and the extraction of slaves as tribute or war booty (Isichei 1983:207).

> The political fragmentation of the heartland made it vulnerable. In the nineteenth century, it experienced traumatic changes...Most devastating of all was the violent creation of Kontagora, later in the century (Isichei 1983:160).

The Kainji peoples were not defenceless, and they adopted various survival strategies involving displacement (Salamone 2010). The Reshe (or 'Gungawa') and other riverine peoples fortified islands in the Niger, while the Kambari adopted the less successful strategy of dispersal into the bush. Often entire populations fled to hilltops and built impressive fortifications – the fortified wall shown in Figure 3 encircles Korisino hill, and is over five miles in circumference (ironically, it is said to have been built by the Acipu's own slaves). The stories from speakers of Cicipu and other Kainji languages are ones of resistance and victory over Kontagora, rather than victimhood. Although it is unlikely, Cicipu interviewed today do not believe that they were driven into the hills by the actions of Kontagora; instead they maintain that they always lived on these inaccessible hilltops. Similar beliefs are held by other Kainji peoples (e.g. Agamalafiya 2008). Today the fortifications at Korisino have fallen into disrepair and their main use is during the Kezzeme war festival (McGill 2011: 152), although propitiatory sacrifices of dogs are still regularly made at the gates in the wall (Figure 4), presumably dating from a more dangerous time.

*Figure 3: Cicipu speaker Mohammed Mallam standing by a well-preserved
section of the fortified wall surrounding Korisino (Karishen) hill, near Sakaba*

Figure 4: Jawbone of a dog sacrificed at the Kadisa gate on Korisino hill

Despite this discourse of resistance (which has become more common across northern Nigeria in recent decades – Blench 2011), the devastating effect of the wars on Kainji peoples should not be under-estimated. Nagwamatse is the only non-Cipu to be named in all the Cicipu oral history collected, and as soon as it was known of the interest in recording oral history, the story of Nagwamatse's defeat at the hands of the Cicipu was produced. Writing in the 1960s about the lasting effect on the Kambari, Hallett observes:

> The reason why Kontagora is so bereft of population is a simple and terrible one – for fifty years Umaru, then Ibrahim made the area their hunting-ground for slaves (Hallett 1960, cited in Hogben & Kirk-Greene 1966: 508).

According to Salamone (2010: xvii) 'In these wars the Kamberi lost up to half their population'. At the time of Mathews' (1926) report, the Cicipu at Korisino still lived exclusively on the hill, although they had started farming in the valley again. From the ages of the speakers McGill interviewed it seems that there was a sizeable community living on the mountain, at least into the 1960s. As for the Kambari, even today many profess an intense dislike of going to Kontagora town.

It should be admitted that not everyone in Nigerian society shares this opinion of the founding emirs of Kontagora. While those claiming a Middle Belt ethnic identity vilify them, some Hausas have attempt to redeem the Nagwamatses from what they see as an unfair reputation. Many institutions in northern Nigeria are named after them, including the military barracks in Kontagora. The website of the Niger State government carries the following text:

> Nagwamatse and his protégés opened up a previously closed forestry area. Idol worship, wars among and between communities, slave raiding and complete absence of law and order was the environment where peace and security was restored and Islam established as the principal religion by these outstanding worriers [sic] and statesmen (http://www.nigerstate.gov.ng/kontagora-emirate-council-2.html).

This is a striking rewriting of the historical record, especially since most of the populations of modern Niger State (Nupe, Gbari, various Kainji peoples and refugees such as the Koro (Jijili)) suffered extensively from the depredations of the emirate in the 19th century.

4.1.2 Becoming Hausa

With the formation of the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1901 slave-raiding seems to have ceased fairly quickly (Blench 2011). Nevertheless Kainji peoples experienced discrimination from the British, who understandably identified more with the more complex political structures of the Islamic Fulani and Hausa than with the small animist farming and fishing communities of the Middle Belt. Thus despite the positive aspects of the 'Pax Britannica', the power of the Fulani/Hausa élite was further consolidated by the British (Blench et al. 2006; Salamone 2010 chapter 4; Isichei 1983: 392-393). Since independence in 1960 the government attitude towards the Kainji peoples has been one of neglect, although two important developments have affected the (formerly) riverine Reshe, Lopa and Laru peoples in particular – state-sponsored conversion to Islam, and the wholesale resettlement of these peoples at the creation of Lake Kainji (from which the Kainji language group takes its name, incidentally) in 1968. In 1975 the anthropologist Frank Salamone described the effects of the resettlement as follows (see also Salamone 1975a on 'Becoming Hausa'):

> Until the completion of Kainji Dam in the late 1960s forced their resettlement, the Gungawa (island-dwellers) [*i.e. the Reshe*] were a riverine people who practised exploitative alternation of resources, shifting from onions to millet, guinea corn and rice as the season and occasion warranted. Fishing supplemented their income and complex and friendly arrangements with the Serkawa (professional fishermen) preserved fishing boundaries. Today the Gungawa find themselves on extremely poor farm land, land especially ill-suited for onion and rice cultivation. In addition, their movement from riverine positions and the other ecological changes consequent on the building of Kainji Dam have abrogated their agreements with the Serkawa, and the Serkawa have taken over the dried fish export trade once dominated by the Gungawa. Faced with no real alternatives, Gungawa increasingly used a long-established pattern of ethnic identity change and *became Hausa* [italics ours]. The procedure for doing so is well-known in Yauri. They became Muslims, spoke only Hausa in public, swore off the consumption of indigenous alcoholic beverages, dressed in a Hausa manner and called themselves Hausa (Salamone 1975b: 203).

The other former riverine peoples, the Laru and Lopa, have had similar experiences – see Section 5.1 for a similar phenomenon in Cicipu. Nevertheless, despite (or perhaps because of) these misfortunes, the western Kainji languages are, in general, remarkably vital today, certainly in comparison with the eastern Kainji languages spoken on the Jos Plateau.

4.2. Cultural ties

In addition to their shared history over the last few centuries, perhaps the most important cultural link between the various western Kainji peoples is the Maigiro cult[12] mentioned in the quote from Usman above (see also Gunn & Conant 1960: 46, Isichei 1983: 288). Although Maigiro is not unique to Kainji speech communities, it is apparently found (and to some extent, still practised) in all of them – it is always easy to elicit a word for Maigiro in the vernacular. Moreover, on a local level it functions to demarcate the Hausa and Fulɓe from the Kainji-speaking peoples. For example, the Cicipu phrase *àzá há-kòrínnò* 'people of the traditional religion' includes the Kambari and Lelna living nearby, but not the Hausa or Fulɓe.

Another shared cultural practice is the *gɔlmɔ* bridal service, where groups of agemates have to perform various farming duties for the fathers of their respective brides in the years leading up to marriage. This is found in its most intricate form amongst the Lelna and the Hun-Saare (Dukawa), but it is also practised by other Kainji-speaking groups.

A cultural practice which causes much discussion in Nigeria is the habit of women carrying loads on their shoulders rather than on the head. Shoulder-carrying is preserved among all the western Kainji peoples (except the Reshe) and interestingly among the Basa groups southeast of the Niger-Benue confluence where it is highly unusual. This highly visible cultural trait acts as an important marker of ethnicity, and when young people begin to drop it under the influence of urban behaviour it is a cause for comment among the elders.

Origin myths also tie the various peoples together in a mesh of interconnecting genealogies: for example the Bassa have been said to be the offspring of the Kamuku and the Hausa of Zazzau (Tukura 2006 part 1 chapter 1, see also Gunn & Conant 1960: 73), the Kambari have been said to be descended from the Hausa of Katsina and the Acipu. Whether or not such stories contain any verifiable history is not the point (see Davidson 1991: 110 for discussion); what is important is that they are believed. Other cultural links stem from the 'joking relationships' (Hausa *abokin wasa*), which exist between various ethnic groups. When members of these groups (which are often subsets of the relevant language communities) meet each other they are free to (and indeed may expect to) insult each other without offence being

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[12] Also spelled Magiro. See Gunn & Conant (1960∶ 46 fn. 8) for a suggested etymology.

taken. Other miscellaneous cultural practices serve to further link the groups together.

These various cohesive ties serve to maintain or engender other cultural similarities between the groups, and taken together with the shared persecution they suffered at the hands of the Hausa/Fulani, suggest that *a priori* we might predict that they would have similar ethnolinguistic ideologies, and would respond in similar ways to language development efforts.

5. Language ideology and endangerment

5.1. Language ideologies

Salamone (1975a, see Section 4.1) observed that the Reshe people are 'becoming Hausa' at a faster rate than before as a result of the disruption caused by the creation of the Kainji dam. He points out that this is an age-old strategy among the Reshe, and indeed it can be found among other Kainji peoples, especially town-dwellers. What is interesting about the situation in Cicipu (and apparently Reshe too) is the notable absence of a well-known language activist stereotype:

1.   educated

2.   urban

3.   don't speak their heritage language regularly

4.   married to a native speaker of a different language

5.   their children speak English or another language of wider communication

6.   regret that they and their children no longer speak it

There are people of Cicipu descent living in (traditionally Cicipu) towns such as Sakaba who meet all of these criteria, except for the last. They have 'become Hausa' through the process identified by Salamone above (see Section 4.1.2.). Rural Acipu often complain that their interests are not well-represented by those of Cicipu descent who move to nearby towns and attain government positions. Although they *can* speak Cicipu, they do not, and often deny being Cicipu at all. If it were not for the very high birth rate in rural Nigeria these changes in ethnic identity accompanying urbanisation might be

damaging to the vitality of Kainji languages, as opposed to just ensuring they remain under-developed.

Salamone (1975a) identified a quite different ideology held by Kambari living amongst the Reshe in Bin Yauri:

> ...Kamberi are beginning to convert to Islam and to occupy high positions in the local government. When I questioned them, however, it was obvious that they were extraordinarily hostile to Hausa and had converted to preserve their ethnic identity. They were careful to live a scrupulously Islamic life in order to guard themselves from the argument that only Hausa are good Muslims. In fact, the presence of non-Hausa Muslims in Yauri in high positions offers a new example of the distinction between ethnicity and Islam not readily available before... (Salamone 1975a: 421).

This description mostly matches the anti-Hausa ideology observed amongst rural Cicipu and speakers of other Kainji languages (although conversion to Islam seems to involve consideration of material wealth and social status rather than a desire to preserve one's ethnic identity). Anthropologists observe that 'social groups as well as individuals define their identities in situations of opposition and contrast with others' (Salamone 2010: 17). The most salient 'others' in the case of Kainji peoples are the Hausa, who (along with the Fulɓe[13]) carried out the slave raids of the 19th and early 20th centuries as described in Section 4.1, and remain politically and economically dominant in northern Nigeria.

Evidence for an anti-Hausa ideology is plentiful, and is displayed by Muslims as well as non-Muslims, just as Salamone found for the Kambari of Bin Yauri. This can readily be observed in the talk and behaviour of individual speakers of Kainji languages of all religions. For example, the most common reason given for why it is important to carry on speaking Kainji languages is the issue of secrecy; it is the Hausa from whom it is desirable to conceal things, rather than the Fulɓe or any of the other Kainji-speaking peoples[14].

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[13]   The 'bush Fulani' (*Fulɓe ladde*) who live amongst the Acipu and other Kainji peoples are not viewed in the same way as the Hausa and their elite Fulani rulers. The Busa and Nupe emirates to the southwest of the main Kainji area were also notorious slave raiders, but there is less information on whether their activities had a similar impact on the ethnolinguistic ideologies of the neighbouring peoples.

[14]   See http://www.cicipu.org/texts/sagb001.xml#sagb001.107 *passim* for an example.

This anti-Hausa ideology also reveals itself in the actions of language documentation and development projects. The short history of the Cicipu Language Project, established in 2010, is particularly interesting, both because of the ideologically-driven orthography, and also because of the Hausa opposition to an attempt to build a project office in the pre-eminent Cicipu town, Sakaba. The April 2010 orthography workshop in Sakaba debated, amongst other topics, the marking of vowel length. This debate hinged not on whether the (Roman[15]) Hausa orthography suffers from ignoring vowel length, which it indisputably does (e.g. UNESCO 1966: 22), but on the fact that marking vowel length would distinguish Cicipu from Hausa. Ample evidence of the confusion that ignoring vowel length would cause in Cicipu was presented, but this was not convincing to the attendees. It was only when the similarity/distinction with Hausa was raised that there was a large majority in favour of marking vowel length in Cicipu. A similar desire to be different from Hausa was displayed in other discussions such as whether to use an accent to indicate the (tonally-expressed) grammatical mood. The context in which the workshop took place makes it clear that this rejection of Hausa has nothing to do with religion: the majority attending the workshop were Muslims, and the meeting was opened and closed in Islamic prayer (in both Cicipu and Arabic) by a Cicipu Mallam, Wakili Juji.

Dorian (1993: 575) observes that language revitalisation is necessarily a political act. Indeed, almost as soon as the Cicipu Language Project was initiated it ran into problems with the Dakaci[16] of Sakaba (who is of Cicipu descent), local councillors and other Hausa residents of Sakaba. The focal point of the Hausa opposition was the attempt in early 2011 by the Cicipu Language committee to build an office on land gifted to the project by the Sarkin Ƙasa of Sakaba, the secular leader of the Acipu of Kebbi State. This plan was eventually thwarted through various filibustering devices, which meant the still-unfinished structure was ruined by the elements in the rainy season of 2011. These included numerous calls for project members to appear before the Emir of Sakaba (to whom the Sarkin Ƙasa reports), two complaints resulting in the building site being changed twice, and eventually, once the outside structure was nearly complete (Figure 5), a final (and eventually

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[15] When Hausa is written in the Arabic writing system (*ajami*) vowel length *is* indicated for some vowels. However, *ajami* is not in general use in the Kainji language area, being limited to religious contexts (this is not true in other parts of northern Nigeria – see Warren-Rothlin 2012).

[16] The Dakaci is more important than individual village chiefs, but less important than the Sarkin Ƙasa.

successful) appeal to the Emir coupled with direct threats of physical violence. The project is continuing, but without a dedicated building.

Figure 5: The half-finished Cicipu Language Project office (March 2011)

The most interesting thing about this dispute is the way in which it has been framed by the opponents of the building. After the first few attempts to stop construction failed, the nature of the complaint was changed to religious – it was claimed that the Cicipu Language Project was building a church. Not only were Muslim and Christian Acipu working together in the face of this opposition, it was altogether remarkable, given the religious situation described in Section 3, to witness a Muslim Cicipu Language Project employee prepared to physically fight to protect a building denounced by its opponents as a church, and being dissuaded from doing so only by the arguments of a Christian Cipu.

Although there are strong links between Christian mission and local language development in Nigeria (and of course between Westerners and Christianity), the Cicipu Language Project has been deliberately structured to guard against misunderstandings in this area. Two of the three employees are Muslims; in fact, the project supervisor is a teacher of Islamic Religious Knowledge in secondary school. The majority of the language committee are Muslims, and the language project has been supported from the outset by the Cicipu king and his elders, who are far from well-disposed towards Christianity. Furthermore, Muslims paid for most of the blocks for the building. Therefore it seems unlikely that the local councillors and other leaders of the opposition really believed that the building was going to be a

church. An alternative explanation (one favoured by several of the Acipu concerned) is that having exhausted other strategies they adopted the rhetoric of religious opposition as a cloak for the less palatable (to local tastes, anyway) reality of ethnic discrimination.

Other Kainji language projects are more overtly political, at least as far as the activities of their members are concerned. Many of the Pongu Language Development Committee are heavily involved in local politics, as are Hungwarya and Duka (tHun) language activists. Pongu and Hungwarya are represented in the 'G5[17]' movement based in Kagara in Niger State, along with Kamuku, Bauchi, and Ura/Cifungwa, which campaigns for greater representation of non-Hausa ethnic groups in local politics. Kainji language projects have been set up almost exclusively by members of Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the older projects mainly employ Christian native speakers, even where Christians form a minority within the language group. However, more recently-established projects such as Tarin (Pongu) employ a more representative cross-section of the target speech community; the Hungwarya project employs only Muslim staff. It is remarkable that in a country as polarised in terms of religion as Nigeria, Muslim native speakers are willing to co-operate with (and even be employed by) Christian missionaries. The north-central city of Jos, which has been plagued with ethnic and religious violence in the last few years is home to numerous mission organisations, and is consequently the most important centre for language development in northern Nigeria. For Muslims from the northwest to go to Jos at all is unusual. For Muslims to travel to Jos to attend literacy workshops at the Nigerian Bible Translation Trust headquarters might be thought inconceivable; and yet this is precisely what the staff members of the Hungwarya Language Development Project in Kagara are doing.

In summary, the most likely explanation for this state of affairs is that it is due to an ideological divide. Due to past persecution and present domination by the Hausa, speakers of Kainji languages, at least in part, define their identity in opposition to the Hausa, regardless of their religion. Although there are very strong links between Islam and Hausa (and between Christianity and local language development), it is possible to be a Muslim and yet have very

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[17] It is perhaps ironic that the group has chosen the number '5' based on the external (Hausa) conceptualisation of their ethnicity, rather than, say, 'G14' based on their autonyms. Kainji peoples tend to be 'splitters' rather than 'lumpers' and their languages often lack terms that can be satisfactorily applied to what linguists might consider a whole 'language'.

negative attitudes towards the Hausa people and language, despite the instrumental value of the latter in northern Nigeria[18].

5.2. Western and eastern Kainji: contrasting responses to an anti-Hausa ideology?

The military and economic dominance of the Hausa is often cited as being responsible for language endangerment. Blench (2007: 150) writes:

> Language endangerment in West Africa generally occurs through language shift, which usually reflects the rise of a dominant culture, formerly military, but often nowadays commercial or religious. This is particularly the case with Islam; conversion to Islam was historically associated with the rise of highly militarized cultures and indeed the slave trade. Thus Hausa, Arabic, Mandinka, Bambara, Fulfulde, and Kanuri have all been associated with aggressive expansionism and the forcible conversion of enslaved peoples. In the colonial era, the convenience of these languages was such that they were frequently adopted as secondary languages of communication. Promoted by the administration they became ever more the vehicle of assimilatory forces pressing on minority languages.

The effects of this language shift can be seen by looking at the state of the Eastern branch of Kainji. Blench (in press a: 3) notes that 'almost all East Kainji languages are threatened', and of the 31 Eastern Kainji languages listed in the *Ethnologue*, at least ten are thought to be extinct. The more northern Plateau languages are also under threat from Hausa but have generally proven more resilient. The recent communal violence on the Plateau has had the paradoxical consequence of strengthening the importance of language such as Berom and Rigwe.

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[18]   Evidence for this state of affairs can also be found elsewhere in the Middle Belt. Ron is a Chadic language similar to Hausa spoken in the Bokkos area, and until recently, adoption of Hausa loanwords was casual and uncontroversial, as well as being facilitated by a similar phonological system. However, the Ron literacy committee now sees it as part of its task to eliminate all Hausa loanwords from the language, sometimes resorting to awkward periphrases in consequence. More generally in the literature on language endangerment it is recognised that oppression and neglect can have positive as well as negative effects on the vitality of minority languages (e.g. Grenoble & Whaley 1999).

The differences between the situation on the Jos Plateau and the situation in the northwest cannot be put down just to size. Field trips in 2011-2012 to some of the smaller western Kainji groups (Wuri, Gwamhyə, Olleran, Tsupamini, and Sengwe) suggests they are all vital, in the sense that children are still learning them. Lopa and Laru were mentioned in Section 4.1. Wuri and Gwamhyə are two ethnic groups speaking dialects of a single language[19], completely undescribed apart from a few nouns in Rowlands (1962). Speakers of the former group, who probably number a few thousand, were interviewed in Bori, a Wuri community adjoining Maga town on the main north road from Zuru to Sokoto. Wuri is the furthest north of all Kainji languages, bordering Hausaland proper. However, as with the Lake languages, Wuri appears to be remarkably healthy. Not only are children still speaking the language as their mother tongue, we were also able to observe young men conversing naturally amongst themselves in Wuri – something that one rarely sees amongst urban speakers of larger Kainji languages such as Cicipu. Again, we met with Muslims who showed a very strong interest in language development. Gwamhi is smaller than Wuri but apparently similarly vital.

So what accounts for the difference in language vitality between the western and eastern Kainji languages? Number of speakers is one possibility; it is difficult to judge human populations in the pre-colonial era, but it is clear that populations of eastern Kainji speakers may often have numbered no more than a few hundred, whereas the western Kainji groups were probably in the thousands. However, the key may lie in perceptions of ethnic identity. Western Kainji peoples seem to have been bound by a strong set of cultural traits which allowed them to develop a coherent anti-Hausa ethnic identity. There is an intriguing similarity with the 'anti-horse' beliefs which bound together the Gur speakers of northern Ghana in opposition to the mounted raiders of the army of Samori (Goody 1971). Eastern Kainji speakers seem to have developed an altogether different relationship with the Hausa, since their principal masquerade, the *Jankai* (Hausa 'red head') speaks in Hausa (Isichei 1991a, 1991b). One possible explanation for this is that their closeness to Jos and to the colonial authorities, meant that key elements of their culture, such as the poison ordeal and the seven-year initiation cycle, were forbidden as early as the 1930s. Diamond (1967) already describes the culture of the Anaguta people (one of the 'owners' of Jos) as in breakdown. This suggests that the smaller ethnic groups had intuited that their culture could not stand against the combined forces of the colonial authorities, Islam and Christianity.

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[19] Mba (Kokanawa) is a further ethnic division – we were not able to visit, but the language is reported to be vital in most (but not all) villages.

The character of the *Jankai* was a way of suggesting this deep ambiguity, and indeed many groups gave up the unequal struggle to maintain their language.

An alternative possibility is that the difference in vitality has something to do with the religious composition of the groups – the western Kainji peoples are predominantly Muslim, whereas the eastern Kainji peoples are largely Christian. It may be that speakers have adopted different strategies to express an anti-Hausa ethnic identity – through the maintenance of their language in the first case, and by conversion to the Christian religion in the second. This is speculative, however, and the argument is weakened by the fact that the mainly Christian speakers of Plateau languages have, in general, retained their heritage languages. What cannot be denied is the need not just for linguists to document and describe Kainji languages, but also for sociolinguists to explain the differences in vitality.

6. Recommendations for applied documentation

The anti-Hausa ideology held by many speakers of Kainji languages suggests that language support efforts might expect a reasonable degree of success. Even in situations which might have seemed unpromising such as Wuri, there is potential for documentation projects to have a positive impact on language development and perhaps on long-term language maintenance. Nevertheless, documentation projects which attempt to apply their work locally are likely to face problems similar to those described above. Therefore in this final section we make three recommendations for applied language documentation work on Kainji languages.

6.1. Building relationships with those in power

The importance of building relationships with those in authority cannot be over-emphasised in Nigeria – if language documentation is inevitably a political act, then documenters are inevitably politicians. This holds not just for officials you come in to contact with regularly, such as the chief of the host village, but also for those who you may never see unless there is some dispute, when it is too late to start building relationships. This is not so important for 'pure' language documentation projects, which are less likely to be perceived as a threat by those outside the target language group. It is when documentation projects move beyond the collection of corpora, and overtly start to apply this material, that opposition from outside groups is more likely. Find out early on who the important people are (and what the chain of command is), and make a habit of paying regular social calls. Letters of introduction from universities and central government will help, but they are not a substitute for local contacts.

This is important whether they speak the language you are interested in or not – a serious mistake in the case of Cicipu was to make little effort to build relationships with powerful Hausa in nearby towns. Urban Hausa often have a condescending attitude towards speakers of Kainji languages; there is a danger that the linguist, who naturally identifies with the speakers of the language under study, will be tempted to look down on or even despise the Hausa in turn. In this case, a better attitude would have been to court favour with those who have the power to frustrate language development activities. This can be seen in the light of Jeff Good's paper on communities in this volume. Although we may not have a responsibility to serve influential local Hausa in the same way as the other communities Good identifies, for purely practical reasons it is important to identify this community early on in the project. It may also be useful to consider what advantages the language project might bring them – they are 'stakeholders' too, even if their goals may be very different or even opposed to those of the minority language community.

6.2. Encourage religious co-operation

As mentioned above, language development work in northern Nigeria is usually associated with Christianity, regardless of the goals of the project leaders. This may lead to opposition from both outsiders and the speech community itself. Part of the solution to this problem lies in appropriate project infrastructure. Older Kainji language projects were set up as one component of a Bible translation project. There are many advantages to this approach, including the availability of outside funding and other resources from international mission organisations, partnerships with local churches, a strong motivation for Christian project staff, and mature methodologies for language development. Nevertheless, when a majority or sizeable minority of the language community are Muslims this approach is problematic, since it alienates many of the potential beneficiaries of the language project. Not only will Muslims feel that reading and writing in the vernacular is only for Christians, but the association between minority languages and Christianity will be further entrenched, with possible effects on language vitality amongst Muslims.

A more coherent approach is the one being taken by the Pongu/Tarin and Hungwarya projects, both based in Kagara, Niger State. Although these were initiated and are still led by European missionaries, they are explicitly concerned with language development and employ both Muslim and Christian staff. Similarly, the Ut-ma'in project made a step in the right direction in 2010 when, following the second Kainji Language Workshop, they made the

literacy committee independent of the Bible translation committee. Other existing projects should be encouraged to take similar steps.

The biennial Kainji Language Workshops have proved a good forum for bringing together Muslims and Christians working on language development, resulting in fruitful discussions about the relationship between Bible translation and language development. There is no secret that most Christians involved in language development in Kainji languages would like to see the Bible translated – however it is coming to be recognised that it is better for all concerned if this is done as one part of a general language development movement, rather than the other way round. As well as increased trust, another benefit of the workshop has been the establishment of informal support networks amongst Muslims working on different projects. Whether it can be called 'applied documentation' or not, given the religious turmoil in Nigeria (Section 3), the phenomenon of Muslims and Christians collaborating on language documentation and development projects to the extent described in Section 5.1 must be considered a worthwhile outcome of the documentation process.

Language documenters often face the dilemma of whether they should become involved in the dissemination of religious material. If the majority of the speech community are adherents of one particular religion, there is of course less of an issue. Western language documenters working with predominantly Christian communities often become involved in producing religious material, regardless of their own beliefs. For example, in Oceania some ELDP-funded grantees have assisted more-or-less wholly Christian communities with the production of vernacular prayer books. Thomas (this volume) provides another example. Similarly, Christian missionaries in West Africa have been known to produce vernacular Islamic products such as the '99 glorious names of Allah' (Warren-Rothlin 2012). In the case of the Cicipu Language Project, however, the Western project leader (McGill) was initially reluctant for it to be associated with the dissemination of religious material. Despite this, both Cicipu documenters were keen to produce religious material in the vernacular for their respective religions, and in the end we came to an arrangement whereby they can work on such material outside their project hours and at their own expense. The very low level of Hausa and Arabic literacy in the area (even those who can read almost always read haltingly) is likely to increase the impact of such material. In particular, it is likely to be a more useful aid to literacy than folktales or oral history – people are glad that such books exist, but they are not so keen to buy them and even less ready to read them. The novelty with respect to Kainji language projects is not the production of religious literature, since that is what is expected in northern Nigeria, but rather the involvement of Muslims.

This approach may have to be revised in the future, but for now Cicipuland remains free from the violence which blights other parts of Nigeria. It may therefore be better to view vernacular religious material (whether print or audio) as a positive means of language support and revitalisation, rather than as something to be censored in pursuit of the anodyne.

6.3. Take knowledge transfer on a small-scale seriously

The major issue with respect to the documentation of Kainji languages is the lack of trained documenters wishing to work on these languages (Section 2). If neither Nigerian nor foreign language documenters are willing to spend long periods of time in the field, then an alternative is to train native speakers of these languages in techniques of language documentation and, as far as possible, delegate responsibility to them.

This approach has a number of advantages over more traditional models of documentation. To the extent that language documentation is carried out at all in northern Nigeria, it is generally done by western linguists, and speech communities tend to be involved only passively. There are many disadvantages to this approach, quite apart from the overtones of colonialism. To mention just a few, documentary work stalls whenever the linguist is not in the field, the project may be associated with certain properties (real or apparent) of the westerner (e.g. Christianity) and therefore be less acceptable to the community as a whole, outsiders may not be allowed to be present at certain events (e.g. religious ceremonies), and it will also be more difficult for them to acquire an 'emic' view of either the genres and knowledge important to the speech community, or their culture. Good documentation is 'opportunistic' which for Woodbury (2003) means that:

> documentary projects must be designed to put easily available, easy-to-use, well-diffused technologies in the hands of as many people as possible, and to train them to make high quality recordings. This is the opposite of the traditional model, where someone from outside the community controls documentation and the means for documentation (Woodbury 2003: 47).

However as well as benefiting the overall project, delegating responsibility for language documentation to community members is likely to result in an important outcome of the documentary process: it allows the documenters to develop skills that are not only useful for documentary work, but also transferable to other jobs in the future.

In early 2011, two Cicipu project members were trained in basic techniques of language documentation. There is no space here to go into detail about this experience; suffice to say that despite a lack of preparation for this kind of task, and the fact that neither of the employees had used a computer before, by the end of the three-month period (working three half-days a week) both became competent in audio and video recording, metadata management and ethical considerations, file transfer and simple housekeeping including backup, the use of simple programs such as Transcriber[20] (for transcription) and WeSay[21] (for dictionary work), and basic word-processing. They subsequently worked largely unsupervised, and have made a very useful contribution to the documentation of their own language[22]. An alternative measure of the success of the project is that both were still active in language documentation and development in June 2012, six months after the end of the HRELP project: one (Markus Yabani) is continuing to use WeSay to carry on work on the dictionary, and the other (Mohammed Mallam) is preparing to translate oral histories collected by Mathews (1926) from English into Cicipu via Hausa, with the assistance of Benjamin Gimba, a graduate of the Bible Translation BA programme at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria in Jos – a further example of interfaith co-operation in pursuit of language development.

As well as the methodological (e.g. Himmelmann 1998) and ethical (e.g. Dwyer 2006: 56) advantages of delegating responsibility for the documentation process to community members, there are benefits for the project employees in terms of transferable technological skills, and more mundane skills such as spelling and project administration. It is clear that the project members value this 'knowledge transfer' (see Maranz [2001: 30] on the high value traditional African societies place on knowledge as opposed to goods), and from our own perspective it is the 'application' of the Cicipu documentary process that is most valued. Thomas (this volume) provides another example of the benefits of training native speakers in techniques of language documentation. Other documentary projects have carried out this kind of capacity-building on a larger scale, such as the Ju/'hoan Transcription Group (Biesele et al., this volume). The call for capacity-building in language documentation is of course not new (see e.g. Austin 2004), but is usually

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[20] http://sourceforge.net/projects/trans/

[21] http://wesay.org/wiki/Main_Page

[22] For those who like commodification, in nine months (working ten man-hours a week) the two project members recorded, transcribed, and translated three hours' worth of material. This has included genres I found difficult to record such as seasonal songs and informal conversation between women.

thought of as something relevant to institutions. However the principle is applicable at the level of the individual as well, and experiences such as those of Cicipu project have shown that even computer-illiterate community members can become valuable language documenters in a remarkably short period of time. In fact the major difficulties we faced during the three-month training period were to do with spelling (in both Cicipu and Hausa) rather than anything more technical.

The challenge for the documentary linguistics community is to develop models of sustainable language documentation that will be applicable in places such as northwest Nigeria, where there is a great need for documentation and a very high likelihood that such work (and associated language support activities) will be well-received by the language communities, but where documentation expertise is rare or non-existent, and local universities are unlikely to be of any assistance. The technique of Basic Oral Language Documentation (Reiman 2010) involving oral 'transcription' (i.e. careful line-by-line respeaking) and oral translation by native speakers is a step in the right direction, but work still needs to done to show how this can be incorporated into an overall methodology that results in a usable resource for archives. Moreover, a certain amount of local supervision will almost certainly be needed, for example in the case of technical problems such as computer failure. In the Cicipu case this has been provided through the goodwill of a 'supporting cast' (Dobrin & Good 2009: 620) of indigenous and foreign missionaries, in the absence of any secular linguists working in the area. Establishing a viable support network early on is a vital important part of establishing sustainable language documentation projects.

7. Conclusion

In spite of the adverse conditions under which the western Kainji peoples have lived for much of the last two hundred years, their languages remain vital compared to the eastern Kainji languages. This is evident even amongst small communities such as the Lopa and Laru which have faced the added disruption caused by forced resettlement, and some of the healthiest languages are found in the unlikeliest places, as in the case of Wuri. Two language ideologies are dominant – a very strong anti-Hausa sentiment rurally, stemming both from memories of the slave-raids of the 19th century and from the continuing political dominance of the Hausa, and a paradoxical process of 'becoming Hausa' generally limited to towns. The strength of the anti-Hausa ideology is such that it can result in decisions by individual Muslims who are willing to collaborate with Christians in language documentation and development, even at the risk of confrontation with their fellow Hausa Muslims.

The contrasting situation of the western and eastern Kainji/Plateau languages, which have similar histories and anti-Hausa ethnic identities, is intriguing. One explanation may be that the dominant Christian religion provides eastern Kainji speakers with an alternative expression for an anti-Hausa ideology, and that this makes retaining the heritage language less important. But this is speculative, and the issue would make a very interesting research question for a PhD thesis.

The paper concludes (Section 6) with three recommendations for existing and future Kainji documentation projects, based on the experiences both of the Cicipu Language Project and the broader survey of Kainji languages: (i) devote time at the outset of the project to identifying influential local Hausa (regardless of their 'official' status) and seek to build good relationships with them, (ii) ensure that both Muslims and Christians are officially represented in language project structures, and do not rule out the production of religious materials as a positive force in language support and revitalisation, and (iii) delegate as much responsibility as possible for the documentation process to native speakers. Provided they are sufficiently motivated, even the computer-illiterate can become effective language documenters in a remarkably short time. To the extent that other parts of the world resemble the sociolinguistic situation discussed in this paper, these recommendations may also be applicable there.

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