

BAKA: A HIGHLY ENDANGERED LANGUAGE OF NORTHERN CAMEROUN



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ACRONYMS

*	regular reconstruction
V	vowel

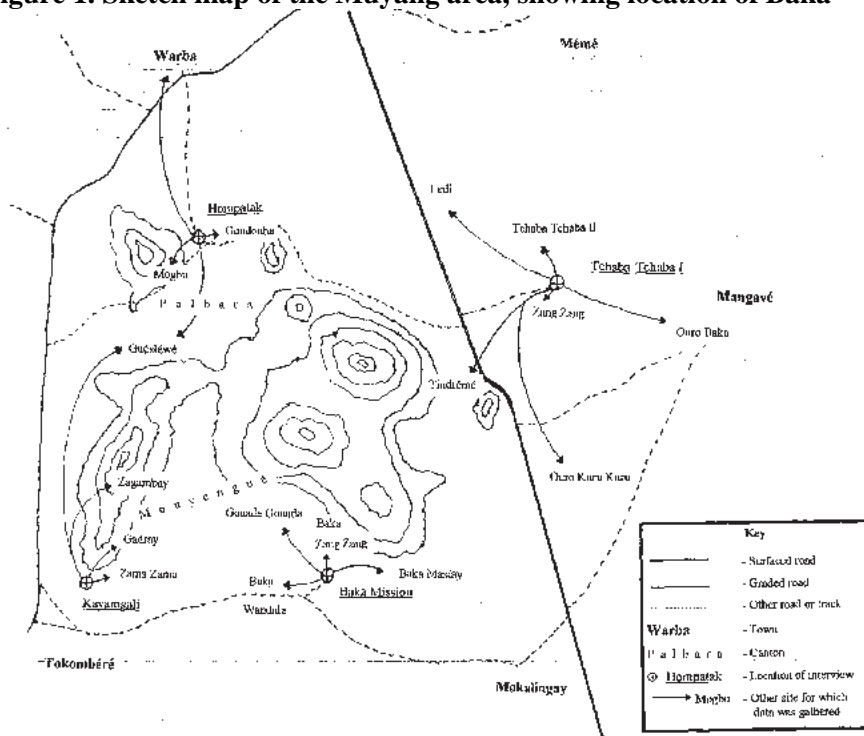
1. Introduction

Baka is a previously unreported language spoken in the Mandara mountains of Northern Cameroun. The community was highlighted as part of a study of the MUYANG people in Far North Province, Mayo-Sava Division, northeast of Tokombere, MUYANG, Mougouba, Gouadagouada, and Palbarar massifs. A preliminary visit was made by Roger Blench, Philippe Avivwai and Tony Smith on the 28th of February, 2009, to establish whether Baka was a distinct language or merely an ethnic subgroup. Richard (1977) mentions Baka as a MUYANG lineage but makes no comment on its linguistic status. The preliminary wordlist suggested that Baka was certainly not MUYANG and was furthermore highly endangered. Further visits by Philippe Avivwai in June 2009 were able to extend the wordlist and undertake a sociolinguistic questionnaire to establish more precisely numbers of speakers and the reasons for the disappearance of the language. This paper was written up by Roger Blench but draws on the insights of all three named authors.

2. The location of Baka

By some irony, the Baka language is no longer spoken in the village of that name except by a few older speakers in MUYANG households. The main settlements where some Baka speakers live are Həmasək, Kablagaka, Akormagara, Koselbey, Demsa, Baka, Dakazlala, Makilngay, Yam Agda and Poŋ. Settlement is very dispersed in this region and these are in reality hamlets with a just a few compounds. Figure 1 shows a sketch map of the MUYANG area with the location of Baka marked;

Figure 1. Sketch map of the MUYANG area, showing location of Baka



From Smith (1996)

3. Linguistic context

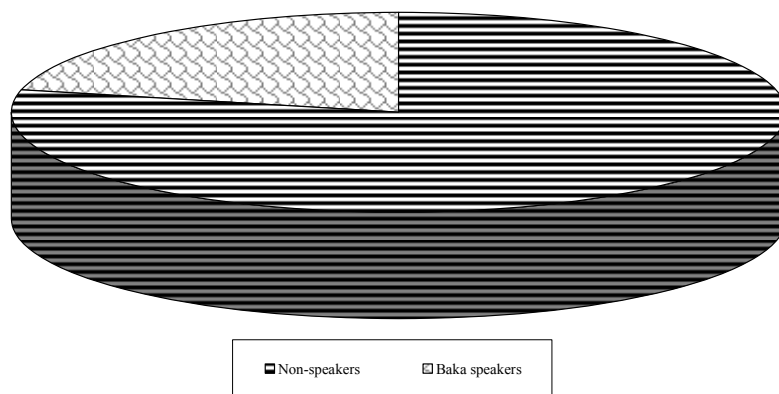
Baka is surrounded by closely related Central Chadic languages of the Biu-Mandara group, notably MUYANG and Moloko [=Melokwo]. Another language that appears in Bradley (1992) is Mikiri, a dialect of Dugwor, and this also surfaces in Baka oral traditions (§4.). MUYANG has been described in a series of papers by Smith (e.g. 1996, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2009)¹ and Moloko (Bow 1997a,b,c, Bow 1999; Boyd 2001, 2002, 2003; Bradley 1992; Friesen 2001, 2003; Friesen & Mamalis 2008; Starr 1997; Starr, Boyd & Bow 2000). A provisional lexicon exists for both languages, but the comparative analysis in this paper will depend on somewhat more extensive Toolbox databases kindly made available by their authors.

¹ Intriguingly, none of these papers are referenced on the SIL-run Ethnologue listing. The same holds true for almost all the work on Moloko listed here.

Apart from Muyang, Baka speakers are typical familiar with the two main vehicular languages of the region, Mandara and Fulfulde. Some French is known to a few individuals, as well as to schoolchildren who by and large do not speak Baka, however.

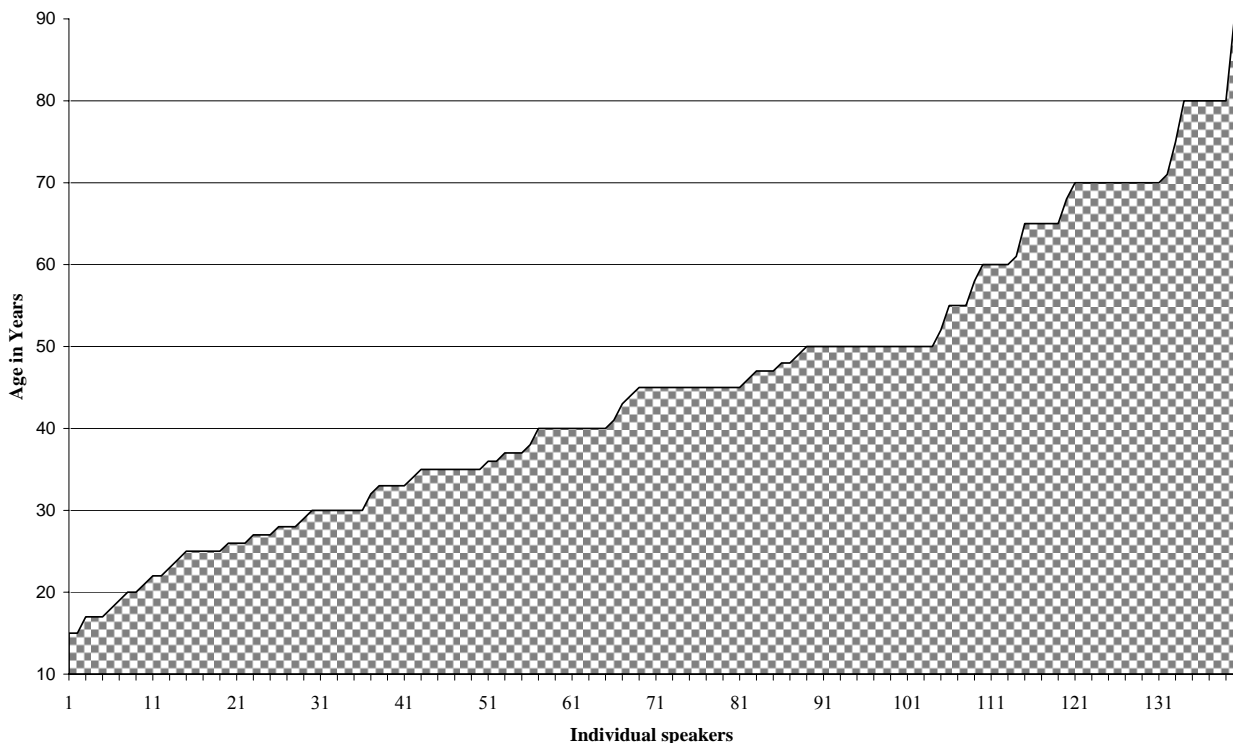
A sociolinguistic survey was conducted of all households in the Baka-speaking settlements with the following results. There are some 115 households which at least claim part Baka ethnicity, or in which there is at least one competent speaker. These households contain some 652 individuals, so mean household size is 5.67 persons. There are 10 households where all members are Baka speakers, but 9 of these contain only one person, usually an aging widow, and the tenth only two people. In these households there are 140 Baka speakers, thus an average of 1.22 speakers per household. This represents 21.47% of the total inhabitants of these households (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of Baka speakers within households



The age range of Baka speakers is 15-90; with a significant bias towards the upper end of the age range. Estimations of the age of speakers above sixty must be taken as approximate. The mean age of speakers is 39.7 years but there are no speakers at all aged 14 and below. Figure 3 shows the ages of speakers plotted on a line chart. The relative slope of the curve indicates the clustering of age ranges; thus it is clear that the majority of speakers are between forty and fifty.

Figure 3. Ages of all competent speakers of Baka



The Baka are linked to the Muyang by a system of clan alliances; these are described in Richard (1977). These were historically strictly exogamic, and this system still largely persists into the present. The structure of this requires daughters to marry outside their clans and men to marry non-Baka speakers. Since all Baka speakers are fluent in Muyang, the incentive for a woman marrying in to learn to speak Baka is very limited. The survey recorded only a very few cases where this had occurred. Normally she will speak Muyang and transmit the language to her children.

4. Baka oral traditions

Baka traditions of their origin as recorded by Philippe Aviwai in June 2009 are as follows;

Baka, Mikeri, Məvaray et Məndəv came from a village called Madawaya to the west of their present location. Baka and Mikeri had the same mother as did Məvaray et Məndəv, and all four had the same father. After their father died each son followed their mother. However, Baka abandoned his mother, who had become blind and left her with his younger brother Mikeri and came to settle near Muyang mountain. One morning a Muyang man came to him and asked him ‘What are you doing on this mountain?’. ‘This is my mountain’ Baka replied. ‘If it is your mountain’, replied the man ‘show me the thatch from your old house, the large cooking pot (*tourne boule*) of your mother and the stool she sits on to stir the porridge’. During the night, Baka went back to Mikeri to look for these things and show them to the man the following morning. As a consequence, the man accepted Baka’s claim and he set up residence. However, because Baka had abandoned his mother to the care of his junior brother, the mother cursed him so that he would have only very few children. As a result, the Baka are small in number today.

This is intriguing, since the only other published reference (Richard 1977) presents quite a different picture. According to her (op. cit. p. 91) the Baka lineage is one of three that originated from Mboko (i.e. Mbuko) and were the descendants of the founding ancestor Azay, along with Guidjila (Gijila) and Mavaray. She records just 22 Baka families, somewhat different from the 140 registered by the survey.

There are also contradictory linguistic elements embedded within this; Mikeri is the dialect of Dugwor given the name Mikiri above. A short ALCAM list of Mikir is included in Brye and Brye (2001) and an unpublished database of Dugwor has also been collected. But, as Table 1 shows, Mikir is less closely related to Baka than Moloko and Muyang, although, as Chadic languages in the same group, there are general similarities. The genealogical relationship with Mbuko is also interesting; the Mbuko do border on the southern limit of the

Muyang and their language is relatively well-known (e.g. Gravina forthcoming). However, again as in Table 1, it does not closely resemble Baka. These traditions may well reflect social and political relations; the Mandaras are full of narratives of origin that appear to be false from a strictly linguistic point of view.

5. Linguistic data

The following is a wordlist of Baka, with comparative data on Muyang, Moloko, Mikir and Mbuko. The list was taken on 28th of February, 2009 from a fluid group of villagers including Geremi Elivou, Joab Apissou, Thomas Kavaya, Jonathan Mazenvou, Marc Mezelemey, Joab Abaïssa, Ndakabou and Nathan Amana to whom our thanks. Philippe Avivwai followed up with them in June 2009 to complete the wordlist and the sociological survey.

Transcription

The first column of Baka is in Muyang orthography but including tones. This can be converted to quasi-IPA using the following equivalences;

sl	ɬ	s	ʃ	j	dz
zl	ɮ	h	x	c	ts
z	ʒ	u	y		

The IPA semi-vowel /j/ is here always transcribed /y/ in Muyang. The following areas of uncertainty remain:

1. The “precise” height of front and back vowels is not marked in Muyang orthography. Unstressed high vowels in these areas may also be mid-central.
2. Coronal fricatives in Muyang are almost always palatalised in the presence of front vowels, and thus palatalisation of these consonants is not marked in Muyang orthography. Observation suggests that the same is true in Baka, which has been converted to IPA accordingly, but uncertainty may remain in some cases.

Table 1. Comparative Baka wordlist

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
un	bəlèŋ	bɪlɛŋ	bɪlɛŋ	ntáy	kártek	one
deux	cew	tʃɛw	tʃy	sílá	cew	two
trois	màkar	mákar	mahkər	màkàr	máákan	three
quatre	wúfad	méfad	fad	mùfàd	fédó	four
cinq	zlàm	ʒòm	ʒam	ʒóm	dára	five
six	múku	mókwɔ	múku	múk ^w ó	mbárka	six
sept	sisíri	ʃɪfɪrɛ	adəskəla	təsólà	cúbe	seven
huit	slalákúr	ɬalakar	aʒalahkər	tsámakàr	jəmáákan	eight
neuf	holombo	hɔlɔmbɔ	ambələmbu	céd	dəsédó	nine
dix	kru	kʊrɔ	kru	kúrró	kúró	ten
onze	kru hər bəlèŋ					eleven
douze	kru hər cew					twelve
vingt	kókúr cew					twenty
vingt et un	kókúr cew hər bəlèŋ					twenty- one
trente	kókúr màkar					thirty
cent	dèŋ					one hundred
eau	yàm	yàm	yàm			water
rivière	zəràkà	zəràkà				river
pluie	ávàr	ávàr	āvər			rain
nuage	métəbasl	métəbasl	māklābál			cloud
fumée	àzak	hàzak	àzək			smoke
rosée	múru	mómɔra	mèrɪ			dew
brouillard	kásày	kòsay	k ^w ósi			fog
ciel	hud hùrmbólóm	hòròmbólóm	mèlèfít			sky

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
vent	hòmáď	hòmáď	āmòď			wind
soleil	fát	fát	fat			sun
lune, mois	kiyi	kíyá	kijè			moon
étoile	wurzlà	wúrǰá	bòŋg ^w òr			star
feu	akú	ak ^w ó	àk ^w ō			fire
sable	slirwiyéŋ	?	wījàŋ			sand
charbon	àziyàku	ďěvèr	xīlmīf			charcoal
suie	kólar	?				soot
cendre	viti	?	vitī			ash
arbre	mónĕ éli	mémélè	?			tree
feuille	áslambáh	àlambax	ĥimbéri			leaf
racine	slóláy	lóláy	ĥirí			root
branche	áhərəá mónĕ éli		?			branch
herbe	egujer	ďěďěw	k ^w ýzír			grass
fruit	wurá mónĕ éli		?			fruit
épine	adák	hàdak	ādàk			thorn
colline	slám dərgá	ǰərlǰàŋ	xémà			hill
sol	wiyéŋ	wiyéŋ	xāď			ground
boue	ndilebéŋ	ndilebèŋ	?			mud
poussière	àrbok	àròg ^w òdò	àrg ^w òdò			dust
forêt	hiyele	?	xèrí			forest
Pierre	ákwar	ák ^w ər	àk ^w ór			stone
jour 24 heures	lèvaŋ	míndijè	móláfāt			day
nuit	lèvaŋ	lèvaŋ	mólàvāď			night
matin	dedew	ďěďěw	ďīy			morning
midi	fət wəwes	magagərfat	?			noon
soir	lòhu	ləho	kārāwá, mólàkārāwá			evening
année	mévi	vɛ	vi			year
temps	sártà	lam	sàk, sártà			time
aujourd'hui	egini	àgine	kánī			today
hier	apázaŋ	apázaŋ	èwénī			yesterday
demain	hájàŋ	hájàŋ	xádzəŋ			tomorrow
tête	dràý	dərəý	àxàr	gár		head
cheveux	simbetkw á dràý	səmbétəwk	móxər	sümbətòk ^w		hair (of head)
nez	hindér	hindér	xìndīr	hitér	cén	nose
oreille	slimáy	lémáy	ĥimi	ǰám	lómáy	ear
œil	elí	alé	ērī	ré	īďě	eye
bouche	ma	ma	mà	má	ǰám	mouth
lèvre	miyasóbù	?	?		təbólèm	lip
langue	hórnek	hírnek	ārōď	ĥirnék	mīrél	tongue
dent	áslar	álar	àlór	ǰér	lān	tooth
cou	dəŋgù	dəŋg ^w ó	dòŋg ^w ō	ďáy	dúngō	neck
gorge	mámberlam	mbórlòm	mbórlòmbórlòm	mbórlóm		throat
front	mileher	méhèr	mélèhèr			forehead
joue	tohor	tòhòr	tòwər			cheek
barbe	kiméc	kiméc	èmíď			beard
menton	bəskam	gigème	bòsk ^w ōm			chin
mâchoire	málgámáy	ďěbèzèm	xólkámáy			jaw
sein	ďúwa	ďúwa	ďúwà	àwàx		breast
main, bras	áhar		àxár	láy		hand, arm
ongle, griffe	éhwedí		èh ^w íď	gègèré		fingernail , claw
épaule	piperi		xəpāl			shoulder

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbukò	English
aisselle	humbeyékw		x ^w òŋg ^w ō			armpit
doigt	wuléher		wèlĕxér			finger
dos	hálàŋ		ālāŋ			back
cœur	túndólóŋ		bòròv			heart
ventre	hwaď		mòsòb	h ^w óď		stomach
foie	gìver		gìvir			liver
intestins	dèndèy		dìndèj			intestines
ped	sindér		mējkējēk	súswołóy		foot
jambe	ásek		àsák	tàpikīsyek		leg
genou	hàr dèdèm		mīrdim, gỳḍzi			knee
cuisse	dúnwaláy		tàk ^w ólāj, wàs			thigh
nombril	mamay		mēzìmēzìm, màhājmá			navel
côte	jàmày		dzàmàŋgày			rib
poumon	pàhov		x ^w òvx ^w òv			lung
fesses	mitelenj			bízáy		buttocks
anus	màndurzày					anus
corps	vù					body
peau	ambár					skin
poil du corps	simbetkw á vù					hair
sang	pémbèz					blood
os	klakásl					bone
veine	emér					vein
urine	kùdeŋ					urine
merde	azúy					faeces
sueur	héreb					sweat
salive	éslesléb					saliva
voix	dúnğù mízi					voice
langue	ma					language
sommeil	dýwer					sleep
rêve	hindir médifi					dream
mort, cadavre	míbijsēm		kij̄m			death, corpse
vie	sifà					life
maladie fièvre	dràjmétfèl̄zi					sickness
toux	mébìlè					cough
plaie	ambàlàk					sore
larme	jàm tuwáj					tear
cicatrice	mèndàvà					scar
nom	líméj					name
esprit	dzáláj					ghost
personne	mízi pl. mázaháj	mełéneŋ				human being
homme, mari	zar pl. zàwúraháj	zàr				man, husband
femme, épouse	hwàr pl. hàwúraháj	hòr	wàl pl. wéwāl			woman, wife
enfant	war pl. bèzaháj	war	wòr pl. bèzà			child
co-épouse	kwasú pl. kwasáháj					co-wife
père	bàba					father
mère	mamá					mother
vieil homme	zèr mídehwér					old man
vieille femme	hùr mídehwér					old woman
roi/chef	bàhay pl.	baháy pl.	bay pl. bóbay			king

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
	bàhiyáháy	bàhiyáháy				
esclave	bèki		ēvidī			slave
dieu	hùmbəlóm		mèlèfit			God
guérisseur	zèr tãhàs					doctor
médicament	hèraf					medicine
hôte	mìrkwi					guest
ami	àskànà					friend
chasseur	waraj					hunter
voleur	zèra kár					thief
forgeron	zèr hitʃivéd					blacksmith
						h
village	kàsà					village
maison	àhàj					house
chambre	mevèr dýwel					room
mur	vijałám					wall
porte	máhàj					door
toit	àhàj kirí					roof
route	tʃivéd		divi			road
puits	suwah					well
houe	míndúgér					hoe I
hache	àʒərgu					axe
faucille	múvãd					sickle
bâton	àdàngàj					stick
lance	èʒèrì					spear
panier	tsəharak					basket
natte I	bútʃi					mat
natte II	hátàv					mat
arc	məŋgelék		àlāká			bow
flèche	avù		kámndzàgãd			arrow
couteau	méŋgel					knife
corde	ézèwed					rope
pot	dãhàj					pot
chose	èlè		èrè, ʒãm			thing
travail	hírèli		týwi			work
guerre	vèrəm		ʃilík			war
trou	pidí		évid			hole
argent	ʃiŋgù					money
marché	gòskó					market
fardeau, charge	médíʃgá					load
vêtement ample	záná, malqá					robe
vêtement chaussure	záná					clothing
chaussure	kímàkà					shoe
chapeau	bìrèwréw					hat
poison	kiléf = <i>poisson</i> , <i>fish</i>					poison
grenier	ɓərə		gʷòvòr			granary
tombeau	hirdèl		míndivìŋ			tomb
pilon	adàj dzórá					pestle
mortier	dzórá					mortar
enclume	dùmara					anvil
manche d'outil	áhər éli					handle
éventail	èlè mégèli hèrəb					fan
peigne	péj (<i>French</i>)					comb
lit	łaráh					bed

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
siège	lé méhndzì					seat
fer	ára					iron
Instruments de musique						
tambour	gàṅṅ		gàṅṅ			drum I
tambour	dýdèw		déwdèw			drum II
tambour	tèmbàl					drum III
	ndùrláj		ndòrláj			flute I
	miḡelém		ézìlìṅ			flute II
	ḡélém		lèlīm			flute III
	tḡitḡèkw		tḡitḡèk			flute IV
hochet	tsúkwájá		tsāk ^w ǰā			rattle
corne	màṅgom					transverse horn
ombre	gýzèli					shadow
lumière	ndándíqá					light
graine	wúr élè					seed
animal	èlè gènàw					animal
cheval	pilés	piléf	pilíf			horse
âne	ázàṅgù					donkey
vache	sla pl. slaháy	la	là			cow
chèvre	áwák	áwak	awak			goat
brebis	təmbák					sheep
bélier	gògòrà					ram
porc/cochon	mədəras					pig
chien	kəra					dog
chat	pataw					cat
éléphant	mbilelí					elephant
lion	màzlàkù					lion
léopard/panthère	tudu					leopard
hyène	ḡirléṅgì					hyena
chacal	kér léhi					jackal
renard	mbiti					fox
singe rouge	mégúláṅ					monkey
babouin	argwùv					baboon
porc-épic	énjèhed					porcupine
écureuil	eyéh					squirrel
lièvre	zlèvèk					hare
souris	áhám					mouse
rat de brousse	médùwàṅ					bush rat
chauve-souris	míbebèk					bat
crocodile	kúmbú					crocodile
caméléon	mákùrnana					chameleon
margouillat	gùslelek					lizard
serpent	máhaw					snake
vipère	égwèh					viper
python	mádàṅgùrdàt					python
tortue	kirkéyeh					tortoise
grenouille	mìcegèm					frog
araignée	màzlàṅpapaṅ					spider
puce	ávàwar					flea
fourmi	màrbàgà					ant
scorpion	árac					scorpion

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
vers	mítjéhwed		mḗtjéh ^{wid}			worm
moustique	tenjéw					mosquito
mouche	zùway					fly (n.)
abeille	àmú					bee
guêpe	màṅgàrvàṅ					wasp
oiseau	édíyéh					bird
poule	hèṅjakar					chicken
coq	agwàzłak					cock
pintade	javár					guinea-fowl
pigeon	kurkódúk					pigeon
canard	ándábábú					duck
vautour	molo					vulture
épervier	etéw					kite
plume	ḡimbètèkw hèndzakar		ḗṅg ^w ýtj			feather
aile	hèrpàslà					wing
œuf	éslesléd					egg
corne	mogóm					horn
queue	hutár					tail
nourriture	ďáf					food
viande	sèsí					meat
poisson	kiléf					fish
bouillon	mótrak					soup/sauce
sel	zétènà					e salt
huile	amár					oil
graisse	akwás					fat
vérité	džéri		džírī			truth
mensonge	aṅòla		màlfàďà			lie
place	łó méhndžì		mōlāṅ			place
fatigue	méjidi					fatigue
faim	maj		l̄wīr			hunger
soif	jàm ékidí					thirst
léger	kákəfgá		kēfkēf			light
blanc	bàbəďgá					white
noir	dádìlṅgá					black
rouge	ndizagá					red
Verbes						Verbs
accompagner	mázàlāj					accompa ny
ajouter	máďďakavalaj					add to
être d'accord	mégèjłaká					agree
permettre	mévilè					allow
annoncer	máďzavu					announce
répondre	mámbəďaká					answer
arriver	adzála					arrive
demander	tsahaj					ask for
être courbé	méhindìdrāj					be bent
naître	méwiji					be born
battre	ḡàďaj					beat
commencer	hèndzaká					begin
incliner/courbe r	médèṅgwì					bend/bow
mordre	dzáṅ					bite
souffler (la	wutáj					blow

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
bouche)						(mouth)
souffler (vent)	mívètè					blow (wind)
bouillir	búláj					boil
emprunter	mékile					borrow
tresser	méndre					braid
casser	haḅ					break
respirer	səsafáj					breathe
apporter	zalaŋ					bring
bâtir	hâr					build
brûler	vákaj					burn
enterrer	li					bury
acheter	səkom					buy
appeler	mbaháj					call
soigner	mémembre					care for
porter	zaḉ					carry
mâcher	poḉáj					chew
choisir	dálvù					choose
abattre	zègàḉ					chop down
trancher	tèlkàḉáj					chop/slic e
fermer	pàvu					close
se peigner	méḉete					comb
venir	lalá					come
cuisiner	di					cook
compter	ḅeḉeŋ					count
couvrir	paká					cover
ramper	gùḉàḅaj					crawl
traverser	tuwudáj					cross
crier	bùbùlu					cry out
couper	dàtsaj					cut
danser	haḅáj					dance
déféquer	tah					defecate
désirer	ndaḉáj					desire
mourir	mat					die
creuser/labour er	méleji					dig
diviser	wuḉákáj					divide
faire	gi					do
puiser	tsah					draw water
rêver	hindér méḉifi					dream
boire	ḉi					drink
chasser/éloign er/repousser	gàlaj					drive away
laisser tomber	makáj					drop
sécher	kwáláj					dry up
manger	zom					eat
entrer	patálaj					enter
éteindre	mbéteŋ					extinguis h
tomber	dàḉ					fall
craindre	gèḅàr méwewe					fear
remplir	rah					fill
trouver	ndzákaj					find

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbukò	English
finir	ndáváj					finish
voler (oiseaux/avion)	vaháj					fly (v.)
plier	lepéj					fold
suivre	mádèbàlàj					follow
interdire	mbaká					forbid
oublier	mètʃìjì					forget
réunir	halikávaka					gather
donner	vèlàj					give
rendre	ŋgalán					give back
accoucher	wi					give birth
aller	lú					go
descendre	hèndàl hàr					go down
sortir	fatála					go out
monter	tsar					go up
saluer	sasu					greet
écraser	hája					grind
croître	gar					grow/incr ease
haïr	mézirè					hate
entendre	tʃíkí					hear
aider	dzənán					help
cacher qqc	ŋgàh					hide s.t.
frapper	méndèbè					hit
augmenter	sàgaj					increase
insulter	méndèwì					insult
joindre	médeʒi					join
sauter	vàh					jump
tuer	kàɗ pl. pəʒaj					kill
savoir	sár					know
manquer de	ábaj					lack
rire	mbasáj					laugh
étudier/appren dre	métʃèhì					learn
laisser	makáj					leave
prêter	mékile					lend
lécher	ndìrkèdeʒ					lick
être étendu	andáj mbò					lie down
soulever	métʃekefe					lift
allumer	bàj					light
aimer	méndèdì					like/love
boiter	dzygdèlej					limp
écouter	tʃeŋ					listen
regarder	mémndzèrì					look
chercher	dèbaj					look for
perdre	dzìdzèŋ					lose
se tromper	méher mendel					make a mistake
épouser	mézidì hwàr					marry
mesurer	gàraj					measure
fondre	méndizì					melt
mélanger	bédèj					mix
ouvrir	paj					open
passer	málijù					pass
payer	par					pay

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
éplucher	mípete					peel
percher	míbehi					perch
ramasser	méhere					pick up
percer	ɣar					pierce
jouer	méji givì					play
piler	méɣeɓe					pound
verser	bàhalaj					pour
tirer	gə̀dzah					pull
pousser	baŋ áhər					push
poser/placer	faɗ pl. bah					put
remiser/ranger	méleɓete					put away
déposer	mébèhé					put down
pleuvoir	avàr átad					rain
lire	dʒə̀ŋgej (< F.)					read
recevoir/ accepter	gə̀sháka					receive/ accept
refuser	mímele					refuse
se souvenir	máŋgàlà dràj vú					remember
						r
réparer	lə̀maláj					repair
ressembler	méziɗvà					resemble
se reposer	mbéfeŋ					rest
retourner	máŋgàlà					return
monter un animal	mátsə̀raká					ride
rincer	tsukwaláj					rinse
rôtir	vakáj					roast
frotter	də̀rlígá					rub
courir	hə̀máj					run
sacrifier	métyle					sacrifice
dire	dʒaj					say
gratter	fár					scratch
voir	mə̀ndzàr					see
saisir/tenir	gàs					seize
vendre	súkumálaj					sell
envoyer	ɣar					send
coudre	ɓah					sew
secouer	gə̀valvə̀					shake
aiguiser	métilkedí					sharpen
se raser	méwiɣi draj					shave
tirer	ɓar					shoot
montrer	dáfáká					show
chanter	dí liméɣ					sing
s'asseoir/être assis	hìndʒi					sit down
dormir	méndʒi dýwèr					sleep
sentir	zézéw					smell
fumer (tabac)	biɣéj					smoke (tobacco)
éternuer	mébeɣi					sneeze
ronfler	méɣirwi					snore
faire tremper	médiji					soak
semer	ɣigi					sow
cracher	teféj					spit
rester	hìndʒi					stay
voler	mígiɣi akár					steal

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbukò	English
piquer	ḡah					sting
sucer/téter	tswadǎj					suck
surpasser	ádàl					surpass
avalér	ndáwan					swallow
balayer	patáj					sweep
gonfler	agał					swell
nager	mígiji dévdèv					swim
prendre	zàd					take
ôter	zalvù					take off
discuter	ḡápom					talk
goûter	təkám					taste
enseigner	tsahán					teach
déchirer	ḡgwàraj					tear
arracher	rad					tear off
raconter	ḡgàl					tell
mentir à	si ḡgwàlà					tell a lie
penser	dzáláj					think
jeter	dəváj					throw
nouer/attacher	wal					tie
toucher, palper	lámán					touch
trembler	ḡəraj					tremble
essayer	təkár					try
se retourner	mánḡàlà					turn over
tordre/tresser	ndar					twist
se déshabiller	méherkákavù					undress
déplier	mēpetḡikekákavù					unfold
dénouer/détacher	pəsakáj					untie
uriner	mémbiḡ kýdǎj					urinate
vomir	vəlahán					vomit
attendre	káł					wait
marcher	táláj					walk
vouloir/avoir besoin	méndèdǎ					want/need
laver	báláj					wash
tisser	hàr					weave
sarcler	was					weed, scrape
chuchoter	méfekw má					whisper
siffler	fikwéj					whistle
écrire	bàhaká					write
bâiller	hamáj					yawn
où	ámtamáj					Q words where
quand	épelej					when
comment	memej					how
combien	mítej					how many
pourquoi	kamáj					why
ici	àhakaj					here
là	kajà hakaj					there
ce...ci	nìhihi					this
ce...là	nìndende					that
qui	wáj					who
quoi	almaj					what
Pronoms						

Français	Baka	Moloko	Muyang	Mikiri	Mbuko	English
je, moi	ní					I, me
tu	nok					you
il, elle	ndáhaŋ					he, she
nous incl.	lakú					we
nous excl.	imí					we
vous	kulí					you
ils, eux	tətá					they

6. Conclusions

Baka is an unreported Chadic language of Cameroun in imminent danger of disappearing. This is the result of a social process, clan incorporation, which has probably been historically common in Africa but which is rarely possible to observe in detail. The usual suspects, globalisation and the spread of a regional vernacular, are not relevant here. Baka can be expected to either disappear or to become heavily relexified from Muyang in the coming decades. Indeed it is remarkable that the relexification process is not yet very advanced. The Baka wordlist shows conclusively that Baka is either a dialect or a sister language of Moloko, yet it shares only a very few lexemes with Muyang rather than Moloko (for example ‘time’, ‘chin’, ‘jaw’). Apparently innovative lexemes are also rare (for example *àrbok* ‘dust’).

Reported oral traditions and clan histories appear to point to links with Mikiri, a dialect of Dugwor, and Mbuko while not mentioning Moloko. This is not supported by the linguistic data. Neither of these languages share a lexeme with Baka that is not shared with neighbouring languages and Mbuko often has quite different term. However, contradictions between the narratives in Richard (1977) and those recorded in the present survey suggest strongly that these reflect current political preoccupations rather than ethnographic reality.

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