

Notes on the Tunzu (Duguza) people and language

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The Tunzu (Duguza) language is an East Kainji language spoken northeast of Jos town in Central Nigeria. Tunzu is classified together with Janji, Guta and the Jere cluster within East Kainji (Crozier & Blench 1992). Although it is clearly divergent, the wordlist taken suggests that Tunzu is correctly placed in this group. The earliest reference to this language is Temple (1922:96), followed by Gunn (1953:31), Shimizu (1975:12) and Nengel (1999). There appears to be no published data on the language at all. A survey was conducted on 30th December 2003 and this note makes further information available on the status of the language.

The following are the correct names for people and language in the Tunzu language;

one person	Tunzú
people	àTunzû
the language	ìTunzû

The origin of the name Duguza is uncertain, but it is just possible that it is a distorted version of the autonym, Tunzu. It may be that the name was originally Tugunza. If the following processes occurred when Hausa speakers heard the name;

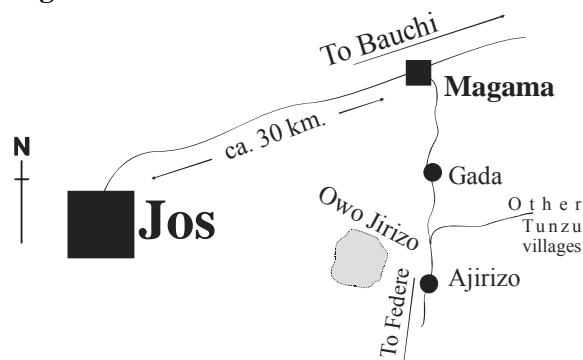
d → t would be a common phonologisation
nasalisation would be lost

and then an intervocalic –g- was lost in modern iTunzu and the final –a became –u through vowel regularisation.

Tunzu could be transformed into Duguza. The Hausa realisation, Duguza, might thus preserve features lost in the modern form. Nonetheless, it should be dropped as a reference name.

Temple (1922: 96) gave the population as 275, the Local Authority Census of 1971 as 500 and the Ethnologue quotes an unsourced SIL estimate of 1973 as 2000. The people's own estimate of the number of speakers is 2500, which seems reasonable. There are probably another 2000 ethnic Tunzu who don't speak the language. Figure 1 is a sketch map of the location of the Tunzu;

Figure 1. Location of Tunzu



The Tunzu live in 5 villages in Jos East Local Government, Plateau State, with two settlements, Kurfi and Magama, in Toro LGA, Bauchi State. However, these latter two are highly Islamised and the language is largely lost to Hausa. Their main settlement, Gada, is marked on maps and other villages are very close. The villages are;

No.	Original name	Modern name	Location	Map Ref
1	Ajirizo	Derezok	Jos East	N10° 01, E 9° 07
2	Dacuwa	Paa	Jos East	
3	Nòmɔ̀n	Nòmɔ̀n	Jos East	
4	Mincari	Shibiri	Jos East	
5	Kurfi	Korofai	Toro	
6	Magama	Magama	Toro	
7	Gada	Gada	Jos East	N10° 02, E 9° 06

The existing references to the location of the Tunzu are confused and it appears the reason is that in the nineteenth century, Hausa raiders scattered the community and fractions of it fled to a number of quite remote areas. These migrants eventually assimilated to the peoples among whom they lived, although some have retained a partial knowledge of the language and culture of origin. At least five migrant groups are known, among the Boze, Guta, Ribina, Jere and Dass peoples. Those among the Ribina, Jere and Boze¹ have lost their language. Those who live among the Guta are 'still trying' and are said to speak a mixed language, with elements of iTunzu and iGuta. Those among the Dass (a Chadic language, unrelated to Tunzu) have preserved their cultural identity and have recently made efforts to send their children to live among the Tunzu so that they will learn the language.

Hausa is widespread and has largely driven out Tunzu in Kurfi and Magama. Apart from Hausa, Izere and iBunu are the commonly spoken second languages. Nonetheless, compared with some of the neighbouring languages, the Tunzu people are making an effort to ensure that the language is maintained. For example, they encourage Tunzu who migrate to the towns to send their children back to the village so that they will have at least a rudimentary command of the language. Children in the rural community all seem to be fairly fluent, despite the bias towards Hausa in the schools system. Nonetheless, there is no room for complacency as Hausa has made considerable inroads in the languages of their neighbours.

References

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¹ It appears to be this group that Gunn (1953:31) refers to, not the Tunzu proper.