

## Plateau field trips 1998-1999

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Between December 18<sup>th</sup> 1998 and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1999 I made a number of field trips in Central and South-East Nigeria to obtain more data on the status of some little-known languages. In 1992, I published the Index of Nigerian Languages (Crozier and Blench 1992); many entries inevitably relied on very old field data, some of which has turned out to be highly inaccurate. Blench (1998) is a summary of the situation as it was known in 1997; much of that material has had to be revised. Nigeria is developing an 'Endangered Languages' infrastructure, as far as headed notepaper and workshops go; unfortunately this seems to have had very limited results in terms of new field data.

The following notes describe the conclusions of what were inevitably rapid visits. The lexical data was taped and is being transcribed. Papers including preliminary data on each language are available from the author as email attachments. Comments on the status of the languages are necessarily impressionistic; more detailed socio-linguistic surveys are clearly essential.

### Ningye

The Ningye language is spoken in Ningshen Kurmi village, Kaduna State, Nigeria. A wordlist was collected by Roger Blench with the assistance of Selbut Longtau from the chief, Abubakar Salihu Samu and Bulus Magaji and a group of villagers in Ningshen Kurmi on the 19th of December 1998. The Ningye people do not seem to be recorded in any previous literature (Crozier & Blench 1992). Ningye is the name of the language and the people. The language appears to be most closely related to Numana and Gbantu.

Ningshen Kurmi is some 19 km. south of Fadan Karshi on the Akwanga road. There are three other settlements, Akwankwan, Kobin and Ningshen Dutse, due north of Ningshen Kurmi but these are all very small. The Ningye language is spoken by perhaps 3-4000 speakers at a maximum. Ningye is still regularly spoken at present. The Ningye are multilingual; Numana and Gwantu are the main additional languages they speak, but Hausa is widely known and some younger people also speak English.

### Cara

The Cara language is spoken in Teriya village, Bassa LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria, some 5 km. west of Gurum, which is 3 km. south-west of the main Jos-Kaduna road, 11 km from Jos town. Teriya is a Hausa name, describing a series of scattered sections, *ipup*, of which the principal one on the road is Anjök. The Cara people occur in the literature under the names Teriya, Tariya, Pakara, Fakara and Fachara. A wordlist was collected by Roger Blench with the assistance of Selbut Longtau from the Village Head, Peter Maguni Kusaru, the Wakili, Hamidu Taita and a group of elders including Kudaru Tanko, Culu Gado and Jinga Kunangaru on the 21st of December 1998. Cara is the name of the language and the people.

The Cara language is spoken by less than 3000 speakers at a maximum. The Cara tend to know Hausa and some younger people also speak English, but generally do not speak the languages of their neighbours. The older people have the impression that younger people are giving up the language in favour of Hausa. Certainly they do not have an easy command of the complex morphology required to be a competent speaker, although this may develop slowly.

### Bu

The Bu language is spoken in four villages in Plateau State, Nigeria. A wordlist was collected by Roger Blench with the assistance of Selbut Longtau from Joshua Chaga (27 years old) and a group of elders in Nakere on the

8th of January 1999. Our thanks to the Wakili of Nakere, Gambo Nagwe, for making possible the meeting and ensuring the terms elicited were as accurate as possible.

The Bu are not referred to in primary sources but appear first in Hansford et al. (1976) as the 'Jidda-Abu' a group classified with Eggon, Nungu and Ake. Ibut and Nakare are given as alternative names; Ibut is clearly a version of Bu and Nakare the name of the first village reached from the road.

The villages of the Bu people are reached from Gbodu village, 18 km east of Akwanga on the road to Wamba. A road leading northwest from Gbodu reaches Nakere after 6 km. and then Rago, Maiganga and Abu. The villages of the Ningkada [=Jidda] are reached by a turnoff some 7 km. north of the Wamba junction. The road turns east at Kango and Jidda (the main settlement) is some 6 km. away. Two hamlets, Ningkada and Lago, are southwest of Jidda respectively 1 and 3 km. away. A further settlement on the main road, Wanga, is some 5 km. north of Kango.

The Bu regard their language and culture as distinct from the Ningkada [Jidda] and they are now geographically separated, but the differences between the two would appear to be slight. A complete wordlist of Ningkada was not taken but some twenty words elicited in a rapid visit suggested that the two languages are the same, with some minor lexical and phonological differences. There are perhaps 4000 speakers of Bu and about 2000 or less speakers of Ningkada (the Ningkada hamlets are extremely small). In both locations, immediate evidence suggests that both language and culture are very strong and are not immediately threatened. The classification of Bu would appear to be in error; the language closest to it is undoubtedly Ninzam, with which it shares some highly distinctive features such as suppletive plurals.

#### Hasha

The Hasha language is spoken in three villages in Nassarawa State, Nigeria. A wordlist was collected by Roger Blench with the assistance of Selbut Longtau from a group of villagers in Bwora (Yashi Sarki) on the 7th of January 1999. The Hasha people have been generally known in the literature as 'Yashi' a Hausaised form of their name. Correctly, however, a single person is /haʃa/ and the plural is /həhaʃa/; the language also appears to be called /haʃa/. There seems to be no reason use any other term than Hasha, which is now what the community prefers.

There are three villages where Hasha is the main language, Hashasu (=Yashi Pa), Kusu (Yashi Madaki) and Bwora (Yashi Sarki). Bwora is the largest settlement and generally regarded as the administrative centre. Hasha villages fall within Nassarawa State. They are all east of the main road from Fadan Karshi to Wamba, reached from a turnoff some 25 km. south of Fadan Karshi.

None of the Hasha settlements are very large; the population cannot be more than ca. 3000. However, the language is still spoken by young people at present. Hausa is widely known and English is spoken by some secondary school students.

#### Rukul

The Rukul language is spoken in Barkul village, Plateau State, Nigeria. A wordlist was collected by Roger Blench with the assistance of Selbut Longtau from a group of villagers in Barkul on the 13th of January 1999. Samuel Musa (ca. 40 years old) kindly spoke the examples on to the tape, but the forms cited are a collective product.

Existing references to the Rukul people and language appear as the Barkul element in the name 'Mabo-Barkul' given in Crozier & Blench (1992). The ba- element is a nominal prefix and ought properly to be dropped in a reference name. The name of the closely related Mabo people similarly incorporates an person affix which is better eliminated. The correct terminology is as follows;

<b>One person</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>amaRukul</b>	<b>baRukul</b>	<b>Kap maRukul</b>
<b>amaBo</b>	<b>baBo</b>	<b>Kap amaBo</b>

A standard reference name mirroring the existing formulation would thus be ‘Bo-Rukul’ and this has been suggested as the head-entry for the forthcoming Ethnologue 2000.

Barkul village is some 8 km. (20 mins drive) east of Richa over an extremely bad road. Mabo village is about a half-hour walk further on but cannot be reached by road. Richa is at the edge of the Jos Plateau some 2 hours drive SE of Jos and is the principal market-town for the area. All the other villages in this area speak varieties of Kulere, a Chadic language, with the exception of Horom and Mwa. The settlement pattern is fairly dispersed, but there appear to be no other hamlets speaking this language.

To judge by the visible houses, there must be between 500 and 1000 speakers of Rukul and the same number of speakers of Bo. Rukul remains the main language of communication and appears to be healthy, inasmuch as a language with so few speakers can be. Hausa is widespread and eliciting the wordlist suggested that younger speakers had a tendency to replace some items with their Hausa equivalent.