

‘Your cheating heart’: Tarok ethnopsychology and the expression of the emotions

[DRAFT CIRCULATED FOR COMMENT]

Presented at the 33rd Colloquium on African Languages and Linguistics, Leiden, August 25-27th,
2003 and subsequently revised

Roger Blench
Kay Williamson Educational Foundation
8, Guest Road
Cambridge CB1 2AL
United Kingdom
Voice/ Ans (00-44)-(0)7847-495590
Mobile worldwide (00-44)-(0)7967-696804
E-mail rogerblench@yahoo.co.uk
<http://www.rogerblench.info/RBOP.htm>

Selbut Longtau
DART

This printout; **Cambridge, August 30, 2013**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Background to Tarok society and culture.....	1
3. Body parts	4
3.1 General	4
3.2 Individual body parts and their significance	4
4. Verbal nouns.....	14
5. Verb (+ complement constructions).....	18
5.1 Directly expressive verbs	18
5.2 Verb + complement constructions	18
6. Idiomatic Compounds.....	20
7. Metaphorical expressions	21
8. Proverbs	21
9. Conclusions	22
References	22

ACRONYMS

ADVM	Adverbial marker
CM	Clause marker
FUT	Future marker
hab.	habitual
int.	interrogative marker

1. Introduction

The linguistic expression of the emotions has generally not drawn the attention of linguists; affectivity is deemed too ‘soft’ compared with the more crossword-like areas of syntax or morphology. Early publications, like Henry (1936), have had few successors until recently. Lutz & Abu-Lughod (1990) have also edited a worldwide collection of essays on emotional expression, although this is mostly concerned with developed-world cultures. In other regions of the world, the literature is somewhat richer, particularly in Oceania. Geertz (1959) described the vocabulary of emotion in Javanese, and White and Kirkpatrick (1985) have edited a collection of papers on Pacific ethnopsychologies, while key monographic texts on the expression of emotions are Levy (1973) for Tahiti and Lutz’s (1988) account of Ifaluk, a Micronesian atoll.

African languages remain generally poorly understood and poorly described. This partly because of weak lexicography, partly because the subject falls somewhere between linguistics and ethnography and has been the province of neither. Most accounts are surprisingly incomplete, taking only a few key terms and describing the contexts of their use. In addition, the great majority are usually linguistically innocent, which can be a source of error in transcribing languages with complex tone-systems. On the other hand, more linguistically-oriented accounts ignore the anthropological context and fail to relate terminology to ethnopsychology.

One of the more detailed descriptions of emotional vocabulary in an African language is Hutchinson (1996:74 ff.) whose account of Nuer terminology is rich in anthropological context though limited in terms of linguistics. For the Nuer, emotions seem to revolve around ‘blood’ as a life force and an opposition of cool/soft with hot/hard. Coolness is associated with generosity, fertility and persuasiveness, heat with strength and temper. Other accounts of African languages include Kirk and Burton (1977) who analyse the ways Maasai describe personality.

This rather sparse literature suggests that there is room for a detailed account of a particular African people. This paper aims to describe the emotional vocabulary of the Tarok, a people of east-central Nigeria. It covers both the different types of expression and gives for each at least one example of its use. From this it is possible to draw some conclusions about the conceptual field it covers. To make more sense of the context of Tarok emotional expression it sketches Tarok ethnopsychology, and tries to set some Tarok notions in a broader ethnographic context.

2. Background to Tarok society and culture

The Tarok people live primarily in the region around Langtang in south-east Plateau State, Nigeria. Tarok was first described by Fitzpatrick (1910/11). The principle scholarly publications on the Tarok language are by Leo Sibomana (1980, 1981a,b) who provides a useful summary of the phonology, noun-classes and verbal system. More recently, Longtau (1991, 1993, 1997) has analysed the implications of the classification of Tarok for the interpretation of oral tradition and elaborated a formal phonology¹. An extensive dictionary of the Tarok language is in preparation and the samples and examples given in the paper are taken from this².

¹ The paper follows the phonological analysis proposed in Longtau (1993) but not the standard Tarok orthography, which has a rather misleading use of IPA symbols. The examples here give IPA symbols their conventional (1993) values. The correspondence with Tarok orthography is as follows;

IPA	Tarok orthography
i	ə
ə	ä
ŋ	ŋ

Three level tones are noted with mid-tone unmarked. Words that are entirely mid-tone are affixed with ⁺ to clarify their tonal status.

² One of us, Longtau, is a native speaker of Tarok.

Tarok society has been largely undescribed in the anthropological literature, apart from a paper on kinship systems by Smith & Smith (1990). There are also recent local Nigerian publications which contain valuable descriptive material, but which must be treated with care; local publication usually have an agenda (e.g. TWA 2000; Lar & Dandam 2002). Broadly speaking, the Tarok consist of a number of exogamous clans, historically recognising no central authority and probably originating with the immigration of other ethnic groups (Longtau 1991). Clans are linked together by complex networks of joking relationships that surface in marital alliances and funeral ceremonies. Inheritance is patrilineal and residence patrilocal. A recognised ruler, the Ponzhi Tarok, whose origins lie in the colonial era, now exists and acts as a partial counterweight to structures imposed by the Nigerian State, notably Local Government Councils. The ancestors, **orim**, essentially a powerful male society into which young men are initiated, remain a powerful force for social order despite the considerable inroads made by Christianity. Since 2001, a series of ethnic and religious conflicts have racked Tarokland, principally between the Tarok and their Fulbe and Hausa neighbours, which have made much of the region inaccessible to research and have also resuscitated a dormant martial culture.

The expression of the emotions in Tarok society is strongly defined by two major axes, gender and life-stage. Tarok classify women and children together and consider that it is acceptable for them to show various types of emotion, and to express it physically by weeping, an action always unacceptable for men. The definition of ‘child’ is social rather than biological. A male child is one who has not yet been initiated into the **orim** society and a female child is an unmarried girl. The age of marriage and initiation is between 15 and 18 years, relatively high for the region and unconnected with puberty. Homosexuality, while recognised as existing by the Tarok, appears not to have accreted the same baggage of emotional stereotypes associated with it in Eurasian culture.

A Tarok man is supposed only to exhibit emotions associated with warfare and competitiveness. Thus aggression, courage, pride and even boastfulness are acceptable, while fear, sorrow and compassion should not be expressed. There is a strong association between virility and maleness; docility and apathy are linked with impotence in several expressions. Similarly, weakness is shown by the negative connotations of the expressions meaning ‘to accept advice’ and ‘to understand Hausa’ which has the transferred meaning ‘to be submissive’.

A key component of the bravery that Tarok man can demonstrate is the invisible army of the **orim** upon which an individual can call in moments of crisis. After young men are initiated they are permitted to carry a special whistle, **nzur icam**, which they can use to call the **orim** to assist them. Post-menopausal women, who have some of the same status as initiated males, can enter the **orim** society on payment of sacrificial animals. Although they do not own a whistle, they can call the **orim** to assist them by the use of a special cry. Such women may then display all the behavioural traits of men.

Women are also expected to be respectful and submissive. TWA (2000:29 [original spelling maintained]), which is written by women, says the following;

‘A good house wife is known by the manner she conducts herself towards her husband and other men. A Tarok woman, therefore, armed with this at her finger tip would never stand to talk to her husband but would rather prostrate or squat especially when the man is seated. It needs to be mentioned that women generally never walk on to men any how in the society; rather, they bow with their hands on their knees as a sign of respect after taking the excuse “**m̄ba wo**” meaning “May I come to you?”.’

There is a air of fantasy about these prescriptions; modern times have meant that as women have moved to town and pursued their education, many have become wealthy and indeed powerful. As a consequence, their attention to traditional respect patterns is declining.

Tarok have no cultural presupposition that men are more insensitive or less open to emotion than women; what counts is their public expression. While men should not exhibit emotions, there is a strong sense that

these are present but interiorised. For example, a man who deserts his children may be said to have no emotions, suggesting that familial love is a key interior emotion, even though it may not be publicly expressed.

There is one context where powerful emotions can be expressed publicly, and that is during mourning. Women sing funeral dirges and very public expressions of grief are the norm. As TWA (2000:48) puts it;

‘In a dirge, heart touching wordings are immotionally discharged in such a sorrowful manner that could melt stone hearted minds’

Tarok has no general word for ‘emotions’, although the implicit concept seems to exist. Verbs such as **lapci** ‘to feel weak’, ‘to be overwhelmed by emotion’ suggest that the concept of abstracting a generic from distinct emotional states is present in the language. Tarok regularly generates abstract nouns from simple CVC verb stems and these form the largest part of emotional vocabulary.

Tarok does not consider some abstract entity such as the ‘self’ experiencing emotions, such as hate, love, anger; rather an organ of the body does something. In this respect, it probably resemble almost all oral speech forms. In English culture, a division has opened up between popular usage and rationalist perception. Spoken English, for example, is richer in this type of expression than literary forms. Expressions in English such as ‘put the nose out of joint’, ‘my heart jumped into my mouth’, ‘hot-headed’, ‘he is a pain in the neck’ are common in speech but rarely occur in prose except within reported speech. In scientific discourse we recognise that the brain is the source of emotional states, but the ‘heart’ is their usual location in ordinary speech. Indeed the opposition between ‘head’ and ‘heart’, standing for rational versus emotional explanations for action is widespread in all forms of metaphorical speech. Interestingly, these types of body part or active expressions are often treated as clichés in prose style, perhaps because of the need to mark out the dichotomy between spoken and written. The lyrics of country-and-western songs are filled with such expressions and this is often seen as evidence of their platitudinous, shallow approach³. Nonetheless, in general, concrete descriptions of emotional states in European languages are rare and seem to have been replaced long ago by more abstract emotional terms. Tarok, however, seems to have retained many more associations with different body parts, as the examples in §3. show.

Nonetheless, there is a word in Tarok that corresponds in some way to ‘self’, **alàkàn**, which also means ‘shadow’. Each individual has an **alàkàn**, which is also something like a soul, in that it leaves the body at death. It is associated with the power or charisma of an individual, thus someone with a strong **alàkàn** can overwhelm a weaker person. It is the **alàkàn** which witches seek to attack and which is affected by encounters with spirits. An aspect of emotional life that is extremely hard to make general statements about is the importance of spirits. The intervention of the **orim** to strengthen the courage of men is explicit, but all sorts of other emotional behaviour may be the result of encounters with different types of spirits. Witchcraft attacks, which can be very common in Tarok society, are a common explanation for unusual behaviour, as is the failure to make sacrifices to spirits with which individuals may have specific relationships.

Tarok do have a concept of a fixed personality type, as the proverb ‘A leopard dies with its stripes still there’ (§7.). An important component of this is the notion of reincarnation. Most of the peoples of Central Nigeria have the idea, sometimes rather inchoately, that babies that are born are the reincarnation of a paternal ancestor and that this can be determined by noting the characteristic appearance or behaviours of the infant. This is remote from the Hindu or Buddhist conception in that it has no links with the larger structure of the universe, nor with morality; reincarnation is not part of a historical pattern of succession. But it does explain personality traits for Tarok; the reincarnated child should mimic those of the dead ancestor. Indeed, the two are probably in a feedback relationship; a child that is expected to behave in a certain way may begin to do so.

³ It is interesting to note that ‘traditional’ singers in English culture, when they do adopt modern repertoire tend to incorporate country-and-western songs but that folk-song collectors, who are resolutely white and middle-class, tend not to record this aspect of the folk-singers’ taste.

This paper aims to marry a description of the social context of emotional expression in Tarok society with as complete a listing as possible of the terminology of emotion, showing how each term is used. This should create a sort of grid to allow us to cross-reference the boundaries of emotion terms with the appropriate contexts of use. It also demonstrates how the Tarok people build up conceptual structures, accreting meaning around a particular semantic primitive, such as a body part. Where there appears to be a comparable English expression, we have tried to cite it, to give some sense of the colloquial nature of the Tarok.

3. Body parts

3.1 General

The major sources of emotional vocabulary in Tarok are;

- a) associations with particular parts of the body,
- b) verbal nouns derived from verbs expressing the emotion in question, compounds of the two
- c) underived nouns
- d) idiomatic compounds (usually with verbal nouns)
- e) metaphorical expressions

There are also a number of intriguing proverbs that express Tarok views of emotional categories.

There are two principal methods of expressing psychological states through body parts. Either a body part will be conjoined with a nominalised verb form, usually an abstract noun functioning adjectivally, or else it will be the object of a verb in a stereotyped expression. For example;

ñrá	ìgwàk
sleeping	heart
inner peace	

and

ìgwàk	làk	na⁺
heart	spoil	3 rd p. pron.
(s)he was annoyed		

The ordering of topic and qualifier can sometimes make substantial differences to the resulting meaning. e.g.

nominalised abstract noun + body part

ñkú	ìgwàk
inactive	heart
forgetfulness	

body part + reduplicated adjective (showing concord)

ìgwàk	ìkuku
heart	dead

describes a person who is apathetic and lacking in motivation and so achieves nothing in life.

3.2 Individual body parts and their significance

Most languages attribute some emotional significance to key body parts, such as the heart or liver. English has some residual expressions such as ‘gets up my nose’ or ‘I haven’t the stomach for it’ suggesting that a wider range of body parts were once attributed more direct emotional significance. Tarok retains a large repertoire of body parts with this type of cultural significance which are listed in this section.

ùzá **pà** **ìpàṅ** **a** **mi**
 he cut throat for me
 lit. he cut my throat
 i.e. he let me down

n yár igi òpàṅ mi
I carry of throat mine
lit. I carried for my throat
i.e. I took it as my own entitlement

ipàŋ **kám** **a** **na** **bét**
 throat is strong to him much
 i.e. he has a strong throat
 but meaning; he is very insouciant/foolhardy

The throat is often contrasted with **igwàk** ‘heart’ the centre of spiritual life.

anùŋ-igwàk	opening of heart
anùŋ-itun	opening of heart
anùŋ-ìkòksók	opening of chest

ùzà	cir	ré	ogá'car	wa	ùnəm	uga	̀nku	aǹn-igwàk
he	run	left	wife and children	like	man	of	dead	opening of heart
he ran away and left his wife and children like a man with no emotions								

anùŋ-itun **kú** **ka** **na** **wa** **ùnəm** **uga** **ñku** **acè**
 opening of heart die with him like man of dead penis
 he is as insensitive as an impotent man

anùŋ-ìkóksók **túl** **a** **na** **pa**
 opening of chest pierce for him that
 His mind was so closed that

ùzá **a** **kpán** **ìpír** **acu** **vá** **ma** **tár** **a** **na** **kát**
 he should catch meaning language which they enter to him not
 he could not understand the things they were saying to him

There is also an expression **anùŋ-anyi** ‘open liver’ but the meaning is rather different (see below).

A whole series of expressions can be derived from the sequence of verbal noun + ‘heart’.

m̃b̃aŋ-igwàk

lit. badness heart
 apathy

ñnàp **asiyasa** **ozá** **vá** **baŋ** **ìgwàk** **a** **na** **bét**
 matter politics theirs that be bad heart to him much
 he has no interest in politics

However, this expression can also be used with an inverted meaning to intensify a positive sentiment. Thus;

ñrí **ayàk** **bu** **vá** **càŋ** **ìgwàk** **a** **mi** **pa** **m̃b̃aŋ-igwàk**
 eating elections your that sweet heart to me of badness-heart
 your success at the polls makes me extremely happy

ñfál-igwàk rage

lit. boiling of heart

mma bú **ùyen-bwakan** **sáj** **kaŋ** **bu** **fál** **ìgwàk** **wa** **nta** **yà?**
 you child-small why that you boil heart like this int.
 Why should a small child like you be so enraged?

In Tarok culture, children are not considered to have the experience or the stress of adult life and therefore should not fall into a rage.

ñrá-igwàk tranquility

lit. sleeping heart

u **gbál** **amanta** **cít** **ki** **ikaŋkaŋ** **te,** **ìgwàk** **mi** **i** **rəra** **ɗak**
 you finish school already in health so, heart my it sleeps indeed
 now that you have finished school successfully, I feel tranquil

This expression is used to translate ‘peace’ in the New Testament.

ñcàŋ-igwàk happiness

lit. sweetness heart

ìgwàk càn mi càn
heart be sweet me be sweet
I am happy

m̃ba bu càn ìgwàk a mi càn
coming your be sweet heart to me be sweet
I'm happy you've come

The reduplication of the verb in sentences making use of this collocation is apparently quite exceptional.

̀̀kàr-ìgwàk forbearance
lit. pressing heart

A stereotyped expression used to console someone when a person close to them has died;

iku asal acumcum o kàr ìgwàk kà pa
death road big you press heart with like that
everyone must die, so you must learn to bear it

̀̀kú-ìgwàk forgetfulness
lit. inactive heart

mi ñm sán kà nku ìgwàk mi ṽta yà?
I do how with inactive heart mine this int.
What can I do about my forgetfulness?

also **̀̀koŋ-ìgwàk** 'forgetful heart'

Nna iyam na kà nlam ta bét te, a koŋ kà mi cít
It is thing this of yesterday this only CM it forget with me already
It was just yesterday and already I can't remember anything about it

ìgwàk-ikuku apathy
lit. dead heart

Used to describe a person who is apathetic and lacking in motivation who achieves nothing in life.

le a mi kà co ki ìgwàk ikuku bu ṽta,
get away from me over there with heart dead your that
keep away from me with your apathy,
owan bu gb̃a amanta cít
peers your finish school already
your age-mates have already completed school

̀̀lák-ìgwàk sadness, sorrow, woe, grief, annoyance
lit. spoiling heart

u**c****a****r** **t****a** **u****w****a** **i** **y****à** **̀****n****l****à****k** **ì****g****w****à****k** **k****o** **o****v****a****n** **w****ò**
 woman this she hab. experience spoiling heart with children hers
 this woman is always aggrieved because her children

o**g****á** **n****w****a** **n****g****u** **v****a****t****a**
 they drinking smoke this
 are addicted to smoking

̀**n****l****à****k** **ì****g****w****à****k** **a****c****a****r** **t****a** **a** **g****à** **a****d****o****r** **b****é****t**
 spoiling heart woman this it evoke compassion much
 the way this women is sorrowing evokes great compassion

The expression can also be turned around; **ìgwàk lak na** she was annoyed

̀nrwá-ìgwàk mercy

lit. paining heart

̀**u****z****á** **k****a****m** **m****p****a****t** **w****ò** **c****í****t** **t****e**,
 he accepts fault his already CM
 Since he already accepts that it is his fault,
w**a** **n****y****a****m** **n****r****w****a** **ì****g****w****à****k** **a** **n****a**
 you should show paining heart to him
 you should show him mercy

̀nsàr-ìgwàk endurance

lit. tying heart

u**b****a****r** **̀****b****u** **a** **n****y****a****n** **k****a** **̀****b****u** **w****a** **n****s****a****ŋ** **n****g****o** **t****e**,
 husband your he should suffer at you like how no matter CM
 no matter how much your husband makes you suffer,
w**a** **s****a****r** **ì****g****w****à****k** **p****a** **k****a****ŋ**
 you should tie heart of firmly
 you should endure it steadfastly

̀nrí ìgwàk pity

lit. eating heart

k**a** **y****à** **p****a** **k****a****k****u****l** **̀****n****r****í** **ì****g****w****à****k** **m****i** **k****á****t** **t****e**,
 it be that because eating heart mine not CM
 If it were not that I take pity on people,
n**n****a** **k****u** **u** **y****a** **n****n****a****m**
 it that you receive beating
 I would have given you a good beating

However, **ri ìgwàk** can also mean simply to like something;

i**n****a** **a****t****a** **a** **r****i** **ì****g****w****à****k** **a** **m****i** **b****é****t** **w****a** **y****a****p** **k****a** **k****á****t**
 cow this it eat heart to me much you should sell with not
 I like this cow very much, you shouldn't sell it

head **ishí**

The concept of the head in Tarok imagery can be quite closely mapped to English. The position of the head relates to rigidity, degrees of self-control etc.

̀̀kák'shí obstinacy, stubbornness
lit. breaking head

u la pa u wa atut ngo te
you say that you drink false baobab [poison] maybe CM
Even if you are so obstinate as to go ahead and drink poison
iyam i kur yi ka bu ka ̀̀kák'shí bu vata
thing will be sufficient us with you with obstinacy yours that
I'll deal with you

This could be compared to English 'bull-headed'.

̀̀kpán-ishí self-control
lit. holding head

bu kpán ishi bu pa dakdak te,
you hold head you ADVCM carefully CM
if you exercise self-control
ucar bu i tām pa kwak
wife your will stay ADVCM quietly
your wife won't play around

Compare with English 'keep your head'.

nrup ki ishi pride, arrogance
lit. raising with head

bu nyam nrup ki ishi a mi
you show raising with head to me
what has happened that you are so arrogant?
pa u wōŋ u nyan uda yà?
that you begin you become who int.

Cf. English 'keep your head up high'.

̀̀-yéń kí ishí humility, meekness
lit. reducing of head

nza apir aponzhi yen ki ishi wa nta yà?
what kind ruler reduce of head like this int.
it is remarkable that this ruler is so humble

Cf. English 'keep your head down'.

ishí iwōŋ lit. open head
i.e. he has the ability to see under the surface of things like a diviner or a seer.

ùyen ata ishishi iwon ta,
child this his head open CM

This child has the gift of a seer,

u nyi kát kan bu dap atam ka na do?
you know not that you drag mouth with him int.
why do you argue with him?

stomach **afú**

The stomach is conceptualised as the location of physical desires, especially for food, and is generally associated with greed and bad behaviour.

m̃baŋ-afú

lit. badness stomach

stinginess, wickedness

ùzá baŋ afu bét, ko i na iyam-nrí a bu kát
he is bad stomach much, not will give food to you not
he's stingy and won't give you food

This is often expressed as an active construction;

afú bu baŋ bét
stomach you is bad very
i.e. you are very wicked or greedy

ñdul-afú

lit. bitterness stomach

wickedness

ùnəm ata ñdul afu bét, a yár nyan ku uya awan wò
man this be bitter stomach much he carries suffers with child relation his
this man is so wicked to the child of his relation,
bu la pa nna ya dī
you say that it is be different
it is as if there's a feud between them

and

afú bu ñdul bét lit. your stomach is very bitter i.e. you are very wicked

One expression is fixed and cannot be inverted;

afú bu gbaŋ bét lit. your stomach is deep i.e. you are very secretive

A much more surprising expression is;

ñrúsók-afú

lit. coldness stomach

kindness

ùzá **rusok** **afu** **nva** **pá** **a** **ɗaŋ** **unəm** **ki** **iyam-ɲrí** **kát**
 he is cold stomach one that he should refuse person with food not
 he's so kind, he'll never refuse you food

This seems to be out of place with the other associations of the stomach.

cf. also **anyi**, **atun** etc.

liver **anyi**

anuŋ-anyi⁺

lit. 'opening of liver'.

an object or concept that is very precious to the speaker, whether a child or an idea

mmabú **na** **ùyen** **uga** **anuŋ** **anyi** **mi**,
 you are one child of opening liver my
 My precious child,
ɓa **n** **la** **iyam** **ro** **a** **ɓu** **kaŋ** **mi** **ga**
 come I tell thing certain to you before I go
 come, let me tell you something before I go [die]

eye **iwú**

Compared with English, the eye has only very limited significance for Tarok speakers.

ɲríwú playfulness

lit. 'eating of eye'

le **a** **mi** **kaco** **ka** **ɲríwú** **ɓu** **vata**
 get away from me there with eating eye your that
 Get away from me with your playfulness!

[iwú] ya atak

lit. the eye sees the place

someone who is clear-sighted, perceptive and observes more than he/she ought

Although the expression is cited with the word 'eye' often this is eliminated in sentence contexts;

ɓu **nəm** **dakdak** **kát** **te,** **ucar** **ɓu** **uga** **n-ya** **atak**
 you do carefully not CM wife your of seeing place
 If you're not careful, your clear-sighted wife
vata **i** **wur** **awo** **i** **ɓak** **a** **ɓu** **ki** **ishi**
 that will carry hand will pile to you on head
 will look down on you

ear **acwán**

The ear also only occurs in a single expression

nkpaŋ acwán

lit. blocking ear
unruly behaviour

Uza kpang acwáng bét
he blocks his ears too much
he doesn't listen i.e. he is too playful

cheek **ñjàŋ** pl. **njáŋ**

ñjàŋ kám

lit. cheeks marry
deserving of public ridicule

njaŋ kam na
cheeks marry him
he deserves the misfortune that has befallen him

fa inyín, lit. 'to bring out teeth', i.e. a desire to assert independence

mouth **anùŋ**

m̀bək-anùŋ suffering

lit. rubbing of the mouth (on the ground).

The act of rubbing the mouth on the ground is the most insulting act you can perform to a Tarok man.

m̀bək anùŋ yi ɸen nla ɸen a?
rubbing mouth ours be good speaking be good int.
Can you imagine our suffering?

ko mmi pa ma yap kát
not petrol be that people buy not
There's no petrol to buy!

ñcàŋ-anùŋ talkativeness, garrulousness, gossipy

lit. sweetness mouth

la ñnàp úyen ata ka ayi
speak thing to child that with silence
Speak softly to the child,
kakul ùnəm aco càŋ anuŋ bét
because man that sweet mouth much
because that man's a gossip

Gossip has the same ambiguous character in Tarok conceptions as in Europe; although always entertaining, society pretends to disapprove of gossips.

atám n. mouth See **ñnàp ashe atám**, lit. 'sounding inside mouth', i.e. empty promises. cf. **anùŋ** mouth.

atám-awong n.p. empty boasting

atám alámlám n.p. talkativeness, garrulity, lit. mouth deceive i.e. he cannot control what comes out of his mouth

body **izər**

ñkap-izər dissension

lit. separation body

bu la ñnàp ata a na te,
 you tell thing that to him CM
 if you tell him that
i ba ka ñkap izər ôza
 it will bring with separation body to them
 it will bring dissension between them

cf. English ‘drive a wedge between them’.

chest **ikóksók** pl. **ikóksók**

ñlèp-ikóksók being proud

lit. hitting chest

ùyen bu vǎ kur ùyen kur pa u lèp ikóksók ka na
 child your this be enough child be enough that you hit chest with him
 you can be proud of your child

nose **alúr**

The nose symbolises difficulties;

nfa alur

appearing nose

ùzá yaŋ pa o kam ucar uga nnyi té,
 he insist that he will marry woman of education CM
 He insisted on marrying an educated woman
ùcàr ka ñfa alúr a na ðak
 wife prog. appearing nose for him as it is
 and now she is giving him much trouble

penis **acè**

typically **nku acè** ‘dead penis’ i.e. impotence, but impotence is associated with lack of emotions or docility

ùzá nəm ùyen na i gbəgbal wa anəm uga nku acè
 he beat child as if he will kill like person of dead penis
 He beat the child so badly as if he was lacking normal human emotions

4. Verbal nouns

Apart from expressions using body parts, Tarok has a range of abstract terms denoting emotions. These are most commonly verbs (see §5.) with a complement, but the nominalised form of these often takes on a life of its own, sometimes with a cognate object.

acèn behaviour

acèn	bu	ben	ka	mi	kát
behaviour	your	good	with	me	not

I am not happy with your behaviour

The sense of this is quite similar to **ñnap-ñnəm** (§6.).

adom covetousness, desiring things belonging to other people (refers to food or money)

u	dom	adom	sáj	wa	nta
you	covet	covetousness			

Why are you so covetous?

See also **gwan**.

ador compassion, pity, sorrow

ñnap	ata	ga	ador⁺	bét
matter	that	bring	compassion	much

That matter arouses a strong emotion in me

cf. also **dor** to pity, to have compassion

alàkàn self, spiritual aspect of an individual

The basic meaning is ‘shadow’ but it is also close to soul and to spiritual power or charisma. The **alàkàn** is subject to attacks by witches;

Unəm ugi ishe	pak	alakanlakan
Wizard	captured	his shadow

he is being tormented by witchcraft

but it can also express interpersonal relations;

Alakan	mi	löp	na
shadow	my	hit	him

my charisma overwhelmed him

amwáp ingenuousness, naiveté

ucar	vá	ya	amwap	abar	wò	bét
woman	this	find	naiveté	husband	hers	much

This woman finds her husband ingenuous

aryáp dignity, personality inspiring awe
archaic cf. also **ayàkàn**

aryáp **apo** **mi** **láp** **na**
dignity father mine hit him
my father's dignity overwhelmed him

ayàkàn n. 1. shadow or being 2. spirit 3. ghosts of recently dead people If you see one you must perform a sacrifice. Often used interchangeably with **aryáp**, personality.

ayír v.n. 1. wind, air 2. evil force which causes mental disturbances and people can be driven mad by **ayír** 3. demon 4. waywardness or unseriousness 5. rascal

ibáp — n. vanity

icár — n. 1. state of being a wife 2. state of being female 3. behaviour of a man usually attributed to a woman (e.g. cowardice) See also **ucar**.

icìgwàk — n. fright, fear

ikin⁺ reliability, dependability

unəm **vá** **məl** **cít** **nəm** **ikin** **nda**
person that try already do dependability today
x has turned out to be dependable to today [which is surprising]

ikpàr jealousy

idur **mi** **nəm** **ikpàr** **a** **na**
wealth mine do jealousy to him
my wealth makes him jealous

ikpàr m̀bin — n.p. patriotism, lit. jealousy for the land

ikpátkpat jealousy between co-wives

ocar **ro** **nyi** **ntəm** **ikpatkpat** **kát**
women certain know staying jealousy not
Some women know how to live in peace with their co-wives

isài intolerance, strictness

isài **akpa** **bu** **iga** **ntəm** **ku** **ucar** **kát**
intolerance friend your of staying with woman not
Your friend is so intolerant, he won't be able to live with any woman

uPonzhin **Duk** **uga** **n-yaṅta** **a** **sai** **bét**
Chief Ngas of now he strict much
The present chief of the Ngas is very strict

isài **apo** **yi** **ben** **nla** **kát**
strictness father our good talking not
Our father is extremely strict

ishindon unconditional love

ùnəm **ḡaṇ** **wo** **ḡaṇ** **na** **pa** **kaṇ** **ishindonshindon** **ləp** **na**
 person ugly his ugly like that but his unconditional love hit her
 The man is very ugly but she loves him all the same

iwuswa shyness, embarrassment

nnàp-nla **ḡu** **na** **iwuswa** **a** **mi** **bét**
 speech your give shame to me much
 Your speech embarrassed me greatly

ucar **ḡu** **nəm** **iwuswa** **bét**
 wife your do shyness much
 Your wife is very shy

mmái waywardness, licentiousness

o **ré** **nnəm** **mmái** **kát** **te,** **ô** **kú** **i** **kukur**
 you leave off doing licentiousness not CM you will die it finish
 If you don't stop this licentious behaviour, you'll all die

mmən love

mmən **a** **gwaṇ** **ozá** **unəm** **ya** **kur** **nkap** **ozá** **kát**
 love it joins them person he able separating them not
 When people are joined by love, no-one can separate them

mmár quietness, quietude**mmár anuṇ** non-talkativeness

mmár **anunuṇ** **nəm,** **ayir** **nəm**
 keeping quiet his mouth do fear do
 His silence is very disturbing

mmat obstinacy, stubbornness

mməmat **nna** **i** **nak** **nnàp** **a** **na**
 her obstinacy it will cause matter to her
 Her obstinacy will be a problem for her

nfam baseless pride

úzá **yár** **nfam** **ada** **yà?** **Ogənaṅənaṇ** **yà** **ki** **iyam** **ro** **kát**
 he carry pride who int. his brothers be with thing certain not
 Where has he acquired this superior attitude? None of his brothers are proud.

ñfán or **ifán** bravery, courage

ùzá **yár** **ñfán** **apo** **wô?**
 he carry courage father his
 He has inherited his father's courage

The use of **ifán** is subtly different; while still referring to bravery it is applied to someone who misuses it, for example an armed robber.

ngán feeling of bodily satisfaction (referring to food and drink)

nce **vá** **cir** **ngán** **a** **bu** **bét**
 beer that run satisfaction to you much
 That beer has really refreshed you

ngbàk fright

ngbàk **onəm** **càn** **ka** **na** **bét**
 frightening people sweet with him much
 He is fond of frightening people

ñkpàŋ hatred /**kpaŋ** to hate

ùzá **kpaŋ** **mi** **na** **i** **ri** **ishi** **iva** **ka** **na**
 he hates me as if he eat head dog with him
 He hates as much as if I had eaten dog's head

nlàŋlaŋ state of being near committing suicide. A person runs into the bush not knowing what will happen

u **bak** **unənaŋ** **cít** **te,**
 you drive his mother already CM,
 You've already driven away his mother,
u **dom** **pá** **ùzá** **a** **lànlaŋ** **do?**
 you want that he should run into the bush int.
 do you want him to run mad as well?

ntàn astuteness

ùzá **tan** **ntàn** **nla-ñnàp** **ônəmbak** **bét**
 he became astuteness speaking matter elders much
 He became astute by always speaking with the elders

ñzhiŋ persistence, **zhiŋ** to persist

ùzá **zhiŋ** **ka** **nga** **aLagot** **vá** **bét**
 he persists in going Lagos that much
 He keeps on going to Lagos

aghám shouting, crying, panic

Mbwai apipe nna kùr cíť kát te, ùzá fàñ agham bét
 money regular only finish already not CM he begin panic very much
 His salary has not yet finished and already he has started to panic

ayir fear

UTali yir ayir bét
 Tali is fear very
 Tali is easily unnerved

5. Verb (+ complement constructions)

5.1 Directly expressive verbs

Tarok has a small number of verbs that express emotional states directly.

bàk v. to change character for the better

cì to be sulky

đor to pity, to have compassion

đul v. 1. to be bitter 2. to be wicked

fán v. to be brave

gák v. 1. to find unbelievable 2. to feel inhibited

ján to feel revulsion

acen wó nəm ajan bét
 walking your do revulsion much
 Your behaviour's very immoral

lapci⁺ to feel weak, to be overwhelmed by emotion

n fe ikuku te, izər lapci mi ga wur
 I hear his death CM body weak me go reach
 When I heard of his death, my whole body became weak

rwa⁺ to be sick, to feel pain (emotionally)

5.2 Verb + complement constructions

Tarok also has a number of verbs used with the appropriate nominal complement can be used to create a variety of expressions.

ḃál ijili v.p. to be contemptuous of lit. 'to clean buttocks'

cú to reach, to arrive at, to feel, to be up to a task

This is most commonly found in:

cú amón to fret, to be anxious
lit. to feel like defecating

The particular interest of this expression is that the subject, the person who is anxious, is not the subject of the phrase but

ma la pa ùzá a mwa akat vá ipin te,
they say that he should pay debt that tomorrow CM
When they said he should pay the debt tomorrow,
a cú amón a na
it feel like defecating to him
he felt very anxious

It is tempting translate this phrase ‘he felt like shitting himself’ but this expression would be over-emphatic in comparison to the sense of the Tarok.

fà ivá v.p. to become hostile

fé means to listen, hear, understand, feel and occurs in the following expressions:

fé anù to accept advice (with negative connotation)

ùzá fe anù acar wo
he listen advice wife his
He accepted his wife's advice

In Tarok culture, a man who always listened to his wife’s advice would be stereotyped as weak and ineffectual.

fé igoi⁺ to be submissive
lit. to understand Hausa [!]

To be submissive is deemed to be a sign of a weakness for a man in Tarok culture. The Hausa, northern Muslim slave-raiders who troubled much of the Middle-Belt region throughout the nineteenth century are generally regarded with mixed emotions, since Hausa became the language of administration in the colonial era and is still used in churches, especially in urban centres. Despite this, Hausa has very negative connotations in Tarok idioms.

orim fa ku ucar vá ka nlam te,
masquerade appear for women that for yesterday CM
The masquerade came out yesterday for women
n ya ùzá fe igoi cít
I see she understand Hausa already
and already I see they are submissive

fé ncàn to feel happy, enjoy, take pleasure in
lit. to feel sweetness

ùzá fe ncàn mba bu bét
he feel sweetness coming your much
He’s very happy you’ve come

gàp angá v.p. to utter unfriendly remarks

nəm-nkun to evoke compassion
lit. do poverty

ùyen ata zhak nəm nkun bét
child this lean do poverty much
this child is so lean it makes you feel compassion

Finally, two expressions describing grimaces that indicate internal emotional states;

gbáklágát adv. describes depth of an emotion **Uza man na pa gbáklágát kát**. She doesn't really love him.

mu⁺ anùŋ to fatten the closed lips in an expression of displeasure

myandar⁺ anùŋ to twist the lips in an expression of displeasure or indifference

6. Idiomatic Compounds

Tarok also has a number of idiomatic compounds, the elements of which are not always transparent to speakers and which are effectively fixed collocations. These appear to be nominalised verb + noun (sometimes a second nominalised verb).

ñmón ikùm anger, malice

?? of war (the meaning of the first element is not now known)

ùzá ñmón ikùm ka mi kakul pa icin mi càŋ ka na kát
he ? war with me because that advice mine sweet with him not
He was angry with me because he did not like my advice

ñkùn iwuswa shame

lit. lacking shyness

u kun iwuswa bét nva u pwat upo bu a
you lack shyness much which you insult father your indeed
You've no shame at all in insulting your father

ñnap-ñnəm behaviour, manner

lit. things doing

This expression is the nearest to a Tarok term for 'character' or 'personality'.

ñnap-ñnəm bu ðom mi bét
manner your like me much
I really approve of your manner

ñnyáwú quirky behaviour

etymology no longer transparent

le a mi kaco ka ñnyáwú bu vata
get away from me there with quirky behaviour your much
Get away from me with your quirky behaviour

This term has a rather archaic feel to modern Tarok speakers

̀̀nyì-nnàp kindness
lit. ‘knowing matter’

̀̀nyì-nnàp bu nak nkun ozá fəŋ
kindness your make poverty theirs untie
Your kindness has alleviated their poverty

̀̀rám-ifəŋ⁺ regret
lit. biting finger

mwa m pat izər ka na te n ram ifəŋ pa gəŋgəŋ
when I miss body with him CM I bite finger ADVM plenty
I very regretted missing him

There is some similarity to the English ‘to bite your tongue’ to express regret at an inappropriate remark.

̀̀-yáŋ onəm⁺ hatred
lit. rejecting person

̀̀zá yaŋ onəm wò pa catcat
he reject person his ADVM all
He hates all his relations

7. Metaphorical expressions

Apart from idiomatic compounds, Tarok can also express emotional states metaphorically. These often embody quite similar ideas to comparable English metaphors, such as ‘like a knife through butter’, or a ‘snowball in Hell’.

anuŋ-akún ká ápər enmity
lit. log of wood and fire

ogənaŋ i yaŋ ogənaŋ wa anuŋ-akún ká ápər kakul nnàp asiyasa
brothers hab. reject brothers as log and fire because matter politics
Politics sets brother against brother

rí ishí ivá enmity
lit. eat the head of dog

The logic behind this expression is that if you eat a dog you should throw the head in the bush, otherwise the whole race of dogs will resent you and bark at you in the bush.

8. Proverbs

Another source of pointers to Tarok concepts of behaviour and personality are proverbs. These are rather more oblique than many of the expressions described here but still point to concepts that are not necessarily found elsewhere. For example, self-centredness is regarded very poorly in Tarok society. The following proverb describes it;

ùnəm bok ñdəŋ, wa te, a le dəp iwuwu
 man dug water drank then he return close eye

A man dug out water, drank his fill and returned to fill up the hole

Source: Lar & Dandam (2002:111)

A proverb that contrasts personality types is;

ñdəŋ ñrūsok i lyaŋ nsur
 water coldness will mix heat

cold water mixed with hot will cool it down

Source: Lar & Dandam (2002:85)

which implies that when a calm person encounters a hot-tempered person, they will moderate the potentially rash behaviour of the other person.

Finally, a proverb that expresses the idea that personality traits are essentially fixed;

idámóng i kú ka ñlir wò
 leopard FUT die with stripes his

A leopard dies with its stripes still there

Source: Lar & Dandam (2002:30)

This is remarkably similar to the English proverb ‘a leopard can’t change its spots’.

9. Conclusions

Tarok has an extremely wide range of terms to express emotions, although relatively few are expressed in purely abstract terms. Typically, although abstract terms can be formed by nominalising verbs, everyday speech uses the verbal form. This type of concreteness is similar to other African languages, although comparable material is extremely sparse. In terms of the pragmatics of different expressions, gender and age are important categories. Specific emotions are assigned to different genders, with the proviso that post-menopausal women change category and can thus express a new and different range of emotions. Children are considered to remain in one emotional category until initiation or marriage, which is rather late by European standards.

As far as it is possible to compare the Tarok material with other African languages, several key patterns of images are quite different. There is no association between colours and emotions.

The other aspect of Tarok emotional vocabulary is its inconsistency. Although a few body parts, such as the ‘heart’, **igwàk**, have a broadly related cluster of associations, the eye and the stomach do not appear to ‘fit’. This rather suggests that emotional terminology may be full of semantic fossils, terms that relate to now lost ideas and concepts or perhaps calques from neighbouring languages such as Ngas, which do not have a nexus of association in Tarok. Trying to analyse points to the weakness of this type of material for any type of African language, much less the immediate neighbours of Tarok. I’d hate to suggest that there is any connection between the sort of people linguists are and their manifest disinterest in this area of language.

References

- Armon-Jones, C. 1986. The social functions of emotion. In: *The social construction of emotions* R. Harré (ed.) 57-82. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Fajans, J. 1985. The ups and downs of Baining personhood: ethnopsychology among the Baining. In: *Person, self and experience: exploring Pacific ethnopsychologies*. G. White and J. Kirkpatrick (eds.) New York: Praeger.
- Fitzpatrick, J.F.J., 1910/11. Some Notes on the Kwolla District and its Tribes. *Journal of the African Society*, X:16-52, 213-221.

- Geertz, H. 1959. The vocabulary of emotion: a study of Javanese socialization processes. *Psychiatry*, 22:225-236.
- Harré, R. (ed.) 1986. *The emotions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Harré, R. & W. G. Parrott (eds.) 1996. *The emotions, social, cultural and biological dimensions*. London: Sage Publications
- Henry, J. 1936. The linguistic expression of emotion. *American Anthropologist*, 38:250-256.
- Hutchinson, S. 1996. *Nuer dilemmas: coping with money, war and the State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- James, W. 1884. What is an emotion? *Mind*, 19, 188-205.
- Kirk, L. and M. Burton 1977. Meaning and context: a study of contextual shifts in meaning of Maasai personality descriptors. *American Ethnologist*, 4:734-61.
- Kövecses, Zoltán 1986 *Metaphors of Anger, Pride and Love*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Lar, I.B. & Ganta Godswill Dandam 2002. *Tarok proverbs in context*. Jos: Jos University Press.
- Levy, R. 1973. *Tahitians: mind and experience in the Society islands*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 1991. Linguistic Evidence on the Origins of Peoples: The case of the Tarok people of Plateau State (Nigeria). *Afrika und Übersee*, 74:191-204.
- Longtau, Selbut R. 1993. A formal Tarok phonology. *Afrika und Übersee*, 76:15-40.
- Longtau, Selbut R., 1997. Tarok Children's Songs. *Afrika und Übersee*, 80, 233-253.
- Lutz, C.A. & L. Abu-Lughod eds. 1990. *Language and the politics of emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press & Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Lutz, C.A. 1988. *Unnatural emotions: everyday sentiments on a Micronesian atoll and their challenge to Western theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Matisoff, James 1986 "Hearts and minds in south-east Asian languages and English: an essay in the comparative lexical semantics of psycho-collocations", *C.L.A.O.* 15,1: 5-57.
- Shaver, P. R., Wu, S., & Schwartz, J. C. (1992). Cross-cultural similarities and differences in emotion and its representation: A prototype approach. In M. S. Clark (Eds.), *Emotion* (pp. 175- 212). Newbury Park: Sage.
- Sibomana, Leo 1980. Grundzüge der Phonologie des Tarok (Yergam). *Afrika und Übersee*, 63:199-206.
- Sibomana, Leo 1981a. Tarok II: Das Nominalklassensystem. *Afrika und Übersee*, 64:25-34.
- Sibomana, Leo 1981b. Tarok III: Das Verbalsystem. *Afrika und Übersee*, 64:237-247.
- Smith, M.G. and M.F. Smith, Mary F., 1990. Kyanship and Kinship Among the Tarok. *Africa*, 60 (2):242-269.
- TWA [Tarok Women Association, Jos Branch] 2000. *The Tarok woman*. Jos: Tarok Women Association.
- Wallace, A.F.C. and M.T. Carson 1973. Sharing and diversity in emotion terminology. *Ethos*, 1,1:29.
- Wierzbicka, A. 1999. *Emotions across languages and cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.