

**TAROK AND RELATED LANGUAGES**  
**of**  
**EAST-CENTRAL-NIGERIA**

**Nomenclature and subclassification**

**Roger Blench**

**DRAFT ONLY**

**NOT TO BE QUOTED WITHOUT PERMISSION**

Roger Blench  
Mallam Dendo  
8, Guest Road  
Cambridge CB1 2AL  
United Kingdom  
Voice/Answerphone/Fax. 0044-(0)1223-560687  
E-mail [R.Blench@odi.org.uk](mailto:R.Blench@odi.org.uk)  
[http://homepage.ntlworld.com/roger\\_blench/RBOP.htm](http://homepage.ntlworld.com/roger_blench/RBOP.htm)

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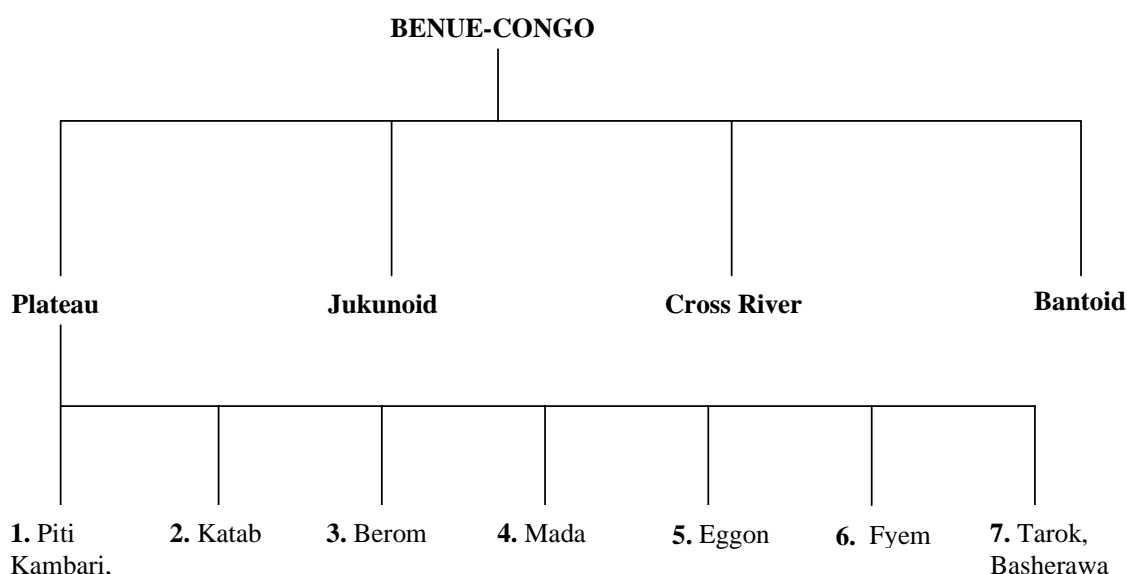
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## 1. Introduction

The term ‘Tarokoid’ enters the published literature in Gerhardt (1989) although it was in informal circulation prior to that at conferences. However, its origins lie in Greenberg’s (1963) identification of a Plateau language group in Central Nigeria. Greenberg (1963) classified a large number of languages into seven groups, and assigned Yergam (Tarok) and Basherawa (Yangkam) to Plateau 7. Figure 1 shows Greenberg’s subdivision of Benue-Congo and Plateau, marking sample languages for the other Plateau groups.

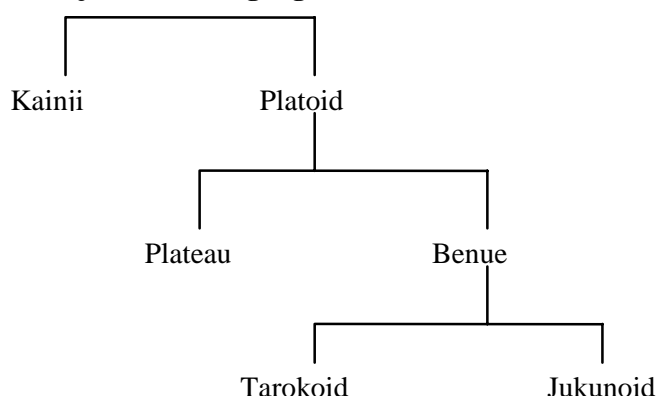
**Figure 1. The subdivision of Benue-Congo in Greenberg (1963)**



These two language have been put together in most subsequent publications, notably in the Benue-Congo Comparative Wordlist (henceforth BCCW) (Williamson and Shimizu 1968; Williamson 1972), Williamson (1971) and Hansford *et al* (1976). In Gerhardt (1989) Plateau 7 is rechristened Tarokoid in keeping with the terminological style of the volume. Two other languages, Turkwam and Arum-Chessu, which were assigned to Benue in Hansford *et al*. (1976) were added to Tarokoid. In a more recent classification (Crozier and Blench 1992) another language, Pai, is added, harking back to Maddieson (1972) who had already put it in Plateau 7, while confining Turkwam and Arum-Chessu to their own subgroup (Plateau 10 in Maddieson). Pai had previously led a somewhat nomadic existence, classified in Plateau 6 by Greenberg, in Plateau 4 in Williamson (1971) and as a separate co-ordinate branch of Plateau in Hansford et al (1976).

At the level of Plateau, following Shimizu (1975), Jukunoid was treated as a distinct group and the remaining languages were divided between Plateau and Benue. Figure 2 presents a comparative table of the various proposals for classifying Plateau languages and proposes a synthesis that splits this ensemble of languages into a number of co-ordinate branches.

Figure 2. Synthesis tree of Kainji/Plateau languages



Toro [=Turkwam] and Alumu-Təsu [=Arum-Chessu] are not listed in the classic sources on Benue-Congo and probably only became known through the short orthographic wordlists collected by Ian Maddieson in the 1970s. Maddieson (1972) treats Toro and Alumu-Təsu as related to each other but forming a distinct subgroup of Plateau. However, in the Index of Nigerian Languages (INL) (Hansford *et al.* 1976), the Toro/Alumu-Təsu had become a subgroup of the Benue languages, along with Tarok, Jukunoid, Eggon etc. By 1989, they had migrated into Tarokoid (Gerhardt 1989) on what evidence it is hard to say since no data has ever been published. It seems quite likely this was just a misinterpretation of a typographic convention based on a reprise of the INL rather than a positive classification. This was reprised in Crozier & Blench (1992) for lack of alternative evidence and Longtau (1991) spent some energy trying to make these language fit with Tarok oral traditions.

These publications have one feature in common; no evidence is actually adduced for the authors' statements<sup>1</sup>. With the exception of, published comparative materials on Plateau languages are sparse in the extreme, often confined to the material in BCCW. Turkwam and Arum-Chessu are not included in the BCCW, while in most cases, the data-slot for Pai and Basherawa is unfilled. In both cases, the source for these languages is 'Nigerian government files' which generally means an orthographic list filled in by an administrator. Those who have published classifications have therefore relied on unpublished wordlists, usually orthographic most of which come from University of Ibadan students<sup>2</sup>.

To try and establish some more solid classification in among this mass of speculation can be achieved only with the collection of new field materials. With this in mind it was decided to see whether a group such as Tarokoid actually existed and if so, to provide a justification for including or excluding individual languages. In addition, information about the exact name of the languages or even the location and number of speakers was woefully inadequate, so filling these lacunae seemed a reasonable subsidiary goal.

Fieldwork<sup>3</sup> took place within the framework of the Tarok dictionary project (Longtau and Blench, forthcoming). The villages of speakers of each language were identified and substantial wordlists were taken as follows;

<sup>1</sup> A partial exception is the lexicostatistics paper by Gerhardt and Jockers (1981). Their calculations, however, did not include many of the languages under discussion here.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Kay Williamson, Ian Maddieson and Tom Cook, all of whom have freely allowed me to copy these materials.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Selbut Longtau who accompanied me on each of these expeditions and who has carefully checked each wordlist for Tarok cognates. The argument of the paper, is, however, my own responsibility.

**The Tarokoid languages of E.C. Nigeria. R.M. Blench. Circulation draft.**

Language	Village	Date	Informant(s)
Arum-Chessu	Arum Kado	10/11/92	Musa Kado
	Chessu-Sarki	8/1/99	Mathys Akwe, Musa Akwe, Yakubu A. Ameh
Turkwam	Turkwam	10/11/92	Yakubu Kos
	Turkwam	8/1/99	Handiru Aveh, Yisus Akoman
Pai	Ndok	17/5/96	Danjuma Torot
Basherawa	Yuli	19/5/96	Salihu Mohammadu, Amadu Kondon Yuli
	Tukur	22/5/96	Abubakar Sulaimanu, Ibrahim Sale, Yushau and Idi Zuberu
Tapshin	Tapshin	21/3/98	John Tula Rabu

The table shows the names of each people as they were recorded in standard sources. This paper begins by setting out basic information about the location and status each language in turn. The second section considers whether these languages form a group and gives the basis for including and excluding each language.

## 2. Individual Languages

### 2.1 Tarok (Yergam)

The Tarok (formerly Yergam) people live primarily in the region around Langtang in south-east Plateau State, Nigeria. There are probably some 150,000 speakers. Tarok was first described by Fitzpatrick (1911). 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) has analysed the implications of the classification of Tarok for the interpretation of oral tradition and elaborated a formal phonology.

An orthography has been developed together with a literacy programme and the New Testament has been translated and published. An Old Testament translation is in progress and the publication of vernacular books is beginning (e.g. Mamfa 1998). The language is being well-maintained and there is no reason to believe it is under threat. Fieldwork took place within the framework of the Tarok dictionary project (Longtau and Blench, forthcoming).

### 2.2 Pe (Pai)

The language and people known as Pai or Dalong are correctly known as Pe. A single individual is ùPè and the people as áPè. Pai is a Hausaised pronunciation of Pe, while Dalong is the Angas name for the Pe and has pejorative overtones and should be rejected. The name Piyeh (said to mean "people with common sense") is also used, for example in CAPRO (ined.) but this is equally inappropriate.

The published material on the Pe [Pai in all earlier sources] language is confined to some lexical items cited in the BCCW, many of them quite inaccurate. Over time, Pe has lived a particularly nomadic life within the broader confines of Plateau. Pe was known to Greenberg (1963), who placed it in Plateau 6, modern-day SE Plateau, together with Fyem and Horom. Williamson (1971) classified it with Plateau 4, i.e. together with Ayu, Ninzam and Che (Rukuba) and it is similarly listed in the BCCW. In Hansford *et al.* (1976) it is placed in 'Eastern Plateau' (Greenberg's Plateau 2-4) but given a separate branch, h., distinct from the other clusters delineated. In Gerhardt (1989) it essentially returns to Plateau 4, now renamed Cluster A of southwestern Plateau. In Blench and Crozier (1992) it is placed tentatively in Tarokoid for the first time. However, in no case has any evidence been published for these classifications. In the two main cartographic sources, Hansford *et al.* (1976) and Blench and Crozier (1992) it is displaced rather badly. The following section gives its correct location, and it should appear in a map correctly sited in the Millennium edition of the Ethnologue (Grimes, forthcoming).

The Pe live on the hills and plain south-east of Pankshin town, bounded by the Tal and Tarok to the east and the Montol to the south. The main settlement, Dok, also known as Dokpai, is 17km south of the road from Jos-Amper, turning a few kilometres before Amper. The settlement is extremely isolated with a single road

that is cut during the wet season. The other Pe settlements are; Tipap Kwi, Tipap Re, Bwer, Kup (=Tiniŋ), Ban, Kwasam, and Kamcik. CAPRO (ined.) also gives Yong, Jak, Bil, Bwai, Wopti, Kanchi and Yuwan, villages not mentioned by the Chief of Dok.

The language is still well maintained with all the children encountered apparently fluent. There are at least 3-4000 speakers in seven villages. Almost all adults are fluent in Ngas and some in Tarok and Montol, where these languages border their villages. Hausa is known, but probably not very widespread, especially in the hill villages.

### **2.3 Yangkam (Basherawa)**

The Yangkam (Yaŋkam) people have been called ‘Bashar’ or ‘Basherawa’ (the Hausaised name for the people) in almost all the literature (Greenberg 1963; Williamson 1971; Benue-Congo Comparative Wordlist; Hansford *et al.* 1976; Gerhardt 1989; Crozier & Blench 1992). The correct name of the Bashar language and people is Yàŋkàm, plural aYaŋkam<sup>+</sup>. Although Yangkam has nearly disappeared as a language, the populations who formerly spoke it are likely to retain Basherawa and Basheranci as their name for the people and language as long as they retain a separate identity.

The main population of Yangkam speakers live in a region west of Bashar town, 25 km north from Jarne on the Amper-Bashar road, Kanam LGA, in Plateau State. Yangkam is spoken in some four villages, Tukur, Bayar, Pyaksam and Kiram [CAPRO also mentions Gambam and Kwakkwani, but this was not confirmed]. Crozier and Blench (1992) gives a figure of 20,000 speakers of the language located in and around Bashar town, some 50 km east of Amper on the Muri road. This estimate turned out to be entirely erroneous. The Bashar people seem to have been heavily affected by nineteenth century slave raids, perhaps by the Jukun as well as the Hausa. They were converted to Islam and a relatively powerful centre was established at Bashar. At the same time they began to switch to speaking Hausa, while still retaining their Bashar identity. There are many hamlets around Bashar town in Wase local Government whose populations are ethnically Yangkam but who no longer speak the language.

In the region of Bashar town today, there are just two old men who remain reasonably fluent in the language, in the village of Yuli, some 15 km northwest of Bashar. However, it turns out that at the time of the raids, the population split into two and another group sought refuge in Tukur. However, even here Yangkam is only spoken by people over fifty and all the young people speak Hausa. The local estimate of the number of fluent speakers is 100, and falling every year. There seems to be no likelihood that Yangkam will be maintained as speakers are quite content with the switch to Hausa, while remaining proud of their historical identity. Wordlists were taken from the two groups and only exhibited minor lexical differences. Rescue linguistics therefore remains a high priority.

### **2.4 Sur (Tapshin)**

The Sur language is spoken in Tapshin village in Bauchi State, Nigeria. Tapshin is some 25 km. north of the Pankshin-Amper road and reached by a track leading off the main road some 5 km. east of Pankshin. In the two main cartographic sources, Hansford *et al.* (1976) and Blench and Crozier (1992) it is located quite inaccurately. It appeared correctly sited in the Millennium edition of the Ethnologue (Grimes 2000). The name ‘Tapshin’ is locally considered to be Hausa, although it does not look like Hausa. At any rate, this is the name of the major settlement. The Tapshin call themselves **nSúr** plural **ànSúr** and their language **kìSúr** and the reference name adopted here is Sur. The Ngas people call the Sur ‘Dishili’. The name ‘Myet’ found in some earlier references is one version of the name Met, a settlement some distance west of Tapshin. The people of Tapshin claim that the people of Met speak ‘the same’ language as them, but this has yet to be directly confirmed.

On the face of it, Sur should be a prime candidate for language loss. All adults appear to be fluent in Ngas and Hausa and Tapshin is an enclave within the Ngas, by whom they are culturally dominated. The number of speakers cannot be more than 3-4000, depending on the status of Met. The figure of 18,000 given in CAPRO (1995) would appear to be a serious over-estimate. However, it was apparent during the interviews that even young children are learning the language and there is no evidence of a decline in competence.

Even more surprisingly, but no doubt related, the language is by no means full of Hausa and Ngas loanwords, as is sometimes the case in such situations.

The only published reference to this language is in Hansford *et al.* (1976) apparently based on some unpublished observations of Kiyoshi Shimizu, who may have claimed that Tapshin was related to Eloyi. The entry in Hansford *et al.* (1976) is repeated in Crozier and Blench (1992) for lack of fresh information. In 1976, Eloyi was considered to be a Plateau language, although Armstrong (1983) was later to point to its equal affinity with Idomoid. What basis, if any, there was for Shimizu's reported claim is unclear. The principal source for Eloyi data is Mackay (1964) which has been compared to the data presented here.

## **2.5 Alumu-Təsu (Arum-Chessu) and Toro (Turkwam)**

Turkwam is a village northeast of Wamba with perhaps 3-4000 inhabitants. The correct name of the Turkwam is Toro (plural à-Toro-mbò). The Toro identify strongly culturally with the Kantana, a neighbour speaking a Jarawan Bantu language, but this is contradicted by their language which is clearly a Plateau language. Language maintenance still appears to be good, although a considerable number of Hausa loanwords have entered the language.

Chessu (a Hausaised form of Təsu) is a single settlement divided into two villages about a kilometre apart, called Chessu Sarki and Chessu Madaki. These villages are on the Wamba Fadan Karshi road. The Arum live in several settlements, also along the same road, the chief of which is Arum Kado. The other settlements of the Alumu are as follows;

Arum-Tsabo	Arum-Sarki
Arum-Tumara	Arum-Chugbu
Arum-Kurmi(Gbira)	Arum-Chine

To judge by the size of their settlements, there must be under 2000 speakers of Təsu and perhaps 4000 speakers of Alumu. Both languages seem to be well maintained, with informants

Preliminary analysis of the lexical data suggests that the assignation of Toro and Alumu-Təsu to Tarokoid is completely erroneous. They are clearly related to one another and probably constitute another subgroup of Plateau. They will form the subject of a separate publication.

## **3. Evidence for Tarokoid**

### **3.2 Tarok, Yangkam, Sur and Pe**

Wordlists of ca. six hundred words for each language have been compared with each other and with other Plateau and East Benue-Congo languages<sup>4</sup>. These languages share quite a number of common lexical items, although most of these are not exclusive to them. However, they share more with each other than with any other Plateau languages –hence their assignment to Tarokoid. Individual languages share numerous common items with at least one other language, pointing strongly to a period when these languages were more directly in contact. These shared items are given throughout the text to exemplify the phonological reconstruction. There are no common borrowings from Chadic, although there are numerous scattered Chadic loans throughout all four languages. This again suggests that contact with Chadic was mainly after the break-up of Tarokoid.

---

<sup>4</sup> The raw data with analyses and etymological commentaries are being distributed separately.

### 3.3 Phonology

#### 3.3.1 Vowels

Tarokoid probably has six phonemic vowels;

	Front	Central	Back
<b>Close</b>	i	(ɨ)	u
<b>Close-Mid</b>	e	ə	o
<b>Open</b>		a	

The /ɨ/ of Tarok, which has three central vowels, appears to be absent in the other Tarokoid languages and probably arose subsequent to the splitting-up of the family. Evidence for the presence of these vowels in proto-Tarokoid is of variable quality, with the central vowel /ɨ/ showing the most variation between languages. The following tables show some of the most convincing stable vowels in common lexical items.

\*a

Language	sheep	to shoot	shoe
Tarok	ìtam	tat <sup>+</sup>	akwàp
Pe	ì-tamu	tat	kap
Yangkam	tam	tat	tukwa
Sur	nta	tat	taxap
Proto-Tarokoid	*ì-tamu	*tat	

\*e

Language	to awaken	Gloss to fly
Tarok	yendəl <sup>+</sup>	yel <sup>+5</sup>
Pe	yemsel	yel
Yangkam	yirak	
Sur	yem	yel
Proto-Tarokoid	*yem	*yel

\*i

Language	Gloss grass, bush
Tarok	ìpìpà
Pe	ù-pip
Yangkam	sepip
Sur	pik
Proto-Tarokoid	*i-pikpa

<sup>5</sup> 'to float'



\*ə

Language	Gloss
	to swallow
Tarok	<b>məkən<sup>+</sup></b>
Pe	
Yangkam	<b>mər</b>
Sur	<b>mərək</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	

\*o

Language	Gloss
	to dry
Tarok	<b>wóm</b>
Pe	<b>wóm</b>
Yangkam	<b>ɲwom</b>
Sur	<b>womi</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*wóm

\*u

Language	to die	navel	bone	silk-cotton tree <sup>6</sup>
Tarok	<b>kú</b>	<b>ìgum</b>	<b>akúp</b>	<b>ìkumkum</b>
Pe	<b>pu</b>	<b>ì-gum</b>	<b>ukup</b>	<b>kukum</b>
Yangkam	<b>kú</b>	<b>kum</b>	<b>kup</b>	<b>kum</b>
Sur	<b>kú</b>	<b>kumbul</b>	<b>tukubi</b>	<b>kum</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*kpú	*ì-kumbun	*-kupi	

### 3.3.2 Consonants

#### 3.3.2.1 Evidence for the proto-phonemes:

\*k

Language	navel	bone	silk-cotton tree
Tarok	<b>ìgum</b>	<b>akúp</b>	<b>ìkumkum</b>
Pe	<b>ì-gum</b>	<b>ukup</b>	<b>kukum</b>
Yangkam	<b>kum</b>	<b>kup</b>	<b>kum</b>
Sur	<b>kumbul</b>	<b>tukubi</b>	<b>kum</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*ì-kumbul	*-kupi	*ìkumkum

Many other Plateau forms show CVC in the stem, e.g. Horom **kom**. However, Mambiloid (Cambap) **kúmbūn** and PB **#kóbù** are clearly cognate with the Sur form, indicating that this must be reconstructed for proto-Tarokoid.

<sup>6</sup> (*Ceiba pentandra*)

\*g

Language	Gloss	
	be bent	wild date-palm <sup>7</sup>
Tarok	<b>gèn</b>	<b>ngàŋ</b>
Pe	<b>ngonmen</b>	<b>ngaŋ</b>
Yangkam	<b>goŋ</b>	
Sur	<b>?</b>	<b>gaŋ</b>
Proto-Tarokoid		

\*kp

Language	Gloss	
	porridge	to die
Tarok	<b>ñkpàŋ</b>	<b>kú</b>
Pe	<b>nkwa</b>	<b>pu</b>
Yangkam	<b>kpoŋ</b>	<b>kú</b>
Sur		<b>kú</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	<b>*ñkpàŋ-</b>	<b>*kpú</b>

cf. Eggon **kpù** ‘to die’.

\*t

Language	Gloss			
	sheep	go out/exit	pound (in mortar)	to shoot
Tarok	<b>ìtam</b>	<b>tur</b> <sup>+8</sup>	<b>atúm</b> <sup>9</sup>	<b>tat</b> <sup>+</sup>
Pe	<b>ì-tamu</b>		<b>tər</b>	<b>tat</b>
Yangkam	<b>tam</b>	<b>turuk</b>	<b>tur</b>	<b>tat</b>
Sur	<b>nta</b>	<b>tur</b>		<b>tat</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	<b>*ì-tamu</b>			<b>*tat</b>

\*6

Language	Gloss	
	agama lizard	plant (crop)
Tarok	<b>ìḃoli</b>	<b>ḃal</b> <sup>+10</sup>
Pe	<b>ì-ḃali</b>	<b>ḃwak</b>
Yangkam		
Sur	<b>ḃwari</b>	<b>ḃər</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	<b>*ì-ḃali</b>	

<sup>7</sup> (*Phoenix reclinata*)

<sup>8</sup> ‘to remove’

<sup>9</sup> ‘mortar’

<sup>10</sup> ‘to transplant’

\*b

Language	Gloss
	to hunt
Tarok	<b>abàr</b> <sup>11</sup>
Pe	<b>bay</b>
Yangkam	
Sur	<b>bar</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*bari

\*v

Language	Gloss
	Roast on coals
Tarok	<b>wàŋ</b>
Pe	<b>mva</b>
Yangkam	<b>vaŋ</b>
Sur	<b>vɔŋ</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	<b>vɔŋ</b>

Widespread initial v- elsewhere, e.g. Eggon **vòm**, Kohumono **vɔβ** suggests this must be reconstructed for proto-Tarokoid.

\*f

Language	Gloss
Tarok	<b>fɛŋ</b> <sup>12</sup>
Pe	
Yangkam	<b>fwɔm</b>
Sur	<b>fwɔŋ</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	

\*p

Language	Gloss			
	new	grass, bush	cut down (tree)/slaughter	Shoe
Tarok	<b>pipe</b>	<b>ìpàpà</b>	<b>pà</b>	<b>akwàp</b>
Pe	<b>mpe</b>	<b>ù-pip</b>	<b>pà</b>	<b>kap</b>
Yangkam	<b>pyaŋ</b>	<b>sepip</b>	<b>pà</b>	<b>tukwa</b>
Sur	<b>pi</b>	<b>pik</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>taxap</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*piNe	*i-pikpa	*pà	

cf. Tarok, Yangkam, Sur. Niger-Congo #pi. Also Chadic: Ngas **pwi**.

Westerman (310) cites #-**pi** as a PWS root, but his evidence is restricted to Benue-Congo and Kwa languages.

<sup>11</sup> 'hunting expedition'

<sup>12</sup> pl. of 'climb down'

\*s

Language	Gloss
	dig
Tarok	
Pe	<b>sum</b>
Yangkam	<b>suŋ</b>
Sur	<b>ʃiŋ</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*suŋ

Tarok distinguishes /s/ and /ʃ/ as separate phonemes, as the example shows;

<b>sak<sup>+</sup></b>	to comfort
<b>shàk</b>	to sieve

This is probably the case for the other Tarokoid languages, but no comparative evidence makes it certain these were distinguished in proto-Tarokoid.

\*y

Language	Gloss	to awaken	to fly
	tear		
Tarok	<b>yíŋ</b>	<b>yendəl<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>yel<sup>+13</sup></b>
Pe	<b>anyul</b>	<b>yemsel</b>	<b>yel</b>
Yangkam	<b>yilə<sup>(k)</sup></b>	<b>yirak</b>	
Sur	<b>iyil</b>	<b>yem</b>	<b>yel</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	ì-yil	*yem	*yel

\*w

Language	Gloss	to dry	to drink	kill
	grave			
Tarok	<b>awap<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>wóm</b>	<b>wá</b>	
Pe	<b>ti-wap</b>	<b>wóm</b>	<b>wu</b>	<b>wel</b>
Yangkam	<b>woop</b>	<b>ŋwom</b>	<b>wá</b>	<b>wyu</b>
Sur	—	<b>womi</b>	<b>wá</b>	<b>wəl</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*-wop-	*wóm	*wá	*wyul

‘Kill’ is an extremely widespread with initial w-. cf. Fyem, Horom **wol**, Kwanka **won**, Olulomo **wùlɔ**, and widespread **#wu** in Niger-Congo.

\*l

Language	Gloss	sesame	to fly
	sun		
Tarok	<b>alum<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>ilámpyar</b>	<b>yel<sup>+</sup></b>
Pe	<b>u-lom</b>	<b>ilumsa</b>	<b>yel</b>
Yangkam	<b>lom</b>		
Sur	<b>lem</b>	<b>ləm</b>	<b>yel</b>
Proto-Tarokoid	*-lom		*yel

<sup>13</sup> ‘to float’

\*r

Language	Gloss		
	farm	remember	rope
Tarok	ìràm	rɪŋ <sup>+</sup>	arɪk
Pe	ì-ràm	leŋkat	ìrik
Yangkam	ram	ryan	rook
Sur	ram	lyeŋ	
Proto-Tarokoid	*ì-ràm	*ryan	

\*n

Language	Gloss			
	mother	mouth	scorpion	cow
Tarok	ù-nàna	anùŋ	ìnyìnyàŋ	ì-nà
Pe	ù-na	unuŋ	ì-nàŋ	ì-nàk
Yangkam	nan	noŋ	naŋ	nak
Sur	naa	kunu	naŋ	nak
Proto-Tarokoid	*ù-nana	*-nuŋu	*ì-nyàŋ	*ì-nàk

\*ŋ

Language	Gloss			
	peelings	scorpion	remember	wild date-palm <sup>14</sup>
Tarok	akwàŋkwaŋ	ìnyìnyàŋ	rɪŋ <sup>+</sup>	ngàŋ
Pe	u-konkoŋ	ì-nàŋ	leŋkat	ngaŋ
Yangkam	gwaŋ	naŋ	ryan	
Sur	gwaŋmi	naŋ	lyeŋ	gaŋ
Proto-Tarokoid		*ì-nyàŋ	*ryan	

\*m

Language	Gloss			
	Build (house)	to swallow	to twist (rope etc.)	millet
Tarok	me <sup>+</sup>	məkən <sup>+</sup>	myar <sup>+</sup>	ìmàr
Pe	me <sup>+</sup>		mande	ime
Yangkam		mər	myar <sup>+</sup>	marak
Sur	mi	mərək	myerkat	mər
Proto-Tarokoid				*ì-marak

### 3.3.2.2 Sound correspondences

Evidence for regular sound-correspondences between the four Tarokoid languages is weak. Those given below are best described as fragments.

Pe /k/ → Sur /g/

Examples:

<sup>14</sup> (*Phoenix reclinata*)

Pe Word	Gloss	Sur Word	Gloss
<b>ukali</b>	medicine	<b>gal</b>	medicine
<b>ikom</b>	war	<b>gwom</b>	war

Pe /ts/ → Tarok /tʃ/

Pe Word	Gloss	Tarok Word	Gloss
<b>ì-tsip</b>	vein	<b>ìcìp</b>	vein
<b>ntsii</b>	blood	<b>ñcìr</b>	blood
<b>u-tse</b>	wife	<b>ùcár</b>	woman

#### 4. Noun morphology

As with tones and vowels, Tarok has a more elaborate system of nominal prefixes than the other members of the Tarokoid group. Sur appears to have lost its system altogether, and Yangkam retains only a few scattered morphological plurals. Pe has been highly simplified, while Tarok retains a medium level of complexity, simpler than elaborated systems like Ce or Eggon. An aspect of noun plurals in Tarok is that the tone of the plural cannot always be predicted from the singular, which reflects the reduction of a more complex system. This suggests that Tarok retains a system quite close to proto-Tarokoid. Nominal prefix systems (actual and reconstructed) are given for each language;

##### 4.1 Tarok

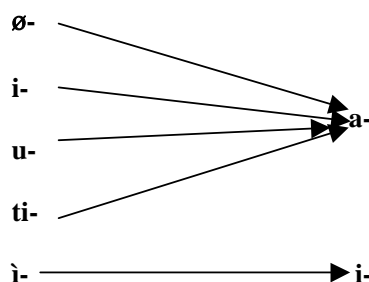
Tarok noun-class pairings are as follows;

1. m̀/n̄- → m/n-
2. a- → agá -
3. i- → igá -
4. m/n- → m/ngá -
5. ì- → i-
6. ù- → o-

Classes 1,5 and 6 show a simple tone-raising rule, while class pairs 2-4 are allomorphs of one another, nearly reflecting the V/N prefixes.

##### 4.2 Pe

Pe noun-class pairings are as follows;



### 4.3 Yangkam

A few Yangkam nouns were recorded with functioning plurals, which were some form of reduplication. Generally speaking, Yangkam has deleted the vowel-prefixes found elsewhere in Tarokoid.

**Table 1. Examples where Yangkam deletes Tarokoid V- prefixes**

Child	<b>vun</b>	cf. Tarok <b>ován</b> ‘children’
Mother	<b>nan</b>	cf. Tarok <b>ùnña</b> , Pe <b>u-na</b> , Sur <b>naa</b> .
Hunger	<b>mwər</b>	cf. Pe <b>i-mwat</b> ,
War	<b>gum</b>	cf. Tarok <b>ikùm</b> , Sur <b>gwəm</b> , Pe <b>ikom</b> . A weakening of the common Niger-Congo root <b>#-kwan</b> (see BCCW, 99).
Ear	<b>toŋ</b>	cf. Tarok <b>acwáŋ</b> , Pe <b>u-toŋ</b> , Sur <b>koto</b> . Common Niger-Congo root <b>#-tu</b>
Mouth	<b>noŋ</b>	cf. Tarok <b>anùŋ</b> , Sur <b>kunu</b> , Yangkam <b>noŋ</b> .

In a few cases, Yangkam retains the a-, i- and n- prefixes;

Snake	<b>awak</b>	cf. Tarok <b>awù</b> , but <b>#wa-</b> is a Niger-Congo root
Sorghum-beer	<b>iyam</b>	cf. Sur <b>yya</b> ,
River crab	<b>ngala</b>	cf. Tarok <b>ñkàm'gwàlì</b> , Pe <b>ì-gwal</b> , Sur <b>tikaŋkalaŋ</b> . Niger-Congo <b>#kala</b>

In the following cases, Yangkam has retained a t- prefix, found in residual form throughout Tarokoid, although not necessarily on these examples;

Rag	<b>tərak</b>	cf. Tarok <b>aryákryák</b>
Shoe	<b>taxap</b>	? < H. but see Tarok <b>akwàp</b> , Sur <b>tukwa</b> , Pe <b>kap</b>

### 4.4 Sur

Sur has completely lost any functioning affix system, perhaps under the influence of Ngas. Sur nouns simply add the prefix **à-** to mark pluralisation. No exceptions to this were recorded, even for persons. It does, however, retain clear traces of the former prefix system, as well as some suffixes which could possibly indicate a period of interaction with Adamawa languages.

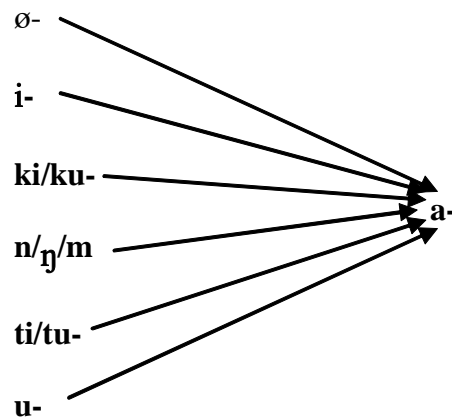
Table 2 shows the principal non-productive morphemes in Sur;

**Table 2. Possible fossil noun prefixes in Sur**

bi-	<b>bifi</b> ‘fire’
i-	<b>iyo</b> ‘flying ant’, <b>ifum</b> ‘termite’,
ki-	<b>kifi</b> ‘head’, <b>kilerem</b> ‘tongue’, <b>kəlayan</b> ‘blacksmith’, <b>kijiri</b> tree-trunk, <b>kita</b> ‘bow’, <b>kiler</b> ‘bed’
mu-	<b>mutuŋ</b> ‘hyæna’,
n-	<b>ntap</b> ‘duiker’, <b>ngafaŋ</b> ‘frog’, <b>nsyok</b> ‘guinea-fowl’, <b>ñkwán</b> ‘ladder’, <b>nfwak</b> ‘salt’
ti-	<b>tifi</b> ‘fonio’, <b>tisuk</b> ‘house-bat’, <b>tikaŋkalaŋ</b> ‘crab’, <b>tikat</b> ‘head-pad’, <b>tikan</b> ‘stone’
tu-	<b>tukwaki</b> ‘leg’, <b>tukurum</b> ‘knee’, <b>tukubi</b> ‘bone’, <b>tukum</b> ‘corpse’, <b>tukwalaŋ</b> ‘mushroom’,
u-	<b>urom</b> ‘husband’, <b>yyaŋ</b> ‘leaf’, <b>wwa</b> ‘dog’, <b>wwol</b> ‘goat’, <b>yyoŋ</b> ‘hunger’,

Some of these can be clearly seen to be affixes by comparison with their external cognates. The single example and lack of parallels in other languages suggest that **bi-** and **mu-** were incorporated in the stem in pre-Tarokoid times. All of them occur in some form in neighbouring Plateau languages. Others may be disguised compounds. A widespread **ku-** prefix seems to occur principally with back vowels and is probably an allomorph of the **ki-** prefix given above.

The ‘Pre-Sur’ noun-class system may have been a simple one a variety of prefixes all linked to a single plural prefix.



#### 4.5 Proto-Tarokoid

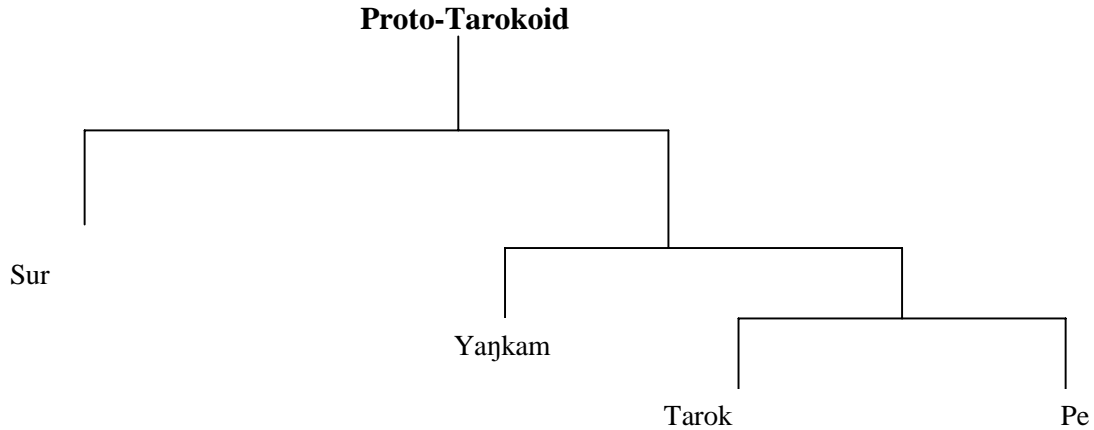
Reconstruction has probably not gone far enough to do more than speculate about the nominal prefix system of proto-Tarokoid, but synthesising the elements in place to date gives the following;

1. à- → a-
2. ì- → i-
3. m/ṽ- → m/n-
4. ù- → u-
5. ki/ku- → ?-
6. ti/tu- → ?-



The key assumptions here are that the tone-raising rule in Tarok was more common and regular, and that the –ga elements in Tarok are recent intrusions. The plurals of ki- and ti- are not easy to surmise, except that it the process that allowed the simplification of all plurals to a- was already underway then it may have been a- even at that stage.

Figure 3. Internal structure of Tarokoid



## 5. Verbal extensions

### 5.1 Tarok

Tarok verbs have a number of elements that appear to be verbal extensions. The most important of these are **-ci**, **-dar** and **-ri**.

#### **-ci**

The most common extension is **-ci**, always occurring in verbs of CV(C)CV shape. The tone on the **-ci** is highly variable. In some cases a corresponding simple CVC verb without **-ci** exists although the semantic link is often less than transparent.

#### **-dar**

The case for a **-dar** extension in Tarok is less clear-cut as its forms are more variable. However, the formula dental + central vowel + lateral links **-dar**, **-ḍar**, **-ḍər**, **-tar**, **-ṭar**, **-ṭər** and corresponding forms with final -l.

#### **-ri**

There are also seven verbs with a **-ri/-li** extension, which is attested widely in Plateau languages.

### 5.2 Pe

#### **-di/-ti**

The fossil extension **-di/-ti** has two allomorphs realised as [d] after nasals and [t] after stops.

**The Tarokoid languages of E.C. Nigeria. R.M. Blench. Circulation draft.**

<b>cendi</b>	cut down (tree)	
<b>kumdi</b>	count	cf. Tarok <b>kúŋ</b> , Sur <b>kəŋəŋ</b> , Kwanka <b>kori</b> , Abuan <b>-kəəl</b> and Rindre <b>-kla</b> . All these are versions of a more ancient root <b>#-kaLa</b> widespread in Niger-Congo. Also Chadic: Kofyar <b>kwan</b> , Zaar <b>kunaan</b> ,
<b>ron̄di</b>	bite	cf. Tarok <b>rəm̄</b> ,
<b>tan̄di</b>	chew	cf. Sur <b>tayal</b> but the <b>ta-</b> element is a Niger-Congo root
<b>zhumdi</b>	answer (question)	

<b>ɓwakti</b>	snap in two	cf. Tarok <b>ɓikci</b> ,
<b>dapti</b>	drag, pull	see also 'pull' Tarok <b>dəpci</b> , Sur <b>nəp</b>
<b>kapti</b>	tear (cloth etc.)	cf. Tarok <b>kākci</b> ,
<b>kapti</b>	weep	

-li

Probably cognate with the **-ri** found in many Plateau languages and notably in Sur.

<b>kuli</b>	open	cf. Sur <b>gwəri</b> ,
<b>nyali</b>	wash	cf. Tarok <b>nəl</b> , Sur <b>ŋgal</b> , Yangkam <b>nwi</b> ,

-si

Probably cognate with the **-fi** in Sur.

<b>bisi</b>	call (to someone)	cf. Sur <b>bifi</b> , Fyem <b>ɓisá</b>
<b>kpees</b>	cough	cf. Tarok <b>pír</b> , Yangkam <b>kpar</b> ,
<b>mi</b>	laugh	cf. Horom <b>mis</b> , Nupe <b>mátsa</b> . Also in Chadic: Diri <b>méd</b> , Tera <b>mósó</b>

### 5.3 Yangkam

In contrast to the other Tarokoid languages, no apparent traces of a verbal extension system were detected in Yangkam.

### 5.4 Sur

-k(y)i

The following verbs suggest a verbal extension **k(y)i-**

<b>byiki</b>	break (stick)	cf. Tarok <b>ɓikci</b>
<b>garki</b>	grow (v.i.)	
<b>kakyi</b>	catch	cf. Tarok <b>kpan</b> , Yangkam <b>kən</b> , Pe <b>kom</b>
<b>kərakyi</b>	dream	
<b>kyirki</b>	play (games)	
<b>nyinki</b>	bite	cf. Tarok <b>nyim</b> , the first element is the word for 'tooth'
<b>reki</b>	fold (e.g. cloth)	

-ri

<b>deri</b>	stay / remain	cf. Ngas <b>dar</b>
<b>gori</b>	uncover (pot)	
<b>gwor</b>	open (door)	cf. Pe <b>kuli</b>
<b>kwari</b>	hoe (cultivate)	cf. Hasha <b>kwār</b> , Berom <b>kara</b> (ex BCCW). A widespread East Benue-Congo <b>#ka-</b> root
<b>kyari</b>	cut (rope)	
<b>kyari</b>	divide (share out)	a widespread <b>#ka-</b> root found throughout Benue-Congo
<b>mari</b>	lose (s.t.)	
<b>puri</b>	boil	cf. Tarok <b>fɪl</b> ,
<b>riri</b>	be sharp	cf. Tarok <b>-riri</b> . This may be a reduplication and not an extension
<b>turyi</b>	resemble	
<b>wuri</b>	blow ( mouth)	cf. Yangkam <b>wurok</b> , Horom <b>wil</b> , Berom <b>wōlōm</b>
<b>wuri</b>	enter	
<b>yari</b>	be straight	

-fi

The following verbs appear to have the verbal extension **-fi**. **bifi** ‘call’ is the only one to have a clear cognate in another Tarokoid language. **lamfi** ‘lick’ is interesting because the cLela (Kainji) cognate suggest this extension can be reconstructed to a considerable historical depth.

<b>bifi</b>	call (summon)	cf. Pe <b>bisi</b> , Fyem <b>ḡísá</b>
<b>bwafi</b>	be rotten	
<b>lamfi</b>	lick	cf. Buji <b>lama</b> , Kwanka <b>lyam</b> , cLela <b>lèmsé</b> , Lamnso <b>la</b> . Forms with initial l- are very widespread and there may be an ideophonic element.
<b>lɔkfi</b>	pour	=spit, eject
<b>lɔkfi</b>	spit	
<b>nunfi</b>	smell	cf. Tarok <b>nɪŋ<sup>+</sup></b> , Yangkam <b>nun</b> , CB <b>#-nùŋk</b> (C.S. 1386) reconstructing back at least to Proto-Benue-Congo
<b>rɔkfi</b>	drop	
<b>fi</b>	fear	This may be a reduplication and not an extension
<b>wafi</b>	pluck (fruit)	
<b>zɔkfi</b>	shake	

## 5.5 Proto-Tarokoid

The inventory of possibly verbal extensions in Proto-Tarokoid is potentially quite large;

-ci

**-dar** (**-dər**, **-dɛr**, **-tar**, **-tɛr**, **-tər**)

**-di/-ti**

**-k(y)i**

**-ri/-li**

**-si/-fi**

No sufficiently large set of correspondences between these extensions has been found to reconstruct either their meanings or indeed their equivalences.

## 6. External relations and further work

Membership of Tarokoid should be restricted to Tarok, Pe, Sur and Yangkam. Of the languages investigated, only Tarok is beginning to have an acceptable level of documentation. Yangkam is severely threatened and should be subject to an intensive investigation while speakers are still fluent. If a small sum of money could be found for transport and subsistence further work could probably be put under way. The other languages are clearly also in need of documentation and further research on their exact status.

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