THE BANTOID LANGUAGES

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DRAFT ONLY

NOT TO BE QUOTED WITHOUT PERMISSION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

PHOTOS

> Among the prodigious mass of narratives, from which has been formed the general history of *Voyages and Travels*, and an infinity of others published every day, no mention is made of the languages which are spoken in the different countries, the manners and usages of which are described to us; and if the authors did not from time to time put into the mouths of the inhabitants of those distant regions, some words of which they know the meaning, we should be tempted to believe that only dumb people had travelled among those nations. All will agree at least that whatever relates to the language, its genius, its relation to other known languages, even its mechanism and flow, are not traits which would look misplaced in the historical picture of a nation.
>
> L'Abbé Proyart
> *History of Loango*.. (1776)

Preface

In recent times a curious gap has opened up between academic linguists concerned with Africa and those in the field. Conferences on African languages are largely attended by university academics, whose long-term contact with African languages is often quite slight and filtered through a single, often out-of-context informant. Papers for journal submission are approved on the basis of the extent to which they contribute to theoretical concerns rather than to the description and understanding of the language purpoertedly featured. The aspirations of the populations speaking those langages are virtually never a concern. Because publishing in refereed journals is an element in a preferred career path, the bar is set ever higher, and the complexities of attaining publication have become an increasing deterrent. Field linguists who do have a long-term acquaintance with an individual language are increasingly rare, and tend to be either African academics, enthusiasts or linguistically oriented missionaries. Missionaries in particular are increasingly having to meet non-linguistic goals in order to attract funding. Since their careers are hardly dependent on journal publication at all, less and less of this material is reaching international circulation. As a consequence, there is almost an inverse relationship between the depth of knowledge represented in publications about African languages and the visibility of publication. This is not to claim that all such local information is high quality; like all else it is highly variable. But it is certainly being ignored and bypassed in the scramble up the academic ladder, and thus not being incorporated into evolving models of the relationships between languages in Africa. A depressing consequence is that what is published tends to repeat the same ideas and models, which thereby gain a certain lustre by being incorporated into the prefaces of articles authored by senior figures. Unfortunately this is no guarantee that they correspond to even an approximation of the truth, nor that they reflect the informal understanding of those in the field.

Nowhere in the field of African languages is this more true than for the Bantoid languages, caught between Bantu proper, the focus of numerous monographs and essays in speculation masquerading as serious scholarship, and the wider field of Niger-Congo. There are perhaps a hundred and fifty Bantoid languages, incorporating some with the most challenging phonologies in Niger-Congo. Not one substantial dictionary or reference grammar of any Bantoid language has been published, despite a wide body of manuscript materials. Not one monograph on historical linguistics has even demonstrated the unity of any of its proposed branches.

Surprisingly, however, there is a great deal of unpublished material. The Bantoid languages are divided between Nigeria and Cameroun, and while contributions from the Nigerian side can tactfully be described as exiguous, Cameroun, which encompasses the great majority of Bantoid languages, has extensive lexical databases associated with literacy and Bible translation projects, dictionaries published by individuals and local cultural associations as well as theses, especially from the University of Yaoundé, which could provide the basis for fresh thinking. It would be presumptuous to suppose that the current monograph can immediately fill such an extensive gap, but it can improve access to otherwise little-known studies and make this knowledge available in a consolidated form.

I must confess, however, another motive for this publication. I have never been much involved in Bantuist scholarship and when seen from the outside, the Bantu establishment appears to have some curious limitations. Despite much critical comment, the influence of Malcolm Guthrie on the definition of Bantu and its classification remains pervasive, and his 'Common Bantu' forms highly influential regularly quoted. Recent research has called into question many of his assumptions about the phonology of proto-Bantu but these have yet to affect the 'Bantu lexical reconstructions' widely available, or the proposals in overviews such as the Nurse & Philippson volume of 2003. I have reached a point where I find much of this literally incredible, for reasons to be discussed in the text. So this book might also shake up the Bantu establishment, although I entertain no great hopes for its success in that area.

Like so much, this is work in progress.

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1. Introduction

The Bantoid languages are a body of some 150 languages positioned geographically between Nigeria and Cameroun and between Benue-Congo and Bantu in terms of their position within Niger-Congo. Often referred to as Bantu, for example in the term 'Ekoid Bantu', their classificatory position remains uncertain. Certainly, their noun morphology is not that of classic Bantu, although their prefixes are often ascribed its class numbers in a way that makes somewhat spurious claims. The term Bantoid was first introduced by Guthrie (1948) to describe these transitional languages, replacing the rather more vague term 'Semi-Bantu' which we owe to Johnston (1919-1922). who applied it in a scattershot style to any language outside the Bantu area with traces of nominal classification.

Although the Grassfields languages, situated around the Ring Road, have had a far amount of attention, especially during the 1960s when the Grassfields Working Group was constituted, many of the other branches have remained virtually undescribed. In part this has been due to problems of inaccessibility. The parts of Nigeria where these languages are spoken were barely reachable without four-wheel drives and many parts of Cameroun, helicopter of several days' trek remains the only option. However, gradually it has become more practical to reach these areas and as students have become more educated and are reaching university level they have begun to be interested in the promotion of their languages.

The function of this monograph is thus simply to describe the history, geography and classification of the Bantoid languages, and to make some proposals as to their relationship to Bantu and to Benue-Congo[1]. Some hypotheses about their phonology and morphology can be set out, but these must remain tentative, as the type of lower-level reconstruction necessary to build more solid constructs remains to be undertaken. As for the higher levels of linguistic decription, little can yet be said, as the grammars on which this could be based have yet to be written.

2. Theories and methods

2.1 Lexicostatistics and other mathematical methods

Lexicostatistics, the counting of cognate words in a standardised list and the assignation of a numerical value to their relationship, seems to have been first used in the early nineteenth century. Dumont d'Urville (1834) compared a number of Oceanic languages (which would today be called Austronesian) and proposed a method for calculating a coefficient of relationship. There were other tentative experiments in the nineteenth century, but until Swadesh (1952) these made a very limited impact. Lexicostatistics initially proved very attractive to Africanist researchers as a way of ordering a large mass of languages of uncertain relationship and Swadesh himself collaborated in an attempt to classify the Gur languages using this method (Swadesh *et al.* 1966). Prior to computers, counting a large number of languages against one another was a major undertaking, but lexicostatistic exercises were undertaken for Kwa (Armstrong 1964, 1981), Atlantic (Sapir 1971), Kwa (Bole-Richard & Lafage 1983) and for Mande (Dwyer 1989). However, it is for Bantu that lexicostatistics seems to have been most alluring. The first count I can trace is Evrard (1966), but this seems to have inspired the compilers of the comparative Bantu lexicon at the *Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale* at Tervuren which has been responsible for a series of counts and revised counts ever since (e.g. Henrici 1973, Bastin & Piron 1999; Bastin, Coupez & Mann 1999). A fifth columnist that very often accompanies

[1] I am not part of any institution although the Kay Williamson Educational Foundation has generously funded part of my more recent fieldwork in Nigeria and Cameroun. My thanks are thus to individuals who have worked with me, read my papers, given me access to unpublished data and generally provided encouragement. These are; Stephen Anderson, Virginia Bradley, Bruce Connell, Tom Cook (†), David Crozier, Dan Duke, Dan Friesen, Cameron Hamm, Robert Hedinger, Jean-Marie Hombert, Larry Hyman, Baudouin Janssens, Roland Kießling, Rob Koops, Cindy and David Lux, Marieke Martin, Emmanuel Njok, Derek Nurse, Laura Robson, Scott Satre, Anne Storch, Kay Williamson (†) and David Zeitlyn. My greatest debt, however, is to the many people in Nigeria and Cameroun who have patiently answered my questions and taken part in survey work.

lexicostatistics is glottochronology, the notion that languages change at a standard rate, so regular that by applying a formula to lexicostatistical results, the approximate ages of language families can be estimated. Robert Latham (1850) was probably the first author to sketch the possibility of assigning a precise date to the split of two languages through applying a mathematical algorithm. Armstrong's (1964) proposal to use glottochronological methods for the Kwa languages of Southern Nigeria, was an early use of this technique for African languages.

Lexicostatistics and glottochronology have the attractive aspect of quantification; they seem to represent a scientific approach to the dating and genetic classification of languages. However, few historical linguists now accept the premises of such approaches, some because the mathematics underlying these methods has been heavily criticised (see discussions in Hymes 1983:75; Embleton 2000). More important, however, has been the realisation that languages undergo a variety of changes in interacting with one another. Glottochronology assumes languages change at a regular rate, especially in their core vocabulary and that the basic lexicon is resistant to borrowing. There are many problems with this approach, the most important being that the calibration of such dates must derive from written culture and it is far from proven that similar rates of change are true for oral cultures. More importantly, borrowing of basic vocabulary between related languages will vitiate the results, a situation which casts doubt on the value of conclusions derived from lexicostatistics. Although this is recognised by some practitioners, it seems to be an almost insuperable objection because of the difficulties of detecting the degree and direction of borrowing even where a great deal of information is available. Despite this, many linguists are still attached to the idea that lexicostatistics and glottochronology can be 'fixed', that if only we can get the technical aspects right, the results will be of value. Greenberg (1987b) devoted part of his studies of Amerind to displaying new formulae while the contributors to Lamb & Mitchell (1991) propose various strategies for improving the algorithms for the calculations. This is not to say that lexicostatistics has no value at all; for a first impression of the broad relationships of a large group it can sometimes be useful. But it should not be the axis of fine discriminations; the single percentage points on which nodes in the structure of Bantu are sometimes determined can surely have no meaning in understanding realworld events (e.g. Bastin *et al.* 1999).

2.2 Shared innovations

When any new speech-form develops, this is marked by innovation. Changes occur in the speech of individuals and may spread to the whole community over time. These changes can be extended by analogy to other sounds, lexemes or clauses, according to rules internal to the language. Analogy often applies to morphology; e.g. the past tense of *weave* is irregular *wove*, but *weaved* is common in many contexts today, by analogy with pairs such as *believe: believed*. Once *weaved* takes over in spoken English, the irregular past of *weave* will only be known from written sources. When enough comparable changes occur, the resultant speech-form is recognised first as a dialect and then, as the changes accumulate, it will be considered a 'different' language.

Innovations can be divided into four categories, and confusions between these categories have often led to disagreements over classification. The categories are shown in Table 1;

Table 1. Categories of innovation in historical linguistics

Category	Definition
Shared innovations	Two or more languages share an innovation that is the consequence of genetic affiliation
Parallel innovations	Two or more languages share an innovation that is the consequence of parallel developments but does not reflect genetic affiliation
Common retentions	Two or more languages share a feature because both have inherited it from a common proto-language
Diffused features	Two or more languages share a feature as a result of borrowing

Source: adapted from Herbert & Huffman (1993:63)

Innovations can be of multiple types, lexical, morphological, phonological, semantic and syntactic. These all have their own interest and analytic problems in determining their status, but the establishment of shared innovations is essential to determining genetic affiliation, and they can only be identified against a background of detailed knowledge of neighbouring languages as well as the other languages in the phylum. Shared innovations are a set or bundle of changes that have occurred at the level of a proto-language, are reflected in the daughter languages and which allow linguists to assign a particular language to a genetic grouping. In the earlier phases of African language classification, proposed shared innovations were nearly all lexical, because of the weakness of morphological and syntactic data. As more reconstructions become available, it is possible to widen the spectrum of shared innovations.

2.3 Historical reconstruction

An underlying theme of this book is the identification of reconstructible lexical items of significance for the prehistory of linguistic groups that can potentially be linked to archaeology. The methodology of reconstruction is usually known as the comparative method, and has a venerable, if often controversial, history (Durie & Ross 1996). Its origins lie in the mid-nineteenth century when scholars began to detect regularities in correspondences between words and to explore the idea that there might be sound-laws that expressed these regularities. The foundation of the comparative method is sound correspondences. In other words, if a segment in language A corresponds to another segment in language B, the correspondence should always be the same under identical conditions. There are two possibilities here. In some language groupings, relations are usually of identity; i.e. the segments are the same across very different languages.

3. Historical overview

According to Mohlig (1983), Krause introduced the term 'Bantoid' in 1895, but it seems to have been forgotten, since it does not appear again until Assirelli (1950) uses it to refer to the *Togorestsprachen*. The modern sense of the term may first appear in Richardson (1957) which includes summary sketches of Nyang, Ekoid, Tikar and Grassfields languages although the whole volume incorporates material on Bantu and a variety of Adamawa and Ubangian languages. However, Richardson has nothing to say about the origin or classification of Bantoid, other than defining it by a lack of regular relationship to the noun-classes of Bantu proper and a vocabulary 'at times reminiscent of Bantu'. The classification of the large and complex set of languages generally known under the name 'Bantoid' has generally been given substantially less attention than Narrow Bantu. There are two main reasons for this; a lack of descriptive material on many of these languages and their extreme phonological and morphological diversity. As knowledge of West African languages developed, it became clear that some of them had concord and alternating affix systems similar to Bantu; this created analytic problems for a long time. Johnston pointed out as early as 1886 that a wide range of West African languages exhibited structural features analogous to those classified as 'Bantu' and in Johnston (1919/1922) he gave them the unfortunate name 'semi-Bantu'. Johnston remained unclear as to whether this was genetic, coincidence or somehow 'influence' from Bantu proper. In his earlier work, Westermann (1927) mentioned but did not explore the links between 'Western Sudanic' [Niger-Congo] and Bantu but later (Westermann 1951?) accepted the relationship. A related problem was that some Bantu languages appeared to have eroded longer roots and reduced their noun-class affix system. Doke (1945:5), puzzling over this issue, considered that northwestern languages such as Basaa and Akɔɔse must have come under 'Sudanic' influence. This issue puzzled linguists for a long time until it was gradually realised that the types of affix system so prominent in Bantu were in fact found all over Niger-Congo, but often in residual or reduced forms. Bantu had simply preserved and then elaborated an older system.

Guthrie (1971,2:107-111) considered the problem briefly in his excursus 'Bantuisms in non-Bantu languages'. In typically convoluted form, he acknowledges the striking morphological parallels even with geographically remote languages such as Temne, but considers that the reduced numbers of cognates with Bantu exclude them from consideration. With Efik (i.e. Lower Cross) and Nkonya (Guan) he says 'the Bantu material in the lexicons looks as though it may have to be correlated with 'Proto-Bantu' (Guthrie 1971,2:111). However, if there are links with Proto-Bantu, 'it would be necessary to postulate some means by which speakers of the proto-dialect could have travelled from where it was spoken in the direction of West Africa'. In other words Guthrie appeared to think that if these languages were related to Bantu it was because the speakers migrated from the Bantu area. Guthrie's listing of Bantu languages has a group Z, out

of geographical sequence, with Z.1 being Tiv and Z.3 being Ekoid, but these languages are excluded from mapping exercises.

Many texts refer to Bantu as if it were unproblematic, as if the boundaries of Bantu were well-known and the internal relationships of Bantu languages agreed. Discarding the suggesting that 'Bantu' is etymologically the Egyptian name for sub-Saharan Africa, *Punt* (Doke 1938), the earliest analytical publication on a Bantu language is Brusciotto (1659) whose grammar of a Kikongo dialect recognised the concord system verbal extensions and other features for the first time. Exactly when the similarities between dispersed Bantu languages was first noted is unclear, but Proyart (1776) observed of the languages of Angola and the Congo 'Several similar articles and a great number of common roots seem, however, to indicate that these languages had a common origin' which is chronologically prior to Sir William Jones' purported discovery of Indo-European commonalties. The conclusion that the Bantu languages of Western and Southern Africa were all closely inter-related may well be due to William Marsden (1754-1836) whose conclusions were published in an appendix to Tuckey (1818).

The concept of Bantu as a genetic category originated with Wilhelm Bleek who first introduced the term *Bâ-ntu* in 1858 (Silverstein 1993). Bleek's (1862, 1869) *Comparative Grammar* established the canonical boundaries of Bantu that are still largely adhered to today. The idea of 'Bantu' was consolidated in a variety of sources, most importantly the work of the linguists Meinhof (1910), Werner (1915), Johnson (1919/1922), Doke (1945) and Guthrie (1948, 1967-71). An important early studied omitted from most conventional accounts is Dias de Carvalho (1890) whose study *Dialectos Tus ou Antus* relates the languages of Angola to those of a wide set ranging from Duala to Swahili and Sesotho. Most references to Bantu use Guthrie's classification, which included most of the languages of Southern Cameroun and all languages south and east of there (Maho 2003). Guthrie established an alphanumeric zoning of Bantu languages still widely used even by those who dissent strongly from his methods and conclusions. His logic is relatively clear; he named the northwesternmost language in his sample, Lundu, in south-western Cameroun, as A10 and continued towards eastern and southern Africa. Even though Guthrie asserted that this classification was referential, it is often treated as genetic.

Sigismund Koelle (1823-1902) was the first to present a major comparative vocabulary of the languages of West-Central Africa, based on the language spoken by freed slaves in Sierra Leone. Koelle (1854) clearly recognised the unity of Bantu and the vocabularies he collected are grouped together. He also collected a significant number of Bantoid languages, for which this is the first record in many cases. The Bantoid languages are split between the Mókō languages (IX) and Unclassified South African (XII.E). In the case of the Mókō group all the Grassfields languages, except, surprisingly, Nsɔ are grouped together with Bantu A group languages such as Duala. In the case of 'Unclassified South African' (scattered individual vocabularies from different Bantoid subgroups) the listing includes what would now be called East Benue-Congo languages. Dalby (1964) provisionally identified some the languages recorded in Koelle but left question marks in respect of others. Some names appear as alternates in the Ethnologue, but are again clearly not always the language listed by Koelle. Table 2 lists Koelle's original classification and name, Dalby's identification, my identification or else the current name where Dalby is correct and the Bantoid subgroup of the language in question;

Table 2. Bantoid languages in Koelle (1854)

Group	Koelle's name	Dalby	Current	Bantoid subgroup
Mókō	Ba:yoŋ[2]	Bate?	? Limbum, Kwaja, Mbə	Nkambe, Grassfields
	Ba:yoŋ of Pa:ti	Bate?	? Limbum, Kwaja, Mbə	Nkambe, Grassfields
	Kum/Bakum[3]	?	? Kako A. 90	Bantu
	Ba:gba	?	Bati ?	Nun, Grassfields
	Ba:lu	Bali/Ngaaka[4]	Baba'	Nun, Grassfields
	Bamom/Mom	Bamum	Shu Paməm	Nun, Grassfields
	Ŋgoa:la	Bangongola	Bangolan[5]	Nun, Grassfields
	Mo:menya/Ba:menya	?	Bamenyam	Nun, Grassfields
	Pa:pi:ax/Moba	Baba	Baba	Nun, Grassfields
	Pa:gham	Bagam	Məngaka	Bamileke, Grassfields
Unclassified South African	Dja:rawa/ Nyamnyam	Jarawa	Jar	Jarawan
	Ŋki:	Bokyi	Bokyi	Bendi
	Alɛge	Alege	Alege	Bendi
	Bute	Vute	Vute	Mambiloid
	Ndɔb/Burukɛ:m	Tikar	Ndop	Tikar
	Tumu	Tikar	Twumwu	Tikar
	Koŋgu:aŋ/ɔku:I	Banyangi	Kenyang	Nyang
	Tiwi/Mi:dji/ Mbi:dji/Difũ	Tiv	Tiv	Tivoid
	Nshɔ	Nsaw	Nsɔ	Ring

The main source for identifying Grassfields is the comparative database prepared by Cameron Hamm. The fit is not perfect; the Nun languages are very close to one another and the modern data is often rather variably transcribed.

Nurse (1996) reviews all major modern attempts to classify Narrow Bantu. The most widespread agreement is that there is a Northwest Bantu; these languages are both more distinct from the rest and from one another. Beyond this there is little agreement; an East and a West Bantu have been proposed but clear evidence for these groupings is lacking. Since Johnston (1919-1922) there have been very few attempts to justify Bantu subgrouping apart from Ehret (1999); more typically, authors complain about Guthrie's alphanumeric coding but use it anyway. Tervuren Museum has published or circulated a series of lexicostatistical analyses, most recently Bastin *et al.* (1999). All the proposals for Bantu reconstructions are combined in an internet database, Bantu Lexical Reconstructions III[6], which puts forward roots and notes their distribution according to Guthrie's alphanumeric system (Schadeberg 2002).

[2] Koelle (1854) has two wordlists of a language he calls Bắyon· and this is listed as an alternative name for Ndemli in the Ethnologue. However, Koelle's list is clearly not Ndemli, although it is a Grassfields language.

[3] An obvious identification would be the Grassfields language Kom, but Koelle's data do not match this language.

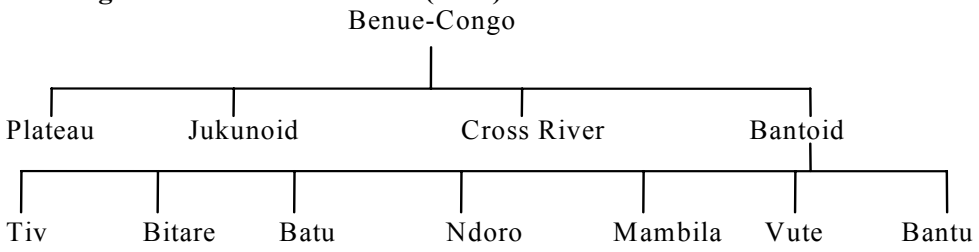
[4] Despite Dalby's identification this language is clearly not Bali Mungaka

[5] A key lexeme is the word for 'eye', *ndí* in Koelle and *ndihi* in the available wordlist. This shift from the more usual *li* appears to be quite distinctive.

[6] Described in Schadeberg (2002). The URL is http://linguistics.africamuseum.be/BLR3.html

The question then became whether there was any really distinctive boundary between Bantu and the languages related to it. Bantuists continue to defend the integrity of their discipline but the truth is that no lexical or morphological isoglosses have been established that somehow mark out Bantu from its closest relatives. Greenberg (1963a) underlined this by treating Bantu as merely a branch of Benue-Congo, i.e. the adjacent languages of southern and eastern Nigeria and Cameroun (Figure 1). He says 'the Bantu languages are simply a subgroup of an already established genetic subfamily of Western Sudanic [i.e. Niger-Congo, broadly speaking] (Greenberg 1963a:32).

Figure 1. Greenberg's classification of Bantu (1963)

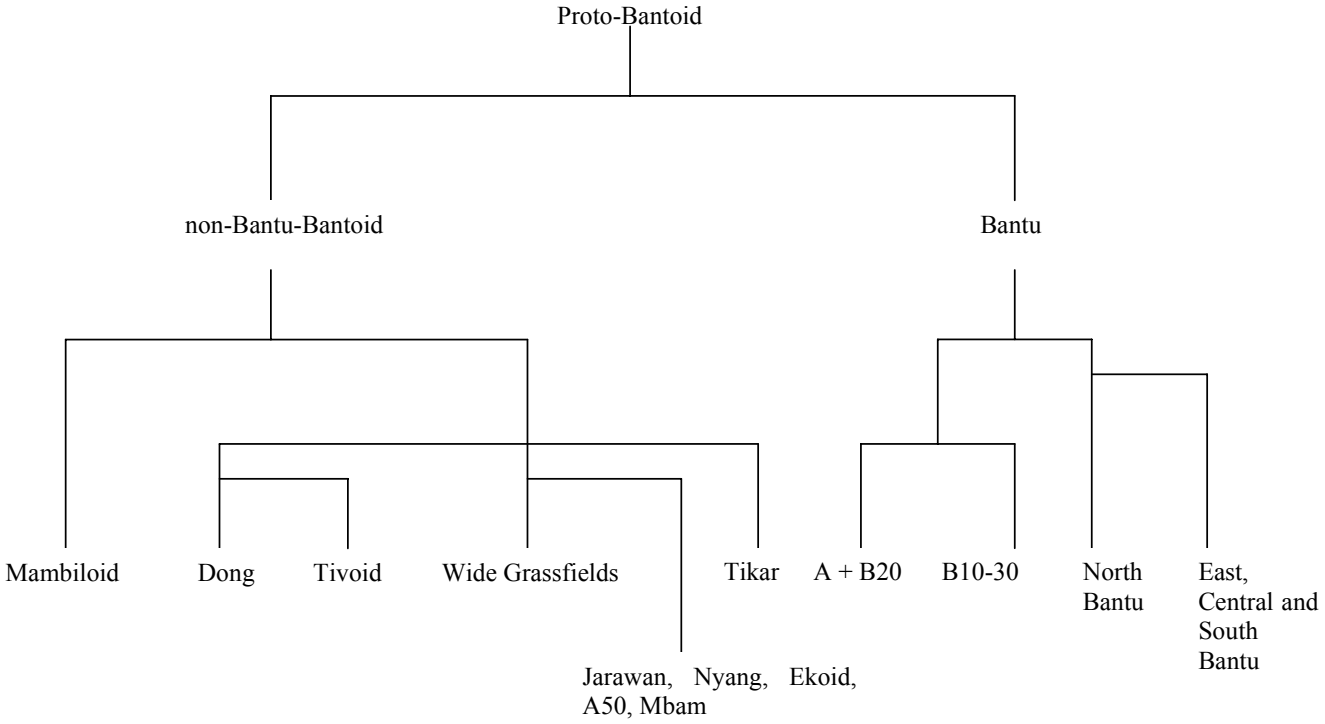


Greenberg (1963a:35) also clearly stated 'Supposedly transitional languages are really Bantu'. In other words, many languages without classic Bantu features are related to it. This approach to Bantu was refreshing and made historical sense in a way that Guthrie's views never had. Broadly speaking, Greenberg's classification has been vindicated by subsequent scholarship. But since the 1960s, data has gradually become available on the vast and complex array of languages in the 'Bantu borderland', i.e. the region between Southern Cameroun (where Guthrie's Bantu begins) and Eastern Nigeria. Greenberg's simple co-ordinate branch model is no longer tenable and something richer and more nuanced is required to understand the linguistic ethnohistory of the region. However, there is little agreement about the relationship between the 'Narrow Bantu', as defined by Guthrie and others, and the large number of related languages with Bantu-like features, now usually known as Bantoid.

The next step in the evolution of our understanding of Bantoid was the formation of the Grassfields Working Group in the early 1970s. Apart from delivering monographs on particular languages (e.g. Hyman 1981), a field team undertook large-scale survey work and began the process of putting this mass of unknown languages in order (e.g. Hyman 1980b; Elias, Leroy & Voorhoeve 1984). Some of this found its way into the BCCW and the related classification in Williamson (1971), but much of the data, such as the comparative Ring wordlists, circulated as photocopies for many years. Bouquiaux *et al.* (1980) was a major focus for publication of new evidence for linguistic features of particular subgroups of Bantu, with a focus on Cameroun. Also in the early 1980s, the ALCAM surveys began as part of a broader process of surveying Francophone Central Africa. Although Atlases were produced for several countries, only the Linguistic Atlas of Cameroun (Dieu & Renaud 1983) represented a substantive analytic advance. The branches generally recognised today have their modern names in this publication; the classificatory scheme treated Mambiloid as a primary branching and the Bantoid languages as co-ordinate with Bantu proper. In the standard reference volume on Niger-Congo (Bendor-Samuel 1989) Bantoid was divided in North and South, following a suggestion from Williamson & Blench (1987). In this version, Northern Bantoid consisted of Mambiloid and Dakoid (newly recognised as a Benue-Congo language rather than Adamawa) (Hedinger 1989) while Southern Bantoid (also Wide Bantu) divided into Narrow Bantu and the rather clumsily named 'non-Narrow Bantu'.

The common feature of this body of work is that the classifications are presented without justification. This is not surprising as the number of languages is very large and many were poorly known, then and still. Piron (1996, 1997) and Bastin & Piron (1999) represent both the most recent attempt to classify Bantoid, and a major body of data that underlies both her lexicostatistical analyses and shared innovations. Two different 'trees' are presented according to whether the lexicostatistics uses 'nearest neighbour' or 'furthest neighbour' calculations. To give an illustration of the type of result this produces, Figure 2 shows the 'furthest neighbour' tree produced by this method;

Figure 2. Bantoid tree according to Piron (1997: 628)



Whether this is helpful remains to be seen. But the body of Piron's text is taken up with the lexical analysis of a hundred distinct items and the distribution of individual roots within the area. It is quite unclear that these support the lexicostatistic tree given above. There are, however, more serious criticisms of Piron, the main one is the curious selectiveness of the comparative wordlists. Dakoid is represented only by Dong (supplied by the present author) instead of the more mainstream lexicon (a useful body of which is published in Boyd 1994). Noni is the sole representative of Beboid, yet Ekoid is quoted from Crabb (1965) in its entirety. No data for Furu was available at the time of compilation, so Furu is excluded. Bendi, treated here as Bantoid, was not considered, although this is a proposal made by the present author. Buru is treated as Tivoid, although the evidence for this is weak. Indeed, no arguments are made for the internal coherence of groups such as Beboid and Tivoid, and indeed these are hard to make. The lexical data for Narrow Bantu is not given, though it is quoted in the text, so it is impossible to see how claims such as those made in Figure 2 are supported by the data. On the positive side, Piron draws attention to the distinctiveness of Ndemli, Modele and Ambele, previously submerged in the broad-brush classifications of Grassfields.

Finally, in the large volume on Bantu edited by Nurse & Philippson (2003), there is chapter on Grassfields Bantu (Watters 2003). While the chapter is welcome, there is no explanation why this short summary of a very complex zone is included and all the other branches of Bantoid excluded, notably Jarawan which is the best candidate for simply being a Bantu language and not Bantoid.

The present situation is thus not very satisfactory; evidence-based presentations for the classification of Bantoid remain very weak. In view of a major expansion of available data, it seems worthwhile to try and advance our understanding of both the languages constituting Bantoid and their relationships to each other. This in turn should provide us with a much better view of the early stages of Bantu itself; and indeed possibly change our picture of its likely structure and lexicon.

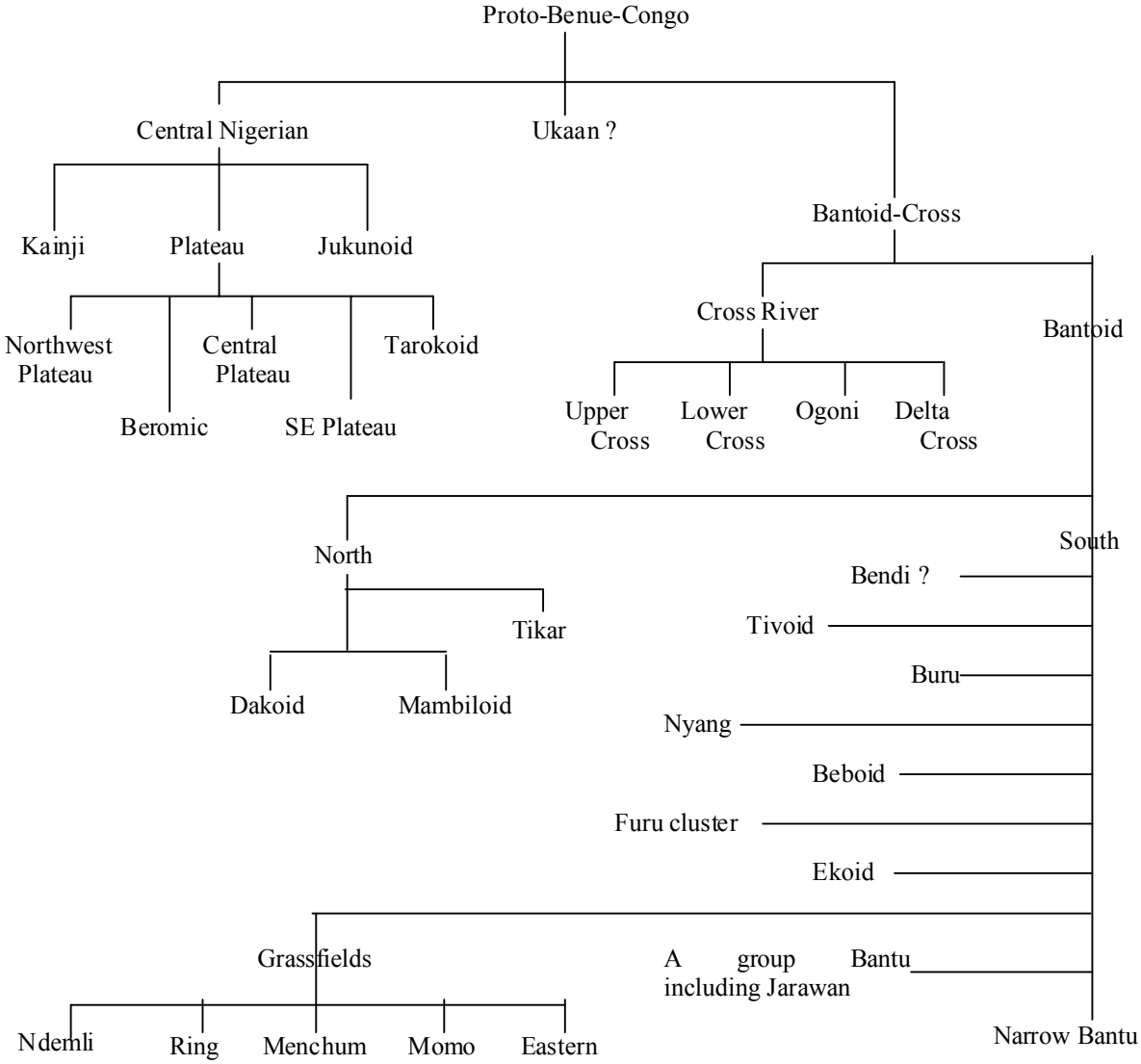
4. [East] Benue-Congo

4.1 Overview

Bantoid is a subset of Benue-Congo, a large and complex group of languages, whose exact membership remains disputed. Originating with Westermann's (1927) *Benue-Cross-Fluss*, it took shape in Greenberg (1963a), Williamson (1971a) and De Wolff (1971). The name 'Benue-Congo' was introduced by Greenberg (1963a) who proposed a division into four branches: Plateau, Jukunoid, Cross River, and Bantoid. Following Shimizu (1975) and Gerhardt (1989), Jukunoid was subsumed under Plateau. Bennett and Sterk (1977) expanded Benue-Congo by adding the eastern branches (c-g) of Greenberg's Kwa; these branches were grouped together as 'West Benue-Congo' by Blench (1989), and Greenberg's original Benue-Congo was therefore renamed 'East Benue-Congo'. By the time Bendor-Samuel's (1989) *Niger-Congo Languages* was published, Greenberg's Eastern Kwa (i.e. Yoruboid, Edoid, Igboid etc.) was considered part of Benue-Congo and this is reflected in the map of Nigerian languages published in Crozier & Blench (1992). However, this new conjunction was adopted almost entirely without evidence, and the Benue-Congo paradigm of Greenberg is provisionally retained here, with the 'West Benue-Congo' languages now moved to a branch of Niger-Congo that also includes Gbe. Ohiri-Aniche (1999) suggested that the Ukaan dialect cluster formed a bridge between West and East Benue-Congo. Ukaan has been described by Abiodun (2000) and Salffner (200x) but its external classification remains highly controversial. As a compromise, Ukaan is placed as an independent branch of Benue-Congo.

Figure 3 sets out a revised subclassification of Benue-Congo languages;

Figure 3. Revised subclassification of Benue-Congo languages



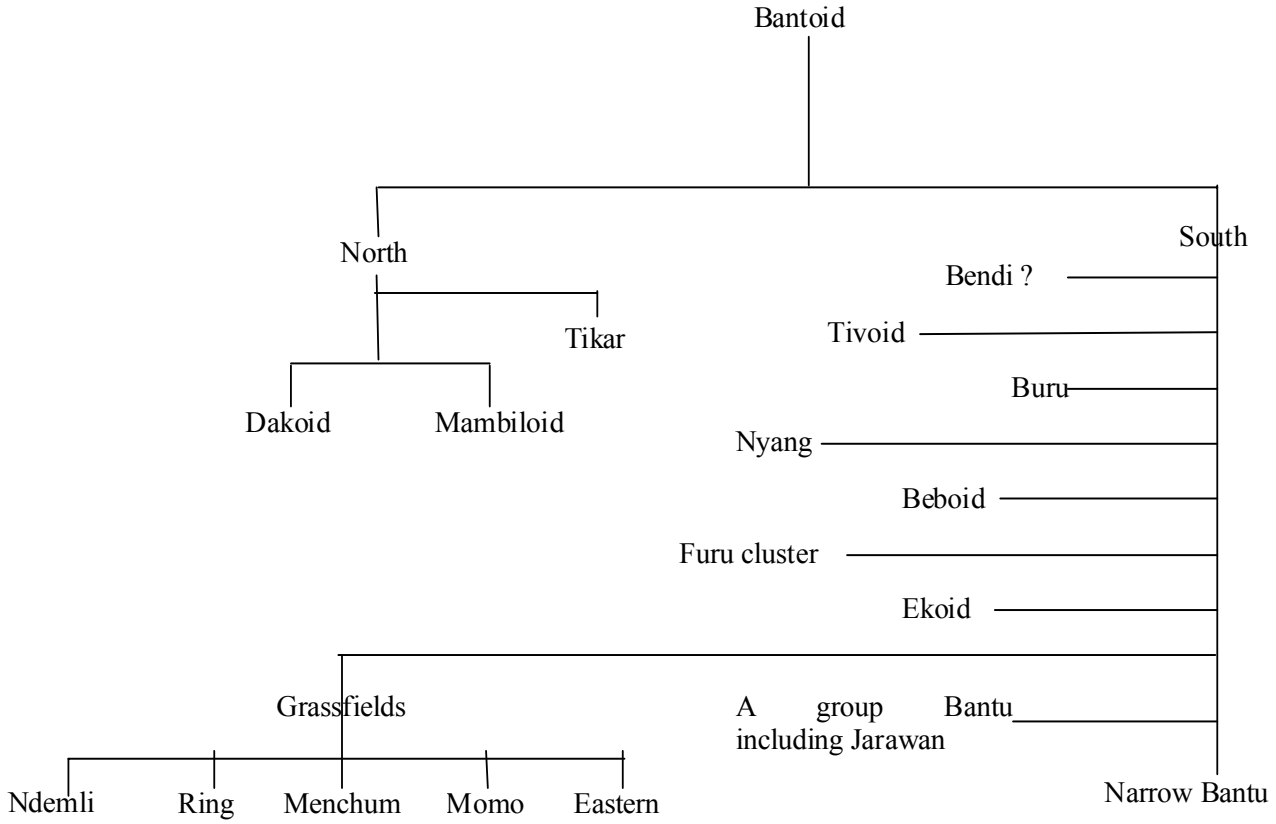
Bendi, previously considered part of Cross River, has been shifted to Bantoid, a change of affiliation proposed by Blench (2001).

5. Bantoid

5.1 Overview

Figure 4 shows a speculative summary that includes all the language groups that have been described that as it were 'stand between' Eastern Benue-Congo and Narrow Bantu. These languages are very numerous (>200) and also highly diverse morphologically. It seems likely that new languages are yet to be discovered and more work in historical reconstruction will improve our understanding of how these languages relate to one another.

Figure 4. Genetic tree of Bantoid languages



5.2 Dakoid

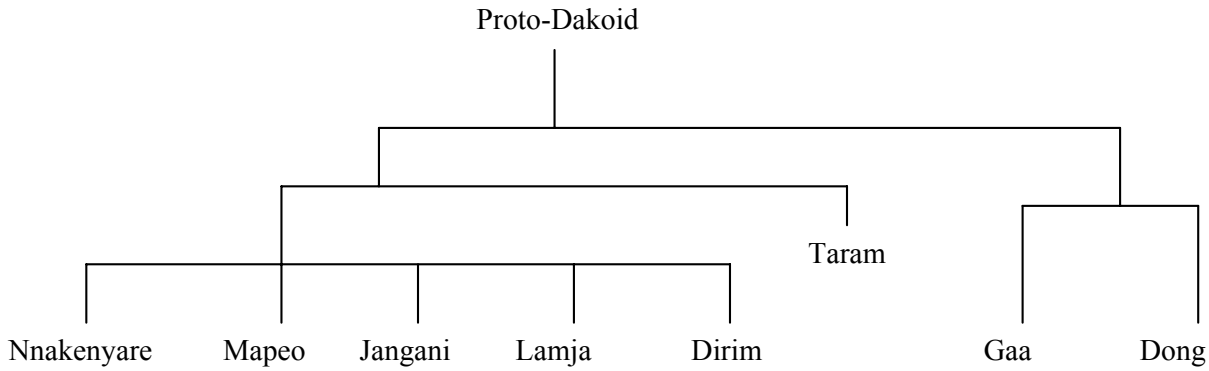
The Dakoid languages are spoken in the extreme east of Nigeria, in and around the Shebshi mountains. An outlier, the Dɔ̃ language, is spoken among the Mumuye people at Yoro (ref). There may be a few villages of Daka-speakers in Cameroun, but these are numerically insignificant. Speakers of Dakoid are generally known under the name of Chamba. However, there is another group with which the Daka share their culture, the Chamba Leko [= Samba Leeko], who speak an Adamawa language (Gwenaelle-Fabre 2003). Boyd (1994) demonstrates that there has been significant lexical interchange between these two languages, although they are not closely related genetically.

The first published data on the Dakoid languages is Strümpell (1910) who presented data on . A richer source is Meek (1931, I 394 ff.) who gave wordlists of Daka of Gandole, Taram and Dirrim of Kwagiri in addition to his discussion of their ethnology. Meek recognised that Lamja, Chamba of 'Tsugu' (=Sugu i.e. the Chamba of Ganye) and Chamba of Nasarawa should be classified together, although he does not give wordlists. Meek noted the cultural similarities with the Leko languages but does not advance a hypothesis as to why their languages should be so different. Westermann & Bryan (1952) placed Daka and associated lects in an 'isolated language group', abnegating responsibility for classifying them.

The first attempt to classify a Daka language appears to be Greenberg (1963) who put Daka together with Leko as part of his Adamawa group. Bennett (1983), in a wide-ranging study of Adamawa languages considered this to be erroneous and proposed that Daka would better be classified with the Benue-Congo languages. The reference article on Adamawa languages by Boyd (1989) accepted this reclassification and noted links its with the 'Nyamnyam' language (now generally known as the Mambiloid language Nizaa).

Blench (1984) also picked up on Bennett's suggestion and pointed out that Chamba Daka was not an isolated language but part of a cluster of unknown size and complexity, for which the name 'Dakoid' was proposed. During the 1980's additional fieldwork on Dakoid languages added some richness to this picture and a proposal for the internal structure of Dakoid was circulated (Figure 5);

Figure 5. The Dakoid languages



Early versions of this appeared in Blench (1989), Hedinger (1989), Crozier & Blench (1992) and Blench (1993).

Research on the Dakoid languages has been limited, with the exception of Raymond Boyd (Boyd 1994; Boyd and Fardon n.d.) and unpublished data collected by the present writer. Boyd considered the classification of Chamba Daka in his 1994 publication[7] and has published a wordlist of Gaa [=Tiba] showing parallels in nearby Adamawa languages (Boyd 1999). However, the other Dakoid languages remain unstudied and even the exact composition of the group remains disputed. Table 3 presents a summary of data sources on Dakoid languages;

Table 3. Summary of data sources on Dakoid languages

Lect	Source or reference
Nnakenyare	Boyd (1994), Blench ms.
Kiri	Edwards ms.
Gandole	Meek (1931)
Mapeo	Boyd (1994) and ms.
Jangani	Blench ms.
Lamja	Blench ms.
Dirim	Meek (1931), Edwards ms.
Taram	Meek (1931)
Gaa (=Tiba)	Blench ms., Boyd (1999)
Dɔ̃	Gambo ms., Blench ms.

Data on Kiri and Gandole is not reliably transcribed and seems not to be sufficiently separate from Nnakenyare as to indicate a distinct classification. Tola is cited by some Daka as a distinct dialect but a visit to Tola suggested this was based more on perceived ethnic differences than true linguistic separation. However, there may well be more Dakoid lects as yet unrecorded in the foothills of the Shebshi mountains.

Linguistically, the morphology of Daka is very restricted, one reason it has proven hard to classify. The nouns are mostly invariant and only a few exceptional lexical items synchronically exhibit plural alternations. These are given in Boyd (1994:18) and with one exception are apparently adjectives;

[7] Boyd apparently considers that Chamba Daka is a Niger-Congo isolate, although this is not explicitly stated in the 1994 text.

s.	pl.	Gloss
dèèrí	dəmsá	long, far
tɔ̀rí	tɔ̀psá	short, near
wàrí	wɔ̀psá	big
míí	méém	small, child
sɔ̀káä	sɔ̀kúüm	younger, junior

It is certainly true that Daka word structures suggest fossil suffixes, examples of which are shown in Table 4;

Table 4. Possible fossil suffixes in Daka

Suffix	Examples	Comment
-ba	**líbá** 'cloth pouch',	?
-ga	**jàángà** 'okra',	?
-k(á)	**lúká** 'pimple', **wúuk** 'fish'	
-lá	**dəláa** 'heap', **jiŋláa** 'hyena', **kɔ̀ŋláa** 'elephant',	?
-lí	**jàmlí** 'flute' **kúmlí** 'cotton', **nyɛ̀ŋlí** 'coals'	
-m(a)	**bùsùm** 'ant', **sékum** 'flying ash', **tékùm** 'middle', **tóòmáa** 'ashes'	
-n	**júrèn** 'anus', **kəsen** 'captive', **nyíngèn** 'shadow',	
-p	**bàrùp** 'twins', **bɛ́ɛp** 'money', **bòòp** 'blindness', **sèp** 'chisel',	
-rí	**yírí** 'sorghum',	= -lí ?
-sà	**dìísà** 'owl', **nyàáksà** 'crow', **nyésà** 'breast', **vàsà** 'laterite'	
-sí	**gipsí** 'body hair', **gɔ̀ŋsí** 'life', **jòsí** 'star', **kəsí** 'limit', **láŋsí** 'rite', **nyémsí** 'armpit'	
-y	**bày** 'cowry', bə̀**y** 'bushbuck', **kàáy** 'maize',	

The Dong [Dɔ̃] language, spoken by a community that defines itself as Mumuye, is known from a wordlist circulated by Blench (n.d.) partly reprised in Piron (1996). Blench (op. cit.) suggested that there were some links with Dakoid, although the material was too fragmentary to be sure, especially as Dong has very large numbers of loanwords (or cognates with) neighbouring Adamawa languages. Boyd (in ms.) has suggested that Dong is part of the Mumuye group although he gives no evidence for this belief.

[table]

Boyd (1994:18) observes that the word structure of Daka makes it likely that it once had a productive system of suffixes and draws from this the conclusion that its classification within Benue-Congo must be erroneous. However, Mambiloid languages once also had a suffix system (§5.3) and their Benue-Congo affiliation is not in question, suggesting that the same could have been true of Dakoid.

The Vute alternation -ø/-m and Ndoro -ø/-ma seems to parallel that in Daka and in the case of Ndoro 'child', ònyé/òyámá, to apply to the same lexical item.

[table]

5.3 Mambiloid

5.3.1 Overview

The linking together of languages such as Ndoro, Vute and Mambila seems to derive from Greenberg (1963:9). Greenberg treated these languages as co-ordinate branches of his group D. of Benue-Congo, along with Tiv, Batu and Bantu itself. Earlier surveys, such as Richardson (1957), simply lump together these languages as 'non-Bantu' in a category that also includes Adamawa-Ubangian. The recognition of the unity of the group appears first in Williamson (1971) who recognised 'Mambila-Wute' as consisting of the

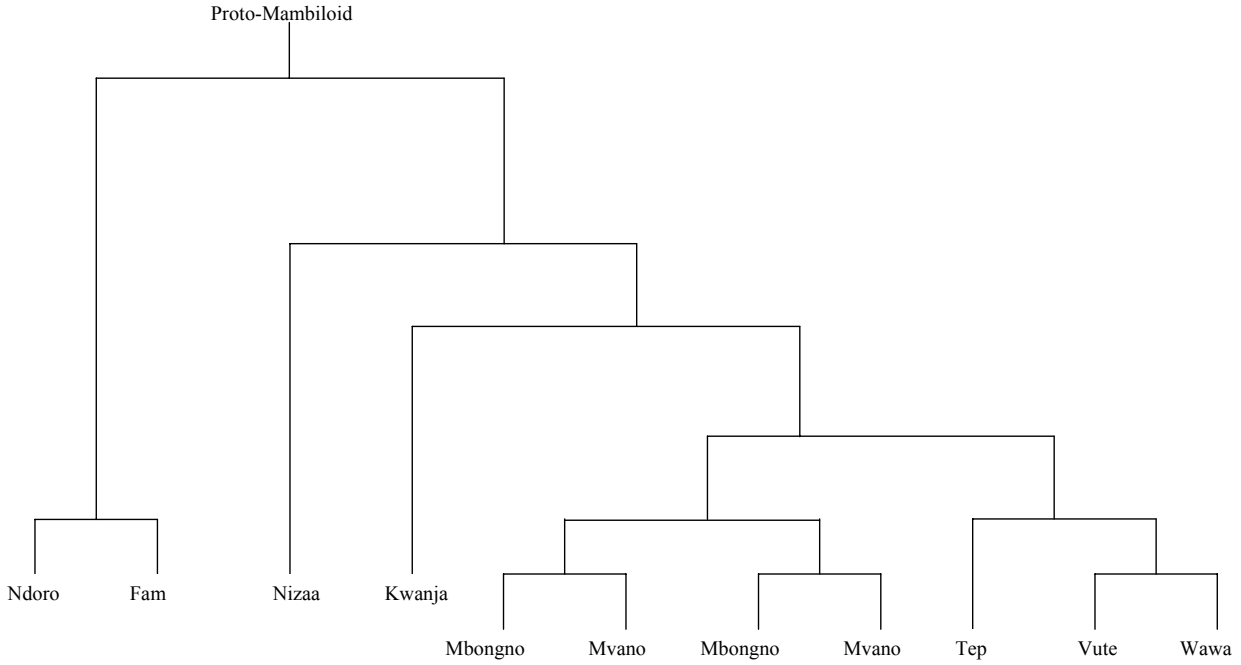
Mambila cluster (including Kamkam, Tep, Kila etc.), Ndoro and Vute (=Wute, Buti and including Gandua etc.).

The use of the term 'Mambiloid' to group together a number of languages spoken in the grassy uplands between Nigeria and Cameroon is of fairly recent vintage. It was first introduced informally in a paper summary where the newly christened Mambiloid and Tivoid were linked (Greenberg 1974). Greenberg proposed a two-way division within Bantoid, naming these languages 'Bane' and proposing Bantu as the other co-ordinate branch. Meussen (1974) replying to Greenberg, suggested Bane and Bantu were co-ordinate subdivisions of Bantu but did not question the Tivoid/Mambiloid grouping. Even at this period, extraordinarily few languages were considered in making these claims.

Bennett & Sterk (1977) reprised Mambiloid in their Niger-Congo reclassification and the ALCAM classification of Camerounian languages added two further groups, Nizaa [=Nyamnyam, Suga] and Konja [Kwanja] (Dieu & Renaud, 1983). Blench (1993) published a summary of everything known at the time about Mambiloid languages and put forward some suggestions for isoglosses relating the whole family.

The unity of Mambiloid remains controversial. Boyd (1994) considers Vute and Mambila to have no particular relationship and Endresen (1989, 1992a,b) considers the place of Nizaa [Suga] as uncertain. Connell (p.c.) remains doubtful about the poorly documented Fam language. Bruce Connell undertook the Mambilex project during the 1990s and a large number of wordlists were recorded for hitherto unknown Mambiloid lects. Although a number of publications resulted from this material (Connell 1995, 1996a,b, 1997a,b,c,d,e, unpublished; Connell & Bird 1997), the database itself has remained in limbo and is now unlikely to be published. However, it is now reasonable to claim that Mambiloid constitutes a unity with the exception of Ndoro-Fam which remains a tenuous member of this group.

Figure 6. The Mambiloid languages



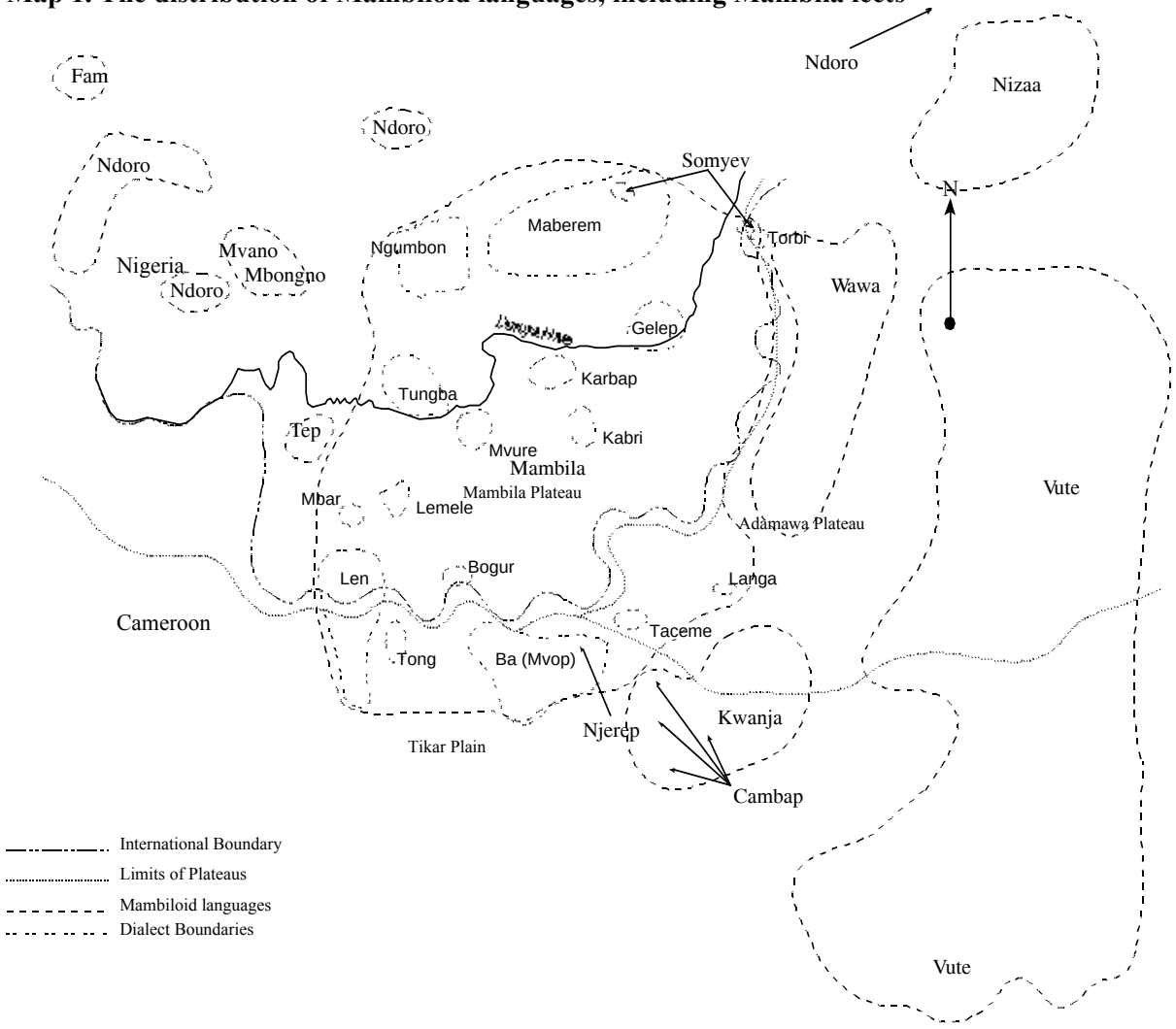
The Njerep language, part of the East Mambila cluster is moribund with a single speaker still able to converse in 2000 and some five rememberers (Connell & Zeitlyn 2000). This cluster includes Cambap, with some 30 speakers in 2000, Kasabe, extinct in 1995 but for which wordlist data exists, and Yeni, for which only songs are remembered.

The Njanga language, with just five speakers in 2008, is becoming increasingly difficult to recover. Speakers are switching to the related Sundani and engage in codeswitching, making it difficult to be sure that the Njanga forms are 'authentic' (Robson p.c.).

Table 5. Extinct or moribund languages of the Mambila region

Language	Number of Speakers	Closest Relative
Cambap (aka Twendi)	30	Mambila (Langa)
Somyev (aka Kila)	20	Tep, Wawa
Njanga	5 speakers, 5 rememberers (2008)	Kwanja
Njerep	6	Mambila (Langa)
Bung	3 (no native speakers)	(Kwanja)
Kasabe (aka Luo)	0 († 11/95)	Mambila (Langa)
Yeni	0	Mambila (Langa)
Connell (p.c.), Robson (p.c.)		

Map 1. The distribution of Mambiloid languages, including Mambila lects



5.3.2 Phonology

5.3.3 Morphology

Vute, described in Thwing (1987), retains a series of alternating suffixes. Table 6, adapted from Blench (1993), shows the alternations recorded in the sources for different Mambiloid lects and attempts to align them in terms of possible cognacy;

Table 6. Affixes in Mambiloid (adapted from Blench 1993)

Language	Plural markers						Source
Vute	-ø/-b	-ø/-m	-ø,-r/-y	Ṽø/-ŋ,-k -n,- Ṽ/-ɲ			Thwing, 1987
Kwanja	- ø /-bɨ̀,-bà				-ø/-tɨ̀	(-V)	Weber & Weber, 1987
Nizaa	-ø/-wu		-ø/-ya`				Endresen (1989)
Mambila	-ø/-bò						Perrin, n.d. (1)
Ndoro	-ra,-ø/-bu	-ø/-ma	-ø/-yí -ø/-bəyi		-ø/-ʃĩ		RMB fieldnotes

Morphemes separated by a comma are probable morphophonemic alternations, except where they alternate with a zero morpheme.

5.4 Tikar

5.4.1 Overview

Tikar is a cover term for three relatively similar dialects spoken in the Cameroun Grassfields, Tikari, Tige and Tumu. Tikar is spoken on the Tikar plain, south and south-east of Mambiloid proper, and it shares a common border with some Mambila and Kwanja lects in Cameroun. The first mention of Tikar may be in Westermann & Bryan (1952) although the Tikar Plain, a highly multi-lingual region, is referenced in many early administrative documents. The main sources for this language are Hagege (1969), Jackson & Stanley (1977), Jackson (1988) and Stanley (1991). Following the establishment of a literacy programme, Tikar has been studied intensively and there are varous academic papers on the syntax as well as a doctoral thesis (Stanley 1991). Separately a series of lexical studies published in German exist (Mamadou 1981, 1984). There is also an unpublished lexicon (ref.).

The Tikar language has always been somewhat problematic in terms of its classification. Dieu & Renaud (1983) placed it together with Ndemli, another language that is hard to classify, although this may be simply an admission of ignorance. Piron (1996, III:628) recognises it as part of her non-Bantu group and assigns it a co-ordinate branch with Dakoid, Tivoid, Grassfields and the other branches of Bantoid (her 'South Bantoid') in opposition to Mambiloid. Stanley (1991) notes that Tikar has many lexical similarities with the neighbouring Bafia (A50) but that the morphosyntax is quite different.
The Bankim dialect, Twumwu, is the principal one chosen for standardisation and development. Nonetheless, primary comparisons do suggest that Tikar plays a role in the North Bantoid grouping and it is tentatively assigned a co-ordinate position with the Dakoid-Mambiloid grouping.

The structure of Tikar is very remote from a classical Bantu noun-class system and of indeed affixes have been lost, this process has been much more pervasive than in Mambiloid. Tikar has a limited number of plurals showing initial consonant alternation, some which add –i prefixes and other which have alternating nasal prefixes (Hagege 1969:37-38). Syllable-final consonants are few in number. However, the –li, –m and –p affixes are also present in Tikar (Jackson & Stanley 1976:50). Tikar also has second syllables that may be analysable as CV affixes (Table 7).

Table 7. Possible fossil affixes in Tikar

Suffix	Examples
-li	**ǹyili** 'love', **ŋ̀keli** 'bamboo sp.', **kùkùlì** 'ant', **lɛ̀lì** 'uncle'
-m(i)	**gwùm** 'abcess', **kikæmi** 'tree', **ŋ̀wùm** 'iron'
-p/b	**kwɛ̀b** 'wing', **lɛ̀b** 'tree sp.', **twìb** 'mushroom sp.', **dɛ̀b** 'sky', **m̀lib** 'woman',

Other CV finals in Tikar are associated with loanwords.

1. beard

Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Nizaa	**gbìiŋ**		E
Dakoid	Daka Kiri	**gbəŋsi gibsi**	**gibsi** = 'hair'	AE
Tikar	Tikar	**gyíwá**		J

2. buttocks

Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Njerep	**kí**		C
	Ba	**ti˘**		C
Dakoid	Nnakenyare	**kììn**		BF
	Lamja	**kinataà**		RMB
Tikar	Tikar	**ké**		J

Commentary: Ba and Njerep are spoken in the same village, Somié, so it may be that there is a t/k correspondence and **ti** forms, which are more widespread in Mambiloid are indeed cognate. If so, then forms such as Mvure **tɛnɛ**$^{+}$ are cognate and retain the nasalisation observed in Dakoid.

Ref:

3. dry season

Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Len	**nyàm**		C
	Kwanja	**ŋvwaná**		WW
Dakoid	Nnakenyare	**nwánɛ́n**		BF
Tikar	Tikar	**næ̀m**	*année passée*	J

4. #jim- to fly

Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Nizaa	**cím**		E
	Wawa	**sim**		
Dakoid	Nnakenyare	**jìm**	also **dùm**	BF
	Gaa	**lýnsì**	'to make fly'	
Tikar	Tikar	**jìmì**	'to jump'	J

5. light

Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Camba	**ŋwɛ́dí mù**		C
	Somyev	**nja ana**		C
	Kwanja Ndung	**ŋwə̂n**		C
Dakoid	Nnakenyare	**jɛ̀ná**	sunlight	BF
Tikar	Tikar	**ŋ̀wánní**		J

6. mat

Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Ba	**kè**		C
	Kwanja Sundani	**kfwárá-kfwàrà**		WW
Dakoid	Nnakenyare	**kirí**		BF
Tikar	Tikar	**kè**		J

7. skin I

Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Ba	**ŋgɔ̀n**		C
Dakoid	Lamja	**wúùn**		RMB
	Nnakneyare	**gùù**		BF
Tikar	Tikar	**ŋ̀wù**		J

8. to swim #-gwaga

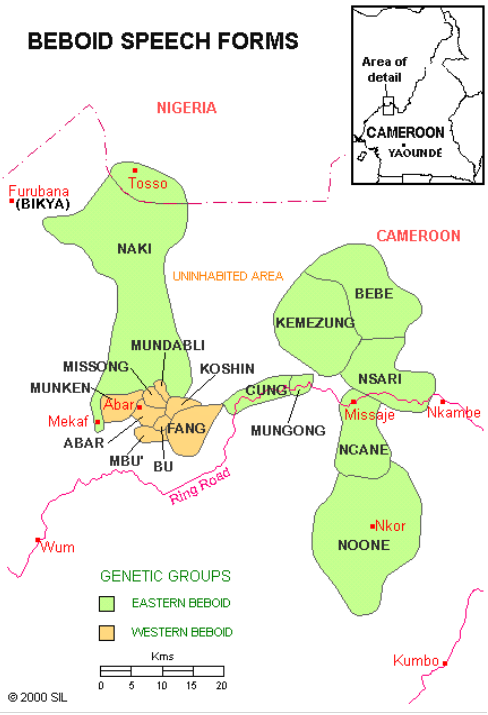
Group	Language	Attestation	Comment	Source
Mambiloid	Mambila	**gwaga**[21]		PM
Dakoid	Nnakenyare	**gàà**	(+**wóok** ‘water’)	B
Tikar	Tikar Nditam	**g^{w}a**		S & J

5.5 Beboid

5.5.1 Overview

The Beboid [=Misaje group] languages are Bantoid languages spoken in principally in Southwest Cameroun although two languages are also spoken over the border in Nigeria (Map 2).

Map 2. Beboid languages



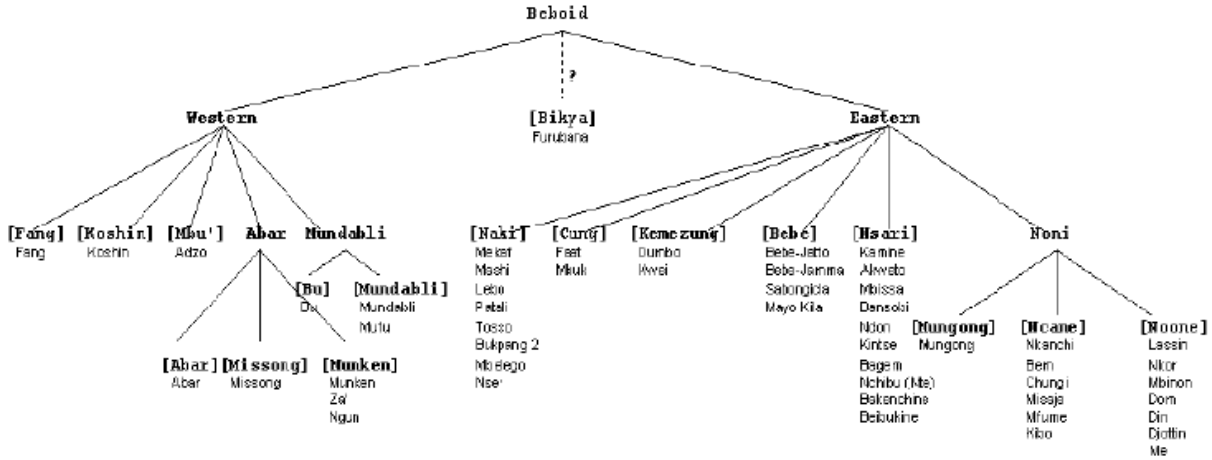
Previous research includes a study of noun classes in Beboid languages by Jean-Marie Hombert (1980), Hyman (1980, 1981), a dissertation by Richards (1991) concerning the phonology of three Eastern Beboid languages (Noni, Ncane, and Nsari), Breton's (1993) survey of languages in the Furu-Awa District of Northwest Cameroon, Lux (2003) a Noni lexicon and Cox (2005) a phonology of Kemezung. SIL survey reports have provided more detail on Eastern and Western Beboid (Brye & Brye 2002, 2004; Hamm et al. 2002) and Hamm (2002) is a brief overview of the group as a whole. Rebecca Voll who is researching Mundabli, has produced several conference presentations and Jeff Good has presented on Naki.

Photo 1. Noni literacy committee, March 2009

5.5.2 Classification

Figure 7 shows the revised classification of Beboid set out in Hamm (2002), amended by the addition of the two Nigerian Eastern Beboid languages, Bukwen and Mashi, for which short wordlists are available (Koops and Blench 2008).

Figure 7. Classification of Beboid (Hamm 2002)



Despite the confident division into Eastern and Western Beboid espoused since Hombert (1980) it is not easy to find shared innovations that define these groups. Table 8 and Table 9 represent proposals for shared lexical items that define east and West Beboid. As Map 2 shows, Beboid languages are closely intertwined and it is therefore likely that borrowing clouds the picture of and East/West division.

[8] Robert Koops kindly made his field wordlists available and I had them typed, converted to Unicode and added comparative data.

Table 8. Proposed East Beboid shared innovations

Gloss	Noone	Ncane	Mungong	Kemezung	Nsari	Bebe	Cung
belly	t^{h}éēn	téē	téē	tɔ̂	téé	té	tɔ̄
moon	kpwé	kwíī	pɛ̄i	pfíə̄	kwi	kpwée	fʌə̄ŋ
eight	njàŋ	njàà	njàà	jàŋ	njàà	njààŋ	njāŋ
give	kěnjá	njá	njìâ	njìá	njɛ́	nɔ́	njá

Good (2008) has stated in conference handouts that he does not accept that West Beboid is a unified group and that some of the languages classified in Beboid may be Grassfields or other groups. There has clearly been considerable crossover with

Table 9. Proposed West Beboid shared innovations

No.	Gloss	Abar	Missong	Bu	Mundabli	Koshin	Fang	Mbu'	Mashi
9.	hair	ufwi	ofu	kəfo	fɛ	kɨfu	fu	fwɔ	dzu

Beboid languages share many of the typical Bantu noun-classes although they have developed 'extra' classes that cannot be matched to the standard list.

5.5.3 Phonology

According to Voll (2008) Mundabli has a ten-vowel system with what looks like ± ATR harmony. However, some of the vowels in Mundabli also have pharyngealised equivalents. According to Voll (2008) the lexical cognates of Mundabli pharyngealised vowels in the closely related Mufu are final velars or glottal stops. This is shown in Table 10;

Table 10. Mundabli-Mufu correspondences

Gloss	Mundabli	Mufu
Banana	tsʊ̈	cʊk
Neck	mʊ̈	mak
mouth	dzɛ̈	dzak
hair	fɔ̈	foʔ

Source: Voll (2008)

5.5.4 Morphology

5.6 Buru

The Buru language is spoken in a single village east of Baissa, below the Mambila escarpment Sardauna LGA,Taraba State, Nigeria. The only data on Buru is a manuscript wordlist collected by Robert Koops in the 1970s. He also collected data on the nearby Batu languages, which show some similarities, but which are more obviously Tivoid. The only published discussion of the classification of Buru is Piron (1998) which assumes it is Tivoid, but without any very conclusive evidence.

Buru has a very reduced noun morphology with only the following noun-class pairings;

e-/ a-
ø-/ bà-
gi-/ bi-

which are not distinctive enough to assign the language to any grouping. There is no trace of the doble-affixing often considered more typical of Tivoid.

Phonologically, Buru has several unusual features, including the voiceless dental /θ/ which may have come from contact with Jukunoid. It has both characteristic Cr clusters and more unusual sequences such as θb and tθ.

Some possibly diagnostic glosses in Buru are shown in Table 11;

Table 11. Buru lexical items not shared with Tivoid

Gloss	Buru	Comparisons
belly	ēbum/ābúm	
mouth	ēdō/āddū	
saliva	aʒín	
fat	áθá	
oil palm	ēbín/ābrín	
firewood	ēkwēn/ākwē	
fire	ēgú/ágú	
smoke	éhún/-	
road	èyɔ́/āyó	
mountain	àkɔ́/bàkɔ́	
rain	èbūrā	
moon	ēkwɛ̄n/ēkwē	
war	èdīm/-	
year	èyā/àyā	
egg	ēdé/ādé	
horn	ēθɔ̄ŋ/āθɔ̄ŋ	
tail	ēsá/āsá	
elephant	ŋ̀kɔ̄: / bàŋkɔ̄	
name	ètá/àtā	

5.7 Furu

Until recently the Furu languages have remained the one exotic and unknown branch of Bantoid. Extremely inaccessible, they can be reached only via a two days' trek from the road or via helicopter. They are also down to the last few speakers or are moribund, and have been cited by the endangered languages lobby in their literature. Spoken on the Nigeria-Cameroun borderland in Furu-Awa division, there appear to have been four languages, Bishuo, Busu, Bikyak and Lubu. The linguist Michel Dieu was the first to report the existence of these languages, and he appears to have collected primary wordlists. However, after his death the data was apparently lost, and only his lexicostatistical calculations survived, published in Breton (1993, 1995). However, these calculations are very misleading, since they appear to show that Furu languages are extremely remote from their neighbours. In 2007, the German linguist Roland Kiessling was able to revisit Furu-Awa and has reported on the current status of these languages with a particular focus on Bikyak which still retains the most fluent speakers. This suggests that the Furu languages are reasonably well-behaved Bantoid languages, with eroded noun-class prefixes and numerous cognates with neighbouring languages.

The following tables compare Furu lexical items with their broader Niger-Congo cognates;

sky, up

Family	Language	Attestation	Gloss	Source
	PWN	-gúlu	sky (above)	M
Ijoid	P-Iɟọ	ɔgɔnɔ̃	above, top	KW
Kru	Grebo	yuu		
WBC	Igbo	igwe		
Bantoid	Bikyak	ágù	up	RK
Bantu	PB	gʊ̀dʊ̀	sky, top	BLR3

10.leg, foot #[k]p[ar]aga

Family	**Subgroup**	**Language**	**Attestation**	**Gloss**	**Source**
		PWS	-kua-	*Bein, Fuß*	W
Rashad		Tegali	ɛkán	foot	RCS
Mande		Vai	kèŋ	foot	K
Atlantic		Ị alu	gbaaŋk	leg	Wi07
Ubangian	Mba	'Dongo ko	kàŋà	*pied*	Mo88
WBC		Proto-Igboid	ɔ-kpà(á)	leg	KW
EBC	Plateau	Reshe	ú-kánà		
	Cross River	Obolo	ú-kót		Co91
Bantoid	East Beboid	Ị oone	ɛ́kâlɛ̄	foot	SIL
	Furu	Bikyak	ekŭ		
		Beezen	ku-gʊn		
		Bishuo	/ɔ-úgwɛn		
	Grassfields	*PEG	*kʊ̀l`		ELV
Bantu		PB	kónò	E-S	BLR3

5.8 Tivoid

5.8.1 Overview

Tivoid languages represent one of the least-known and most poorly characterised of the larger Bantoid groups. Greenberg (1963) included Tiv, Bitare and Batu, languages now considered to be Tivoid, as three of the seven co-ordinate branches of Bantoid but did not argue for any special relationship between them. The recognition that there is a whole group of languages related to Tiv may well be as late as Watters & Leroy (1989). Indeed no argument for the unity of this group has ever been presented in print and for some putative Tivoid languages there appears to be no published information. Table 12 lists the known Tivoid languages and their locations.

Table 12. Tivoid languages

Language	Country
Abon	Ị igeria
Ambo	Ị igeria
Balo	Cameroon
Batu	Ị igeria
Bitare	Ị igeria
Caka	Cameroon
Eman	Cameroon
Esimbi	Cameroon
Evant	Ị igeria
Iceve-Maci	Cameroon
Ipulo	Cameroon
Iyive	Cameroon
Manta	Cameroon
Mesaka	Cameroon
Oliti	Cameroon
Osatu	Cameroon
Otank	Ị igeria
Tiv	Ị igeria
Ugarə	Cameroon

The great majority of wordlists derive from ALCAM, the Linguistic Atlas of Cameroun, hence the list of 120 words which was used for that survey. Materials from Ị igeria include the Tiv dictionaries of Abrahams and Terpstra and ms. wordlists collected by Rob Koops in the 1970s. Cassetta & Cassetta (1994a,b,c) have contributed some initial studies of Ugarə. Jockers (1992) reviews the history of publications on and in the Tiv language itself.

One of the most puzzling members of Tivoid is Esimbi, spoken in Menchum Division, Ị orthwest Province, Cameroun. Initial studies of Esimbi are Stallcup (1980a,b) and there is a phonology in Fontein (1986). A shorter ms. dictionary dates from the era of the Grassfields Working Group, but Coleman (n.d.) has circulated a more extensive document[9].

5.8.2 Classification

5.8.3 Phonology

Table 13 Esimbi Consonant Phonemes

	Point of Articulation

[9] I understand this project remains uncompleted.

Manner of Articulation	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labio-velar	Glottal
STOP voiceless voiced	 p b		 t d		 k g	 kp gb	
AFFRICATE voiceless voiced			 ts dz				
PRE-Ị ASALIZED STOP AFFRICATE	 mb 	 nd 	 ndz	 	 ŋg 	 ŋgb 	
Ị ASAL	m		n	ɲ	ŋ		
FRICATIVE voiceless voiced		 f v	 s z		 ɣ		 h
APPROXIMAỊ TS	ꞵ		l, r	y		w	

Source: Koenig, Coleman and Coleman (2007)

Table 14 Esimbi Vowel Chart

	Front	Central	Back
HIGH	i ii		u uu
MID	e ee	ə əə	o oo
MID-LOW	ɛ ɛɛ		ɔ ɔɔ
LOW		a aa	

Tiv itself has been the subject of much discussion because it is one of the small number of Ị iger-Congo languages to have both prefixes and suffixes. These are only otherwise common among the Gur and proximate languages in the Togo-Ghana borderland (Avatime, Bassari and Bogong are examples).

5.9 Nyang [=Mamfe]

Ị yang [=Mamfe] consists of three languages, Kenyang, Denya and Kendem, spoken in Manyu & Kitwii divisions of Southwest Province in Cameroun (Tyhurst 1983; Tyhurst & Tyhurst 1983). Due to intensive literacy programmes in this area these languages are relatively well-known. Table 15 presents basic information about the Ị yang languages.

Table 15. The Nyang languages

Language	Dialects	Population	Main references
Denya	Basho, Bitieku, Takamanda, Bajwo	11,200 (1982)	Abangma (1987), Mbuagbaw (1996, 2002), Beyer (n.d.)
Kendem	none	1500 (2001)	Anderson & Krüger (2004)
Kenyang	Upper Kenyang, Lower Kenyang, Bakoni	65,000 (1992)	Bufe (1910/11); Ittmann (1931-2a,b); Ittmann (1935-6); Tyhurst (1985); Mbuagbaw (1998, 2000)

Source: Ethnologue (2005) + additional references[10]

The first record of Kenyang appears in Koelle (1854) under the name Kóŋgūaŋ. His wordlist came from a freed slave in Sierra Leone born in the village of Bisóŋawaŋ, present day Besong Abang in the lower Kenyang dialect area (Mbuagbaw 2000). Further data on a Ị yang language appears in the wordlists in Mansfield (1908) and Bufe (1910/11).

Although the Ị yang languages clearly form a group, they are very different from one another. In the survey by Tyhurst (1983) the lowest lexicostatistic percentage between Ị yang lects was 47%, indicating considerable lexical diversity, confirmed by the attached comparative wordlists. Attempts to classify these languages (principally Kenyang) begin with its assignation to Ekoid (Johnston 1919-1922) under 'Manyang', repeated in Talbot (1926) and Westermann & Bryan (1952). It is likely that Ị yang only appears as a defined and distinct group in Tyhurst (1983). Subsequently attempts to place it on the Bantoid 'tree' have assumed it is a separate branch.

Voorhoeve (1980) who is still unclear about a Ị yang group, demonstrates the mixed character of these languages with some prefixes that closely resemble Bantu and others that seem to have undergone mergers characteristic of Ekoid. Ị yang has five paired noun classes which show concord with modifiers and corresponding pronouns. The numbering for classes is used as in Ị arrow Bantu except for class 6a which corresponds to Bantu classification.

5.10 Ekoid

The Ekoid languages, spoken principally in SE Ị igeria and in adjacent regions of Cameroun, have long been associated with Bantu, without their status being precisely defined. Crabb (1969) remains the major monograph on these languages, although regrettably, Part II, which was to contain grammatical analyses, was never published. Crabb also reviews the literature on Ekoid up to the date of publication.

The first publication of Ekoid material is in Clarke (1848) where five 'dialects' are listed and a short wordlist of each is given. Other significant early publications are Koelle (1854), Thomas (1914) and Johnston (1919-1922). Although Koelle lumped his specimens in the same area, it seems that Cust (1883) was the first to link them together and place them in a group co-ordinate with Bantu but not within it. Thomas (1927) is the first author to correctly point to the Bantu status of Ekoid, but the much later Westermann & Bryan (1952) repeats an older, less accurate classification. This also propagated another old error and included the Ị yang languages with Ekoid. Ị yang languages (5.9) have their own quite distinct characteristics and are probably further from Bantu than Ekoid.

Guthrie (1967-1971) could not accept that Ekoid formed part of Bantu. His first improbable explanation was that its 'Bantuisms' resulted from speakers of a Bantu language being 'absorbed' by those who spoke a 'Western Sudanic' language, in other words, the apparent parallels, were simply a massive corpus of

[10] Ị ote that the bibliographies of the Ethnologue are highly unreliable even in respect of SIL documents

loanwords. This was later modified into 'Ekoid languages may to some extent share an origin with some of the A zone languages, but they seem to have undergone considerable perturbations' (Guthrie 1971, II:15). Williamson (1971), in an influential classification of Benue-Congo, assigned Ekoid to 'Wide Bantu' corresponding to Bantoid.

All modern classifications of Ekoid are based on the data from Crabb (1969) and when Watters (1978a,b) came to explore the proto-phonology of Ekoid, he used this source, rather than his own field material from the Ejagham dialects in Cameroun. A problematic aspect of Ekoid in Crabb is a failure to clearly distinguish phonetic from phonemic transcriptions. Fresh work on Ejagham by Watters (1978, 1980, 1981) has extended our knowledge of the Camerounian dialects of Ekoid. However, an important unpublished dissertation by Asinya (1987) based on fresh fieldwork in Ị igeria made an important claim about Ekoid phonology, namely that most Ekoid languages have long/short distinctions in the vowels. In 2009, a new survey of part of Ekoid in Ị igeria that presently has adopted the name 'Bakor' for the cluster has made possible a re-assessment of the status of some of the languages.

The Ekoid noun-class system resembles Bantu and yet it cannot be said to correspond exactly (Watters 1980). A perhaps more pertinent question is whether Ekoid has any clear innovations that would distinguish it from A Group Bantu. Table 16 shows some suggested Ekoid innovations;

Table 16. Innovative roots in Ekoid

	Efutop		**PB**
Gloss	**sg.**	**pl.**	
eye	èmár	àmár	yícò
head	èsí	àsí	túè
hair	èlú	nlu	cʊ̀kí
tooth	èmən	àmən	yínò
tongue	élíbà	álíbà	dímì

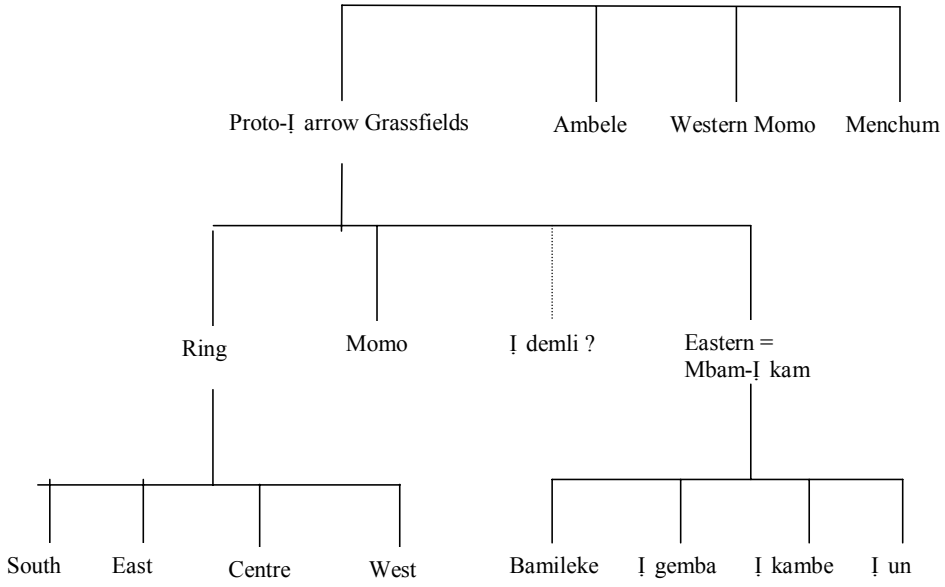
5.11 Grassfields

5.11.1 Introduction

The Grassfields languages are spoken in the West, Ị orthwest and Southwest Provinces of Cameroun. The high grassy plateaux for which they are named extends across into Ị igeria, but there are only a few scattered villages of Grassfields speakers on the Mambila Plateau. The name 'Grassfields' first appears in Richardson (1957:61) without a clear genetic definition. In the 1970s a 'Grassfields Working Group' was formed to both survey and research the languages of the geographical Grassfields but Grassfields was probably first used in its linguistic sense simultaneously in Hyman (1980) and Stallcup (1978, 1980). Other outlines of Grassfields appear in Dieu & Renaud (1983), Watters & Leroy (1989) and Piron (1995). The most recent overview is Watters (2003).

Grassfields is usually divided into 'Ị arrow' and 'Wide' (or Peripheral). Ị arrow Grassfields includes the Momo languages, the Ring Group, Eastern Grassfields and possibly the isolated Ị demli, spoken outside the Grassfields area among Bantu A40 speakers. As so often, there is a worrying lack of justification for any of these classifications and to be fair, Watters' text is interspersed with questions about the status and genetic classification of these languages. Although a scatter of publications focus on individual languages, only for Eastern Grassfields does a true reconstruction with proposed innovations exist (Elias, Leroy & Voorhoeve 19xx). With these reservations, Figure 8 shows a tentative classification of Grassfields. The languages outside Ị arrow Grassfields are treated as co-ordinate with and not forming a genetic group in themselves as implied by Piron (1995).

Figure 8.Grassfields languages



5.11.2 Language groupings

5.11.2.1 Ambele

Ambele, spoken in 11 villages in Momo Division, Ị orth West Province, Cameroun by some 2600 speakers in 2000. Ị ganganu (2001) states that the speakers know the language as Lèmbɛ̀llà. The etymology of this name is said to refer to a species of red ant met by the Ambele in the course of their migrations. She also mentions that the language is severely threatened as speakers are switching to Betieku and Menka and estimates there may be less than 1000 speakers in an ethnic group of 6-8000.It is still classified as a Momo language in standard references (e.g. Ethnologue 2005), despite being identified as quite dissimilar in a number of sources. The survey by Ayotte and Ayotte (2002) states clearly that it has lexicostatistical counts with Western Momo (§5.11.2.2) as low as with other quite different language families in the immediate area.

The first published data on Ambele may be Jungraithmayr & Funck (1975) and there are otherwise the wordlists appended to Ayotte and Ayotte (2002). Ị ganganu (2001), a study of Ambele phonology, may well be the only extended linguistic material of the language. Even from these limited sources, many unusual lexical items can be detected that are cognate neither with the relevant items in neighbouring languages, nor with broader Ị iger-Congo. Table 17 shows a sample of these extracted from the first half of the wordlist.

Table 17. Ambele lexical innovations

Gloss	Ambele
nose	**ɑgi**
neck	**gɛmi**
leg	**ɣɛjɛt**
belly	**ɛkɔt**
blood	**lɛkɛ**
skin	**gbə**
feather	**ɛtɔɳ**
horn	**sɑɳ**
sky	**ɛbɔlɑ**
dew	**ɑɣɔp**
ground	**gɑtɔp**

Source: SIL unpublished wordlists

Innovations in such fundamental vocabulary suggest strongly that Ambele has adapted its lexicon from now-vanished predecessor languages.

The phonology of Ambele is known only from Ị ganganu (2001). She gives the phonemic vowels as follows;

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ɨ ʉ	u
Mid-High	e		o
Mid-Low	ɛ	ə	ɔ
Low		a	

This is a somewhat surprising inventory and it seems possible that the two high central vowels are conditioned allophones of /ə/. Ị onetheless, she provides limited examples of contrast suggesting their phonemic status.

Ị ganganu (2001: 44) gives a small number of examples of length contrast in vowels. These are as follows;

[wíí]	sheep
[áɲènèè]	cat
[átəət]	antelope
[gɛ́tʃpàà]	to fall

Pending more extensive data, these are treated as VV sequences of similar vowels rather than as phonemic length contrast.

ıble 4

Place of articulation / ınner of ticulation			Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	velar	glott al	Labial-velar
STOPS	plosive	VL	p	t t^w		k k^w		Kp kp^w
		VD	b b^i	d		g g^i		gb
	Prenasal	VL		nt		ŋk		
		VD	mb	nd		ŋg		ŋgb
	Nasal		m m^w	n	ɲ	ŋ		
AFFRICATES	VL				ʧ ʧʲ			
	VD				ʤ $ʤ^w$			
	Pre-nasal				nʧ			
FRICATIVES	VL		f	s s^w s^j			h	
	VD					ɣ		
LATERAL				l				
GLIDES		w			j			

The tone-system of Ambele seems fairly typical for this region of Grassfields. Ị ganganu (2001) provides evidence for contrast between Low, Middle and High as well as Rising and Falling tone. She posits that the glide tones may have arisen from compression of a sequence of similar vowels with different tones. This suggests that the glide tones may subdivide into different categories (Low-High, Lo-Mid etc.) but no direct evidence is given for this.

5.11.2.2 Western Momo

Western Momo is listed as having three lects, Atong, Busam and Manta, although Manta is divided into a large number of subdialects.

Table 18 shows a series of shared lexemes that appear to be shared among the Western Momo languages and not to be attested in Eastern Momo.

Table 18. Innovations defining Western Momo languages

Gloss	Atong	Busam	Manta	Bantakpa	Tanka	Menka	Alunfa	Osatu
head	fɨ	fi	fee	fii	fee	fi	ɛfɛ	
blood	ɛŋkin	ɛŋkin	ɛŋkin	ŋkin	ɛŋkin	ɔŋkin	ɔŋki	
horn	efoŋ	ndɔŋ	ɛfɔŋ	efɔŋ	ɛfɔŋ	ɑfɔŋ	ɔfuu	
human being	we/	wɔt	vɛ’	bvɛ’	vɛ’	vɛt	ow\ɔ	
rope	əɣoa	ɛyə	ɛɣɔ	ɛɣɔ	ɛɣɔ	ohɔ	owii	
elephant	nsu/	su’	nso’	nso’	nsɔ’	isɔ	ɛnsu’	
tortoise	ɛmbɔ	mbə’	mbɔ’	mbɔ’	mbɔ’	kpɑɑmbɔ	ɛmbɔ’	
six	etʃeti	brəndɑt	tiɛtɨ	ɛtiɛti	ɛtiete	dɑti	otɔnɔti	
eight	\ɛnjini	bvəŋi	\nini	\ɛŋini	\ɛŋini	\ɛŋi	\oŋiŋii	
ten	efwat	ɛfɔt	fwɑɑ	ɛfwɑɑ	ɛfwa’	ofwɑt	ofwɑ’	
fall	t\iɾi	tsu	t\ile	t\ili	t\əli	c\iri	c\ili	
vomit	z\ɛŋ	dz\ɛn	z\ɛŋ	z\ɛŋ	az\ɛn	izhɔŋ	yɛ	oyɛ
push	tɨni	pɑ’e	tin	tin	tini	tili	teni	okpɛsi
know	kjaβa	kabe	kɑwe	kɑi	kabe	kɑbi	kabe	okɔkə

Source: SIL unpublished wordlists

Even so, the classification that places Western Momo outside Ị arrow Grassfields which includes Eastern Momo does not seem very soundly based.

5.11.2.3 Menchum

Menchum is represented by a single language, Befang, which has a number of dialects. Available material on Menchum is very slight, but includes Abre (2003) and Gueche (2006).

5.11.2.4 Narrow Grassfields

5.11.2.4.1 General

5.11.2.4.2 Ring

5.11.2.4.3 Momo

5.11.2.4.4 Eastern Grassfields

5.11.2.4.4.1 General

5.11.2.4.4.2 Bamileke

Fe'fe'
Ghomálá'
Kwa'
Medumba
Mengaka
Ị da'nda'
Ị giemboon
Ị gomba
Ị gombale
Ị gwe
Yemba

The Bagam, a subgroup of the Mengaka, appear to have developed their own script, probably sometime in the nineteenth century. L.W.G. Malcolm, an adminsntrator and ethnographer, documented this script and submitted a paper to the Journal of the African Society in 1920 (Malcolm (1920/21). The journal was edited by Sir Harry Johnston, who for reasons best known to himself, considered indigenous African scripts to be 'clumsy copies of Roman script'. As a consequence, no Bagam characters were ever published and only came to light some seventy years later, when they were published in the journal's successor, *African Affairs* (Tutscherer 1999). There is a clear connection with the Bamun script (§5.11.3.4.4.4) and some characters are the same. Unfortunately, the Bagam script has disappeared and it is unlikely we will know more than is contained in Malcolm's admittedly amateur record.

5.11.3.4.4.3 Ị gemba cluster

Gloss	Bambui	Bambili	Bufe (Bafut)	Pinyin	Alatining	Ị kwen	Mandankwe	Beba'	Bombe (Beba')	Mankon	Mundum (Beba')	Mbatu (Mankon)	Ị jo (Ma
	nelwí	nə̀lüé	nìlwî	nəlíə	nə̀lwí	nœ̀lüí	nìlúwè	nèlwí	nèluí	nə̀lwê	nə̀núgə̀	nə̀lwê	nə̀lv
	nìbúu	nə̀bwén	nìbìì	nəpúŋnə̀	nə̀bwúnə̀	nœ̀bwœ́	nə̀bô	níbə̀rə̀	nə̀bá	nəbúŋə̀	nə̀búnə̀	nə̀búŋə̀	nəbu
blood	àlém	àlə́ɣá	àlə̀ə̀	àlə́mə̀	àlémə̀	àlíŋə̀	àléŋè	àlé	àlé	ɑ̀lémə̀	ànə́mə̀	àlê	àlên

5.11.3.4.4.4 Ị un cluster

The Ị un cluster was probably first characterised by Hombert (1980) and this was picked up in the ALCAM (Dieu & Renaud 1983). Table 19 shows the Ị un languages listed by the vernacular name for the language, with the sometimes more familiar name given in the second column.

Table 19. The Nun languages

Language	Alternative	Population
Baba	Papia, Bapa, Bapakum	13,000
Chuufi	Bafanyi, Bafangi, Ị chufie	8,500
Ị goobechop	Bamali, Chopechop	5,300
Mboyakum	Bambalang, Tshirambo	14,500
Bamenyan	Mamenyan, Pamenyan, Mengambo	4,000
Shu paməm	Bamoun, Bamoum, Bamum	215,000
Bangolan		13,500
Mungaka	Bali, Li, Ị gaaka, Ị ga'ka, Munga'ka	50,000
Dialects	Bali Ị yonga (Bali), Ti (Bati), Ị de (Bandeng)	
Ị ote: All these languages are assigned the ISO code 639-3		

For some reason, the Ị un languages were particualrly well-represented among the freed slaves resident in Sierra Leone when Koelle was compiling his *Polyglotta Africana*. He has lists of Bati, Baba, Shu Paməm, Bangolan. Bamenyam and Məngaka (Table 2). Compared with many other languages in this area, the Ị un languages are comparatively well-served.

Table 20. Data sources for the Nun languages

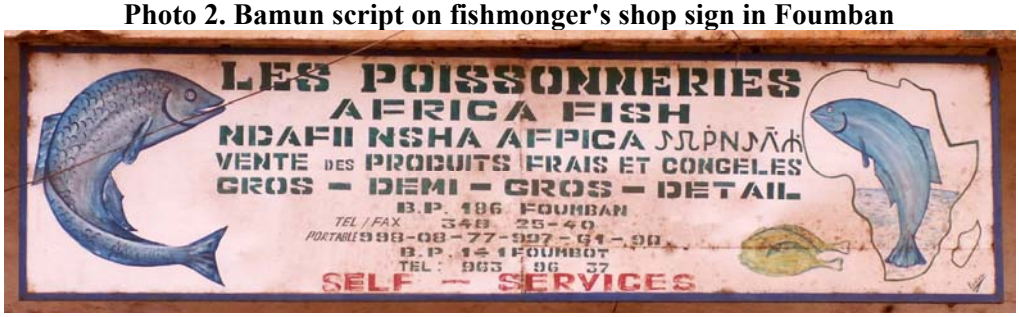
Language	References
Baba	Ị ashipu (2005)
Chuufi	Koopman & Kural (1994), Grant (2007)
Ị goobechop	Achotia (2005)
Mboyakum	Anon (2004)
Bamenyan	ALCAM
Shu paməm	Ward (1937/39), Matateyou (2002)
Bangolan	Ị jeck & Anderson (2003)
Mungaka	Sema (1988), Stöckle & Tischhauser (1993), Awah (1997)
Bali	Vielhauer (1915), Kähler-Meyer (1941/42)
Ti	Ị usi (1986)

Ị ote: All these languages are assigned the ISO code 639-3

	Bamali	Bafanji	Bamb alang	Bame nyam	Bang olan	Bandeng (Mungaka)	Bapi (Bamun)	Bati (Mungaka)	Baba '	Bamun	Bali Ị yonga (Mungaka)
leg	kɔt	kɔɔ	kwo	lakɔt	kpat	kwa	kʰwu	tʃʰanəkfwo	ku	lákùt	kwù
sk	nəpɔt	pɔ	pò \ tɔtʰɨ	nəpot	pwat	tɛʔɛpo	faŋbɨ̃	tãfə	pu	pùt	nídəŋ
y											
fire	mʷə	mwɔ	moŋo	mɔ	məhɔ	moʔ	muʔ	muʔ	muʔ	múú	múʔ

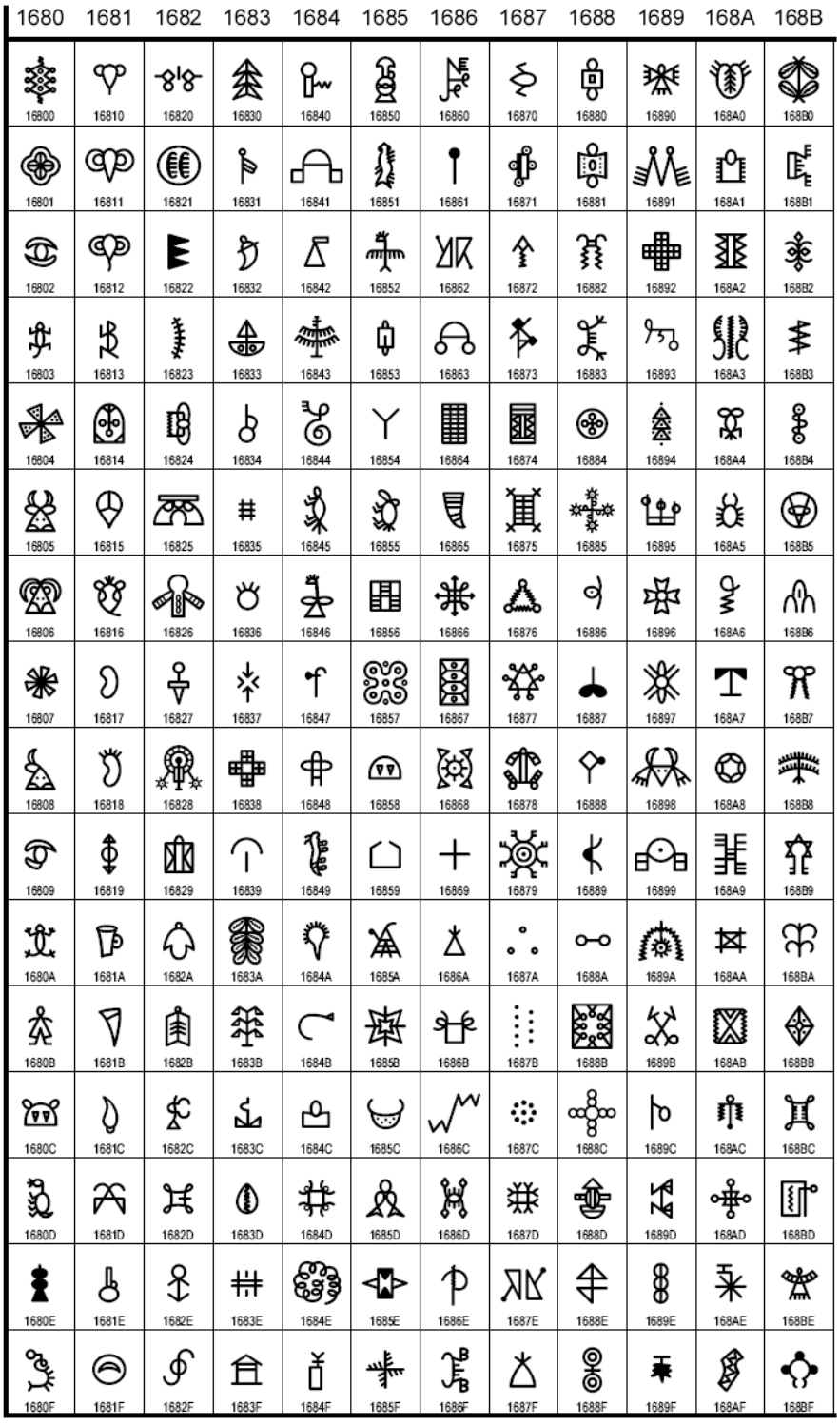
The Bamun people are famous for developing an indigenous script to write the language of the court (Dugast & Jeffreys 1950; Schmitt 1963). The script itself was devised at the end of the nineteenth century by Sultan Ị joya and his scribes. The traditional Bamun corpus consists of manuscripts, chiefly history, treatises on traditional medicine, local cartography, personal correspondence, and illustrated folktales. Some of these can be seen on display at the museum in the palace at Foumban. The script passed through several stages of evolution, from a largely ideographic script to broadly phonetic. In its most recent incarnation it has some eighty characters. It is not currently in use except for some signage (Photo 2) but a proposal has recently been put to assign Unicode numbers to the characters (Figure 9);

Photo 2. Bamun script on fishmonger's shop sign in Foumban



Source: Author 2008

Figure 9. Part of proposed assigned Unicode characters for the Foumban script



Source: Everson et al. (2008)

Another language in the Ị un group is Bali Ị yonga. Centred on

5.11.3.4.4.5 Ị kambe cluster

The Ị kambe languages constitute a coherent but internally rather diverse subgroup of Grassfields spoken in the northeast of the uplands in Cameroun and spilling over into Ị igeria. Some languages, such as Mfumte, appear to be quite dialectally diverse. The main languages are shown in Table 21;

Table 21. The Nkambe languages

Language	Alternative	Population	Data sources
Dzodinka	Adere	2600 plus unknown number in Ị igeria	Voorhoeve (19xx)
Kwaja	Mfumte	3000	Wordlist
Mfumte	Ị fumte	25,000	Orthography booklet
Ị daktup		3000	Wordlist
Mbe'	Mbo	1500	Wordlist
Limbum		73,000	Full-scale literacy project
Yamba	Kaka	41,000 plus unknown number in Ị igeria	Full-scale literacy project

Dzodinka, Kwajand Ị daktup are all culturally Mfumte and may be considered dialects, although the Mfumte cluster also has numerous named dialects as well. Without more data on the morphology of these languages it will be hard to resolve this type of issue. Yamba and Limbum, which has numerous lexicla resemblances, have very distinctive morphology and Mfumte lects may show similar diversity.

Photo 3. The Fon of Mbem, Yamba

An innovation that seems to define the Ị kambe subgroup is the word for 'water', #-dip. Although some other Bantoid groups have forms which may be ultimately cognate, such as the *#–lib* forms in Ekoid, this particular structure, complete with nasal prefix seems to be distinctive for this group.

Table 22. Distinctive lexical items in the Nkambe cluster

Language	Quasi-reconstruction	Dzodinka	Manang (Mfumte)	Nchaʔ	Kwaja	Limbum	Yamba	Mbəʔ
water	ǹdʒíp	mù:ndīp	ǹdíp	n̩dīp	ndjɛ́p	ɾdzə̄̃p	ndzə́p̄	ndzɑp
bone	kfúp	ɣūp	və́p	wupʔ	wɔ́p	vəb	və́p	wɔ́p
sky	-bu	libo	búbù	mūbītʔ	bàmbə́ɣə́	ɾbū:	ntò:bú	kwɑb ú

The word for 'sky' is interesting since all the Mfumte lects show reduplication, whereas Mfumte outliers show evidence of the former noun prefix.

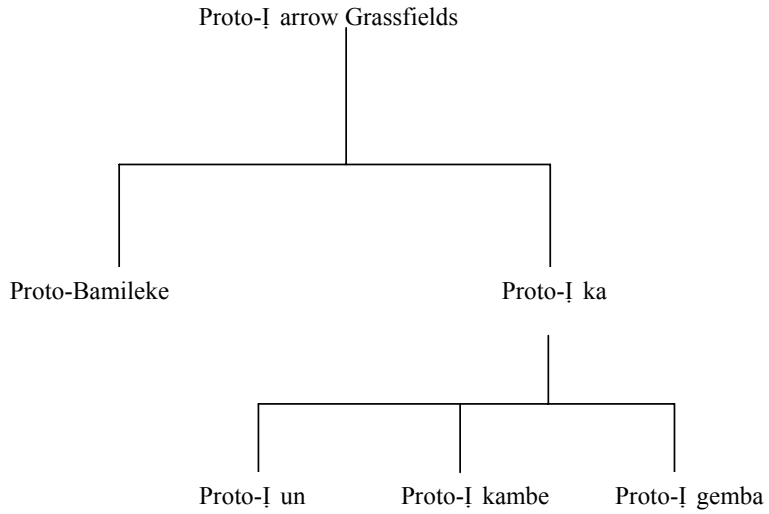
5.11.2.4.5 Synthesis

There is some evidence the Ị un and Ị kambe clusters are particularly related. Table 23 shows a number of cognates between reasonable proto-forms. Cognates also turn up scattered through other Grassfields subgroups but do not occur across the spectrum of languages indicating a proto-form.

Table 23. Evidence for links between the Nun and Nkambe clusters

Proto-language	name	cloud	water
Proto-Ị un	*liŋi	*mbaʔa	*nkyi
Proto-Ị kambe	*lilin	*mbak-	*ndʒip
Proto-Ị gemba	—	*mbaʔa	*nkyə

Figure 10. The internal structure of Narrow Grassfields



6. Bantu

6.1 Overview

The Bantu languages are a type of historical ghost responsible for a great deal of confused thinking about Ị iger-Congo. One of the largest and best-known groups of Ị iger-Congo, they were for a long time considered a parallel family rather than a minor sub-branch. [Insert brief history of Bantu studies]

Sigismund Koelle (1854) and Wilhelm Bleek noted that many languages of West Africa also showed noun classes marked by prefixes, and Bleek went so far as to include a West African division in the family he named Bantu. A different tradition culminated in Meinhof's work; he saw languages without noun classes (typically Ewe, but including many Ị ilo-Saharan languages) as a type he named 'Sudanic'. He regarded languages which were obviously lexically related but had noun classes as being influenced by Bantu and therefore 'Semi-Bantu'. The result of such views was a typological rather than a truly genetic classification.

A work that is little-cited in conventional works is Bryant (1963 but manuscript completed in 1945). Bryant wrote principally on Zulu lexicography and anthropology but this book is an intriguing overview of the more exotic theories of Bantu origins (including Sumerians, Semites, Dravidians and Caucasians) and a strong defence of the linguistic unity of Bantu and Sudanic (i.e. Ị iger-Congo languages). Bryant has an interesting comparison on Bantu noun-classes with those in Ị orth Caucasian, in which he concludes that despite the strong similarities, the resemblances are typological and not genetic. Bryant developed Westermann's arguments, which he cites approvingly and his arguments and conclusions are fairly similar to those currently accepted. It is therefore all the more surprising that his book is not even quoted in standard reference works such as Flight (1979, 1980) Ị urse & Philippson (2003). This illustrates the power of conventional narratives such as Greenberg versus Guthrie to exclude those who inconveniently seem to have outlined their ideas such as Johnston & Bryant.

Ị urse (1996) shows that all major modern attempts to classify Ị arrow Bantu have been based on lexicostatistics, but have not produced an agreed overall scheme. The most widespread agreement is that there is a Ị orthwest Bantu, corresponding to Zones A,B,C, and parts of D; these languages are both more distinct from the rest and from one another, suggesting more ancient splits. After this many authors see a

division between East and West Bantu, but the boundaries differ from one scholar to another, with some suggesting an intermediate Central Bantu.

These classifications all have the defect that they accept the somewhat arbitrary boundaries to Bantu set by Guthrie. The next logical step has been taken by Piron (1998), who presents a classification which extends the most recent lexicostatistic classification of Bantu (Bastin, Coupez and Mann, in prep.) to include samples of all Bantoid groups. In spite of problems caused by inadequate or unrepresentative data from some groups, and defective lists in others, which are known to cause distortion of results, her work suggests various levels of relationship between the Bantoid groups. South Bantoid appears as a coherent group, but the next division is problematical; only the Furthest Ị eighbour method of calculation shows a clear break between (Ị arrow) Bantu and the rest of Bantoid, while the Branch Average method separates East plus South Bantu from all the rest. Clearly further work with better data is needed to resolve this contradiction, and work with other methods (shared innovations, reconstruction) is also required to confirm or modify these lexicostatistic results. A consequence of accepting the basic split in Bantu between Ị orthwest and the rest is that the reconstructions of Bantu, such as Guthrie's (1967-71) Common Bantu or Meeussen's (1980) Proto-Bantu, will need to be revised to give more weight to Ị orthwest Bantu.

6.3 Jarawan

The Jarawan Bantu languages have always been something of a poor relation to Bantu proper. Scattered across northern Cameroun and east-central Ị igeria, they remain poorly documented and poorly characterised. The first record of Jarawan Bantu is Koelle (1854), whose Dṣ̣ārāwa probably corresponds to modern-day Bankal. Gowers (1907) has six wordlists of Jarawan Bantu (Bomborawa, Bankalawa, Gubawa, Jaku, Jarawa (Kanna) and Wurkunawa) include in his survey of the largely Chadic languages of the Bauchi area. Strümpell (1910) has a wordlist of the Jarawan Bantu language Mboa, formerly spoken on the Cameroun/CAR border near Meiganga. Strümpell (1922) and Baudelaire (1944) are the only records of Ị agumi, based around Ị atsari, SE of Garoua in northern Cameroun. Johnston (1919: 716 ff.) assigned the language recorded by Koelle to a 'Central-Bauci' one of his 'Semi-Bantu' language groups. Thomas (1925, 1927) recognised the Bantu affinities of the Ị igerian Jarawan Bantu languages, but Doke (1947) and Guthrie (1969-71) make no reference to Jarawan Bantu, and the latest reference book on Bantu also exclude it (Ị urse & Philippson 2003). Some Jarawan Bantu languages are listed in the Benue-Congo Comparative wordlist (henceforth BCCW) (Williamson & Shimizu 1968; Williamson 1973) and a student questionnaire at the University of Ibadan in the early 1970s provided additional sketchy data on others.

Maddieson & Williamson (1975) represents the first attempt to synthesise this data on the position of these languages. Since that period, publications have been very limited. Kraft (1981), although principally concerned with Chadic, includes lengthy wordlists of Bankal and Jaku wordlist in a rather doubtful transcription. An M.A. thesis on Jar provides a phonological sketch and wordlist of one Jarawan lect. There is also the unpublished grammar and dictionary of Ira McBride (n.d. a,b) prepared in the 1920s and so far unpublished[11]. Shimizu (1983) presented an overview of some nearly extinct lects in Bauchi State. This seems to have been a prelude to a lengthier, more data-oriented publication that has never appeared. Lukas and Gerhardt (1981) analyse some rather hastily collected data on Mbula, while Gerhardt (1982) published an analysis of some of this new(er) data and memorably named the Jarawan Bantu 'the Bantu who turned back'. Gerhardt (1982) provides data on verbal extensions in Mama and Kantana. Recently, Ulrich Kleinwillinghöfer has made available a comparative wordlist of six Jarawan Bantu lects; Zaambo (Dukta), Bwazza, Mbula, Bile, Duguri and Kulung, collected in the early 1990s as part of the SFB 268. The availability of this data seems to be a good chance to re-evaluate the position of Jarawan Bantu in relation to Bantu. Each lexical entry is commented in a footnote.

[11] Apparently an edition is in press edited by Ulrich Kleinwillinghöfer and Jörg Adelberger

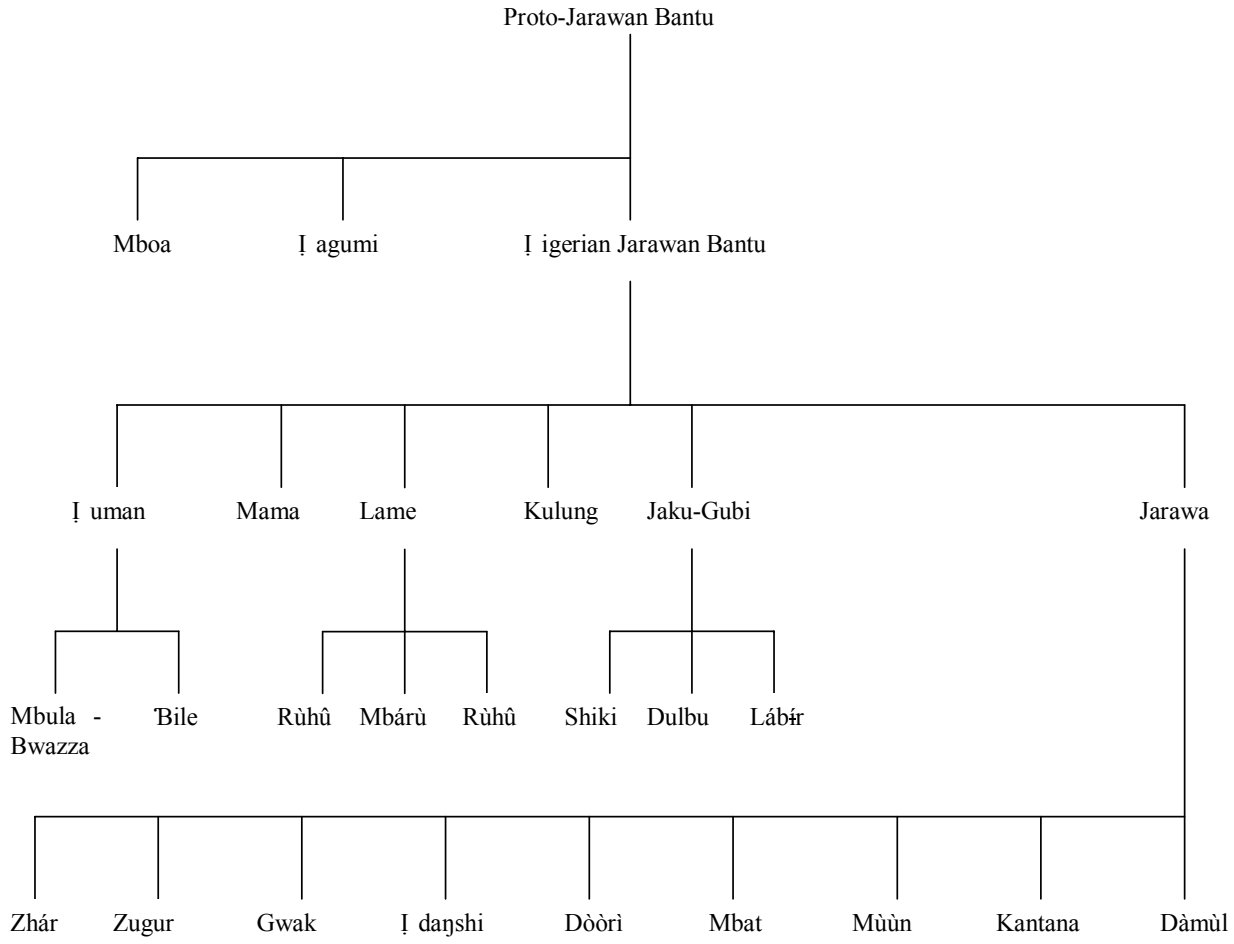
The present situation regarding the classification of Jarawan Bantu languages remains highly unsatisfactory. They are generally regarded as Bantoid and a 'higher node'. For example in ALCAM (1984) they are treated as co-ordinate with Tivoid, Ekoid, Grassfields and others. Williamson and Blench (2000) is a reprise of this view, with Jarawan splitting from a phylogenetic tree after Ị arrow Bantu but before Grassfields etc. This classification was frankly based on impressions rather than detailed argument, and, as this paper will argue, was misconceived.

There seem to be three possibilities;

a. Jarawan Bantu is part of A group
b. PB is quite different from its conventional representation and more like proto-A
c. Similarities between Jarawan Bantu and A are accidental or spurious

The most recent attempt at a revised internal subgrouping of Jarawan Bantu is Shimizu (1983) which follows Maddieson & Williamson (1975) adding improved ethnonyms and some new lects from the Bauchi area. This is as follows (Figure 11);

Figure 11. Jarawan Bantu



The exact correspondences between some of the names recorded by Shimizu and those in Maddieson & Williamson (1975) is not always clear, but;

Mbaru	=	Bambaro
Làbír	=	Jaku
Shiki	=	Gubi
Zhàr	=	Bankal

One reason that Jarawan Bantu has never been welcomed into Bantu is that it does contain many manifestly non-Bantu lexemes, even for fundamental vocabulary items. This is presumably the result of its surprising journey from southern Cameroun to central Ị igeria, apparently moving in small, mobile groups for reasons that are still unknown. Extensive bilingualism with speakers of Bantoid, Chadic and Adamawa languages has caused lexical replacement in many items.

6.4 and the rest

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