

# **THE MOMO and 'WESTERN MOMO' LANGUAGES : BRANCHES OF GRASSFIELDS**

**WORKING DOCUMENT: NOT A DRAFT PAPER**

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Tones are shown as follows;

High	ˊ
Mid	Unmarked
Low	ˋ
Rising	ˊˋ
Falling	ˋˊ

1. Introduction

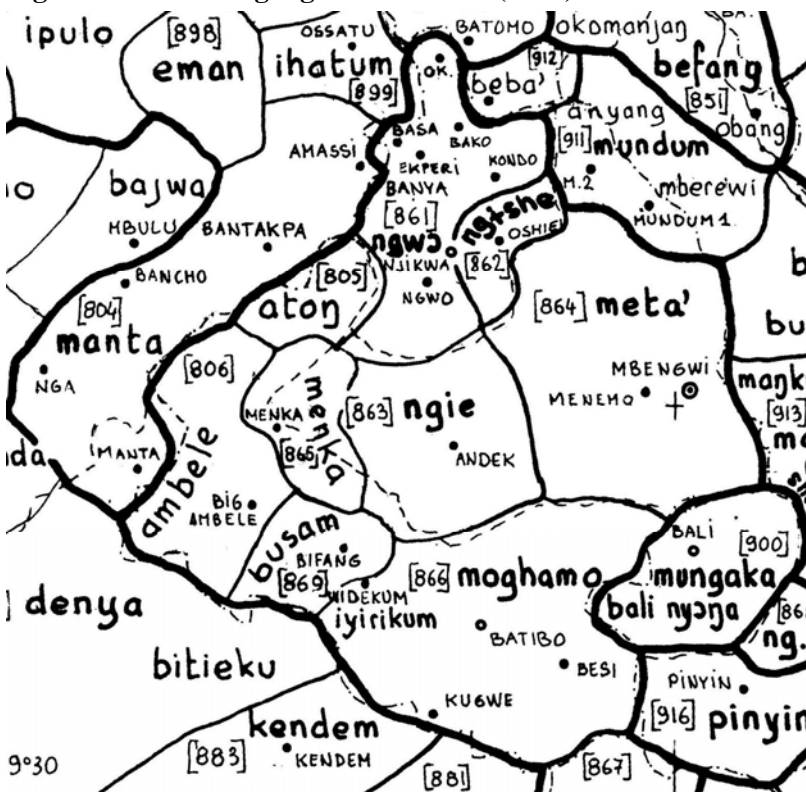
1.1 Background to the Momo languages

The Momo languages are usually said to be a branch of Grassfields, itself a branch of Bantoid. They seem to have been first called into existence in a paper by Stallcup (1980) a revision of his thesis (Stallcup 1978). Williamson (1971:279) had previously defined a 'Tadkon' group, which included Ngamambo, Moghamo, Menemo [now usually called Meta'] and Iyirikum [name of a Moghamo village]. Stallcup (1980:193) says 'There are three languages in the Momo group: Widikum-Tadkon, Ngie and Oshie'. He goes on to describe the noun-classes of Batibo Moghamo in some detail and compares them with Ngie and Oshie [now usually called Ngoshie] and ultimately with Meussen's Proto-Bantu. Stallcup (1980: 194) is strongly insistent that these languages be regarded as Bantu, not Bantoid, although his reasoning could be applied to any Niger-Congo language with nominal prefixes and concord. Since this time, overviews of the Momo languages which contain data are somewhat thin on the ground. The next listing of Momo languages occurs in the Linguistic Atlas of Cameroun (Dieu & Renaud 1983). They list Ngwo, Ngishe, Ngie, Meta', Menka, Moghamo, Mundani, Ngamambo and Busam in the sequence 861-869 and add Manta, Atonj and Ambele numbered 804-806. These latter are known as 'Western Momo' in some sources, a group with a rather flexible membership.

Our deeper understanding of the Momo languages is dominated by documentation on Mundani, for which there are a long series of papers describing its phonology and morphology. Stallcup (1980) deals with noun-classes in three lects, and the introduction to Eyoh (forthcoming) sketches the grammar of Ngwo, but this is hardly the basis for an in-depth comparison. As a consequence, the analysis in this paper focuses on the comparative wordlist and the indications from the lexicon. Needless to say, this is hardly a long-term solution to understanding Momo; nonetheless, it does enable us to define membership of the group which itself is controversial.

Figure 1 shows the location of the Momo and western Momo languages in ALCAM (Dieu & Renaud 1983).

Figure 1. Momo languages in ALCAM (1983)



Since this time, there has been a considerable expansion of data for some of these languages<sup>1</sup> and it seems reasonable to try and define the Momo language more precisely, and to see if the ‘Western Momo’ group is a meaningful unit. Ambele in particular has often been regarded as quite distinct from all the other languages in the region.

## 1.2 Data transcription and comparability

The data put together in this paper comes from a variety of sources of differing reliability. It ranges from detailed datasets resulting from a complete phonemic analysis, as with Mundani, to phonetically transcribed ALCAM lists, with no tones and noun plurals not indicated. To make comparison between lects simpler, I have made some adaptations to the transcription of sources.

### Phonology

Source	This document
c	ʃ
j [IPA]	y
j [orthographic]	ɔʒ
gh	ɣ
h̃	ɣ
ny	ɲ
sh	ʃ
zh	ʒ
,	?

The cedilla is used to mark nasalisation in many Camerounian orthographies and I have converted this to conventional nasalisation in all cases. As far as I know, the macron over a vowel always marks mid-tone, not length. SIL survey wordlists are always recorded phonetically, and use the symbols, ‘ɑ’ and ‘fi’. I know of no case where [a] and [ɑ] are in phonemic contrast, so ‘ɑ’ has usually been neutralised to ‘a’. [fi] seems to correspond to ‘ɣ’ in most languages which have been recorded in greater detail and it seems likely that this is in fact the sound represented. Similarly, aspirated releases of final stops are recorded ‘h’ but these are never contrastive as far as I know.

### Morphology

Momo languages generally mark the infinitive with a prefix on the verb, usually a front or central vowel. Meta’ has i, Mundani has e-, Ngie has i- and so on. These are sometimes transcribed, but other wordlists delete these prefixes or only mark them sporadically. I have decided to leave them in place at present, but they should be mentally deleted when comparing verb roots. Lower numerals in many of these languages have concordial nominal prefixes and numbers may therefore be cited with such prefixes. Again, these should be excluded when making comparison of the root. Where there is data on singular/plural alternation in nouns, I have marked the singular prefix with a hyphen and indicated only the plural prefix. Where there is consonant alternation or irregularity I have cited both singular and plural in full. The default assumption is apparently that the tone in singular plural is the same, but this is not the case in other Grassfields languages, and therefore plural tone must be treated with caution.

## 2. Sources of data now available

### 2.1 General

This paper divides the purported Momo languages into ‘Core Momo’ and others, not all of which have the same classification. I have included Amasi, which although said to be a dialect of Manta appears to group with Momo, and excluded Menka, which is listed in the Ethnologue as Momo, but which does *not* seem to be part of this group. Proposals for the classification of these other languages is given in §3.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Robert Hedinger and Cameron Hamm for making available otherwise difficult to access electronic datasets.

## 2.2 Core Momo languages

The core Momo languages are listed in Table 1 with ISO number, alternate names and location.

**Table 1. Momo languages, ISO, alternate names and location**

Lect	ISO	Other names	Location
Amasi	?		
Basa	NGN		as Ngwo
Konda	NGN		as Ngwo
Mengum	NGI		as Ngie
Meta’	MGO	Bameta, Chubo, Menemo-Mogamo, Metta, Mitaa, Muta,	North West Province, Momo Division, east and southeast Mbengwi and east Batibo subdivisions; Bamenda Subdivision, Bafuchu and Nja village areas.
Moghamo	MGO	Batibo, Moghamo-Menemo, Widikum-Tadkon	As Meta’
Mundani	MNF	Bamumbo (Bamumbu), Bechati, Besali, Banti, Folepi, Iguambo (Igumbo), Bangang, Nko (Nkong).	South West Province, Manyu Division, Mamfe and north Fontem subdivisions, south of Batibo.
Ngamambu	NBV	Bafuchu, Banja, Mbu, Mungyen, Nga, Ngembo	North West Province, Momo Division, east and southeast Mbengwi and east Batibo subdivisions; Mezam Division, Santa Subdivision, Bafuchu and Nja village areas.
Ngie	NGI	Angie, Baminge, Baninge, Mingi, Ngi, Ugie, Ungie	North West Province, Momo Division, west Mbengwi Subdivision, Andek area
Ngoshie	NSH	Ngishe, Oshie	North West Province, Momo Division, east Njikwa Subdivision.
Ngwo	NGN	Ngwaw	North West Province, Momo Division, Njikwa Subdivision.
Njen	NJJ	Nyen, Nzin	North West Province, Momo Division, southeast of Batibo, Njen village.

Source: adapted from Lewis (2009)

Table 2 shows Momo languages, population, dialects and literacy programmes, if any.

**Table 2. Momo languages, population, dialects and literacy**

Lect	Population	Dialects	Literacy
Amasi	?		No
Basa	?		No
Konda	?		No
Mengum	?	West Ngie	No
Meta’	87,000 (1982 SIL).	Menemo (Metta, Meta’, Uta’, Bameta)	Yes
Moghamo	?	Moghamo (Muywi, Iyirikum, Widekum, Tiwirikum, Batibo, Besi, Kugwe).	Yes
Mundani	34,000 (1987 SIL).	Bamumbo (Bamumbu), Bechati, Besali, Banti, Folepi, Iguambo (Igumbo), Bangang, Nko (Nkong).	Yes
Ngamambu	8,000 (2002 SIL)		
Ngie	37,000 (2001 SIL)		Trial
Ngoshie	9,200 (2001 SIL)		No
Ngwo	22,000 (2004 SIL)	Ngwo (Nguni, Ngwaw, Miguhni, Ngunu), Konda, Basa (Bassa), Ikweri (Ekperi), Banya, Bako, Okorobi, Zang.	Yes
Njen	1,867 (2001)		No

Source: adapted from Lewis (2009)

Table 3 lists the bibliographic resources for Momo languages, including unpublished databases;

**Table 3. Bibliographic resources for Momo languages**

<b>Lect</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Amasi	Jungrathmayr & Funck (1975), ALCAM wordlist
Basa	ALCAM wordlist
Konda	ALCAM wordlist
Mengum	Gregg (2002)
Meta'	Unpublished Toolbox database created by Klaus Spreda. Also Spreda (1986, 1994) and Casali (1995)
Moghamo	Data from Stallcup (1980), Lem & Brye (2008).
Mundani	Annett (1983, 1987), Parker (1981, 1986, 1989, 1991a & b, 1992), Parker and Durrant (1990) [also available as a Toolbox database]
Ngamambu	Data from Lem & Brye (2008).
Ngie	Stallcup (1980), unpublished Toolbox database from SIL. See also Hombert (1976), Umenjoh (1997)
Ngoshie	Data from Stallcup (1978, 1980), Bolima (1998), Gregg (2002). See also Gladys (1998)
Ngwo	Eyoh (in press)
Njen	Bolima & Brye (2006)

Of all these languages the most problematic is Ngoshie, since there is no complete wordlist transcribed by an individual author. Gregg (2002) must have collected such a list but he omits it (by accident?) from his otherwise comprehensive report. I have therefore compiled the list from a variety of sources, most significantly Bolima (1998). However, inconsistencies in transcription in different parts of the document make this problematic.

Table 4 shows a comparative wordlist of the languages here claimed to form a genetic unit, Momo.

**Table 4. Comparative Momo lists**

Gloss	Ngoshie	Basa	Konda	Ngwo	Moghamo	Ngamambu	Meta’	Mundani	Amasi	Ngie	Mengum	Njen
mouth		ɔcu	etso	e-klɔ /a-	itú	ɔtsók	i-cɔ /mi-	è-tsê /mè-	ɔtsø	ù-ʃɔw /i-	enu	itʃú
eye	í-yí / á-	esə	eghə	e-γóó /a-	iyó	iyi	i-γó /ə-	èghi /à-	eyo	i-ghi /à-	ɾu	iyí
head		atu	nyato	a-tó /é-	átok	ətɔ	ə-tú /i-	àtsə /è-	atø	à-tów /ù-	atə?	ətú
hair		nyɔ'tu	nyato	ɲɔ /ɲóɔ	ɲɔɲ	əɲúɲ	ɲɔɲ	nyèm / nyèm̩tsə	nyɔɲatø	ɲyɔɲ	ɲwatok	nyəm ətú
tooth	à-sòɲ	eso	iso	é-ʃwə /á-	isòɲ	isón	i-sòɲ /ə-	èsɔɲ /à-	ɛʃwəɲ	i-sòɲ /à-	ɔʃɔɲ	isón
tongue	imèní no pl.	eneme	enəme	ènèmə / ènèməɛɛ	ínemí	ənémə	i-némí /ti-	èlɪ/tèlɪtsə	ename	i-némí	ine	ilíní
nose		ʒuʒu	eʒu	e-zú /a-	idzik	ədzwéy	i-dʒwí /ə-	èdzi/tèdzitsə	ɛʒu	idʒúgí	izɔ	idʒí
ear	tónɲ	atunɲu	akio	à-timi /è-	átòɲò	ətɔɲ	ətɔɲ /i-	átú /è-	atɔɲ	à-tòɲ /ù-	átónɲ	átòk
neck		ɔmwu	ime	eɲəme	ámék	əméy	ə-mí /i-	àmí /è-	ɔɲwe	à-méy /ù-	imi?	àmí
back of neck		fɔnkuremwi	dzumome	e-ɲwè /a-	?	dʒimkát	?	?	ɔɲkwəlɔɲwe	ɲni kɔ*		
throat		dádɔ'o	ɲjendɔ	a-dwó /e-	?	fɔ́dɔ?	ətón ɔ́dɔ?	ətɔɲ /è-	taandwɔɲ	à-dó? /ù-		
breast	ā-bēn	ebene	ebən	e-bán /a-	íbón	ibn	i-bón /ə-	èbì /à-	eben	i-bón /à-	ibən	ibín
arm, hand	à-bíyè /i-	abwe	abwə	a-bwó /e-	ábó	əkwen, ɔdɔ	əbó /ibó	à-bu /è-	abwɪ	à-búgá /ù-	abuɔ	ábók
claw		eghufəbwɛ	ewɔnyia	ɲ-glí /ɲ-	fey	əyéɲ	f-ɲgəm /t-	?	ɛyuu	i-ghóbí	ifuənən	fíwúwí
nail		eghufəbwɛ	ewəbwə	ɲ-glí /ɲ-	?	əyéɲ	i-yêɲ /ti-	mpi /mpitsə	ɛyuu	ikəw		
leg	ā-wōk /ù-	aghu	awu	á-lo /é-	əwōk	əyók	əwu	à-ka /è-	eba	ághów /ù-		
foot		egəbawu	awu	e-blá /a-	?	əyók	ə-kyéɪ /i-	à-ka /è-	eba	ághów /ù-	ebraro	əwú
buttock		abietica	abwɔnyɪ	e-fúdzɪ /a-	únúnú	ndábɔton	ndáb ɪnyɪ	èsaalə/təsatalə èsantú /təsaatentú	kibuɲ	indəɲini*	indzɪɲi	intá ntwɔn
belly, stomach		omɲwa	ebum	e-búm /a- e-tóó /a- (s.)	fúbúm	fíbúm	ətó /i-	èbêm / tèbêm̩tsə	etø	ibúm	etúó	ábəm
navel		etoo	et <sup>h</sup> ɔ	é-twɔn /á-	fütōn	itɔɲ	fɪ-tɔɲ /ti-	ètɔɲ /tètɔɲtsə	etwɔɲ	i-tòɲ /è-	étónɲ	átɔɲ
intestines inside		ɔtwe	tikwə	e-twé /a-	itó	mótɔ	i-tó /mi-	è-tu /mè-	atwe	útúgá	ekretuɔ	itók
blood	à-ném	ɲkiɛse	anɛm	a-nóm /e-	ánóm	əním	ənóm	əlɔ	ɔɲkin	ánóm	anəɲ	əlyóm
urine		ndʒɛ'se	tintse	n-tsɛn	mɪʃʃɛɲ	mɪtsɛn	micɛɲ	ətsɛ	ɔndʒɛ	i-ʃʃád	ɛtʃɛt	mɪtsín
bone	à-wú /ù-	aghufu	khaghue	a-wú /e-	əwú	əkwená	əwó /i-	è-kwē /à-	ayuu	à-wó /ù-	awu	əkwen
skin	í-góbi	ɔkubu	gwəwhuə	gɔ̀bəkɔwá /góbóròkwá	gɔ̀b	əgùb	gɔ̀b	gùb /gùb̩tsə	ɔkwɔp	ɲyí nyō (person) ághóbí	guɔʃɪn	ɪnyít

Momo and ‘Western Momo’: Grassfields subgroups. Draft for comment

Gloss	Ngoshie	Basa	Konda	Ngwo	Moghamo	Ngamambu	Meta’	Mundani	Amasi	Ngie	Mengum	Njen
										(fruit)		â
wing		ɔbaba	ebape	e-blábâ /a-	ibábì	əbábə	i-ábì /ti-	kəbaabə /təbaabətsə	ababe	i-báá /ù-	abíà	ibâ
feather		evi	ewili	a-wúrù /e-	iwidì	əvurù	iwórí /ti-	kəgwelə /təgwelətsə	əwi	iúídi	aju	igwíri
horn	ñ-dóŋ /in-	nde	ndɔ	ñ-dwɔ /ñ-dwɔɔ	ñdōŋ	ñdóŋ	ndōŋ	ndɔŋ /ndɔŋtsə	ɛdwɔn	indóŋ	inđoŋ	ndóŋ
tail		ɔnhwɔnɔ	ikwɔnɔ	á-ntsákòd /é-	ùkōn	ókún	i-ōn /ti-	əkɔ /təkɔtsə à-saŋ /è-	ɔkwɔn	ú-kón /i-	ekɔn	ikwōn
human being/person	wêṭ/ bêṭ	wuru	wulu	γð /bḏ	wəd	wət	wəd/ bḏd	wòt /bòt wḏbḗ /bḏbḗ	γulu	wà / bā	anɔm	wḏt
man	wé-nóm /bé-	wanumu	vanom	a-nóm /â-	mbāŋà	mbāŋà	mbāŋə	mbā /mbātsə	γanɪm	ànòm	anɔm	mbēn
woman	wé-yí/bé-	waze	wayi	a-yé /â-	γyi	wóyéy	ə-yí /mə-	àvi /bèzi	γazɛ	áyéy	aje	wḏwék
husband	wê-nóm /bé-	onumu	enom	ènɔm /anóm	inḏ	nnūm	inóm /mi-	lū /bèlū	γanɪm	ù-nóm /i-	anɔmajé	lwóm
child	ŋwó /bú	wana	wan	ŋwó /bwo	ŋwán	wán	wán /bón	wā /bḏ	wan	ŋwó /buŋ	wa	wyén
name		oghəmu	ekum	e-kúmú /a-	ukúm	əkúmá	ikóm /ti-	èlen /tèlentə	ɔkum	ù-kúm /i-	ekim	ilén
sky		ozu	eʒo	e-zób	kóŋəbòm	əkáŋ	ikāŋ /ti-	ègweləbuule	ɛʒə	ázòbi	azuwa	igút
night	kùní	ezimi	ŋkwo	ŋkli	isímí	əzímí	izímí	ètsə? /mè-	ɛzím	áfḏb	afok	ndzóm
moon		otaa	eta	é-ta /â-	mék	mák	imíg /ə-	èŋu /mè-	ɔtaŋ	ùmáɔ	emua	inwú
sun		ŋwucwe	etsuzu	etáránŋwḗ	ŋùmò	ŋùmə	nyùmə/ mínyùmə	ántányèm nyèm /nyèmtsə	ŋwe	nyamaŋfugi*	etfui	ŋəm
wind		dafu	ifəo	éfùù	afútè	əfḏ	ifḏ	à-feme /è-	ɔfu	àfùfùd	ɛfu	əfwət
cloud		mpa’sa	mpa’a	mbè?	pà?	m̀pà?	pà?	mbà? /mbà’ tsə	emba’e	pà?	imbā	mpà?
dew		ŋgesɛ	egie	gérè	ámə?	əmó?	əmḏ?	lèbaŋa /bèlèbaŋa	amə’	ìgyád	qet	əmwḏ?
rain	ī-mbḏŋ	ɔtsə	mbu	m̀bò /m̀bòrò	m̀bəŋ	m̀biŋ	m̀bəŋ	m̀biŋ / m̀biŋtsə	ebu	imbəŋ	ibre	m̀bəŋ
ground		ŋwe	ŋfi	ŋwā	sēyk	əséy	sī	è-tsa? /mè- si /sitsə	ŋwe	isèy	tʃua	itsá?
sand	ī-sēk	ntsu	ŋkəgwo	énŋfírí, éblándim	siwāŋ	lájíwáŋ	tísí	kəsəŋ / tèsəŋtsə	inʃe	isəkwa*	ijʃe	tísəŋ
path/road		guke	nji	aghé? /e-	nəndzi	əkwen	əzán /i- (p.) əzíb /i- (r.)	a-lū /ba-	wanegi	inđzi	ixadziɔ	ilwóm
water	í-níp	nwa	egum	n-dím /ñ- dímírí	múníɓ	móníp	miníɓ	mèleb, mèlab	muɔ	ùnè	ingro	mílɔp
stream (river)	ó-gī	atwe	egu	e-dʒí /a- (s.) á-ndzò? /é- (r.)	iwīt	əγwīt	igyí /mi-	a-dzi /ba- (s.) èdzí /mè- (r.)	dʒwɔ	ù-gī /i- (stream) u-ŋwi kyāy	indro	ági



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Gloss	Ngoshie	Basa	Konda	Ngwo	Moghamo	Ngamambu	Meta'	Mundani	Amasi	Ngie	Mengum	Njen
										/i-* (river)		
house		nu	enu	ndó /ndóró	náb	nóp	náb	lob / lobtsə	nə	ná	nigi	lyó
fire	úʒít	awuʒi	ewii	é-wu /á-	iwīt	áɣwít	iwīd	èwet /mèwèt	ɔwi	úwéd	ɛju	iwít
firewood		awɛ	ewɛwii	é-wáwù /á-	iwè	áwóná	iwéŋ /mi-	èwè /mè-	ɔwianɲ	iwáɣ	ewɛŋ	iwén
smoke	i-ndi	onyighu	enik	n-dʒí?	ndī	ndi?	ndi?	ndi? /ndiʔtsə	aŋi	indi?	añī	ndi?
ash	á-búri	entwese	abele	abúru	lbúró	əvúru	əbóri	mut /muttsə	abulwi	ábádí	aburu	mót
knife	ó-bék /ú-	obii	fəbi	ébyé /mbyéré	ibít	bít	fibí /ti-	a-nyí /ba-	əbie	úsótí /i-	atigi	ámbẽk
rope		endana	enekə	e-ndú? /a-, e-póm a-, ñ-dè/ ñdèrè <sup>2</sup>	iní?	əŋí?, əní?	iní? /ə-ibòmi	èli? /mè-	ɔŋu	ùní'	egrə	ilí?
spear		egho	igho	é-ŋwə /á-	iwōŋ	əɣóŋ	iwōŋ /ə-əŋjà'á /i-	èghoŋ / tèghoŋtsə	ewoŋ	?	ewoŋ	iɣóŋ
war	á-bít	blili	eble	e-bíri /a-	ibít	bít	bíd	è-bet /mè-	bli	béd	ibiri	ibét
animal	í-ŋí /á-	nyama	nya	ŋēm /ŋéméré	ŋám	ŋám	ŋám	anyà /ba-	nyam	nyə	ña	əŋəm
meat		odugu	nya	ŋēm /ŋéméré		ŋám	ŋám	nyà /nyàtsə	nyam	nyə		
dog	à-bók /i-	bû	eb <sup>h</sup> u	bó/ bóró	bók	bók	bó	bə /batsə	bu	bəw /ibəw	bok	ábū
elephant		geneme	nsək	aŋkə	sē	ntsen <sup>3</sup>	sən	èsō /mè-	—	aŋifom*	añafom	iʒən
goat	bwí	bwutdi	ebhu	bú /búru	gwí	əɣwí	əbóbí /i- (he-~)	dzə /dzətsə	bi	ibúgí	bu	gwí
bird	ù-nén /i-	foneme	fənən	énòr /ènòn	finən	fənən	finən /ti-	ànĩ /è-	ɔnen	ù-nèn /i-	inən	ánìn
tortoise		—	—	à-tòròkí /è-	ákywíákò	kwímāŋkò?	kyimàkò? /mikyimàkò?	kekəŋ /bèkekəŋ	embə'	àtòdò kí	atroki	kíkōŋ
snake	í-dʒúgō	dʒwe	edʒu	dʒwé / dʒwéré	dʒó	dʒō	jó	nyàkàbòŋ/nyàtekàbòŋ	dʒwə	idʒúgə	dʒuwə	əɣəbòŋ
fish		oduguba	ebu	ʒú /ʒúru	ʒú	əɣwēy	igwi /ə-	asə /ba-sə /sətsə	ʒu	sú	ʒu	ʒú
louse		agligwa'a	niŋkwan	ñ-tin /ñtiri	id	ətít	tid	nkət /nkəttə	eɫligbaŋ	ù-pəʔ /i-	ətiri	kət
egg	ábómō	enu	ebuməgu	a-kôn /e-	ibūm	əbūm	ibōm /ə-	è-bū /á-	eken	ábōm /ù-	aqəg	ibwóm
tree	á-yát /ú-	at <sup>h</sup> u	azəl	a-zór /e-	ázét	əzérí	əzéd /i-	àyit /è-	azole	à-zád /ù-	azet	àʒít
bark		akubə at <sup>h</sup> u	ŋgwəzəl	gōb	ákhóphì	əɣúb	əkòpì /i-	à-kúb /è-	gup	injiməzad*	awəzət	qōʒít

<sup>2</sup> and several other names according to material

<sup>3</sup> My interpretation of a scrambled print

Momo and ‘Western Momo’: Grassfields subgroups. Draft for comment

Gloss	Ngoshie	Basa	Konda	Ngwo	Moghamo	Ngamambu	Meta'	Mundani	Amasi	Ngie	Mengum	Njen
				/góbóró								
leaf	ā-fək /ú-	efufu	efwəzəl	e-fú /a-	ifóʔ	əfúʔ	ifóʔ /ti-	əfəʔ/təfəʔtsə	efu	ù-fúʔ /i-	efu	ifúʔ
root		ogha	eghazəl	á-gha /é-	áγāŋ	əγāŋ	əghāŋ /i-	əghaŋ /təghaŋtsə	oγaŋ	á-ghán /ú-	axaŋ	iyáŋ
salt	ùŋgwāŋ	oŋgie	fəŋgwa	ńgbáá	fiwāŋ	fiɣwāŋ	fiŋgwāŋ /ti-	ngwaŋ	oŋge	ù-ngwāŋ /i-	imbaŋ	áɣbwāŋ
fat		afómə	ifom	m-fóm /mífómóró	tifóm	mófóm	tifóm	méfō	fwóm	ifúŋ	efo	mifwóm
hunger(general)		tfo	etʃə	fʃwə	ńdzèy	ńdzèy	ndzi	ndzi /ndzitsə	fʃwəŋ	i-njèy	tʃoŋ	ńdzèk
hunger for meat		dandoo	etsonya	fʃwə nyem	?	?	?	?	dandwəŋnyam	?		
iron (metal)		akweghe	atəŋə	a-tóró /e-	átéy	ətíní	ətóní /i-	átíina	atene	à-tóní /ù-	atini	átíní
one		ōfi	moʔ	əŋwaʔ	mōʔ	əmóʔ	fibi, mōʔ	mōʔ	amwəʔ	ifèy	abiŋ	mōʔ
two		ōtʃlā	fi	áfye	bē	əbē	-bē	be	əfie	ibígí	efije	byá
three		ōhwā	etala	átéd	tád	ətát	-tád	tat	ətali	itá	itaʔa	tát
four		ētánā	ihwa	èkwè	kwè	əkwe	-kwè	kwi, tsə (Tabot dialect)	ekwa	ikyùgí	etfuwa	kwèk
five		dāŋfú	etan	ètān	ān	ótán	-tān	tāā	etan	itīŋ	eten	tèyn
six		ābóbátʃra	ndufu	mfo	tifúó	əfúyó	fúó	ntúa	dənfu	ifəw	efok	ntō
seven		ŋíghwā	sambala	sāambye	sāmbè	sāmbé	sāmbē	sāāmbe	amba	isambigi*	fambia	sāmbýá
eight		ētánəhwā	ifwa	fwo	fāmi	fām	fāmi	fāā	efwəma	ifèy	efuwā	fā
nine		ēyumu	nikwə	kə	ləbók	əbók	əbòə	bəʔa	dekwo	əbəw	ebuʔə	bùə
ten		ōfi	wum	wum	wūm	yūm, wūm	wōm	əghem	eghum	iwūm	eyəm	iyóm
come		dzəʔə	zui	zeʔe	yiʔeʔ	mbəʔə	imbəʔ, iyeʔe	ekiʔi	zeʔe	izəʔə	ziʔi	yíyé
send		tʰúmú	thum	təmə, sàa	tōm	túm	itōm	etsaa	təm	itóm	tom	twóm
walk		gwə́ə	ghine	zin	yē	yèn	iyeni	eghèène, eghèète	zene	iyèy	jini	iyíni
fall		égúu	egu	gò, turu	fè	gòk	igò, ibuʔə, igòòri	ekwene	gu	igəw	turu	ikpóní
leave		táníni	nyane	nèn, sàa, fí	nòʔ	yəʔ	inòʔ (vi), isəŋ (vt)	edzə, eləʔə, esə	gi	?	nere	dòk
fly		dāyālā	zia	furu	firə	firè	ifirə	ele	pfumə	ipəgəðə	pivi	bará
pour		gie	gie	pyè, tù, dɔɔɔ, tsòʔ	tù	zi, fù	ighati, ifəŋ, icwí	ebiile, etsəte	ge	itù	də	tʃimíni
strike		náná	wuru	fʃwá, duru, nímí, tím, wuru	sóm	súm	ibèri, ikò	elene, etème, ewū	kie	ifè (w. hand) itəgə (w. stick) ifò (w. hammer)	fə	bóʔ
bite		númú	nom	nəm	nōm	núm	inōm	elū	nəm	inóm	nom	lwóm

Momo and 'Western Momo': Grassfields subgroups. Draft for comment

Gloss	Ngoshie	Basa	Konda	Ngwo	Moghamo	Ngamambu	Meta'	Mundani	Amasi	Ngie	Mengum	Njen
wash (tr.)		fú	fukə	sò, tsò?	sò	sōō	isò	esfú	fə	ísəw	fugo	sō
split		sáná	fane	pámà	sōm	sán	ijà?	etsi	fan	íwä (cut) ífidáy (slice)	təoro	sóní
give	nà?à	nā?á	na'a	ndē?è	nà?	nē?	ijà?	eŋa	na'a	ínā?	na?a	ná?á
steal		ōdʒí	edʒi	ɖʒi	ɖʒí	ɖʒí	ijí	ekwanje, esò?te, etsə, evi	oɖʒi	ídʒí	ɖʒi	tsòŋ
squeeze		k <sup>h</sup> ámá	cweri	kam	pā?	mín	imin, iswèn	ekāā, ewù?u	fweri	íkín	kam	méné
cultivate		tóémé	xhuli	kiri	wù	ní?, ní?	?	eli?i	kli	íwù	tʃiri	ílí?i
bury (tr.)		ni	khia	kpa	iw?əŋi	kpəŋá	itweni	etu	nyii	ítwéy	tue	ítók
burn (tr.)		só	təno	sò?	tō	tən	iswèn (vi) ifia (vt)	efii, ete	fwoŋ	ítùŋ	bigi	ítóní
eat	dzék	dzó	ne	nde	ɖʒlək	dzək	ijig	eji, ekwele	ne	íjóg	nik	ídʒí
drink	núgí	ndʒaŋa	ŋɔ	ŋwə	nō	nóó	inō	enu	ŋwə	ínúgá	nū	ínók
vomit I				zè	zēi	əzèn	izèŋ	eya?a		ízäy	zəŋə	
vomit II		tɛfɛ	t <sup>h</sup> u					etii	t <sup>h</sup> ɔ			mitə
suck I			fɔ	fwa	sō	swén		esɔ	fwo	ísó	ɖʒu	
suck II		nyuŋu				nɔŋ	inyōŋ	enyɔ				nɔŋ
spit (saliva)		t <sup>h</sup> u	kiu	t <sup>h</sup> umen	tsēd	tək	icēd + mād	?	t <sup>h</sup> uu	itu miyad*	tu	mát
blow (on)		whua	fuu	fùù	fā	fé	ifā, ifòti, iŋwi, itōŋ	eto, efòte	fɔ	ifí	ɖu	fā
swell		dampuku	mwolu	mòrò	mòd	mòrò	ibòbrə, ifò	efùùle, efùte, ekə?ə, emùùle	miele	ifā	migi	mót
give birth		bɛ	be	be	gywi	gwí	igywí	ebi	be	?	bigi	íbí
die	fi	eghu	xhu	ku	kū	píú, kfú	ikwí	eleme, eŋə?ne, epfə	ku	íkú	ku	kú
kill		ri	zu	zu pl. zudu	zw?eti	zwítí	izwiiri	ebùŋe, eliime, eyete, etsii, esòòbe	zu	izwítí	zuri	zétí
push	tsiné	ba'a	dɛ'e	twà?à	tí	tín	itin	etene	baah	ítíní	tini	téní
pull		fini	gwə	gòò	sùŋ	fùŋ	icòŋ, isèri, imən, isòŋgi, ipèŋgi	esə	guu	íghì	go:	íjù
sing		bhəghu	bənetsa	kwəno, kwəro	zə	zə?	izə?, ikwəri, izəb	ekōō	kwən	íkyúgáy	nə?ə	íkwóní
play (game)		mere	finsan	fí ntsará	fēt	fērí	fēd	eyiite	mwure	ídəw	ivan	íyíndo
be afraid		plaa	afana	bumu	bō	bó	ibō	etsə?a	pale	?	guru	íbó
want		zama	eme	ke	khəb	kəp	ikəb	eki	biɛ	?	tʃəŋ	íkí
say	yámá, yí	dzama	ga	gá	yá	yá	iyá	ekeelee, eʃu	game	íghäy	məgə	ísók

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Gloss	Ngoshie	Basa	Konda	Ngwo	Moghamo	Ngamambu	Meta’	Mundani	Amasi	Ngie	Mengum	Njen
see		zɛnɛ	zu	ʒɔ	zǎ, bāt	zǎ	izǎ	eye	zɛ	ínè	ʒə../.zə	zín
show		mɛrɛ	te	tee	ʃwèy	ʃwiyé	ʃʃwe	enyiʔte, enyiʔte	t <sup>h</sup> ee	íté	te	tê
hear	zók	ʒu	ʒu	zo	zók	zók	izó	ezə	ʒu	ízów	ʒok̄	ʒú
know		enɛɛ	ekhi	nɛ́ɛ	kèri	kyèrí	ikyéri	eko	nyae	íkyáy	kri	íkórí
count	tán	ta	ta	ta	thān	tán	ikwàʔ, itān	epǎ	p <sup>h</sup> ie	ítán	tan	ípéní

Items illustrating coherence of grouping. ‘head’, ‘tooth’, ‘tongue’, ‘ear’, ‘nose’, ‘neck’, ‘breast’ and many others. However, it is otherwise hard to see any coherent subgroups emerging from the present dataset. The Momo languages are thus treated as a dialect linkage, pending further more detailed descriptions of individual languages.

### 3. ‘Western Momo’

#### 3.1 Which languages are part of this group?

I have previously argued that Manta, Balo and Osatu form a group which is part of Tivoid, designated ‘South Tivoid’. This seems to be erroneous and this group would be better included with ‘Western Momo’. However, Ambele is highly divergent (§3.) and probably needs a branch of its own. It seems very clear from these dataset that the name ‘Western Momo’ is essentially a geographical classification; these languages have no particular affinity with the Momo languages, except proximity. As a consequence, the name is misleading and should be discarded. Pending a more suitable name, it is here proposed to adopt the name Southwest Grassfields, which at least describes their location and the broader family of which they are a part.

#### 3.2 Individual languages

The Western Momo languages are listed in Table 5 with ISO, alternate names, population and location. There are no named dialects and no literacy programmes recorded.

**Table 5. Western Momo languages, ISO, alternate names and location**

Lect	ISO	Other names	Population	Location
Alunfa	BQO			cf. Balo
Atong	ATO	Etoh	4,200 (2000 SIL)	Northwest Province, Momo Division, extreme northwest Widikum-Menka Subdivision. 5 villages
Balo	BQO		2,230 (2000).	South West Province, Manyu Division, Akwaya Subdivision
Bantakpa	MYG			cf. Manta
Busam	BXS		1,490 (2000).	North West Province, Momo Division, Batibo Subdivision, Bifang, Ambambo, and Dinku villages.
Manta	MYG	Anta, Banta, Bantakpa, Kisam, Menta, Tinta	5,300 (2001 SIL).	South West Province, Manyu Division northeast of Mamfe, from Mom border, Akwaya Subdivision, to Manta, Mamfe Subdivision. About 20 villages
Menka	MEA	Mamwoh, Wando Bando	5,200 (2000 SIL).	North West Province, Momo Division, Widikum-Menka Subdivision, west of Mbwengi, northwest of Batibo. 10 villages.
Osatu	OST	Ihatum, Ossatu	400 (2002 SIL).	South West Province, Manyu Division, Akwaya Subdivision, southeast of Asumbo
Tanka	MYG			cf. Manta

Source: adapted from Lewis (2009) and SIL unpublished wordlists

The concept of Western Momo used in this paper is essentially novel, bringing together a group of languages previously assigned to different branches of Bantoid. My own previous work on Tivoid tried very hard to include Manta et al. with limited success. I have now revised my Tivoid paper to exclude these languages. Table 6 shows the previous classification of the lects here assigned to Western Momo and lists the bibliographic resources for languages;

**Table 6. Bibliographic resources for Western Momo languages**

<b>Lect</b>	<b>Previous classification</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Alunfa	Tivoid	SIL Wordlist
Atong	Western Momo	Ayotte & Ayotte (2002)
Balo	Tivoid	SIL Wordlist
Bantakpa	Tivoid	SIL Wordlist
Busam	Western Momo	SIL Wordlist
Manta	Tivoid	Ayotte & Ayotte (2002)
Menka	Momo	Ayotte & Ayotte (2002)
Osatu	Tivoid	SIL Wordlist
Tanka	Tivoid	SIL Wordlist

It will be obvious that there is no data other than survey data for any of these languages. In the case of Manta, the wordlist adopted is that given for Manta II village. However, all the wordlists are very similar and this gives a good impression of this language. Spurious /ɑ/ has been corrected to /a/ and the infinitive prefixes ní- on verbs have been deleted.

### **3.3 Comparative lexical data**

Table 7 shows a comparative wordlist of Western Momo. Also included is Ambele, although this paper will argue that Ambele should be excluded from both Momo groups.

Table 7. Comparative Western Momo wordlist

English	Balo	Alunfa	Osatu	Manta	Bantakpa	Tanka	Menka	Atong	Busam	Ambele
mouth	ɔpu	ɔnu	ɔndo	é-ɲúú /á-	ɛpu	enu	adzúm	ndzú	izúé	enu
eye	ɪfi	ɛfi	ɪfi	é-ɲíí /á-	ɛfi	ɛfi	ɪfi	ɪsí	ɪsó	esi
head	ɛfɛ	ɛfɛ	ifi	féē /fésii	fii	fee	fi	fi	fi	dzi
hair (on head)	αzuwe	ɛɲɔsɔfɛ	ogwɛ	ɲôɲ /ɲôɲse	ɲɔɲfii	ɲontɲifee	mwóɲ	ɲôɲ	ɲôɲ	dʒɔɔ
tooth	ɛfɔ	isɔ	isɔ	é-sǒɲ /á-	ɛsɔɔɲ	ɛsɔɔɲ	ɪsónɲ	ɪfua	ɪsónɲ	esánɲ
tongue	ename	ɛneme	indɔ	é-néméé /á-	ɛnemi	ɛneme	ɪlémí	ɛnémí	ɪlémní	eléma
nose	ɛyi	ɛyi	izwi	é-dzǐí /á-	ɛzi	ɛzwi	ɪzví	ɪzwi	ɪwí	agí
ear	oto:	ɔtuu	ɔto	é-tǒɲéé /á-	ɛtonɲi	ɛtonɲe	ɔtónɲɔ	ɛtónɲí	ɪtónɲí	etú
neck	ɔnme	ɔɲwɛ	ɔmi	é-méé /á-	ɛme	ɛme	ɔmí	ɛmí	amí	gemi
back of neck		ɔkwa'adze		ɛɲkwalmɛ	ɛɲkwalmi	ɛkpareme	ɛkwatmi			
throat		intu'tendɔɲɔ		anindonɲ	anindonɲ	anindonɲ	ajua'a			
breast	ebe	ɛbe	igbɔ	é-bón /á-	ɛbɔn	ɛbɔn	ɪbónɲ	ɛbón	ɪbón	eben
arm / hand	ɔbo	ɔbvɔ	ogbɔ	é-bwǒó /á-	ɛbwɔ	ɛbwɔ	ɔbú	ɔbúʔó	ɪbu	ebó
claw	eje	adzie	idzwa	é-dzáá /á-	ɛdza	dziikwa	ɪdzá	ɛdzəʔa	akápi	egíá
nail		adzie		é-dzáá /á-	ɛdza	ɛdzə	ɛdza			
leg	eje	ɛbvɛ	ogu	é-bâ /á-	ɛnam	ɛnam	onám	ɛbuʔa	apfɔ́ɔ	
foot		ɛyenebue		fɪɲɛba	ɛba	ɛba	ɛbajɛt			gedzát
buttock	ɛfiyɪli	ɔbvɛɛfɪli	ata	é-kéɛɛ /á-	aka'ni	abokape	ndzù	atfándū	dʒɛm	ʃó
belly	ɔpa	ɔpa	anda	é-ɲáá /á-	ɔpa	ɔpa, ɛkɔt	alíá	ɔɲgyá	ɪdɔ́ɔ	ɛkót
navel	etu:	ɛsuu	itu	é-túm /á-	ɛtum	ɛtum	ɪtonɲ	ɛtwánɲ	ɪtɔɲá	ɛtúmábát
intestines / insides	mbufi	mvulɔpa	okyanda	mbùlɔɲáá /mbùsɔɲáá	ɛmbulɔpa	ɛmbulɔpa	alia	ntubaɲgia	ilê	begyá
blood	ɔɲki	ɔɲki	ɔkye	éɲtɲín	ɲkin	ɛɲkin	ɔɲkín	ɪɲkín	ɪɲkín	lekiɲ
urine	ɔdzɛsɛ	ɔndzəsɔ	andzɛsi	éntséé /éntséesi	ntse'	ɛntɲɛ	ɔɲɲɪɲfɛt	nset	dɪɲfɛt	ɪɛfɛt
bone	ɛβu	ɛyuu	iwu	é-wúú /á-	ayuu	aywu	avú	awúú	avɔɔ	gewú
skin	ɛgɔk	ɛɲɔkɔ	igovi	ɲébà	ɲabɔ	ɲibɔ	ɪdzwéɲ	ɲgóp, ɛkwa	ɲgóp	gbe
wing	ɔfɔ	ɔkpwiɛ	opik	é-páwlə /á-	apale	apabəri	abábli	ɛpábli	abábli	bebáb
feather	odzuwe	ɔkpwiɛ	opile	é-ví /á-	evi	ɛzi	ɔwi	ɪjali	ɪwóó	ɛtánɲ

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English	Balo	Alunfa	Osatu	Manta	Bantakpa	Tanka	Menka	Atong	Busam	Ambele
horn	ofɔ	ɔfuu	ovu	é-fɔŋ /á-	efɔŋ	efɔŋ	afɔŋ	efɔɔ	ndɔŋ	sáŋ
tail	oke	oki	oki	é-tʃê /á-	ekie	eke	ɔkwi	ekí	ikpí	ekpí
human being	owaʔ	owɔ	ɔndu	vê/bê	bveʔ	veʔ	wet	we	wóòt	enòt
man (male)	wanɔ	wanɔ	olwandə	è-wânóm /ø-	onom	vanom	jalóm	wanóm	alóm	bɔnòt
woman	wayi	waye	ɔwundu	è-wâyéé /ø-	oye	vay\ɛ	jajo	waje	ají	benót
husband	onɔ	onɔ	ɔndo	é-nóm /mà-	enom	enom	ɔlum	nòm	alóm	edzòm
child	owa	owa	wa	và/bqá	va	vəfu	ìtsán	wafe	wá	wán
name	oko	oku	okɔ	é-kúm /á-	ekum	ekum	okúmú	ekúm	íkúm	egíét
sky	eyɔʔ	eyɔ	idʒɔ	ézóó	ɛzooʔ	ɛzɔʔ	idzúbú	ezó	ajɔblí	ebólá
night	picu	nunʃu	ifu	áfúù	etuʔ	etuʔ	idzúp	etú	afúùp	betúp
moon	otɔ	otɔɔ	ota	é-tâŋ /á-	etaŋŋ	etaŋŋ	otánŋ	etá	ŋwí	etánŋ
sun	tɛcwi	ʃwe	idʒɔndo	épúm zɔɔ	ɛpumtsi	ɔpumɔʃwe	ɔŋpúm	mpúm, dintʃwi	ijóbá	gedʒi
wind	ofɔ	ofɔɔ	ohə	éfóó	kəfufu	kəfufu	ngùm	ngùm	ngòm	gégó
cloud	embasi	mbaʔsi	mbasi	èmámòò	ŋguʔsi	əmɔmɔ	mbàrè	mba	mpa	gémək
dew	imbasi	amɔʔ	ndwəsi	ámáà	amɔʔ	amɔʔ	amó	dʒiè	amê	awóp
rain	ebo	ɛbu	ivo	ébbóó	ebɔ	ebɔ	ebuó	ebúhó	ebú	émwa
ground	tɛtsa	tetsa	itwɔ	ʃwáà	ʃwaa	ʃwaa	ʃwàp	tswàp	tóò	gátap
sand	tɛŋʃisi	tɛŋʃje	minzenzəsi	étínséé	etɛŋʃje	etɛŋʃje	osó	sé	isí	lání
path	egli	wagli	eji	ézyâ /á-	vagu	gu	jakuqi	wajagi	ipóɔ	agia
water	ɔmwɔ	omuwɔ	ɔmwɔ	mɔáà	mua	mua	mwā	zuhó	ŋgú	émwa
stream (river)	edzwɔ	idʒwɔ	idʒwɔ	dʒuáà	vadzua	dʒua	zà	wazuhó, dʒiga	ilû	alaut
house	enɔʔ	enɔ	ito	múnaa /músinaa	nɔɔʔ	naaʔ	lɔp	ndóp	iké	giu
fire	owisi	owuʃi	owusi	évíí /á-	eviʔ	eviiʔ	ɔvít	ewi	ivét	ewu
firewood	owe	owɛɛ	aye	é-vénŋ /á-	əvenŋ	əvenŋ	oviŋ	ewe	ijúén	awen
smoke	ɔneʔ	ɔnye	ɔndiʔi	áŋíí	ɔŋi	ɔŋi	alí	ɔŋgi	izé	agik
ash	ɔncwɔ	ɔncwɔ	antɔ	éntwəsi	ntwəsi	ntwuseʔ	ontʃúó	ntuyɔ	itú	letɔ
knife	ɔfwe	ɔfwe	ɔxya	wéefe /bɔʃfè	vafe	efe	itó	nkúlɔ	wanti	alitó
rope	odzuwi	owii	oyi	éyóó /á-	eyɔ	eyɔ	ogwó	eyó	ijí	eyō
spear	eyɔ	ɛyɔɔ	iwɔ	é-yòŋ /á-	eyɔŋ	eyɔŋ	iwoŋ	ewá	iwòn	gebam



Momo and ‘Western Momo’: Grassfields subgroups. Draft for comment

English	Balo	Alunfa	Osatu	Manta	Bantakpa	Tanka	Menka	Atong	Busam	Ambele
war (fight)	obli	obli	wunɔ	bíi-ø /-sɛ́	beʼ	biʼ	bít	bít	jwéét	bít
animal		kecu		nâm/nânsɛ́	nam	nam	nâm	nam	ná	nâm
meat	ɛna	ɛna	ɪna	nâm/nânsɛ́	nam	nam	nâm			
dog	ebo	ebu	egbo	ø-mámʒa /ɛ-	omia	mamia	bú	bu	bú	bu
elephant	ensoʔ	ensu	kinəmi	ènsò /-sɛ́	nsoʼ	nsɔʼ	isò	nsò	suʔ	sòk
goat	ebwi	elve	ibu	bíi-ø /-sɛ́	bi	bii	bí	wi	ɖʒé	wì
bird	tonɔni	tunɔni	fiyɪnɔ	é-nôn /á-	enɔn	enəŋ	ɔnén	enɔn	mɔnɔ	ánòn
tortoise		embo	megwe	èmbáá-ø /-sɛ́	mboʼ	mboʼ	kwámbɔ	mbo	mbə	mbə
snake	edʒwɔ	edʒwɔ	edzɔ	ɖʒwɔ-ø /-sɛ́	ɖʒwo	ɖʒwo	ɖʒúɔ	ɖʒufɔ	ɖʒú	ɖʒɔ
fish	esu	ɛʃuu	ɪʃi	ʃú-ø /-sɛ́	ʃu	ʃu	ʃú	ʃwi	sùé	sú
louse	eklamba	akalanɔba	egu	ɖʒii-ø /-sɛ́	gi	gbi	asá	gwití	ɖʒwét	gwet
egg	ekɔnɔ	ekɔnɔkɔ	ikənə	ékôn /á-	ekɔn	ekɔn	ekón	ekón	ɪgú	égu
tree	eti	ete	iti	é-tɛ́tɛ́ /á-	atɛ́tɛ́	atɛ́tɛ́	etí	até	ajét	gegjét
bark	egɔʔ	egɔʔ	ego	gɔɔ	gooʼ	gɔʼ		ngop	ngop	gɔp
leaf	efuwubwe	efuubwe	ifuwe	éfúbʒèn	efu	efubjaŋ	efúru	efútí	ɪfá	éwú
root	əkɔ	okɔ	oka	ékân	ekaŋ	ekaŋ	okaŋ	ŋkà	ɪkanə	ékaŋ
salt	ɔmwa	omwa	ɔŋma	mʒán	miaŋ	miaŋ	miaŋ	myá	ɪŋbán	mán
fat	ɔmfɔ	mfɔsi	ohɔ	émfwám	nfwam	nfwam	difám	mfwam	difám	lawám
hunger (general)	edzɔw	edʒɔɔ	idʒɔ	tsɔŋ	tʃɔŋ	tʃɔŋ	tsón	tswá	ŋgán	ŋgán
		edzɔɔ		afwan	afwan	afwan	tsoŋ nam			
iron (metal)	etene	atene	itənə	átónɔ	atɔnɔ	atɔnɔ	ańten	ʒɔm, atono	antən	gesén
one				ébiŋ	ebiŋ	abiŋ	abiŋ	ebvəŋ		abú
one II	yimɔʔ	yimɔʼ	inimɔ					gemɔ	amɔ	
two	bofɛ:	bufɛɛ	mihe	éféé	ɛfɛ	ɛfɛ	ɔfè	bejí	ɪfé	efige
three	botyaʔ	bucaʼ	mitya	étaá	etaaʼ	etaʼ	ɔtát	betát	ítát	etiá
four	boŋi:	buŋii	mɪŋi	èŋii	ɛŋi	ɛŋi	ɔŋi	beŋi	ɪŋi	enji
five	bota	buta	mita	étân	etan	etan	otsàn	betón	itòn	etan
six	otɔnɔti	otɔnɔti	mititi:	ètʒétɛ́	etieti	etiete	datí	belendát	blendàt	etyedí
seven	osambwe	osombwe	mititinemɔ	èsàmbáá	esamba	esamba	datinɔmwc	belendátɔmɔ, esamboya	blendàtimɔ	saubwá
eight	oŋiŋi	oŋiŋii	minini:	èŋiníí	ɛŋini	ɛŋini	ɪŋi	beliŋi	bleŋi	enjiní

Momo and ‘Western Momo’: Grassfields subgroups. Draft for comment

English	Balo	Alunfa	Osatu	Manta	Bantakpa	Tanka	Menka	Atong	Busam	Ambele
nine	onjɪɪni:yimɔ?	onjɪɪinəwumɔ	minini:nenimɔ	ɛ̀nɪnɪbɪŋ	ɛ̀ɪnɪnɪbɪŋ	ɛ̀ɪnɪbɪŋ	ɪpɪnɔmɔ	belɪpɪnɔmɔ	blɛŋɪimɔ	njɪnábú
ten	ofwɔ?	ofwa	mifɔ	ɛ̀fwáá	ɛ̀fwaa	ɛ̀fwaʼ	ifuót	bewat	ɪfót	ɛ̀fua
come	eya?	ya	ɔɟɪ	záá	zaʼa	zaʼa	zá	dzie	jee	bá
send (s.o.)	etɔ	se	osala	tɔm	tom	tɔm	tómó	tom	ndù	getɔm
walk	emayine	yene	oci	dʒɪni	zini	zina	dʒɪní	idʒɪni	ɲèè	geŋgi
fall	etili	ɟɪli	ɔgbə	tɪli	tili	təli	ɪʃɪrí	ntírí	ɲfù	geŋʃit
leave	edi	se	ɔveka	faa	dɛʼɛ	dɛʼɛ	zó	tsifɔ	ndù	éndo
fly	efwili	fule	ɔfuli	fùlé	fuli	furi	flí	flò	ntàli	gewuli
pour	etili	ɲiti	ɔhati	daŋke	tuu	tu	dɔŋgu	gifi	fi	gesale
strike	ɛ̀pɔnɔ	ɛ̀gwala	ɔcati	vɪle	vili	uli	swóm	tʃɛ	swám	genkya
bite	ɛ̀nɔ	nɔ	ɔndo	nɔm	nom	nɔm	lómó	nóm	lóm	gegyɔm
wash (tr.)	eso	ɟu	ɔsovi	sòò	ɟuu	ɟu	sú	sù	sù	gesú
split (wood)	eya?	yake	ɔzaki	zaa	zaʼ	zaʼ	netí	dʒati	nʒátí	gedʒat
give	ona?	naa	ɔna	nàà	naʼ	naʼ	nahá	kwɔ, ɲa	naha	genak
steal	edzi	odʒi	ɔdʒi	dʒii	edʒi	edʒi	odʒí	dʒi	nzye	gedzɪ
squeeze	enmeti	ɲaame	ɔɲmeti	ɲámé	ɲami	ɲame	tʃweri	tʃweni, ɲame	nteri	gekam
cultivate	epo?	ɛ̀pwoʼ	ɔkwi?ki	ɟii	ɟiʼi	ɟuʼi	dʒiné	puyó, kɪli	ndʒən	gɛndɪŋ
bury (t.)	ɛ̀nwi	ɲii	wende	ɲii	ɲii	nəɲi	lué	nzwé	zə	gɛŋgi
burn (t.)	eyɔ?	yɔ	wɔdʒɔ	dʒwàà	ʒwaaʼ	ʒwoʼ	dʒwahá	dʒwayá	nʒahi	gɛndʒɔk
eat	eni	ne	ɔndi	ɲii	ɲi	nəɲi	li	ndi	lí	geli
drink	enwɔy	ɲwɔ	oyɔ	ɲɔɲ	ɲɔɲ	ɲɔɲ	ɲwó	ɲwá	nʒɔɲ	gɛndʒaɲ
vomit I				zɛɲ	ʒɛɲ	azɛɲ	dʒɔɲú	azɛyɛ	nʒən	gedʒɪɛɲ
vomit II	eye	yɛ	oyɛ							
suck		ɟɔɔti		ɟwátɪ	ʒwati	ɟwə	tʃwá	tʃwa	nʒa	gesa
suck II	enwɔy		oyɔ						nɔ	
spit (saliva)	etu	onɟwa	otuti	tù	t <sup>h</sup> u	t <sup>h</sup> u	ntuʃá	fɛm, tʃu	ntʃue	getu
blow (on)	eyeni	fete	oweti	fɔɔti	fɔ	fɔ	fuo	féeti	fue	gefəə
swell	emɔ?	imɔɔ	omwɔ	mwɔ	amuʼ	mɔʼ	mí	mwɔr, fɔli	ɲie	gekwi
give birth	ebe	ube	ogbɔ	be	be	be	bí	bì	mbì	gewie
die	eku	kpu	oku	kù	ku	ku	ifú	efú	mfɔ	genkù
kill	eyi	yi	odʒwi	dʒii	ʒi	ʒwi	dʒwi	edʒwi	nʒeti	gɛmbɔŋge
push	etini	teni	okpesi	bwàn	tin	tini	tilí	tɪŋ	mpahi	getɪŋi

Momo and 'Western Momo': Grassfields subgroups. Draft for comment

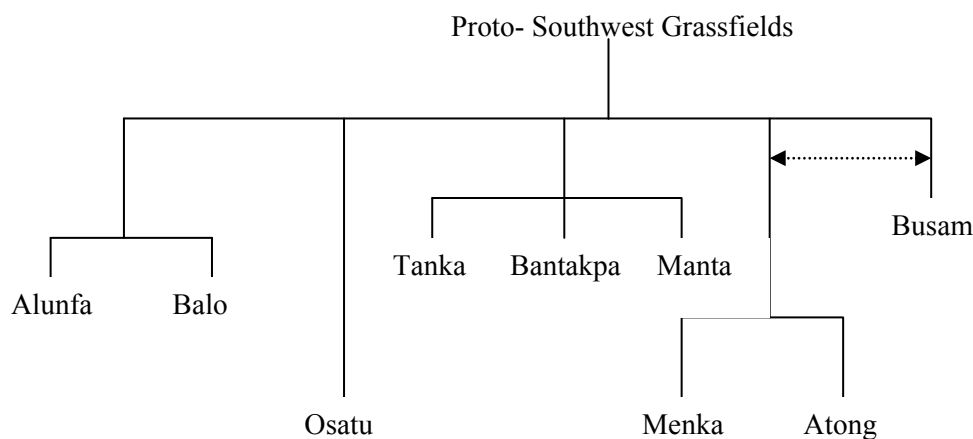
English	Balo	Alunfa	Osatu	Manta	Bantakpa	Tanka	Menka	Atong	Busam	Ambele
pull	egor	gɔu	oɣwɔ	gò	go	wɔ	ɲgwó	ɲgwo	ɲgwíí	gɛwɔ
sing	ekpa	kpana	ogba	kpàn	kpan	kpan	fúó	kwáná	su	gekóŋ
play (game)	epokesa	kesa	oto	pùkisa	kesa	kesa	ofwám	atwám	nkomatu	gesàà
be afraid	epa?	ofɔ	otyɛ	bùmàfàà	efɔ	efo	bamú	búm	mvuti	geŋgula
want	emedo?	ɣɔɔ	oɖɔa	nàà	ki	kiə	ki	kye	nkiŋ	bɛŋkɔŋɔ
say	ega	ga	oɣíli	tsɔɔ	tso	tʃɔ'	móɔ	mòɣò	jim	batáyó
see	ega	bwa	ovɔ	zaa	zɔ	zɔn	bwá	zó	jén	geɓwaŋ
show	etaʔali	taali	otaʔa	tɪ	te	te	tí	te	nté	gentedi
hear	eyo	gu	owuti	zuu	zu	zu	zú	dzú	ndzù	gendzù
know	ekabe	kabe	okəkə	kòwɪ	kai	kabe	kabí	zo, kyaβa	nkabi	gekabi
count	epi:	pii	oxələ	pè	bu	pɛ	pɛ	piyé	mpi	geŋpe

### 3.4 Subclassification and coherence

The proposed SW Grassfields has numerous lexemes shared between all lects shown in Table 7. These include ‘eye’, ‘head’, ‘tooth’, ‘nose’, ‘ear’, ‘neck’, ‘breast’, ‘arm,’ and many others. Many of these are part of the larger lexical stock of Grassfields, but overall this is indicative of group coherence. The distinctive differences with Momo can be seen by the divergent roots for many basic lexical items. Thus ‘mouth’, ‘head’, ‘eye’, ‘nose’, ‘claw’, ‘belly’, ‘intestines’, ‘horn’ and many others have a quite different root.

In terms of the internal classification of SW Grassfields, the similarities between lects make this difficult to assess in detail. However, some aspects of subgrouping can be established. Busam is clearly the most remote member of the group, with non-cognate lexemes for ‘claw’, ‘leg’, ‘belly’, ‘horn’, ‘sun’, ‘stream’, ‘house’, ‘firewood’, ‘rope’, ‘war’, ‘goat’, ‘egg’, ‘tree’, ‘salt’, ‘hunger’, ‘send’, ‘fall’, ‘fly’, ‘drink’, ‘swell’, and ‘push’. Menka, Atong and Busam may form an outlier, sharing lexemes for ‘mouth’, ‘wind’, ‘spear’, ‘die’. However, this number is low compared with the divergent lexemes of Busam and thus this may be either a contact effect or parallel common inheritance. Manta, Tanka and Bantakpa appear to form a subgroup, exclusively sharing lexemes for ‘skin’, ‘dog’ and ‘nine’. Balo and Alunfa form a subset, although they do not show distinctive lexical innovations, but because the forms of individual items are very close to one another. See, for example, the word for ‘one’. With this in mind, the following tentative ‘tree’ is offered for SW Grassfields (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Internal classification of SW Grassfields**



### 4. The puzzle of Ambele

The Ethnologue (2009) lists Western Momo as having three lects, Ambele, Atong and Busam. Ambele, spoken in 11 villages in Momo Division, North West Province, Cameroun by some 2600 speakers in 2000. Nganganu (2001) states that the speakers know the language as Lèmbèllà. 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. The survey by Ayotte and Ayotte (2002) states clearly that its lexicostatistical counts with Western Momo are as low as with other quite different language families in the immediate area.

The first published data on Ambele may be Jungraitmayr & Funck (1975) and there are otherwise the wordlists appended to Ayotte and Ayotte (2002). Nganganu (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 Niger-Congo. Some, like the word for ‘person’ appear to be old lexical retentions. Table 8 shows a sample of these extracted from the first half of the wordlist.

**Table 8. Some Ambele lexical innovations**

Gloss	Ambele
nose	agi
leg	gedʒát
belly	ekót
intestines	begíà
skin	gbə
feather	etáŋ
horn	sáŋ
person	enòt
name	egyét
sky	ebólá
cloud	gémək
dew	awóp
ground	gótap

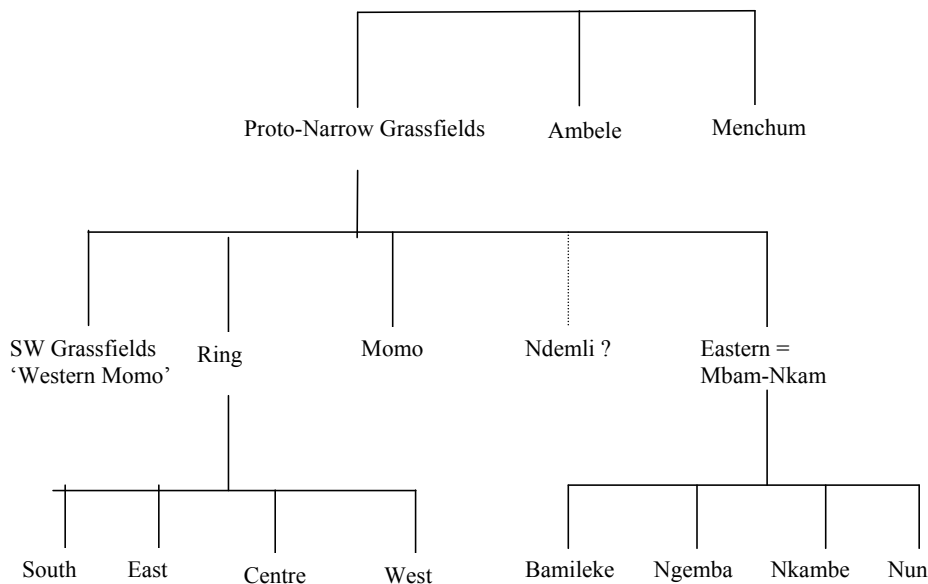
Source: SIL unpublished wordlists

Innovations in such fundamental vocabulary suggest strongly that Ambele has adapted its lexicon from now-vanished predecessor languages. Ambele is clearly distinctive, although it has cognate lexemes with Tivoid. It does share classic Grassfields roots such as the word for ‘tooth’, so it is tentatively placed as a parallel branch to ‘narrow’ Grassfields.

**5. Conclusion: restructuring Grassfields**

If Momo and SW Grassfields constitute two distinct branches of Grassfields, how do they fit into the larger picture? Both retain some of the distinctive lexemes that characterise Grassfields, notably the *\*-soŋ* root for ‘tooth’. Ambele has so many unusual lexemes in its basic vocabulary, as to suggest it is co-ordinate with what can be called here ‘Narrow’ Grassfields. Its similarities with its SW Grassfields neighbours are thus treated as contact phenomena. With these reservations, Figure 3 shows a tentative new classification of Grassfields.

**Figure 3. Grassfields languages**



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