

Tommo sɔ of Pirõ, a language of the Dogon group

in Northern Mali and its affinities

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1. Introduction

This is an annotated but incomplete wordlist of the Tommo sɔ of Pirō language, part of the Dogon group, spoken in northern Mali. The wordlist was collected from a group of villagers in Pirō on the 23rd of February 2005. We would like to thank them for their patience.

The wordlist was collected as a ‘one-shot’ exercise and the transcription must therefore be regarded as preliminary. This analysis was prepared by Roger Blench, who added the comparative observations¹. This document is being circulated to scholars for comment.

2. Location, history and sociolinguistic situation

2.1 Nomenclature

2.2 Location and settlements

The main area of Tommo sɔ is north of Sanga, along the line of the escarpment, almost to Douentza. Calame-Griaule (1956:65) says,

Tombo sɔ, « *dialecte des avertisseurs* »

Il est parlé dans les cantons de Ouassabari-Amala, Ouassabari-Gougouna (sauf à Bolomo, qui est un village de culture de Sanga et parle Toro), Ouassabari-Ondougou et Indel, un village (Kendi) du canton de Tintam (les autres parlent Bondum), Ouassabari-Ouroli et Saré (sauf trois villages parlant dogul), Bargué Tombogo-Ningari et Mori, Dè (en partie, car on y parle aussi Bondum et peul), Kassa (sauf Kono qui parle nãŋa), ceci pour la subdivision de Bandiagara; dans celle de Douentza, un village (Temba) du canton de Nadyomba (le reste parle Bondum), le canton de Tédyé, le canton de Tigné (dont la moitié environ parle Bondum) pratiquent également ce dialecte. L'ensemble forme un total d'environ 23.000 Dogon.

2.3 Language status

The Tommo sɔ of Pirō language is presently being transmitted to the children. The second language of Tommo sɔ of Pirō speakers is Fulfulde, the dominant language in the zone. There is a limited amount of French spoken, usually by migrant workers or students.

2.4 Tommo sɔ of Pirō culture and history

2.5 The classification of Tommo sɔ of Pirō

Calame-Griaule (1956:66) says,

Tombo sɔ, « *dialecte des avertisseurs* »

Ce dialecte se divise en deux sous-groupes principaux:

I. Le groupe de Ondom et Amala (au nord de l'aire du tombo dans la région de Ningari, Sarédina, etc.).

II. Le groupe de Wazouba (au sud du premier dans la région du canton de Ouassabari-Ouroli et Saré).

Il venait en second dans la révélation à l'ancêtre Amma Sérrou; en effet, il est, d'après la tradition, le premier dialecte qui se soit différencié du dyamsay lors de la séparation des familles. Actuellement il présente un état plus archaïque de la langue que les dialectes voisins. Son aire de compréhension s'étend à peu près sur tout le plateau et dans la région des falaises (il n'est pas rare que des hommes de cette dernière région épousent des femmes tombo). Il est par excellence la langue des chansons, qui sont connues dans tout le pays, ses usagers ayant la réputation de tout mettre en chansons.

¹ The authors are grateful to Eric Huysecom and the Swiss Ethno-archaeological project for providing funding for this survey.

Plungian (1994 :178–179) writes:

les dialectes tommo et Donno sont totalement intercompréhensible, et une intercompréhension suffisante existe également avec les locuteurs Toro (la plupart des divergences concernent la phonétique, la grammaire et le lexique étant beaucoup moins affectés).

Hochstetler et al. (2004) say that ‘Tōmmō-so and Kamba-so (i.e., Donno-so) speakers tend to understand each other. We found that Tōmmō-so speakers close to the Tōrō-so area understand Tōrō-so speakers well, but as one moves further from the area this comprehension gradually reduces so that those furthest away have difficulty understand it (*à peine*).’

The language spoken in the isolated community in Pirō seems close to the other documented varieties of Tommo so.

3. Phonology

The phonology of Tommo so of Pirō is based on rapid observations and should therefore be regarded as tentative at this stage.

3.1 Vowels

Tommo so of Pirō probably has seven phonemic vowels;

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close-Mid	e		o
Open-Mid	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

Tommo so of Pirō permits all vowels to be long or short and all short vowels can be nasalised. Examples of nasalised long vowels are not so far recorded, but certainly exist in other Dogon lects.

3.2 Consonants

Tommo so of Pirō consonants are as follows:

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Alveopalatal	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b	t d		[j]	k g		
Nasal	m	n		ɲ	ŋ		
Trill		r					
Fricative		s z	[ʃ] [ʒ]				h
Approximant				y		w	
Lateral Approximant		l					

There appears to be certain amount of allophonic or free variation between voiced and voiceless alveolars and velars especially in medials. Thus a single elicitation session two speakers may produce the same word with k/g, t/d. The same is true of the palatal forms of alveolar fricatives; these seem to be in free variation with non-palatal forms. [ʃ] and [ʒ] are may not be distinct phonemes and /s/ and /ʃ/ can be produced in parallel especially in initial position, perhaps reflecting perceptions of sentence context. However, in some words, /ʃ/ can be strongly palatalised, possibly a remnant of a lost syllable.

3.3 Tones

Tommo so of Pirõ has two tones, High and Low.

4. Morphology

4.1 Nouns

Plurals of nouns in Tommo so of Pirõ are typically formed by the suffix –mbe.

5. Tommo so of Pirõ wordlist

The wordlist was elicited via French and Fulfulde. This is not entirely satisfactory as pervasive multi-lingualism among the Dogon means that speakers could well be influenced by the phonology or lexis of the second language.

The most likely uncertainties in transcription are vowel length, nasalisation versus syllable-final nasals and the distinction between /e/ and /ɛ/ and /o/ and /ɔ/.

English	French	Pirõ
tree	arbre	tima
leaf	feuille	ɲuə
root	racine	wyɛl
branch	branche	tima n moy
bark	écorce	
thorn	épine	gyɛɛ
fruit	fruit	ii
grass	herbe	bɛlu
mushroom	champignon	
seed/stone/pip	semence/graine	
charcoal	charbon	gyɛmɛle
dust	poussière	uguna
ashes	cendres	undo
rubbish heap	tas des ordures	
mud	boue	unjum
clay	argile	
dew	rosée	
stone	Pierre	dumbɔ
pebble	cailloux	
sand	sable	shɔlmo
smoke	fumée	kumwa
fire	feu	ɲaɲ
water	eau	di
rain	pluie	anadi
cloud	nuage	kulumwa
lightning	éclair	
rainy season	saison des pluies	
dry season	saison sèche	
year	année	
today	aujourd'hui	
yesterday	hier	
tomorrow	demain	
morning	matin	aga
evening	soir	diganaɲ
day	jour	nanden
night	nuit	yaɲa
moon	lune	iyàpíl

English	French	Pirõ
sun	soleil	naŋ
star	étoile	tøndolo
wind	vent	ɔdɔɔ
sky	ciel	àdàgálá
god	dieu	ambanaŋ
world	monde	
ground	sol	taw
river	fleuve	debe
stream	rivière	
pond, lake	étang	
forest	forêt	undu
hill	colline	pəgɛɛ
bush	brousse	ul
field	champ	milne
market	marché	ibe
house	maison	gyine
room	chambre	
wall	mur	kere
roof	toit	
ceiling	plafond	dembe
granary	grenier	
well	puits	tine
road	route	odu
path	sentier	
village	village	damma
riverbank	bord du fleuve	
place	place	
human being	personne	nde <i>pl.</i> ndeŋ
man	homme	aŋŋa
woman	femme	yaana
child	enfant	yigale
husband	mari	ige
wife	épouse	
co-wife	co-épouse	
father	père	
mother	mère	
father's brother	frère du père	
father's sister	soeur du père	
mother's brother	frère de la mère	
mother's sister	soeur de la mère	
brother	frère	
sister	soeur	
son	fils	
daughter	filles	
old man	vieil homme	aŋŋa kunumɔ
old woman	vieille femme	
friend	ami	anige
guest	hôte	
chief	chef	kunaan
hunter	chasseur	antul
weaver	tisserand	gyɛdetine
thief	voleur	gwigwɪpa
doctor	guérisseur	jɔŋgu jɔŋgɔna

English	French	Pirō
witch	sorcière	
corpse	cadavre	yimu
blacksmith	forgeron	irne
potter	potier	
slave	esclave	koŋiina check!
twin	jumeau	
prophecy		
shame		
fear/fright		
bravery/courage		
laughter		
wisdom		
guilt		
anger		
race/running		
sleep	sommeil	
circumcision	circoncision	
death	mort	
name	nom	ndabwoy
grave	tombe	
song		
proverb		
story		
word		
lie		
news		
hunger	faim	
horn	corne	kεε
tail	queue	dula
egg	oeuf	tal
wing	aile	karkar
nest	nid d'oiseau	
feather	plume	
gum/glue	colle	
anthill	fourmilière	
hole, pit	trou	numolo
hole in tree	trou dans arbre	
poison	poison	
load	fardeau, charge	
firewood	bois de feu	
stick	bâton	taŋna
work	travail	kaadu
war	guerre	jaw
fighting	combat	
medicine	médicament	nuō
divination	divination	
money	argent	kyεεε
shadow	ombre	
thing	chose	
land/country	pays	
sickness/disease	maladie	
smallpox	variolo	
diarrhoea	diarrhée	

English	French	Pirõ
eczema	eczème	
goitre	goitre	
fever	fièvre	
boil	furoncle	
sore/wound	plaie	
scar	cicatrice	
skull	crâne	
brain	cervelle	
head	tête	ku
eye	oeil	giri <i>pl.</i> giru
face	visage	dirim bulo
cheek	joue	tugu
forehead	front	dimu
nose	nez	kini
ear	oreille	shugulu
mouth	bouche	aṅa
lip	lèvre	kεε
tooth	dent	inu
tongue	langue	ṅindey
throat	gorge	oḍoḡolo
neck	cou	oḍo
jaw	mâchoire	
chin	menton	byε
shoulder	épaule	kaṅga
armpit	aisselle	karkar
fist	poing	
arm	bras	numo
hand	main	lumo
elbow	coude	
finger	doigt	
leg	jambe	an
foot	pied	an kinde
heel	talon	
thigh	cuisse	paga
knee	genou	ṅuṅolo
nail	ongle	kobidi
breast (female)	sein	iru
stomach	ventre	beri
navel	nombril	bwongey
back	dos	unnu
buttocks	fesses	bwolokunu
penis	pénis	
vagina	vagin	
clitoris	clitoris	
skin	peau	gudu
bone	os	kiye
rib	côte	
vein	veine	
blood	sang	ilye
breath	souffle	
tear	larme	
saliva	salive	
bone marrow	moelle	

English	French	Pirõ
sweat	sueur	
urine	urine	
faeces	merde	
hair	cheveux	ungulo
beard	barbe	byε kulu
liver	foie	kinda
heart	coeur	kindey
intestines	intestins	kwolasay
lung	poumon	
body	corps	gwodu
meat	viande	
animal	animal	ul nama
camel	chameau	
cow	vache	naa pl. naambe
bull	taureau	naa jan
goat	chèvre	εne
he-goat	bouc	
sheep	mouton	pedu
ram	bélier	pede anḡa
pig	cochon	
horse	cheval	shomu
mare	jument	
donkey	âne	janjiru
dog	chien	ide
cat	chat	gamma
elephant	éléphant	gwuyε
buffalo	buffle	εde
lion	lion	yára
leopard	léopard/panthère	tara zɔgolo
hyena	hyène	tara
civet		
genet		
jackal	chacal	ul ide
fox	renard	
wart-hog	phacochère	
antelope I	antilope	
antelope II	antilope	
antelope III	antilope	
antelope IV	antilope	
porcupine	porc-épic	
vervet monkey	singe	
patas monkey	singe rouge	ɔmolo
baboon	babouin	dεge
squirrel	écureuil	
hedgehog	hérisson	
hare	lièvre	
bush rat	rat de brousse	
mouse	souris	ai
cane-rat	rat palmiste	
house-bat	chauve-souris	kidikidi
fruit-bat	roussette	wadu
crocodile	crocodile	
chameleon	caméléon	

English	French	Pirō
agama lizard	lézard âgama	gyem
gecko		
monitor lizard	iguane	
toad	crapaud	
frog	grenouille	
tortoise	tortue	kire
snake	serpent	yire
cobra	cobre	
python	python	
crab	crabe	
fish	poisson	idu
bird	oiseau	sada
chicken	poule	engye
cock	coq	engye aḥḥa
duck	canard	tḥ kḥḥ
pigeon	pigeon	gulumba
guinea-fowl	pintade	yawa
vulture	vautour	
cattle-egret		
hawk	épervier	
owl	hibou	
bush-fowl	perdrix	
swallow	hirondelle	
pied crow	corbeau	
scorpion	scorpion	
butterfly	papillon	
dragonfly	libellule	
mosquito	moustique	
house-spider	araignée de la maison	
spider	araignée	
mason-wasp		
bee	abeille	
housefly	mouche	
louse	pou	
cockroach	cafard	
termite	termite/fourmi blanche	
flying ant	fourmi volante	
grasshopper	sauterelle	
mantis		
firefly		
worm	ver de terre	
oil	huile	pīi
fat	graisse	
salt	sel	pemu
soup/sauce	bouillon	
food	nourriture	
beer	bière	
peelings	épluchements	
handle	manche d'outil	
sickle	faucille	pul kebu ²
harvesting knife	couteau de moisson	kḥḥ

² For harvesting millet

English	French	Pirõ
cutlass		
iron	fer	ine
axe	hache	gula
adze		
hoe I	houe I	dàmmà
hoe II	houe II	ine tooto
knife	couteau	
anvil	enclume	
hammer	marteau	
pincers	pinces	
awl	alène	
chisel	burin	
tweezers		
bellows		
cooling bowl	bol d'eau	
broom		
bag	sac	
fireplace	foyer	
shoe	chaussure	
hat	chapeau	gwuro
clothing	vêtement	
necklace	collier	
mortar	mortier	kuna
pestle	pilon	kwi
pot	pot	tundo
pot I	canari I	
pot II	canari II	
head-pad		
basket	panier	
winnowing tray		
mat	natte	
needle	aiguille	
spear	lance	wara
bow	arc	too
arrow	flèche	too iney
quiver	carquois	
rope	corde	shumu
stool	tabouret	
door	porte	taa
door-frame	seuil	mulge
bed	lit	
fence	clôture	
ladder	échelle	
canoe	pirogue	
paddle	pagaie	
bee-hive	ruche	
	Instruments de musique	
drum I	tambour	bwoy
drum II	tambour	gɔgɔ bwoy
drum III	tambour	
kora/luth	kora	
flute		
whistle	sifflet	sudey

English	French	Pirõ
rattle	hochet	
transverse horn	corne	ka kɛɛ
iron bell	clochette de fer	ginu
iron slit bell	clochette de fer à fente	
clarinet	clarinette	biberi
Numbers		
one	un	ti
two	deux	ne
three	trois	taandu
four	quatre	náày
five	cinq	ùńó
six	six	kule
seven	sept	sooy
eight	huit	gagira
nine	neuf	tuwɔ
ten	dix	pɛl
eleven	onze	
twelve	douze	
twenty	vingt	peneyay
twenty-one	vingt et un	pene turu siga
thirty	trente	peerandu
forty	quarante	penay
fifty	cinquante	pɛl nɔ
sixty	soixante	pɛl kule
seventy	soixante-dix	pɛl sooy
eighty	quatre-vingt	kèèsùŋ
ninety	quatre-vingt-dix	kèèsùŋ dekel a pɛl
one hundred	cent	kèèsùŋ de pene
white	blanc	pil
black	noir	gyemu
red	rouge	banu
green	vert	
heavy	lourd	
light	léger	
large	grand	
small	petit	
many	beaucoup/nombreux	
few	peu	
all	tout	
thick	épais	
thin	mince	
wide	large	
narrow	étroit	
hard	dur	
soft	doux/tendre	
sweet	doux/sucré	
bitter	amer	
sour	aigre	
deep	profond	
shallow	peu profond	
long	long	

English	French	Pirõ
short	court	
good	bon	
bad	mauvais	
dirty	sale	
fat	gros	
thin	maigre	
near	proche/près	
far	loin/lointain	
beautiful	beau	
ugly	laid	
hot	chaud	
cold	froid	
strong	fort	
weak	faible	
ripe	mûr	
unripe	cru/vert	
empty	vide	
Verbs	Verbes	
accompany	accompagner	
add to	ajouter	bara
agree	être d'accord	
allow	permettre	
announce	annoncer	sosoo
answer	répondre	
applause	applaudir	
apply (ointment)	oindre/huiler	
arrive	arriver	duwey
ask for	demander	shelmu
be bent	être courbé	
be born	naître	
be quiet	se taire	
beat	battre	jaw
begin	commencer	tolo
bend/bow	incliner/courber	
bite	mordre	kere
blow (mouth)	souffler (la bouche)	pubye
blow (wind)	souffler (vent) I	nguri
blow (wind)	souffler (vent) II	jubugida
boil	bouillir	
borrow	emprunter	ngyere
braid	tresser	
break	casser	jogo
breathe	respirer	ninu
bring	apporter	jele
build	bâtir	udo
burn	brûler	tegede
bury	enterrer	dene
buy	acheter	eben
call	appeler	bwebo
care for	soigner	
carry	porter	juwe
carry in arms	porter dans les bras	

English	French	Pirõ
carry on back	porter sur le dos	
carry on head	porter sur la tête	
carry on shoulder	porter sur l'épaule	
chew	mâcher	tɛmɛ
choose	choisir	
chop down	abattre	
chop/slice	trancher	
close	fermer	
comb	se peigner	
come	venir	yɛɛ
cook	cuisiner	
count	compter	
cover	couvrir	
crawl	ramper	
cross	traverser	
cry out	crier	
cut	couper	kɛdɛ
dance	danser	gwɔɔ
defecate	déféquer	
desire	désirer	
die	mourir	yimu
dig	creuser/labourer	
divide	diviser	
do	faire	kana
draw water	puiser	
dream	rêver	
drink	boire	nɔ
drive away	chasser/éloigner/repousser	
drop	laisser tomber	
dry up	sécher	
eat	manger	ɪɲɛ
enter	entrer	
extinguish	éteindre	
fall	tomber	
fear	craindre	
fill	remplir	
find	trouver	
finish	finir	
fly (v.)	voler (oiseaux/avion)	kilide
fold	plier	
follow	suivre	
forbid	interdire	
forge (metal)	forger	
forget	oublier	
gather	réunir	
give	donner	ɔbu
give back	rendre	
give birth	accoucher	
go	aller	ya
go down	descendre	
go out	sortir	
go up	monter	
greet	saluer	

English	French	Pirõ
grind	broyer	nama
grow/increase	croître	
hate	haïr	
hear	entendre	
help	aider	
hide	cacher	
hit	frapper	
increase	augmenter	
insult	insulter	
join	joindre	
jump	sauter	
kill	tuer	da
know	savoir	dye
lack	manquer de	
laugh	rire	
learn	étudier/apprendre	
leave	laisser	
lend	prêter	
lick	lécher	dεge
lie down	être étendu	unjo
lift	soulever	
light	allumer	
like/love	aimer	mbεgam
limp	boiter	
listen	écouter	
look	regarder	yende
look for	chercher	
lose	perdre	
make a mistake	se tromper	
marry	épouser	
measure	mesurer	
melt	fondre	
milk	traire	
mix	mélanger	
moan	gémir	
nurse	téter	
open	ouvrir	pindire
pass	passer	
pay	payer	
peel	éplucher	
perch	percher	
pick up	ramasser	
pierce	percer	
plaster	crépir	
play	jouer	kilme
pound	piler	dwɔɔ
pour	verser	yubɔ
pull	tirer	vinje
push	pousser	damba
put	poser/placer	daanda
put away	remiser/ranger	
put down	déposer	
rain	pleuvoir	

English	French	Pirõ
read	lire	
receive/accept	recevoir/accepter	
refuse	refuser	yabalu
remember	se souvenir	
repair	réparer	
resemble	ressembler	
rest	se reposer	
return	retourner	
ride	monter un animal	
rinse	rincer	
roast	rôtir	yõra
rub	frotter	shuda
run	courir	jobo
sacrifice	sacrifier	
say	dire	shõ
scratch	gratter	
see	voir	yẽŋ
seize	saisir/tenir	
sell	vendre	
send	envoyer	tuyẽŋ
sew	coudre	noy
shake	secouer	
sharpen	aiguiser	
shave	se raser	
shoot	tirer	ta
show	montrer	
sing	chanter	
sit down	s'asseoir/être assis	
sleep	dormir	yeyim
smell	sentir	
smoke (tobacco)	fumer (tabac)	
sneeze	éternuer	
snore	ronfler	
soak	faire tremper	
sow	semer	
spit	cracher	
stay	rester	
steal	voler	gwuye(gwuye)
stick onto	coller	
sting	piquer	
stroll	se promener	
suck	sucer/téter	
suffice	suffire	
surpass	surpasser	
swallow	avaler	
sweep	balayer	
swell	gonfler	
swim	nager	
take	prendre	
take off	ôter	
talk	discuter	
taste	goûter	
teach	enseigner	

English	French	Pirō
tear	déchirer	
tear off	arracher	
tell	raconter	
tell a lie	mentir à	
think	penser	ada
threaten	menacer	
throw	jeter	kamba
tie	nouer/attacher	
touch	toucher, palper	
tremble	trembler	
try	essayer	
turn over	se retourner	
twist	tordre/tresser	
undress	se déshabiller	
unfold	déplier	
untie	dénouer/détacher	
urinate	uriner	
vomit	vomir	
wait	attendre	
walk	marcher	yamo
want/need	vouloir/avoir besoin	
wash self	se laver	ndiyɛ
wash s.t.	laver q.c.	mɔgɔ
weave	tisser	
weed	sarcler/arracher les herbes	
whisper	chuchoter	
whistle	siffler	
wipe (nose)	se moucher	
wipe/dry (dish)	essuyer (vaisselle)	
write	écrire	
yawn	bâiller	
Q words		
where	où	
when	quand	
how	comment	
how many	combien	
why	pourquoi	
who	qui	
what	quoi	
here	ici	
there	là	
left	à gauche	
right	à droite	
north	nord	
south	sud	
east	est	
west	ouest	
I, me	je, moi	
you	toi	
he, she, it	lui, elle	
we, us	nous	
you	vous	
they, them	ils	

