

The Niger-Congo Languages

**A classification and description
of Africa's largest language family**

**Editor: John Bendor-Samuel
Assistant Editor: Rhonda L. Hartell**

UNIVERSITY
PRESS OF
AMERICA



Lanham • New York • London



Copyright © 1989 by

University Press of America,® Inc.

4720 Boston Way
Lanham, MD 20706

3 Henrietta Street
London WC2E 8LU England

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

British Cataloging in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Niger-Congo languages.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Niger-Congo languages—Classification. I. Bendor-Samuel,
John. II. Hartell, Rhonda L.

PL8005.N54 1989 496'.3'012 88-36268 CIP

ISBN 0-8191-7375-4 (alk. paper)

ISBN 0-8191-7376-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Co-published by arrangement with the
Summer Institute of Linguistics

All University Press of America books are produced on acid-free paper.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American
National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library
Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984. ☹



14 Nupoid

Roger M. Blench

14.1 EARLY SCHOLARSHIP

'Nupoid' was introduced to replace the term 'Niger-Kaduna' first introduced by Hyman (1972:175). It refers to a group of languages whose principal representatives are Nupe, Gwari,¹ Gade, and Ebira. The unity of this group was recognized by its first investigator, Koelle (1854:8-9), who named it 'Niger-Dshadda', a grouping also accepted by Greenberg (1963:8). Koelle based his classification on word lists of Nupe, Kupa, Dibo, Nupe Tako, Asu, three Gwari and three Ebira dialects. Map I, showing the approximate locations of the peoples speaking these languages, is based on extensive fieldwork rather than published sources, which are often misleading. Figure 14.1 shows the percentages of cognates between representative languages and dialects, although these results should be treated with a certain scepticism since they are based on data of varied quality and on an 80-word list. Figure 14.2 derives a genetic tree from a combination of these figures and isoglosses; similar reservations apply. Two languages or dialects, Agbi and Edzu, are entered in parentheses on the basis of assertions by their speakers. A list of all Nupoid languages and dialects is found in section 14.2.²

¹In this paper, a convention of writing the Hausa form 'Gwari' to cover both Gbari and Gbagyi languages will be adopted.

²Research on the Nupoid languages was initially carried out as an adjunct to research project S78/21285/SA, funded by the Social Science Research Council on the comparative use of speech-surrogate systems among the Nupe and Gbari. Additional visits to Nigeria in 1984, 1986 & 1987 produced further field data. Preliminary results have been edited into the text of the paper in December 1987, but analysis of newly collected field materials is still in progress. A lengthier earlier version of this paper, omitting material on Ebira, was presented to the African Languages Colloquium at Leiden on 7/9/82. I am grateful to Professors Kay Williamson, R. Armstrong, C. Hoffmann, Dr. B.O. Elugbe and Dr. I.S.G. Madugu for discussion concerning various aspects of the paper and for making available sources that were difficult to obtain. However, they should not be held responsible for the final result.

Recent work by Sterk (1977) and Bennett and Sterk (1977) attempts to establish the unity of Nupoid, although much of the lexical material used in this paper was not available to them. However, they do not follow Hoffmann (in Hansford, Bendor-Samuel, and Stanford, 1976) in raising Ebira to the status of a separate branch of Old Kwa (South Central Niger Congo in their terms). They argue for a close link with the Idomoid languages, a hypothesis originally advanced by Latham (1862) and supported by the lexicostatistical work and reconstruction of Armstrong (1981, 1983). The principal reason for postulating the unity of Nupoid rests on the similarity of a considerable number of lexical items. The first 'modern' linguistic material is contained in Banfield's fully tone-marked Nupe dictionary (1914/16). Unfortunately, standardized word lists are not available for many languages, and published lexical material on Nupe Tako, Asu, and Kupa is only available in Koelle, which is inadequate in both elicitation and orthography.

NUPE												
84	NUPE TAKO											
65	64	ASU										
85	80	65	DIBO									
83	76	68	88	KAMI								
84	79	66	86	90	GUPA							
65	65	65	66	69	70	KAKANDA						
70	68	64	73	73	74	70	KUPA					
64	63	58	66	61	66	61	66	GBARI-ZUBAKPNA				
61	60	54	65	66	65	63	63	73	GBAGYI-KUTA			
40	40	44	40	41	41	43	45	45	40	GADE		
38	38	34	35	35	35	35	39	35	34	38	EBIRA-OKENE	
36	36	34	35	35	35	35	38	34	34	38	88	ETUNQ
38	35	34	36	36	36	36	36	39	34	36	36	79 80 EBIRA-KOTO

FIGURE 14.1 Percentage cognates between a sample of Nupoid languages³

³These percentages were derived from an 80-word list including only nouns and qualifiers, such as numerals. The relatively high figures probably result from the conservative nature of basic terms. When verbs are included, figures up to 20% lower are obtained. Moreover, where longer word lists are available, the percentage of cognacy also falls. On lists of 200 words, cognacy between Nupe and Dibo reduces to 66% and between Nupe and Gbari-Zubakpna to 48%.

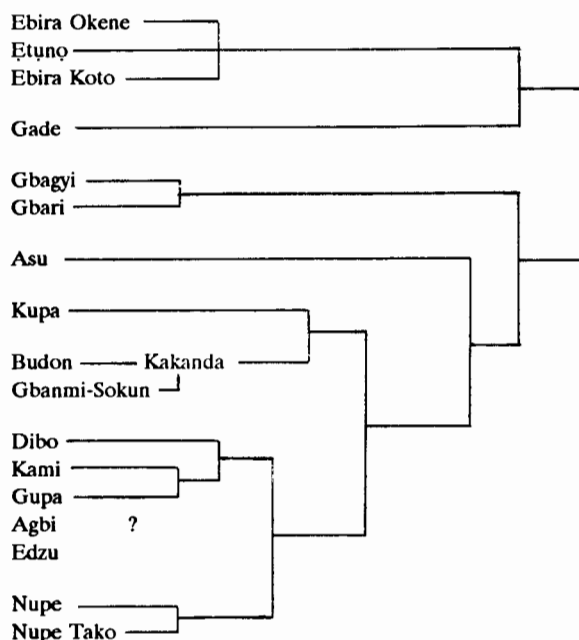


FIGURE 14.2 Internal relations of the Nupoid languages

Nupe and Gbagyi are used on television, while Nupe, Gbagyi, Dibo, and Ebira have regular radio broadcasts. Nupe and Ebira have orthography committees and literacy programs. Educational Research Centre (1980) discusses the work of the Nupe Language committee while Scholz (1976) and Laniran (1984) review the development of the Ebira orthography and Scholz includes a complete listing of earlier sources. Bible translations exist in Nupe and Ebira, with fragments in Gbagyi, and a small amount of secular vernacular literature has been published independently. Hair (1967) provides a comprehensive survey of early publications on Nupe and related languages. Word lists of Dibo, Kami, Gupa, Kupa, Asu, a variety Gbari and Gbagyi dialects and Kakanda are from my own fieldwork.

14.2 CLASSIFICATION

In the following annotated list, Nupoid languages are listed by the suggested reference names. Sources are listed under individual languages. Hansford, Bendor-Samuel, and Stanford (1976) should be consulted for a



more complete listing of alternative ethnonyms. Note the substitution of Dibo for Ganagana, Asu for Ebe and Nupe Tako for Bassa-Nge.

1. *Agbi*. A language related to Gupa spoken at Abugi Jankara, near Gupa town.

2. *Asu* (Abewa, Ebe). The Asu live in about six villages south of Kontagora. Although speakers are bilingual in Nupe, the language is not under threat. Both vocabulary and lexicon appear to have been heavily influenced by Nupe in recent times.

3. *Dibo* (Ganagana, Zhitako). Spoken in about twenty villages south of Lapai. The Ganagana (shown on a map in Sterk 1977), who migrated to the Kwali area in the nineteenth century, have largely become Gbari speakers and do not, therefore, constitute a reliable source for Dibo. Dibo is often treated as a dialect of central Nupe, but a 200-word list shows only 66% cognacy, suggesting separate language status.

Ebira (Egbirra, Egbura, Igbara, Igbirra, Ika Bira). A cover term for Ebira-Okene, Ebira-Koto, and Ètunọ. Scholz (1976) provides a bibliographic review of early classifications of the Ebira group.

4. *Ebira-Koto* (Ebira-Inavi, Igbara-Kwotto, (O)panda, Okpoto, etc.). The Koto live northeast of the Niger-Benue confluence and, according to Srivastava (1970), are divided into two closely related dialects, Igu (Egu) at Koton-Karifi and Opanda (Ebira-Oje) at Toto and Umaisha. The language is known only from word lists in Koelle (1854), Migeod (1911), and Sterk (1977).

5. *Ebira-Okene* (Ebira-Kaneri, Ebira-Tao, Hima, Ihima). The most well known dialect of Ebira is the basis for a standard orthography. The land and language are known as èbirà, and the people as ànébirà. Scholz (1976) and Laniran (1984) discuss population estimates and conclude that nearly half a million speakers would be a reasonable current estimate. Principal published sources are Ladefoged (1964), Scholz and Scholz (1972), Scholz (1976), Ajayi (1985) and Adiva (1985). Manuscript sources of varying importance are Srivastava (1970), Ihionu (1982), Musa (1982), Rotifa (1982), Owuri (1983), Elugbe (1983), S. Elugbe (1984), Adiva (1984), and Laniran (1984).

Ebira-Nya. A dialect of Ebira listed only in Laniran (1984:2); said to be spoken among fishing communities near Lokoja, almost certainly part of Ebira-Koto.

6. *Edzu*. A language of the Dibo cluster, spoken in a village of the same name near Pelemi.

Eggan (Egã). Although listed in Hansford, Bendor-Samuel, and Stanford (1976:136) as a coordinate member of the Nupe group, it is not a distinct language (perhaps confused with Egba (q.v.)). Egã town contains a mixture of Kupa and Kakanda speakers.

7. *Egba*. A language spoken in a single village on the north bank of the Niger near Gupa. No lexical data is available, although informants asserted that it has features in common with Kakanda.

8. *Ẹ̀tunọ* (Igara). The variety of Ebira spoken at Igarra town in Bendel State. The only printed source of lexical items is Ladefoged (1964), but citations here are from Elugbe (pers. com.). Laniran (1984:2) states that this dialect is also spoken in the Nasarawa area of Plateau State, where it is known as Ebira *upẹ̀tẹ̀*, a general term for Ebira-Koto.

9. *Gade*. Gade is spoken by 80-100,000 people in a large number of villages centered around Kuje in the Federal Capital Territory (Sterk 1977). Although Gade shows 40% cognacy with Nupe and Gbagyi, it has developed a nominal morphology that has no parallel elsewhere in the Nupoid group. The discovery of its prefixing noun class system with twelve classes and a fairly complete concord system was partly responsible for the breakdown of the former (Old) Kwa/Benue-Congo dichotomy.

10. *Gbagyi*. A recently adopted cover-term for the group known in Hausa as Gwari-Matai or Gwarin Ngenge. Low (1908) gives a preliminary grammatical sketch, Edgar (1909) compiled a dictionary of the Kuta dialect, Hyman and Magaji (1970) a grammar and word list, and Shekwo (1979) a pedagogic introduction to the language.

Gwari. A Hausa cover-term for all the Gbari and Gbagyi-speaking peoples. The extent of the Gwari, indicated on the Nupoid map, is far greater than is evident from any published source. In particular, data on the outlying groups at old Birnin Gwari or northeast of Kaduna has only recently become available. Maps of the Gwari, such as Hansford, Bendor-Samuel, and Stanford (1976), typically show the two languages in discrete geographical areas. However, further survey work suggests that the two communities co-exist, intermingled, throughout most of the Gwari area. This mosaic of distinct but related languages of a single ethnic group with a common culture is relatively unusual (although paralleled in

the nearby Kamberi, (cf. Blench (1982)) and calls for more detailed sociolinguistic work.

All investigated Gwari dialects show an *a-* pluralization prefix and nasalized released stops (see Hyman (1972) for a hypothesis on the origin of the prefix and stops).

11. *Gbari*. The 'other' Gwari language, spoken between the Federal Capital Territory and northeast Kaduna. Although similar to Gbagyi phonologically and morphologically, it has a distinctive lexicon.

Gbedegi. An extinct language, probably of the Nupe group, spoken near Mokwa, referred to by Nadel (1942:12).

12. *Gupa*. A language related to Dibo spoken in the villages of Gupa, Atsu, and Kirikpo south of Lapai. Meek (1925,2:137) confused 'Gupa' with 'Kupa', which may explain the lack of reference to this group in ethnographic and linguistic literature, despite a population of several thousand.

13. *Kakanda* (Akanda, Hyabe). A riverine group based on Budon, but with scattered villages from the confluence as far as Muregi, and a population of at least 10,000. Although the prestigious lect is centered on Budon, the riverine villages of Gbanmi and Sokun have a distinctive form of the language.

14. *Kami*. A group confined to Ebo town, south of Lapai, with a maximum of 500 speakers. Kami is closely related to Gupa and Dibo.

Kede (Kyadya, Kiadia, Kyedye). A name for a specialized fishing group on the Niger, but not a distinct linguistic entity (see Hansford, Bendor-Samuel, and Stanford 1976:136).

15. *Kupa*. Kupa is spoken in fifty-two villages south of the Niger, centered on Abugi. Kakanda is its nearest relative in terms of lexicon.

16. *Nupe* (Anufe, Nupenci, Nyffe, Takpa). Reference name for the language of Bida and a broad area both east and west. Nupe is also spoken in a number of isolated communities on the Benue near Ibi and east of Lafia, a relic of extensive river commerce in the nineteenth century. In addition, Nupe was being spoken under the name 'Tappa' in Brazil as late as the 1880s (Rodrigues 1932). A recent report to the Niger State government estimates the number of Nupe speakers at around a

million. Temple (1922:319ff.) and Nadel (1942:12ff. and Map) list a large number of Nupe subgroups, but many of these are not linguistic units. Groups such as the Benu at Kutigi (originally Kanuri-speaking) and the Gbagyi at Lemu have been wholly assimilated linguistically. Nupe is the only member of the group for which extensive modern linguistic material is available: Banfield (1914/16); Banfield and Macintyre (1915); Westermann (1927); Smith (1964, 1967a, b, 1969a, b, 1971, 1980); Harms (1983); Hyman (1970a, b, c, 1972, 1973); Krohn (1974); Aron (1980); Madugu (1970, 1971, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1979a, b, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1986a, b, 1987); Blench (1982).

17. *Nupe Tako* (Bassa-Nge, Ibara). The Nupe Tako are centered on Lokoja, and their population was nearly 20,000 in 1931. Nupe Tako is a recently adopted name, translated roughly as 'the Nupe below', replacing the wholly inappropriate 'Bassa-Nge'. Oral history (Akpata and Obajeh n.d.) claims the Nupe Tako migrated from central Nupe land in the eighteenth century. Lexically, Nupe Tako is closest to central Nupe, although certain morphological features recall Dibo (e.g., unproductive *a*-noun prefixes). Available materials are in manuscript form: Ejimatswa (1983); Chumbow and Ejimatswa (1984).

14.3 PHONOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Languages of the Nupoid group display a remarkably conservative phonological inventory in relation to their considerable lexical diversity.

14.3.1 VOWELS

Nupoid languages provide support for the hypothesis that proto-Benue-Congo may have had a complete series of expanded (+ATR) and non-expanded (-ATR) vowels, such as are preserved in Iggede today. Gade and Ebira both have nine underlying vowels, with identical expanded and non-expanded series for all vowels except /a/. Sterk (1977) argues that the process of reducing the nine vowels to seven is currently occurring in Gade, and Nupe exemplifies a later stage in this process with the reduction of seven vowels to five (Hyman (1970a)). Chumbow and Ejimatswa (1984) claim that the retention of seven vowels in Nupe Tako invalidates Hyman's 'abstract' account of Nupe.

Neither Gade nor Ebira have any underlying nasalized vowels, and all languages investigated so far show the restrictions on nasalization

of mid-vowels put forward by Hyman (1972). Synchronically, Nupe, Gwari and the Dibo cluster show distinctive nasalization, as well as (rare) closed syllables with final nasals.

i	u	i	u	i	u
ɪ = j	ʊ = ɸ				
e	o	e	o	e	o
ɛ	ɔ	ɛ	ɔ		
a	a	a			
Ebira, Gade	Gupa[?], Kupa, Kakanda, Nupe Tako	Dibo, Asu, Gwari, Kami, Nupe			

nasalized vowels:

ĩ	ũ
ã	
Asu, Dibo, Gwari, Gupa, Kakanda, Kami, Kupa, Nupe, Nupe Tako	

FIGURE 14.3 Vowel systems of selected Nupoid languages

Ekira-Okene and Gade, and probably other Ebira dialects, have strict vowel harmony with exceptions only at morpheme boundaries. In addition, Gade has extensive regressive assimilation. Only Ebira permits widespread dissimilar VV sequences, presumably subsequent to intervocalic consonant deletion. VV sequences of similar vowels occur in other Nupoid languages, but they are less common and often restricted to exceptional words, such as ideophones. No Nupoid languages show an underlying contrast between short and long vowels, although this appears as a surface representation in Nupe (see Smith (1967a) and Madugu (1970) for discussion on this point), Ebira (Ladefoged 1964), and Kakanda.

14.3.2 CONSONANTS

The apparently irregular correspondences between Ebira and other Nupoid languages may indicate a fortis/lenis contrast in the consonant system of the proto-language. Without this assumption the following minimal set of consonant phonemes can be reconstructed for proto-Nupoid:

	labial	alveolar	palatal	velar	labial velar	glottal
plosive	p b	t d	c j	k g	kp gb	
fricative		s z				h
roll		r				
lateral		l				
nasal	m	n				
approximant	w	y				

Gbagyi has an exceptional implosive /ɓ/ in most dialects, corresponding to /b/ and /gb/ in other Nupoid languages. The affricates [tʃ] and [dʒ] are analyzed as positional allophones of /ts/ and /dz/, and the alveopalatal fricatives [ʃ] and [ʒ] of /s/ and /z/ respectively. Synchronically, they can occasionally be contrastive (Smith 1967a:158). Elugbe (1983:4ff.) shows that underlyingly the alveopalatal affricates of Ebira [tʃ] and [dʒ] were not in contrast with /k/ and /g/. Thus: *giV* → *dʒV* and *kiV* → *tʃV*. They are therefore excluded from the phoneme inventory.

Most Nupoid languages permit syllabic nasals, usually in initial position, although these rarely form a contrastive set. Smith (1969a:91) observed that syllabic nasals were not found in verbs in Nupe, a restriction that seems to hold for other Nupoid languages. A particular feature of the phonology of Gwari is the extensive set of consonants with post-nasalized release (Hyman and Magaji 1970:12) comparable to Mumuye. In *CnV* sequences these frequently correspond to Nupe nasalized vowels, e.g., Gbaye *dn̩a* and Nupe *dā* 'to be in'.

Secondary articulations, palatalization and labialization, are predictable in many situations, although they do form contrastive sets (Smith 1967a:161; Hyman and Magaji 1970; Sterk 1978:57), particularly in *C + a* sequences, e.g., Gbaye *bwá* 'to pound', *byā* 'to blow' and *bà* 'to read'.

Figure 14.4 illustrates some of the correspondences between languages in the Nupoid group.

14.3.3 TONE

All Nupoid languages studied to date have at least five surface tones, three level tones, and two glides. This produces a possible five-way lexical contrast (for Nupe examples, see Madugu 1970). Nupe, Gbagyi, and Gade also have a lowered mid-tone at surface level, although this has been analyzed as an allotone of the mid-tone. Allowing for loan words and ideophones, these can all be analyzed as three underlying level tones, with rising and falling tones as allotones of the level tones. Sterk's (1978:8)

observation concerning Gade, "the few lexical items that have underlying glide tones should probably be analyzed as cases where word-internal vowel clusters contracted", probably holds for the other languages of the Nupoid group. Nupe, Gbari, and Gade seem to exhibit downdrift, but do not have terraced tones.

	Ebira Koto	Ebira Okene	Ẹtunọ	Gade	Asu	Kakanda	Kupa
'ear'	kp ètókpa	[ùtɔ́]	[òtɔ́]	kp gùtakpú	túwo	v ātúvá	b atiba
'hand'	bw òbwó	v ɔ́cúvɔ́	v oóvɔ́	bw gùbwo	w wāri	b iiba	v iva
'sorghum'	a,e àkwú	a,t àkú	?,e -	l,a ì-cú(pl.)	a,e āwù	a,l ahyu	a,l ayi
'head'	erasó	irēsú	ērēsú	à-tú(pl.)	eti	ípí	ìkpí
	Dibo	Kami	Gupa	Nupe Tako	Nupe Central	Gbari Zubakpna	Gbagyi Kuta
'ear'	bw atúbwà	v atuva	v atuva	gb tugba	kp tukpa	bw kp nubwa	bw tnúbwà
'hand'	w èwá	b iba	gbw igbwa	gw agwo	gw ēgwā	gbw ēgbwā	bw òbwá
'sorghum'	e,a awyi	a,l awyi	a,l awyi	e,l ayi	e,e eyi	e,[] ēwhí	o,[] ōwyí
'head'	eti	iti	iti	ití	eti	túgó	túkwó

FIGURE 14.4 Some examples of sound correspondences in Nupoid languages

The tone system of Ebira has been subject to considerable controversy. Ebira has a downstep tone and Elugbe (1983:8ff.) shows that after downstep the contrast between high and mid is neutralized. Scholz and Scholz (1972, 1976) argue for a 'super-high' and mark it throughout the lexicon. However, since this tone includes a fall, it was treated by Adivé (1984) as a falling tone. Elugbe (1983) has questioned its status as a separate toneme, analyzing it as a high-low sequence occurring on a single syllable nucleus.

14.4 MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

14.4.1 NOUNS

The underlying morphophological pattern for nouns in Nupoid seems to be CVCV, although this has undergone transformations in various languages. If the noun class system of Gade does reflect the original system of Nupoid, then the CVCV structure consisted of a CV prefix and CV stem.

In Ebira, the original prefixes, with some exceptions in nouns referring to persons, have become unproductive, and a later rule required that all nouns take a V pre-prefix (also observable in Kakanda) in harmony with the vowels of the stem. Elugbe (pers. com.) observes that this rule is common in neighboring Edoid languages, and there may perhaps be a connection. The common element *rV-* preceding the stem in many Ebira nouns appears to correspond with class 5 singular in Gade *ri-*, e.g.:

Gade	<i>r̥ibat̥u</i> (pl. à-)	
Ebira-Okene	<i>irevá</i>	'breast'
Ẹtunọ	<i>ìrévá</i>	
Ebira-Koto	<i>erebá</i>	

This appears in other Nupoid languages as a form of the plural *àbat̥u* with the suffix *-tu* deleted. In Ebira, the suffix is deleted, the *rV-* prefix retained, and a vowel pre-prefix added.

In Nupe and Gwari, the CV prefixes have largely disappeared, although in Gwari all nouns take a prefixed *a-* plural marker (Hyman and Magaji 1970), a development paralleled in certain Plateau languages. Presumably this was generalized during the process of the disappearance of the noun class system. Both groups then developed a partial suffix system marking semantic classes, and in some cases these suffixes were then reanalyzed as part of the stem.

Some Nupe examples are:

Productive		Unproductive
Suffix	Gloss	Suffix
-ci	'tree, bush'	-ro
-ci	'ethnic group' (Hausa?)	-ri
-ko	'large'	-kũ
-gi	'small'	-sa
-la	'place'	-la

(No semantic unities have yet been identified among the unproductive suffixes.)

For Nupe, Nupe Tako, Asu, Kupa, Dibo cluster languages, Kakanda, and Ebira the final step was the development of postposed plural markers.

14.4.2 VERBS

As in nearly all neighboring groups, the common canonic form of verbs is CV. The patterns of verb reduplication in Nupe and Gwari are notably complex. Smith (1969a:90) summarizes the Nupe verb structure as C(w/y)V(C(w/y)V(CV(CV))) and a similar formulation would be appropriate for other Nupoid languages. He notes that only level tones are found on monosyllabic verbs and the initial syllable of polysyllables, a restriction that also applies to Gbagyi (Hyman and Magaji 1970:15) and Ebira.

Stem reduplication in verbs is a common method of creating verbal nouns or continuatives in the language groups of this area. It is found in Nupe, Gwari, and Ebira, as well as Yoruba and Edoid. Thus Nupe **kpwà** 'to be cheap' gives **kpìkpwà** 'cheapness'. In Nupe there are restrictions on the vowels of the reduplicative prefix (Smith 1969a:92ff.), but Gbagyi allows for complete repetition of the stem.

Nupe and Gwari both have a large number of verbs that can bracket their object. Thus Nupe **kpē...yē** 'to know' becomes **mī kpē ū yē** 'I know it'. The conditions restricting the syntactic contexts of such verbs are discussed more fully in Smith (1971). In addition, the CV elements of polysyllabic verbs can be inverted to create substantives; thus Nupe **sāmī** 'to greet' becomes **ēmīsā** 'greeting' (Smith 1969a).

14.5 SYNTACTIC CHARACTERISTICS

Descriptions of the syntax of Nupoid languages are rare, and more has been published on Nupe than all the other languages. Ebira syntax in particular is virtually unknown.⁴ Examples of Nupe given below may be relevant to analogous categories in related languages.

14.5.1 THE NOUN PHRASE

The basic word order is SVO, as in all adjacent language groups. However, Madugu (1979a) has presented evidence for traces of a former SOV pattern, which he argues are relics of a former more widespread Niger-Congo feature. Most of the major languages have post-verbal modal auxiliaries, such as the negation marker.

Nupe

Musa ba cigbà wòó
Musa cut tree ability
'Musa can cut the tree'

Gbagyi

wo lá shnamá lō
he take yam PRES-CONT

Gade

Gàni ù sɪ gízè beé
Gani he buy yam already

Ebira

má sɪ éñù hú
I PERF yam cook
'I have cooked yam'

(Examples from Madugu (1979a) and Hyman (1970))

14.5.2 THE VERB PHRASE

Verb serialization in Nupe has attracted attention from Smith, Hyman, and Madugu all of whom have discussed aspects of the verb phrase. Madugu (1977) provides an overview of the different types of constructions possible in Nupe.

⁴The thesis by Adivé (1984) on the Ebira verb is in the course of publication.

Gwari appears to have developed a system of past tense markers more elaborate than those in Nupe. Hyman and Magaji (1970:57) give the following example of the completed past:

w'a kú àshnamá si	'he bought yams (today)'
wò kùì àshnamá si	'he bought yams (yesterday)'
wò ɓei kú àshnamá si	'he bought yams (before yesterday)'

A corresponding series exists for both the continuous past and the future.

14.5.3 ADJECTIVES

Banfield and Macintyre (1915) and Madugu (1986a) have argued for two parallel systems of adjectives in Nupe: attributive and predicative. Examination of the more restricted lexicons of Gbagyi, Gade, and Ebira argues for similar distinctions. Nupe has an immensely rich repertoire of attributive adjectives; Banfield (1916) lists 157 items for 'large' depending on the nouns that are qualified. Madugu (1987) has shown that in Nupe many of these derive from circumstantial ideophones. For example:

	Adverbial form	Derived adjective
'disorderly'	jígìjìgìyí	jígìjìgì

Similar reduplicated attributive adjectives are recorded in Ebira: *gérígérí* 'firm', *sákásáká* 'completely' but without corresponding adverbial forms.

14.5.4 IDEOPHONES

Nupe ideophones, according to Madugu (1987:2), "exhibit peculiar phonological properties . . . they are generally longer than non-ideophonic lexical items; . . . they employ a high degree of duplication with regular tonal patterns for some kinds of semantic emphasis." He identifies five tone patterns in Nupe ideophones and argues that they correlate with semantic classes. For example, sequences of all high tones are associated with high, long, thin, bright objects while sequences of low tones correspond to slow, heavy, abnormal or unpleasant situations and objects.

14.6 CONCLUSION

Research on the Nupoid group has to date been unsystematic and, therefore, some languages are considerably more well-known than others. Further studies should concentrate on detailed descriptions of those languages, such as Asu and Kupa, for which our knowledge is restricted to short word lists, and on obtaining basic data for Agbi, Edzu and Egba where no material is available.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adiva, J.R. 1984. *A descriptive study of the verbal piece in Ebira* (a language of Kwara State Nigeria). Ph.D. dissertation, University College London.
- . 1985. *Ebira orthography*. Ebira Christian Unity Fellowship, Jos.
- Ajayi, J.O. 1985. *Ebira names in Nigeria*. Okpella: Asekome Publishers.
- Armstrong, Robert G. 1981. The Idomoid language sub-family of the Eastern Kwa borderland. *Berliner Afrikanistische Vorträge*, ed. by H. Jungraithmayr, pp. 7-33. Berlin: D. Reimer.
- . 1983. The Idomoid languages of the Benue and Cross River valleys. *JWAL* 13.1:91-149.
- Banfield, A.W. 1914/16. *Dictionary of the Nupe language*. 2 vols. Shonga: The Niger Press. Reprint. Gregg Press, 1969.
- and J.L. Macintyre. 1915. *A grammar of the Nupe language*. London: SPCK.
- Bennett, Patrick R. and Jan P. Sterk. 1977. South Central Niger-Congo: A reclassification. *SAL* 8:241-73.
- Blench, Roger M. 1982. Social structures and the evolution of language boundaries in Nigeria. *Cambridge anthropology* 7.3:319-30.
- Chumbow, Beban S. and E.W. Ejimatswa. 1984. Nupe abstractness revisited via Bassa-Nga. Paper for the 3rd LAN Conference.
- Edgar, F. 1909. *A grammar of the Gbari language*. Belfast: W. and G. Laird.
- Educational Research Centre [Niger State]. 1980. A progress report on Nupe language projects. *Nigerian language teacher* 3.1:42-5.
- Ejimatswa, E.W. 1983. *Aspects of Bassa-Nge phonology*. B.A. research essay, University of Ilorin.
- Elugbe, Ben Ohi. 1983. Aspects of Ebira phonology. Seminar paper, Dept. of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ibadan.
- Elugbe, Stella A.S. 1984. *Phonological problems in teaching English to Ebira speakers*. M.Ed. thesis, University of Ibadan.
- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1963. *The languages of Africa*. The Hague: Mouton; *IJAL* 29.1, Publication 25 of the Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore and Linguistics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hair, Paul E.H. 1967. *The early study of Nigerian languages: Essays and bibliographies*. WafriL monographs, 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hansford, Keir, John Bendor-Samuel, and Ron Stanford. 1976. *Index of Nigerian languages*. Ghana: SIL.
- Harms, Robert T. 1983. How abstract is Nupe? *Language* 49.2:439-46.
- Hyman, Larry M. 1970a. How concrete is phonology? *Language* 46.1:58-76.

- . 1970b. The role of borrowing in the justification of phonological grammars. *SAL* 1:1-48.
- . 1970c. Some diachronic aspects of serial verbs. Unpublished paper.
- . 1972. Nasals and nasalization in Kwa. *SAL* 3:167-205.
- . 1973. Nupe three years later. *Language* 49.2:447-52.
- and Daniel J. Magaji. 1970. *Essentials of Gwari grammar*. Occasional publication, 27. IAS, University of Ibadan.
- Ihionu, P. 1982. *Vowel harmony, assimilation and contraction in Ebira*. B.A. long essay, University of Ilorin.
- Koelle, Sigismund W. 1854. *Polyglotta Africana, or a comparative vocabulary of nearly three hundred words and phrases in more than one hundred distinct African languages*. London: Church Missionary House; Gregg International. Reprint. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1963.
- Krohn, R. 1974. Is there a rule of absolute neutralization in Nupe? Mimeo.
- Kropp Dakubu, Mary Esther, ed. 1977. *West African language data sheets, 1*. West African Linguistic Society.
- Ladefoged, Peter. 1964. Igbirra notes and wordlist. *JWAL* 1.1:27-37.
- Laniran, Yetunde. 1984. Ebira orthography: A brief introduction to Ebira languages. MS.
- Latham, R.G. 1862. *Elements of comparative philology*. London.
- Madugu, Isaac S. George. 1970. Nupe tonology. *SAL* 1:100-22.
- (as George, I.). 1971. The *a* construction in Nupe: Perfective, stative, causative or instrumental. *Papers in African linguistics*, 1, ed. by C.W. Kim and H. Stahlke, pp. 81-100. Champaign: Linguistic Research Institute.
- . 1974. Verb serialization in Nupe. Seminar paper, Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ibadan.
- . 1975. *A grammar of Kwa-type verb serialization; its nature and significance for current generative theory*. Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA.
- . 1976. Review article: Dictionary of the Nupe Language. *African languages* 2:152-55.
- . 1977. The Nupe verb and syntactic change. Seminar paper, Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ibadan.
- . 1979a. Auxiliary verbs in Nupe and diachrony. *Kibàrà* 2.2:90-101.
- . 1979b. The Nupe verb and diachrony. *Ibadan journal of humanistic studies* 1:74-97.
- . 1982. The *na...na* construction in Nupe. *JOLAN* 1:35-46.
- . 1984. Quantifiers and negation in Nupe. *JOLAN* 2:31-6.
- . 1985. Complex verbs in Nupe and Yoruba. *SAL* 16.3:295-321.
- . 1986a. Category incorporation in Kwa. Paper for 7th LAN Conference, Maiduguri.
- . 1986b. The category adjective in Nupe. Paper for the WALS Conference, Ibadan.
- . 1987. Circumstantial ideophones in Nupe. Paper presented at the 8th LAN Conference, Port Harcourt, Aug. 2-6, 1987.
- Meek, Charles Kingsley. 1925. *The northern tribes of Nigeria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Reprint. 2 vols. Cass library of African studies, general studies, 97. London: Frank Cass, 1971.
- Migeod, Frederick W.H. 1911. *The languages of West Africa, 1*. London.
- Musa, F. 1982. *The morphosyntax of Egbura*. B.A. long essay, University of Ilorin.
- Nadel, Siegfried F. 1942. *A black Byzantium*. London: Oxford University Press for IAL.

-
- . 1964. Morality and language among the Nupe. *Language in culture and society*, ed. by D. Hymes, pp. 264-66. New York: Harper & Row.
- Owuri, S.I. 1983. *Question formation in Ebira*. B.A. long essay, University of Ilorin.
- Rodrigues, N. 1932. *Os Africanos no Brasil*. Sao Paulo.
- Rotifa, O. 1982. *A phonological analysis of Ebira*. B.A. long essay, University of Ibadan.
- Scholz, Hans-Jörgen. 1976. *Igbira phonology*. LD-AF7, a microfiche. Dallas: SIL.
- and Chris Scholz. 1972. *Let's go forward - let's read and write Ebira*. Zaria: Institute of Linguistics, ABU.
- Shekwo, J.A. 1979. *Fundamentals of the Gbagyi language*. Zaria: Institute of Adult Education, ABU.
- Smith, Neil V. 1964. *A phonological and grammatical study of the verb in Nupe*. Ph.D. dissertation, London University.
- . 1967a. The phonology of Nupe. *J Afr L* 6:153-69.
- . 1967b. *An outline grammar of Nupe*. London: University of London: SOAS.
- . 1969a. The verb in Nupe. *Afr L S* 10:90-160.
- . 1969b. Nupe. *Twelve Nigerian languages*, ed. by E. Dunstan, pp. 133-41. Longmans.
- . 1971. Rule ordering in Nupe. *Actes du 8ème congrès du SLAO. Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan, série H*, 1:131-39.
- . 1980. Nupe. *West African language data sheets*, 2, ed. by M.E. Kropp-Dakubu.
- Srivastava, O.P. 1970. Phonology and morphology of Ebira. MS. University of Ibadan library.
- Sterk, Jan P. 1977. *Elements of Gade grammar*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- . 1978. The noun class system of Gade (Nigeria). *African languages*, 4.
- Temple, Olive. 1922. *Notes on the tribes of northern Nigeria*. Lagos: CMS.
- Westermann, Diedrich. 1927. Das Nupe in Nigerien. *MSOS* 30.3:173-207.