

**AKPONDU, NIGBO, BƏBƏR AND NISAM:
MORIBUND OR EXTINCT LANGUAGES
OF CENTRAL NIGERIA**

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Barau Kato

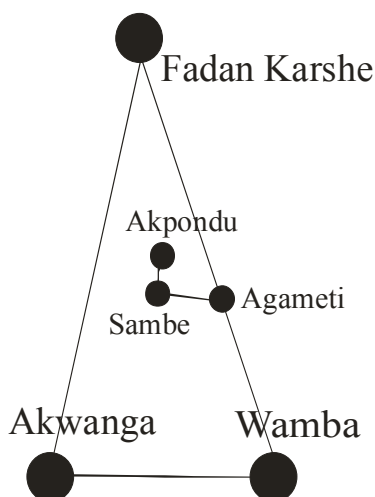
Jos, Monday, 11 June 2012

In August 2005, further surveys of the languages of the Fadan Karshe-Wamba-Akwanga triangle were conducted in Kaduna State, Nigeria, to follow up on reports of moribund or extinct languages. This resulted in the discovery of one language not previously known to exist and information about the near certain death of two others. One of us (Barau Kato) interviewed the present village head of Babur (Akpondu) on August 15th and we were given the following information.

There were formerly three distinct languages in three different but close villages, named Akpondu, Babur and Nigbo. Apparently at the end of the nineteenth century, a period when there were communal clashes between the Akpondu and other nearby communities of Arum, Turkwan, Ninzo, Sambe and Ayu, the Akpondu people were captured and taken away, leaving the village uninhabited.

The father of the present village head was taken to Ayu to serve the chief of Ayu, while the rest were taken to other places. On his sick bed, the Ayu chief asked him to go back to rebuilt his community. The father then went back, but on hearing that someone had come to re-establish the village, the Sambe people threatened to kill him. He became afraid and decided to stay in Babur (Akpondu is in the valley). At that time, the Babur people had also been captured by the Ninzo and there was nobody left, which was why he stayed there. On hearing that one of their own people had come to rebuild Akpondu, some of the other captives returned. By this time, they could only speak Ninzo and other languages. The older generation that had been captured had died out leaving only their offspring, who could not understand Akpondu. The present chief says he can only remember how to count but not to speak in sentences, although pressed further, he could remember some few words. Further contact with him is in progress.

The Babur people had become captives and spoke those languages where they had been captives even up to today. The language and village only exist in name but no one now exists that can speak the language. The Nigbo also only exist in name and as a village. For this language, there *is* one person who has been identified who may remember the language. We are yet to make contact with him, but hope to follow up very soon. There is now political recognition of these three villages/languages: Akpondu, Nigbo and Babur. The government has recognised them by creating for them traditional stools, so that they now have Village Heads (*Dakaci* in Hausa). All the people now speak Ninzo.



Akpondu numerals

The numerals given by the village head were as follows;

No.	Akpondu	Təsu
One	àpini	àpimbere
Two	àfi	àhùrwi
Three	àtára	àtaat
Four	ànnè	aane
Five	àtúngu	atúngú

Six	ànar kye	térékífi
Seven	ànar apini	térékífi napí
Eight	atar	tsyátsyá
Nine	atar kye apini	tsyátsyá nanyi
Ten	àgùrmabɔ	gòròmàvɔ
Eleven	àgùrmabɔ apini	gòròmàvɔ hwá nyimbere

I have compared them with Təsu numerals as the Alumu-Təsu languages are evidently the closest relative of Akpondu.

Nisam language

During a visit to Nandu (Ankpong), we heard of a language called Nisam farther into the interior, still spoken by two people in Nince village. According to my informant in Nandu (Ankpong) by name Danlami A. Nandu, there were two speakers of the Nisam language but one died in March 2005 leaving behind the said Danladi Nince. Danladi Nince was the name of one of these. On reaching Nince, we discovered that the people speak Nandu and Ninzam. Danladi Nince denied knowing anything about the Nisam language. We then asked him the meaning of Nince in Ninzam and Nandu, which he could not tell. We put it to him that, if Nince has no meaning in either of these two languages, it means that Nisam existed. We are not convinced that he is ignorant of such a language, but because of the traditional position he holds in the land, he wouldn't want to agree to the previous existence of such a language (which actually is his own language). He is the Village Head of Nince. Should he reveal that he is Nisam and not Nandu, he fears he might be stripped of his position. Further visits will be undertaken to Nince which we believe will yield better results.