

# VERBAL EXTENSIONS IN BANTOID LANGUAGES AND THEIR RELATION TO BANTU



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**KEYWORDS**

Africa; linguistics; Benue-Congo; Bantoid; verbal extensions

**ABSTRACT**

The Bantoid languages are a body of some 150-200 languages positioned geographically between Nigeria and Cameroun. They do not form a genetic group, but all are in some way related to Bantu more closely than other branches of Benue-Congo. The most well-known branches are Dakoid, Mambiloid, Tivoid, Bebid, Grassfields, and Ekoid. Bendi, formerly Cross River, may be Bantoid, while Jarawan is certainly Narrow Bantu. The paper discusses the characteristics of verbal extensions in Bantoid and their possible relation to the better-described extensions in Narrow Bantu. One branch of Benue-Congo, Kainji, retains systems of verbal extensions in some branches, which argues strongly that these were a feature of the proposed proto-language. Some Plateau languages retain more eroded systems, while they have disappeared in Cross River and Jukunoid. However, some Bantoid languages also have no trace of extensions. The paper argues that in the light of their attestation at higher levels, they must have been lost. The paper then reviews the literature on verbal extensions in the various branches of Bantoid and presents case studies of individual languages. It concludes that a rich system similar to Bantu can be reconstructed for proto-Grassfields and must be posited for the other Bantoid branches, where it is now lost or much reduced. Only the causative in -si is attested in a significant number of branches. Bantoid extensions show few segmental similarities to Narrow Bantu, arguing that Bantoid extensions must have been subject to extensive re-analysis.

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

L'Abbé Proyart  
*Histoire de Loango..* (1776)

## 1. Introduction

The Bantoid languages are a body of some 150 languages positioned geographically between Nigeria and Cameroun and between Benue-Congo and Bantu in terms of their position within Niger-Congo. Often referred to as Bantu, for example in the term 'Ekoid Bantu', their classificatory position remains uncertain. Bantu and Bantoid are characterised by systems of nominal affixes and alliterative concord, although these are highly eroded in some languages. However, Bantoid noun morphology is not that of classic Bantu, despite its prefixes being often ascribed the same class numbers in a somewhat misleading way. 'Bantoid' does not represent a genetic group, although the languages are related; it is simply a cover term for those which those which split away from Benue-Congo before the genesis of Bantu proper (Blench 2014). Even the division between Bantu and Bantoid has been questioned, as some authors have observed that much of Bantu A, with its highly reduced noun-classes, would perhaps be better treated as Bantoid.

According to Möhlig (1983), the term 'Bantoid' was introduced by Krause in 1895, but this seems to have been subsequently forgotten. Sigismund Koelle (1854) and Wilhelm Bleek (1862-69) noted that many languages of West Africa also showed noun classes marked by prefixes, and Bleek went so far as to include a West African division in the family he named Bantu. The term Bantoid re-appears in Guthrie (1948) to describe what he called 'transitional' languages, replacing the rather more vague term 'Semi-Bantu'. Nonetheless, the underlying model espoused by Meinhof (1910) and Johnston (1919-1921) was maintained by Guthrie. The modern sense of the term may first appear in Jacquot & Richardson (1956) which includes summary sketches of Nyang, Ekoid, Tikar and Grassfields languages although the volume as a whole also incorporates material on Bantu proper and a variety of Adamawa and Ubangian languages.

Apart from noun-classes, one of characteristic features ascribed to proto-Bantu is its system of verbal extensions. These are (V)(C)V elements which are (usually) suffixed to the verb stem, and in some languages can be stacked in complex strings. These in turn may become unproductive, becoming incorporated in stems and thereby generating innovation. Verbal extensions can almost certainly be traced back considerably further in Niger-Congo (e.g. Hyman 2007). Certainly they are present in some form in many of its branches, though not Mande, some branches of Kordofanian, Dogon and Ijò. Whether these should be reconstructed to Proto-Niger-Congo depends on what internal structure is claimed for the phylum. Similarly, the state of scholarship is not such that we can easily assert that particular segmental features can be reconstructed. However, it is reasonable to assume that the extensions attested for Bantu today are in some sense descendant of those in Benue-Congo. Benue-Congo is of considerable importance, because some languages exhibit features which resurface in Bantu, but which are only attested in fragmentary form or not all in Bantoid. Nowhere in Bantoid are these systems wholly functional, as they have largely been replaced by auxiliaries or other strategies.

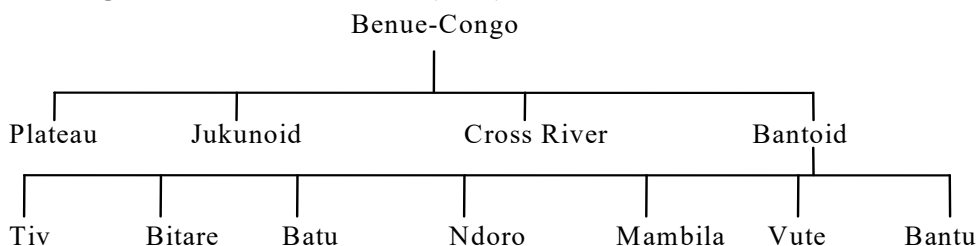
Since Bantoid is a key element in understanding the genesis of Bantu verbal extensions, this paper<sup>1</sup> reviews the presence, absence and nature of extensions in the Bantoid languages. Since Bantoid itself is a poorly documented language ensemble, some time is given to discussing the question of its nature and classification. Since extensions are preserved in some branches which strongly resemble Bantu, the paper also considers briefly the relationship of Bantoid to Benue-Congo. After reviewing the sources of data and the existence of extensions, it presents some examples of their form and function in relatively well-documented languages. Finally, it considers the evidence for the historical origin of attested Bantu extensions.

## 2. The genetic classification of Bantoid

### 2.1 Bantoid vs. Bantu

Although Bantu has been treated as a genetic unity since the middle of the nineteenth century, it remains an open question as to whether there is any distinctive boundary between Bantu and the languages related to it. Bantuists continue to defend the integrity of their discipline but no lexical or morphological isoglosses have been established that clearly demarcate Bantu from its closest relatives. Greenberg (1963, 1974) underlined this by treating Bantu as merely a branch of Benue-Congo, i.e. the adjacent languages of southern and eastern Nigeria and Cameroun. He says ‘the Bantu languages are simply a subgroup of an already established genetic subfamily of Western Sudanic [i.e. Niger-Congo, broadly speaking]’ (Greenberg 1963:32). Figure 1 shows Greenberg’s classification.

**Figure 1. Greenberg’s classification of Bantu (1963)**



Greenberg (1963:35) also clearly stated ‘supposedly transitional languages are really Bantu’. In other words, many languages lacking some features typical of Bantu are nonetheless related to it. This approach to Bantu was refreshing and made historical sense in a way that Guthrie’s views never had. But since the 1960s, data has gradually accumulated on the vast and complex array of languages in the ‘Bantu borderland’, i.e. the region between Southern Cameroun (where Guthrie’s Bantu begins) and Eastern Nigeria. The next step in the evolution of our understanding of Bantoid was the formation of the Grassfields Working Group in the early 1970s. Many of these findings were summarised in overview articles from this period, including Hedinger (1989) and Watters & Leroy (1989).

A common feature of this body of work is that the classifications were presented with limited justification. This is not surprising as the number of languages is very large and many were poorly known, then and still today. Piron (1998) and Bastin & Piron (1999) represent classifications of Bantoid using lexicostatistics. Grollemund (2012) applies recent statistical techniques to the classification of Bantu and Bantoid. The focus of this thesis is on Bantu with South Bantoid languages sampled in a somewhat random fashion. It omits several branches of Bantoid described in this paper and uses somewhat outmoded terminology. For example,

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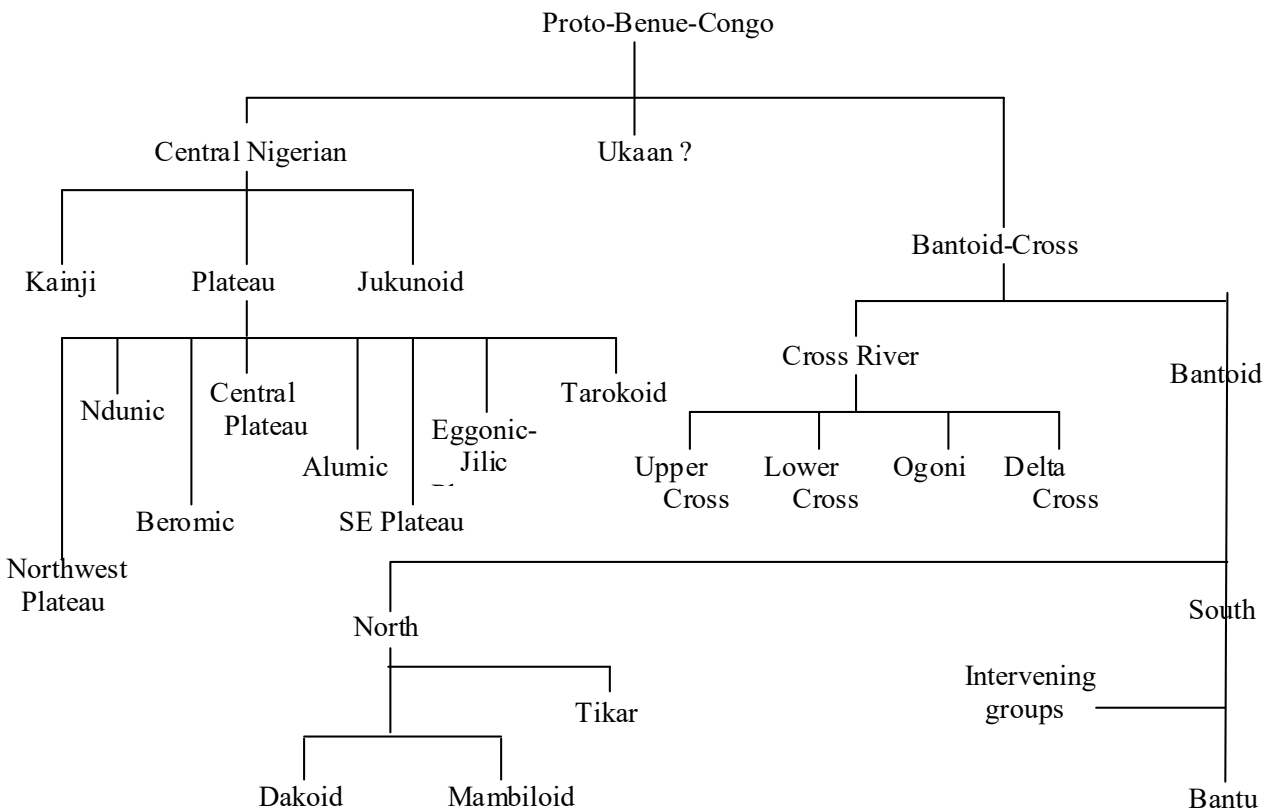
<sup>1</sup> I would like to take this opportunity to thank SIL members in both Nigeria and Cameroun, who have always been willing to share material and to observe, that despite academic sniping from university academics, our knowledge of Bantoid would be markedly impoverished without their contributions. Special thanks to Steve Anderson and Robert Hedinger

Beboid is still treated as a unity. Moreover, since the cognacy judgments on which the calculations are based is not given it is difficult to assess the resultant trees.

**2.2 Bantoid within [East] Benue-Congo**

Bantoid and Bantu represent nested subsets of Benue-Congo, a large and complex group of languages, whose exact membership remains disputed. Originating with Westermann’s (1927) *Benue-Cross-Fluss*, it took shape in Greenberg (1963), Williamson (1971) and De Wolff (1971). The name ‘Benue-Congo’ was introduced by Greenberg (1963) who proposed a division into four branches: Plateau, Jukunoid, Cross River, and Bantoid. For a period in the 1980s and 1990s, it was considered that all the languages in former ‘Eastern Kwa’, i.e. Yoruboid, Igboid, Nupoid etc. were part of Benue-Congo, i.e. Western Benue-Congo. However, the evidence for this was never published and it seems easier to revert to Benue-Congo as in Greenberg’s original, with the potential addition of Ukaan, a small cluster of languages spoken southwest of the Niger-Benue Confluence. Ukaan has alternating prefixes marking number and concord, hence its likely affiliation with Benue-Congo, but its exact position remains to be determined. With this in mind, Figure 2 provides a revised subclassification of Benue-Congo languages;

**Figure 2. Revised subclassification of Benue-Congo languages**



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

One aspect of this figure requires consideration, the division of Bantoid into North and South. Dakoid, Mambiloid and Tikar represent language groupings with either no noun classes, or relics of a highly idiosyncratic system, as in Tikar. There is some evidence for classifying these three together. However, the lack of data for some languages and convincing reconstructions of their historical morphology makes this a speculative hypothesis at best. The other side is ‘South Bantoid’, not a genetic group but a convenient cover term for all the languages that are closer to Bantu without being part of it.

**2.3 The membership of Bantoid**

Figure 2 shows the subgroups that ‘stand between’ Eastern Benue-Congo and Narrow Bantu. The languages represented are very numerous (150 ~ 200) and also highly diverse morphologically. New languages are yet to be discovered and more work in historical reconstruction will improve our understanding of how these languages relate to one another. This section lists the major Bantoid subgroups as they are presently understood. A more complete list of the languages this includes is given in the Ethnologue<sup>2</sup> and Glottolog<sup>3</sup>. In the absence of more extensive historical linguistics it is assumed individual groups split away from a common stem, and developed their own characteristics. The order in which this took place remains controversial, and will take considerable further work to resolve in a satisfying manner. A proposal is presented in Figure 3;

**Figure 3. Proposal for the divergence of Bantoid languages**

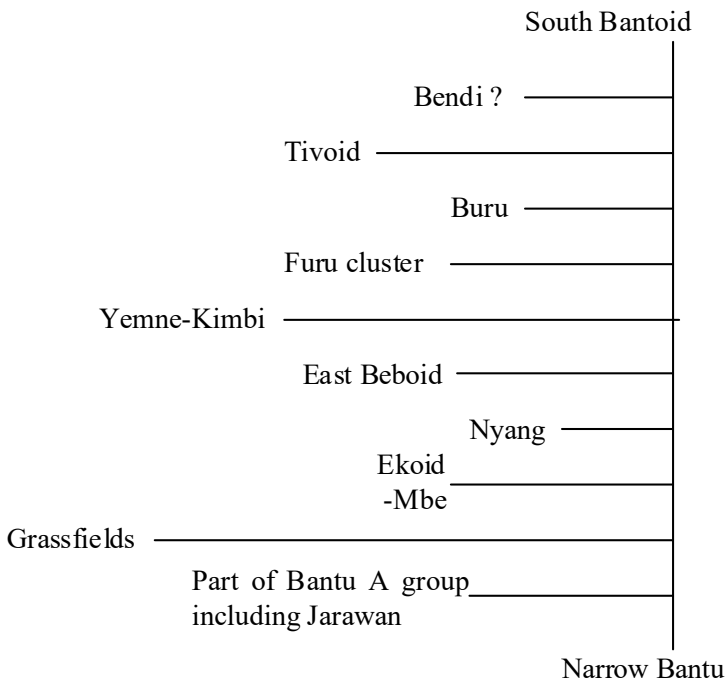


Table 1 lists the major subgroups of Bantoid follows the order in which they may have diverged from Benue-Congo.

**Table 1. Major subgroups of Bantoid**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Typical languages</b>
Dakoid	Nigeria	Around Ganye	Chamba Daka, Taram, Tiba
Mambiloid	Nigeria/Cameroun	Around Gembu	Mambila, Kwanja, Vute, Suga, Ndoro
Tikar	Cameroun	NE of Foumban	Numerous dialects
Bendi	Nigeria	Around Ogoja	Bokyi, Bekwara, Alege
Tivoid	Nigeria/Cameroun	Around Obudu	Tiv, Iyive, Ugarə
Buru	Nigeria	Buru	Buru
Furu	Nigeria/Cameroun	Furu Awa	Furu

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ethnologue.com>

<sup>3</sup> <https://glottolog.org/>

<b>Group</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Typical languages</b>
East Beoid	Cameroun	Around Nkambe	Noone <sup>4</sup> , Ncane
Yemne-Kimbi	Cameroun	NE Grassfields	Fungom, Mundabli
Nyang	Cameroun	Mamfe	Kenyang
Ekoid	Nigeria/Cameroun	Mamfe	Ejagham
Mbe	Nigeria	Ogoja	Mbe
Ambele	Cameroun	Grassfields	Ambele
Menchum	Cameroun	Grassfields	Menchum
Grassfields	Cameroun		
Ndemli	Cameroun	Nkam, Littoral region	Ndemli
Ring	Cameroun	Grassfields	Aghem, Isu
Momo	Cameroun	Grassfields	Moghamo
Southwest	Cameroun	Grassfields	Manta
Eastern	Cameroun	Grassfields	Bamileke, Chufie', Ngiemboon
Bantu A	Cameroun	Southern Cameroun	Akɔɔse
Jarawan	Nigeria/Cameroun	East-Central Nigeria	Jar, Mbula-Bwazza, Mama

It is important to flag some caveats. Not all authors agree Dakoid is Bantoid (e.g. Boyd 1994, 1996-7) and the placing of Ndoro in Mambiloid remains doubtful. Bendi has long been treated as Cross River following Greenberg (1963) and Williamson (1989a) but without good evidence. The data on Furu is too uncertain to be sure it has been correctly classified; a Jukunoid affiliation is possible. Jeff Good and his colleagues have argued convincingly that Beoid is not a unity, and even that the languages within Yemne-Kimbi [= former West Beoid] may not constitute a genetic group. Ambele and Menchum are treated as co-ordinate with Grassfields, but the evidence remains sketchy. Momo has been split up into Momo proper and Southwest Grassfields. Finally, the Jarawan group, treated in previous texts as Bantoid, appears to be better placed within A60.

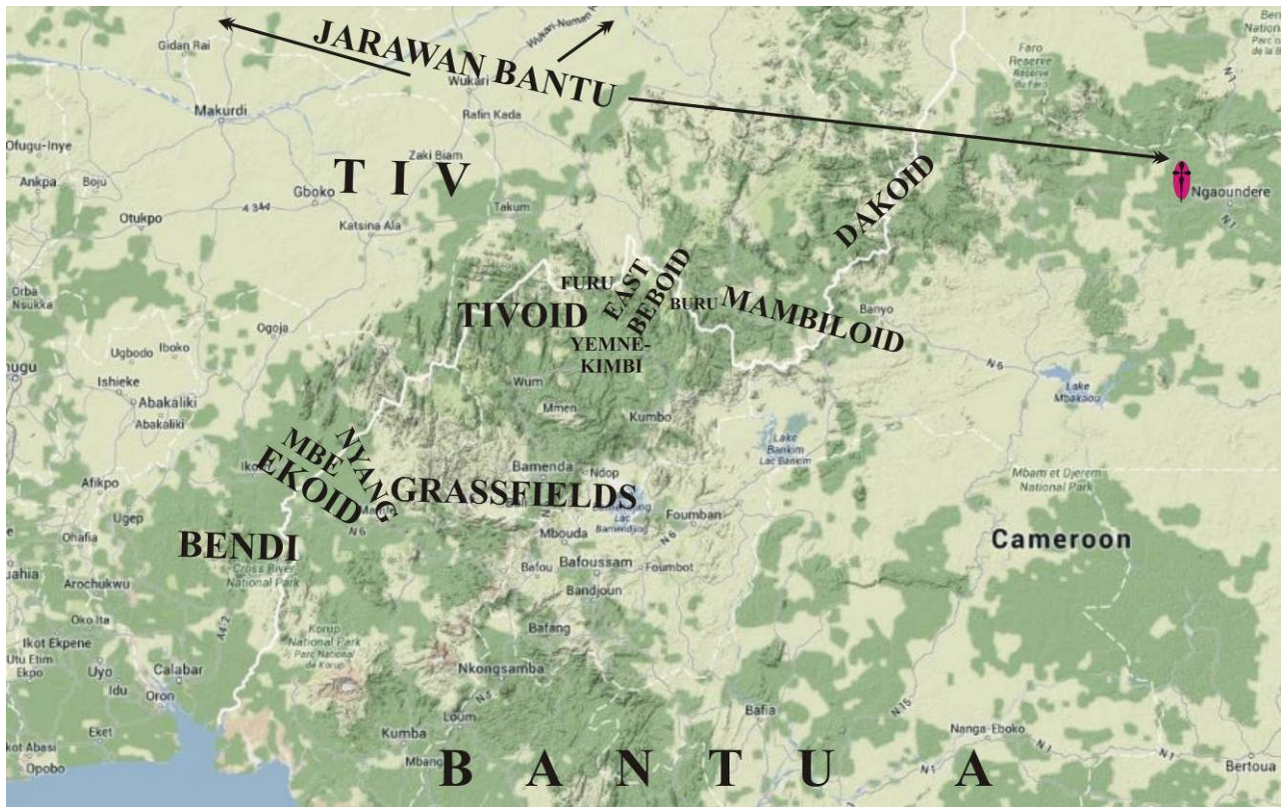
Map 1 shows in outline the broad locations of the main Bantoid groups. Jarawan Bantu is scattered across Central Nigeria, hence its location is only marked with arrows, as well as the extinct languages of Northern Cameroun. Tiv covers a very large region of SE Nigeria, whereas the Tivoid languages are otherwise only in very small communities. Buru is a single village, and the Furu group may consist now of two extinct and one moribund language.

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<sup>4</sup> This language name is spelt in various ways (Noni, Nooni) in bibliographic references and even in the Noone community.



Map 1. Bantoid languages: overview map



### 3. Bantoid verbal extensions

#### 3.1 Overview: data sources

The descriptive data required to characterise Bantoid languages in ways which would satisfy typologists is not available for many branches. The literature on many subgroups is sparse, to say the least, and many important sources are unpublished. Because so much of the material has focused on an ultimate goal of orthography and literacy, phonology and noun-classes remain much better understood than, for example, verbal extensions.

There are two key caches of unpublished and mainly electronic data, the files of SIL (which incorporates much of the data collected for ALCAM, the Linguistic Atlas of Cameroun) and the student dissertations supervised at the University of Yaoundé. Part of the legacy material is available on the SIL Cameroun website (<http://www.silcam.org>) although much material, especially Fieldworks lexicons, remain in the hands of its members. Wycliffe Nigeria has recently undertaken surveys of the Bantoid languages on the Nigerian side of the border, resolving numerous queries about the extent and classification of particular branches<sup>5</sup>. University of Yaoundé linguistics theses have been scanned up to 2006 through Jeff Good and are available electronically.

#### 3.2 The historical background of verbal extensions

##### 3.2.1 Verbal extensions in Benue-Congo

Much of Benue-Congo, including Plateau, Jukunoid and Cross River, retains only traces of a verbal extension system. The Kainji languages in northwest Nigeria show striking evidence for Bantu-like systems

<sup>5</sup> Materials from Nigeria created by SIL survey staff are available on personal application.

(or more accurately, Bantu retains Kainji-like systems. These are analysed in McGill (2009) for the Cicipu language, part of the Kambari cluster, and for tiCind, a Kamuku language described in Mort (2012). Cicipu (McGill 2009: 227 ff.) has the following extensions (Table 2);

**Table 2. Cicipu verbal extensions**

Segments	Interpretation
-is- ~ -sV	causative, intensive
-wA	valency increasing, anticausative [!], separative
-nA	ventive
-nu	resultative, intensifier, de-intensifier
-il-	pluractional

Extensions have either disappeared or been reduced to unproductive segments in most branches of Kainji, Plateau, Jukunoid and Cross River. For Tarok [Plateau], for example, Table 3 shows that the following can be inferred from the lexicon;

**Table 3. Tarok fossil verbal extensions**

Segments	Interpretation
-f̄i	singulative, do s.t. once
-dar	do s.t. completely, intensively
-ri/-li	unassigned

However, these are unproductive today. Nonetheless, their fragmentary survival leads to the conclusion that these have to be reconstructed back to the level of Proto-Benue-Congo, and must therefore have been present in early Bantoid.

### 3.2.2 Synchronic distribution of verbal extensions in Bantoid

A primary question in analysing Bantoid verbal extensions is accounting for their absence in some branches, especially in those more remote from Narrow Bantu, where they have disappeared without leaving obvious segmental traces. Table 4 summarises the situation in individual branches of Bantoid. It should be emphasised that there are no specific publications on extensions in many branches. The claim for their presence or absence has to be based on inferences from the lexicon or incidental data. Some of the more diverse branches may include languages with no remaining extensions and those where they are evidently present. Key references are given for individual languages.

**Table 4. Verbal extensions in major subgroups of Bantoid**

Group	Verbal extensions		Language	Reference
	Functional	Inferred		
Dakoid		+	Daka	Boyd & Sa'ad (2010)
Mambiloid	+	—	Nizaa	Kjelsvik (2002: 19 ff.)
Tikar	—	—	Tikar	Stanley (1991)
Bendi	—	—	Bekwarra	Stanford (1967)
Tivoid	—	—	Tiv	Arnott (1958)
Buru	?	—	Buru	Koops (n.d.)
Furu	?	—	Furu	Keissling (2007)
East Beoid	+		Noni	Hyman (1980)
East Beoid	+		Mungong <sup>6</sup>	Boutwell (2014)
Yemne-Kimbi	—	—	Mundabli	Voll (2107)

<sup>6</sup> However, these consist only of a multiple action extension and an extremely rare causative in –si.

Group	Verbal extensions		Language	Reference
Nyang	—	—	Denya/Kenyan g	Unpublished lexicons
Ekoid	—	—	Ejagham	Watters (1980)
Mbe	+	—	Mbe	Bamgboṣe (1967)
Ambele	?	?	Ambele	Nganganu (2001)
Menchum	?	?	Befang	Gueche (2004)
Grassfields				
Ndemli	—	—	Ndemli <sup>7</sup>	Ngoran (1999)
Ring	+		Lamnso?	Blench (ined) cf. Table 13
Momo	—	?	Meta	Spreda (1995)
Southwest	?	?	Manta	Ayotte& Ayotte (2002)
Eastern				
Bamileke	+	—	Ngiemboon	Blench (ined) cf. Table 12
Nkambe	—	—	Mfumte	McClellan (2014)
Ngemba	+		Bambili	Ayuninjam (1994)
Bantu A	+	+	Akoose (A10)	Hedinger (1992, 2008)
Jarawan	+	+		Gerhardt (1988)

Hyman (2018) is a survey of Bantoid verb extensions which focuses heavily on Grassfields and Bantu proper. Mbe, Noone and Vute are included in his comparative tables, but many Bantoid branches are not included. I am at a loss as to the sources of some of the extensions listed in Hyman's Table 5, since these are not referenced to any literature in the bibliography. For example, Tikar is said to have pluractional, causative and detransitivising. However, the grammatical description of Tikar by Stanley (1991) does not appear to list these.

### 3.3 Proposed Bantu verbal extensions

The verbal extensions of Proto-Bantu have generated a considerable literature. The first discussion of these goes back to Meinhof (1899 rev. ed. 1910) and the 'Bantu Grammatical Reconstructions' of Meussen (1967 rev. 1980). The literature on this is summarized in Schadeberg (2003: 72) whose list of proposed reconstructions is still the most widely cited (Table 5).

**Table 5. Proto-Bantu verbal extensions**

Proto-Bantu	Semantics
*-i/-ici	Causative
*-il/-id	Applicative
*-ik	Impositive
*-ik	Neuter
*-am	Positional, Stative
*-an-	Associative, Reciprocal
*-a(n)g	Repetitive
*-al-	Extensive
*-at-	Tentive, Contactive
*-u/*-ibu	Passive
*-ul/-uk	Reversive
*udud	Repetitive

<sup>7</sup> Ngoran (1999: 73) says; 'In this language, we have been unable to uncover any vestiges of suffixal extensions'.

This system is relatively rich and has the important characteristic of being stacked, i.e. up to four extensions can be added to the stem to generate very specific subsets of meaning. The analytic question is the extent to which these can be linked to extensions attested for Bantoid, or further back, for Benue-Congo.

### 3.3 Case studies

#### 3.3.1 Sama Mum [=Samba Daka]

The Dakoid languages represent one of the least-described branches of Bantoid. Some elements of grammar re recorded in papers by Boyd (e.g. Boyd 2004). The main lexical resource is Boyd and Sa'ad (2010) which has a list of verbal derivations in the introduction, unfortunately without listing the segments the authors consider are associated with each proposed extension. I have therefore had to infer these from the dictionary as in Table 6;

**Table 6. Sama mum verbal extensions**

Interpretation	Segments	Comment
pluractional	-kì, -sì	
causative	-sì	
causative II	-rì	
resultative	-èn, -sèn, - kèn	
resultative II	-mèn	
reciprocal	-kèn, -sèn	
applicative	?	not listed in text
diminutive		only one case known

Since Boyd does not always clearly mark his lexical examples, it is not always clear where some segments are to be found. A striking aspect of Sama Mum is the allomorphy of /s/ and /k/ and absence of extensions indicating motion, which is characteristic of other branches of Bantoid.

#### 3.3.2 Nizaa

The Nizaa language is part of Mambiloid, and seems to preserve verbal morphology far better than some other languages in the group. Mambila itself has lost virtually all morphology. The main summary of verbal extensions in Nizaa is Kjelsvik (2002). Table 7 outlines the following identifiable forms;

**Table 7. Nizaa verbal extensions**

Function	Segments	Interpretation
Number marking	-r suffix, lowering	verbal plurality
Directionals	-a	'illative', motion into an enclosure
	-ri	'allative', motion towards a location, often the deictic centre of the sentence.
	-wa	'distantive' motion away from a location, or from the deictic centre.
Compleative	-sa	'down', motion towards a lower location.
	-ki	'totality'

Kjelsvik (2002) notes that stacking of up to three extensions is allowed.

#### 3.3.3 Vute

The only published description of Vute verbal extensions is Thwing (1987). She distinguishes the following extensions shown in Table 8;

**Table 8. Vute verbal extensions**

Function	Segments	Comments
Causative	-tì	Could also be interpreted as a transitivity marker e.g. ‘become black’ → ‘blacken’
Transitivity marker/ iterative	vowel lengthening, polar tone on second vowel, change in vowel quality	e.g. ‘be lost’ → ‘lose’, also ‘bite’ → ‘bite many times’
Directionals	-wò -wú -sò -sé -ré -hó	toward speaker up away from speaker down in out
Benefactive (?)	-nà	indirect object marker

These do not resemble the extensions identified in Hyman (2018: Table 5). Note also, although Nizaa and Vute are related, there are no apparent segmental cognates between the extensions identified for the two languages.

### 3.3.4 Tikar

Despite existence of a lengthy grammar of Tikar (Stanley 1991), Tikar verbal extensions are not discussed. However, the Flex database of Tikar lists various subsets of verbs in some detail and the following account is extracted from this material. Tikar is characterised by very extensive allomorphy in its extensions. I have given the French names assigned to extensions as in the database.

**Table 9. Tikar verbal extensions**

Attested	Valency	Segments	Interpretation
Causative <i>Répétitif</i>		(N)s~zi -(k)aʔ, -taʔ, -saʔ, -(l)oʔ ~ - (n)oʔ, -ŋga	Iterative
	Transitive	-ti, -ndi, -m	Physical action on an object especially with hands
	Transitive	-li ~ -ni	?

Hyman (2018: Table 5) lists Tikar but it is difficult to match his listed extensions with those given above, except for the causative. In particular, there seems to be no evidence that -li marks intransitive.

### 3.3.5 Noni

Noone (Noni) is an East Beoid language, first described in Hyman (1980). Table 10 summarises the extensions listed for Noone.

**Table 10. Noone verbal extensions**

Segments	Interpretation
-ce	attenuative
-ye	distributive
-ken	iterative
-ten	bifurcative
-RED	frequentative

This is quite a restricted set and it is problematic to link these segments with other Bantoid branches.

### 3.3.6 Mbe

The main source for verb extensions in Mbe is Bamgboṣe (1967). His paper describes morphology of Mbe verbs in some detail but gives little or nothing on the interpretation of the forms listed. However, it is clear that almost all verbal extensions in Mbe involve either valency change or plurality. Reduplication is a common strategy and is sometimes combined with the extended forms. Mbe permits multiple plurals on individual verb roots. Table 11 shows the main extensions which are listed for Mbe, together with my inferences as to their interpretation.

**Table 11. Mbe verbal extensions**

Number	Valency	Segments	Interpretation
	Transitiviser	-ô, -î	
	Transitiviser	Falling tone	
Plural	Ubiquitiser	-nî	Do s.t. all over the place
Plural	? Reversive	-lî	close → open etc.
Plural	Intensifier	-rî	
Plural		-î	
Plural	Complete reduplication		
Plural	Reduplication of first syllable		

Hyman (2018: Table 5) lists only -li, -ri as separative and intransitive, but clearly the Mbe system is richer than this.

### 3.3.7 Ngiemboon

Ngiemboon is a Bamileke language for which a very large lexical database exists, published as a dictionary (Lonfo & Anderson 2014). Ngiemboon no longer has a productive system of extensions, but the numerous pairs and triplets of verb roots plus (C)V segments shows that a rich system must have existed in the recent past. Table 12 shows the likely extensions which can be extracted from the database with their proposed interpretations. Included are segments which appear to be present in morphological terms but which have no obvious semantics.

**Table 12. Evidence for verbal extensions in Ngiemboon**

Candidate	Plausibility	Semantics
-a	Conclusive	Valency-changing
-bE	Evidence inconclusive; some cases clearly final -e	Highly varied, perhaps intensification?
-e	Conclusive	Valency-changing
-le	Present but rare	Reversive, reflexive
-me	No conclusive evidence for an -me verb extension	All examples valency-changing final -e
-ŋV	Limited evidence for a valency-changing final -ŋV	Valency-changing
-o	Inconclusive	
-tE	Conclusive	Iterative, reversive, reciprocal, plurative, cessive, intensive, valency-changing
Vowel doubling	Conclusive	Reversive, reflexive, cessive, valency-changing
Tone reversal	Conclusive	valency-changing, reversive, iterative, intensive

It is very difficult to map any of these clearly to other attested Bantoid evidence, and the extensive potential meaning-sets argues that Ngiemboon has undergone extensive mergers and reanalysis.

### 3.3.8 Lamnso'

Table 13 summarises all the probable verbal extensions in Lam Nso', with their likely meanings. It should be said that for almost all extensions, there are words that do not 'fit' either because the simplex form of the verb is missing, or because the semantics do not lend themselves to any unambiguous analysis. These questions are discussed in the headed sections below.

**Table 13. Lam Nso' verbal extensions**

<b>Formula</b>	<b>Subset</b>	<b>Sense</b>
CVC	-kir	Distributive, plural subject, iterative, continuous action, reflexive
	-nen	Reciprocal, plural subject, valence change
	-nin	Reciprocal, excessive
	-sin	Completive
	-tir	Paucal, diminutive
	-tin	Plural subject, completive, valence change, intensification
	-rin	Resultative
CV	-si	Completive, causative
	-ri	Multiple action
	-ti	Multiple action, action creating plural objects, intensification
	-fi	Process
	-ne	
VC	-vi	Reductive
	-Vm	Inchoative, inceptive
	-Vy	Completive
	-Vr	Causative
	-Vn	Autonomic
V	-V	Extensive

### 3.3.9 Jarawan Bantu

The only significant analysis of verbal extensions in Jarawan Bantu is Gerhardt (1988). As Gerhardt points out, these are generally interpreted as perfectives, and in common with the loss of noun-classes, Jarawan has lost all the usual functions of extensions, including iteratives and plurals, as well as valency-changing extensions.

**Table 14. Jarawan Bantu verbal extensions**

<b>Segments</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
stem-vowel lengthened, with occasional inserted glottal	intensifier
stem-vowel lengthened, final vowel neutralised to -a	perfective
-m ~ -Vm ~ -mV (where V is commonly -a-)	perfective

### 3.3.10 Akoose

Akoose (A10) is a Narrow Bantu language, presumably very close to the forms which should have been present in Proto-Bantu. Its verbal extensions have been described in detail in Hedinger (1992, 2008). These are summarised in Table 15;

**Table 15. Akoose verbal extensions**

Formula	Segments	Interpretation
V(C)	-ed/t	causative
	-en/n	instrumental, reciprocal, comitative
	-e/- <sup>2</sup> /-d	applicative
	-el	unexplained
CVC	-led	unexplained
	-len	unexplained
	-med	unexplained
	-ned	instrumental, comitative, applicative
	-nen	unexplained
	-ted	applicative, causative
	-ten	instrumental, reciprocal, comitative
	-sen	unexplained
	-gen	unexplained

This should be compared with the proposed Proto-Bantu extensions set out in Table 5. The very limited correspondences between the synchronic extensions in Akoose and the reconstructed forms makes it difficult to understand how these were arrived at. It is notable that there are more resemblances with Lamnso<sup>2</sup>, particularly the prevalence of CVN forms, and parallels such as the reciprocal in (n)-Vn.

#### 4. Conclusions

Verbal extensions were evidently part of the morphological system at the time when the first split from Benue-Congo occurred, as strongly suggested by the evidence from West Kainji. Nonetheless, they have largely disappeared in many branches, both in Bantoid and Benue-Congo, although their presence can sometimes be inferred from the lexicon. The outcomes of this loss remain to be more fully explored, but clearly an expansion of the verbal auxiliary system, verb serialisation and adverbs are typical replacement strategies.

Where languages preserve extensions, many are very restricted, as in Nizaa or Mungong. Only some Grassfields languages have complex, if now unproductive systems which can be inferred from the lexicon. The problem, as a comparison of Table 12 and Table 13 makes plain, is that there are hardly any correspondences even within Grassfields. Languages such as Ngiemboon and Lamnso<sup>2</sup> are presumably more closely related to one another than to Bantu but this is hardly apparent. Comparison with Bantu (Table 5) is hardly more illuminating. As Hyman (2018) observes ‘The forms or functions of the extensions may not correspond to those in Narrow Bantu’. Indeed the only extension which is clearly preserved from the remoter branches of Bantoid is the causative in *-si*, which is widespread in Niger-Congo. All the other extensions seem to be different.

Another major difference with Bantu is the absence of stacked extensions. Given the productive nature of this process in Bantu, it is surprising that not a single Bantoid language can be demonstrated to permit strings of extensions. It is plausible to suggest that the CVN forms which are attested in Grassfields and Beboid represent two originally distinct extensions now fused, but this has yet to be actually demonstrated.

Given the relative conservatism of noun-class prefixes, this variability is quite surprising. To explain it, we must invoke metatypy, the notion that ideas are conserved more than segments, that verbal plurality, iteratives, directionals and transitivisers need to find expression but are constantly recoded, perhaps because of continuing segment merger and resplitting. Ngiemboon represents this, where some extensions with a consistent segmental form encompass a whole variety of semantics. Such systems are very dynamic and probably change on a generational scale, while the underlying parameters are conserved.



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