

Some notes on Nyiŋɔm (aka Nyingwom or Kam)

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The notes and data presented here are mainly based on an interview with Afiniki D. Kam and Liatu D. Kam, both from Din Kamaajin B, Taraba State, who I met at Garba Chede in 2011. Their language Nyiŋɔm (Nyingwom), commonly known as Kam, is one of the Northern Nigerian languages documented with a vocabulary in Meek 1931. Since then, no other document on this language seems to have been published. Therefore I took the chance to elicit some information and data, on this so little known language. Part of the elicitations was conducted in Hausa.

Nyiŋɔm, Nyingwom or Nyingwum as in Meek 1931, commonly known as Kam, is spoken in Bali L.G.A., Taraba State, Nigeria, by possibly less than 5.000 people. The name is probably a compound with the morpheme *nyi* 'person' as the first element (Meek 1931:539). According to Afiniki D. Kam and Liatu D. Kam Nyiŋɔm is spoken in the following settlements. In brackets are their estimates of how many Nyiŋɔm people are living in each place.

Sarkin Dawa (70), Mayo Kam (150), Garin Hamza (700),
Din Kamaajin A, B, C, D (3000), Garin Laa (300), Garin Bandari (300).

In most classifications Kam (Nyiŋwom) is listed among the Adamawa languages as the only member of a distinct (isolated) Kam Group (cf. Greenberg 1963, Boyd 1989, Williamson & Blench 2000) with no apparent relation to any higher level Adamawa grouping. Blench (initially in 1997 and recently in 2012) presents an alternative view whereby Nyingwom (Kam) forms a (genetic) unit with [Tula-Waja](#), and that this "Adamawa 1, 8" unit (the name refers to Greenberg's numbering of Adamawa groups) forms one of the nine distinct branches of a Gur-Adamawa(-Ubangi) continuum (Blench 2012:4). The decisive evidence constituting a genetic unit "Waja-Kam", as this purported Adamawa branch is also named elsewhere (e.g. Wikipedia), however, has to the best of my knowledge not been published/presented as yet.

Nyiŋɔm has no noun class system. When eliciting the vocabulary, plural forms of the nouns were regularly asked for. These were generally cited by simply adding the morpheme *yo* to the 'singular form'. Since this pattern is regular only a few of the examples are quoted below. The only exceptions are a couple of nouns denoting persons where different means of plural marking were noted. Whether *yo* is a bound morpheme or a clitic is still unknown. In Meek's vocabulary a morpheme *yo* denoting plurality is not to be found. He also has no marked plural forms of nouns with the exception of 'men' and 'women'.

Nyiŋɔm seems to differentiate gender, at least in the use of pronouns in the 3. Person Singular. Examples are included in the vocabulary below. This property of Nyiŋɔm surfaced towards the untimely and abrupt end of the interview at the time and requires like many other essential questions further confirmation and research.

In the tables below I also listed for the benefit of fuller information the respective items from Meek's Kam Vocabulary published in 1931. The differences to be noted with several items of the two vocabularies may (i) result from linguistic change in the past 80 years, (ii) be attributed to dialectal variations in Nyiŋɔm, or (iii) they may also partially result from the fact that the divine King of the Kam, who was the principal source of Meek's information and data, "spoke only in a whisper" to an interpreter in response to Meek's questions (see Meek 1931: 538-9).

	Nyíṅòm of Din Kamaajin field notes, 2011	Kam Vocabulary; Meek 1931, Vol II: 547-550
fish	àtábí / àtábí yo	
bird	núṅ / núṅ yo	nu
louse	ńkón	
dog	wó / wó yo	wo
animal (cf. goat)	mpilibi / mpilibi yo	
meat	àfàm	nɔm (<i>also animal</i>)
horn	ból / ból yo	
tail	àsí	
egg	àbàr	bɛl kume (<i>egg of fowl</i>)
feather of bird	séráá núṅ	sira
kill	ávə vɔli ; vɔlí !	
* <i>he killed a chicken</i>	á vɔlí kúmé ya	
bite	kúmú yá ² !	
fly	firi sáṅ	
rise, get up; * <i>tashi</i> !	yii gaṅ	
tree	bàl / bàl yo	bɛl ; bɛl buu (<i>10 trees</i>)
root	àdɛlájɛl bàl	
bark of tree	kpá bàl	
leaf	àbɛlák	abula
earth	àbìbí	
seed	àwù	
grain	cè	
fire	àlì	
smoke	mò:k	
ash	sùńsòk	
grease; * <i>mai, kise</i>	màn	man (<i>fat, oil</i>)
* <i>this grease</i>	màn ábâ	
groundnut oil	màn gúshì	
star	ńcá	
moon	àjì	adze
sun	àlájɛl	alaṅ
God		alaṅ
cloud	àbúl	
rain	mpòm	impòm
night	àbó'ó	abo

path	àlukôṅ	
road		mukɔm
water	məṅ káṅá	mekanu
* <i>this water</i>	məṅ káṅá bâ	
river		mar
stream		mikâ
mountain	ṅtótṅ	
hill		adaṅ
sand	zù	
stone	àtâl	atal
white	ábùlì	
* white house; white dog	àṅóḡ bùlì ; wó bùlì	
black	ábóʔli	
red	ádòmli	
* <i>red dog</i>	wó dòmli	
die * <i>yáá mutu</i>	vaʔàyi	
dying * <i>mutuwa</i>	àvæk	
* <i>sit down !</i>	jòṅ kpókéma !	
* <i>sit down !</i>	jòṅṅ bii !	
stand	yii gáṅ	
* <i>she is standing</i>	ú cí taṅ ga:ṅ	
* <i>he is standing</i>	á cí taṅ ga:ṅ	
sleep (<i>barci</i>)	lùh	
sleep * <i>yi barci</i>	lusú rúlú	
* <i>ya barci</i>	á corə lúsù rulu	
* <i>yana barci</i>	á co dúkúlú	
hear	àrə là:g	
* <i>ya jii</i>	a laʔaà	
know <i>sani</i>	màsi	
* <i>ya sani</i>	á mäsáà	
say ... <i>ya ce</i>	bim bèn	
saying <i>cewa</i>	bén	
eat * <i>ci !</i>	nìṁ ; nəm nî !	
* <i>ci abinci!</i>	nəmə kpò !	
* <i>ci nama!</i>	kəmə fàm !	
drink !	num !	
drink water	núṅ mṅṅkàṅà	
see; * <i>see!</i>	jali ; jálím!	

* <i>give me!</i>	mam pə	
* <i>give him!; give her!</i>	yàmú ; yàmááca	
swim	bwár mə̀ŋkàŋà	
burn	càmsí	
bush	àshẹ	
walk	ànyap	
* <i>ya tafi</i>	nyí nyap	
* <i>ya tafi gona</i>	ú saŋa fɔ:k	
come	pà	
* <i>zo naŋ!</i>	pà kəma	
human being	ní / n'í yo	
* <i>this person</i>	ànyáà	
* <i>these people</i>	nyí yowa	
person	àn'íu / nyí yo	nyi ; nyi bu (<i>10 people</i>)
man	àwán / níwanu	nyavan / nyivan
* <i>my husband</i>	àwánóm	
woman	anya ^s bana / ànya bana	nyaban / nyiban
* <i>my wife</i>	àgbànom	
child	àcaà / cì yowà	cise
* <i>my children</i>	àcím yo	
head	àlíp	alIp
bone	àkùb	
eye	ànùŋ	anu
ear	àkàr	akal
nose	àmèràk	mIre
mouth	ŋwé	
tongue	àlímóní	alIm
tooth	àshàg / àshàg ^l yo	asha bimbini (<i>one tooth</i>)
hair (of head)	séráá lib	sira lip
neck	àgbár	agber
breast	àvẹ	aví
milk	mə̀ŋkàŋ ávẹ	
heart	àtík	afal
liver	àfàl	
belly	àdàl	aye
palm of hand	àdà nyé	
hand		adèl nyè
arm	ànyé / ànyé yo	anye

finger nail	kpàlǐb cír éne	achIrIṅye
foot nail	kpàlǐb cír b̀̀:k	
sole of foot	àdà b̀̀:k	
foot		ader bo
leg	àb̀̀:k	abo
knee	àlúlu	alunu
blood	wò	awo
all	ṅwap	sel b̀̀p (<i>all the houses</i>)
many	ninani, buboli	sel b̀̀ba (<i>many houses</i>)
big * <i>babba</i>	boli	wo b̀̀li (<i>large dog</i>)
small	átɔp	
long	ádube	
new ; * <i>sabon gida</i>	áṅwì; àṅók éṅwì	
dry	áfɔ'e	
hot; * <i>hot water</i>	ásho; m̀̀ṅkaṅ ashò	
cold ; * <i>cold water</i>	ádàà ; m̀̀ṅkaṅ adàà	
good	l̀̀lám	
full	músà	
who?	b̀̀ b̀̀i ?	
who came?	b̀̀ b̀̀é pé biì?	
what?	nyip gə (gə)?	
* <i>me faru</i> ?	nyip gə síṅ g̀̀?	
* <i>babu</i>	səɾə	
* <i>akwai</i>	díb b̀̀é	
that	b̀̀	
this	b̀̀a	
groundnut oil	m̀̀n gúshì	
arrow	àb̀̀n	abun
* <i>fadama</i>	b̀̀r̀̀	
bow	àcyé	acê (<i>bow; war</i>)
calabash	àzéré	
faeces	àshib̀̀	
flour	ànáam	
fly (n.)	àj̀̀ṅ̀̀	d̀̀ɔṅ
forehead	agɔm	
goat	m̀̀p̀̀li	impili
guinea corn	c̀̀	ce
house	àṅók	

* <i>gidan sarki</i>	àṅók wànaa ba	
kidney	àyéṅcwi	
mosquito	dīnà	
prepare food * <i>tuka tuwo</i>	àr lánó kpòm	
* <i>he prepared food</i>	àr lánó kpò wà	
* <i>she prepared food</i>	àcàr lánó kpò	
river	àfè	
room * <i>daki</i>	sàl	asel (<i>house</i>)
sheep	ṅtámá	
snake	nyìshé	nkali
stick	bàl	
thing	niì / nyòò	
* <i>tuwo</i>	àkpò	
wind (<i>iska</i>)	àshàp	
thank you!	ń nyétáà	

Meek 1931, Vol II: 547-550

1	bìì	bimbini
2	yiraak	ira
3	càr	tʃar
4	nár	nar
5	ṅwún (ṅmún (?))	ṅwun
6	jù:p	dʒɔp
7	jùp yiraak	dʒub ira
8	sâl	sal
9	níízaa	aṅyeza
10	bòò	buu
15	boo gún ṅwún	
20	kpáímí	paimi
40	ṅkpó yiraak	
50	ṅkpó yirààk bún boò	
60	ṅkpó càr	
80	ṅkpó nar	
100	ṅkpó ṅwun	akpô

sàlí-m my room (* *daki na*), my single roomed house cf. Meek *sal* 'house'
sàlí-nyá your room
sàlí-nyo his room (* *dakin sa*)

sàlí-ca	her room (* <i>dakin ta</i>)
sàlí-yírú	our room
sàlí-bí mənabu (?)	your (?) room
sàlí-nó	their room
méŋ ! ~ míŋ !	Build!
míŋə ŋɔk !	Build a house!
kə míŋ gâ !	Don't build!
kə míŋə ŋɔk gâ !	Don't build a house!
á míŋə ŋɔ' áà	he has built a house * <i>ya gini gida</i>
á míŋə ŋɔ' j̄ɔ̀	<u>NEG</u>
arə míŋə ŋɔ̀̀̀k	he is building a house * <i>yana gini gida</i>
arə míŋə ŋɔk h̄̀	<u>NEG</u>
əm míŋə ŋɔk	he will build a house * <i>zai gini gida</i>
árə míŋə ŋɔk ɔ̀ h̄̀	<u>NEG</u>

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