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“Basic Linguistic Research in Adamawa Languages”

## "ADAMAWA"



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## Adamawa ? , Adamawa-Ubangi ? , Adamawa-Gur ? Gur-Adamawa-Ubangi ?

- Controversial views about what Adamawa stands for
- Insufficient documentation: many languages are spoken by minorities in remote areas)
- A marked linguistic diversity which also results from intense contact during the past millennia
  - the geographic position in the centre of the Sub-Saharan savannah belt, where three of Africa's language families meet (cf. also Güldemann 2008 )
  - severe climatic changes (Maley & Vernet 2013)
  - the emergence of feudalistic states must have caused massive relocations of peoples resulting in numerous varying contact scenarios.

## Classification (I)

- Most classifications appear to be largely based on counts of putative cognate words, randomly compounding items of horizontal and vertical (genetic) transfer.
- Geographical proximity appears to be decisively correlated to presumed states of relationship.
- Case in point: the varying classification of Tula (Tula-Waja Group) by :
  - Greenberg 1955/63 : Adamawa-Eastern : Adamawa branch
  - Bennett 1983 : North Central Niger-Congo : Trans-Benue
  - Boyd 1989 : Adamawa-Ubangi : Northwestern core group ?
  - Williamson & Blench 2000 :
    1. Gur-Adamawa-Ubangi continuum : NW Adamawa branch
    2. Adamawa – Ubangi : Adamawa branch – NW sub group
  - Blench 2012 : Gur-Adamawa-Ubangi continuum : Waja – Kam branch
  - Starostin 2012 *“Preliminary lexicostatistics for a small representative subset of Niger-Congo languages “*: Tula shares most cognates with Beboid.

## Classification (II) : Adamawa - Ubangi

- **Greenberg 1949:** 89 : “There are some indications that branches 12 [*i.e. Adamawa*] and 14 [*i.e. Eastern*] form a unity. I assign Gbaya to the Eastern Branch with hesitation since it displays evidence of affiliation with the Adamawa branch.”
- **Greenberg 1955/1963:** Adamawa - Eastern subgroup of Niger-Congo.
- **Boyd 1989:** Adamawa – Ubangi  
"3 core groups within the Adamawa branch to which most of the languages *could be* assigned to." (1989: 179)
  - a "core consists of the languages of group 6 [Kebi-Benue] ... *which seem to have* the greatest lexical affinities with the small isolated northern groups 13 (Bua), 14 (Kim) and Day“.
  - the southwestern groups (Samba, Duru, Mumuye, Yandang, Nimbari)
  - a "northwestern unit *might be posited*" (*identical to Bennett’s Trans-Benue*)
- **ETHNOLOGUE** various editions ... - 17<sup>th</sup> edition, 2013  
Adamawa - Ubangi: classification and higher level groupings are based on/follow Boyd 1989. Yet, rather arbitrary naming praxis for the higher level groupings.

## Gur - Adamawa - Ubangi continuum

- **Bennett & Sterk 1977: 249 :**  
"Longuda and Tula of Adamawa-Eastern, for example, show significantly higher percentages of cognacy with More (Gur) than with some other Adamawa-Eastern languages."
- **Bennett 1983: 36-37 :**  
"Tula-Longuda ... is by the figures of this test as close to - or as far from - Gurunsi as it is to Boa-Kula and Chamba-Namshi."
- **Williamson & Blench 2000 (two conflicting views) :**
  - Adamawa languages form branches of a *Gur-Adamawa-Ubangi continuum***but also:**
  - *Adamawa-Ubangi* is a language family

## Gur – Adamawa ! / Gur – Adamawa ?

- **Dimmendaal 2008: 841**

"Gur and Adamawa ... form a larger subgroup, according to Kleinewillinghöfer (1996). These can be shown to be genetically related beyond any reasonable doubt. The evidence is not only lexical in nature, it is based primarily on a range of cognate grammatical morphemes. The so-called 'Eastern' branch of Greenberg's Adamawa-Eastern, however, does not fit in; 'Eastern' probably constitutes an independent language family that cannot or can no longer be shown to be related to Niger-Congo (or any other family), and is now usually referred to as Ubangian."

- **Blench 2012 :**

- **Gur.** Fairly coherent, but the argument that some western Adamawa languages are closer to Gur than those further east is apparently well-founded.

- **Adamawa.** No evidence that all claimed members really form a genetic group. Fali and Daka have been expunged. Much hangs on a typological feature, noun-class suffixes, which must be argued as disappeared in some branches.

- **Ubangian.** Not a group and no evidence yet presented for a particular relation with Adamawa, although geographical proximity makes this likely.

## Morphological evidence for a relation between Adamawa and Gur groups

- Kleinewillinghöfer 1996  
*Relationship between Adamawa and Gur languages: The case of Waja and Tula :*
  - Strong morphological evidence in support of a relation between Tula-Waja and Central Gur groups. Tula-Waja a member of Central Gur (?).
- Kleinewillinghöfer 2012  
*Correlations of the Noun Class Systems of Central Adamawa and Proto Central Gur :*
  - Class languages of the Samba- Duru group (Central Adamawa) obviously link with Central Gur as well.
  - Some of the impressive correspondences, in terms of characteristic features, are not found in Tula-Waja.

## Correlations of the noun class systems of **C**entral **G**ur groups and **C**entral **A**damawa (I)

Gender *\*ku* / *\*ni* ~ *\*tu*                      **CG**            (Miehe et al. 2012)  
*ko* / *ne* ~ *to*                                      **CA**            (Kleinewillinghöfer forthcoming)

Gender *\*bu* / *\*ni*                                      **CG**  
*\*bu* / *\*na* (< *\*ni*)                              **Eastern Oti-Volta**            (Sambieni 2005)  
Contents: trees; bow, canoe; “food”, ...

*bo* / *ne* ~ *to*                                      **CA**  
Contents: trees; bow, canoe; “food”, ...



## Correlations of the noun class systems of **C**entral **G**ur groups and **C**entral **A**damawa (II)

- Class ***\*ni***                      **CG**  
                  ***ne***                        **CA**  
- plurals of *\*ku* and *\*bu* in CG , *ko* and *bo* in CA  
- single class (abstracts, deriving nouns of quality and state)
- Class ***\*tu***                        **CG**  
                  ***to***                        **CA**  
- plurals of *\*ku* (and *\*bu*) in CG , *ko* and *bo* in CA  
- single class (masses; derivations: e.g.: *chieftaincy*, *childhood*, ...)
- Class ***\*da***                        **CG**  
                  ***ne***                        **CA**  
- "thing" (singular); derivations [+neuter]

## Noun class languages in "Adamawa"

- Noun class morphology is insufficient to define the position of individual "Adamawa" groups within the whole of the "Adamawa" and "Adamawa-Gur" complex.
- In "Adamawa" class languages amount only to roughly one quarter of the total of the approx. 90 languages.
- They occur in only 5 out of 16 groups:
  - **Samba-Duru** : (Kleinewillinghöfer 2011, forthcoming)
  - **Tula-Waja** : (Jungraithmayr 1968/69, Kleinewillinghöfer 1991, 1996, 2006)
  - **Longuda** Cluster : (Jungraithmayr 1968/69, Newman 1977, Kleinewillinghöfer 1996, ms )
  - **Ḃəna-Mboi** (Yungur) : (Kleinewillinghöfer 1993, 1996, ms)
  - **Bua** : (Boyeldieu 2012, Kastenholz ms)

## Vestiges of former noun class marking

- **Yandang** of Donadda
- *tî-k / tí-yì* tree
- *tár-í / tát-tì* stone
- *shǐ / shǐ-yǐ* fish (UK field notes)

(For further examples of plural marking in Yandang/Maya languages:  
see Barau et. al (n.d.))

- 'proto-lakka' (Boyd 1974) :
- **\*-i, \*-p, \*-t, \*-k, \*-m**

## Languages with only one general plural marker

- **Kam** (*Nyijom*) (Kleinewillinghöfer, field notes)

**-yo**

plural marker

*bàl / bàl -yo* 'tree'

*ní / n<sup>yí</sup> -yo* 'person / people'

- **Kuasap** (Kim group) (Iberg 1990)

*ma* plural marker post posed to noun

- **Day** (Day) (Nougayrol 1979)

*ge* plural marker post posed to noun

- **Fali of Mongo (Fali)** (Kramer 2013)

*ě* plural marker post posed to noun

Plural marking with prefixes  
in the Bikwin-Jen group and Baa (Kleinewillinghöfer 1996)

	Jen (Dze)	Munga Leelau	Tala (Maydi)	Baa (Kwa)
tree	<i>kée / e-ké(e)</i>	<i>kaa / lé-kaa</i>	<i>káp / yée-káp</i>	<i>kii / ri-kii</i>
stone	<i>tée /-</i>	<i>tèi / -</i>	<i>t<sup>h</sup>ál / -</i>	<i>titáa / rí-títáa</i>
person	<i>í-fò / é-fò</i>	<i>yí-và / lé-và</i>	<i>yu-gùl / léé-gùl</i>	<i>(náhò / niyásâ)</i>

## Agent nouns derived from verbs

- Central Gur : \*-**d**- (see: Manessy 1978: 100)

- **Gämme** (Central Adamawa) : **-r-**

<i>dɔɔ-r-áa</i>	elder	<i>dòò dɔná</i>	become old
<i>yib-r-à</i>	pregnant woman	<i>yib-sé</i>	pregnancy
	(cf. Beiya :	<i>yip-ná</i>	become pregnant)

compare also:

- **Fali**

<i>ngáf-r-ò</i>	'Feigling'	<i>ngaf</i>	'sich fürchten'
<i>ó:-r-ò</i>	'Dieb'	<i>o:</i>	'stehlen' (Kramer 2013)

## Evidence of verbal morphology ?

- Verb extensions
- Infinitives
- Verbal nouns
- TAM
- ...

## The evidence of the "cultural" vocabulary

- Manessy 1999: 13:
  - *"... le lexique "culturel" du proto-central (...) évoque une civilisation néolithique agricole proche (à la métallurgie près) de celle des sociétés des savannes dans l'Afrique pré-coloniale ... dans un milieu semblable à celui des locuteurs du proto-OV et du proto-gurunsi: savane boisée ... probablement avec quelques frontières, donc grands cours d'eau ... Il est tentant de situer cela à l'est du Bénin, dans la vallée de la Benue ?"*
- Kleinewillinghöfer (2004/09/ forthcoming).
  - *Significant portions of the cultural vocabulary of 'proto-central' (Gur) - in particular terms referring to subsistence as millet/guinea-corn farmers in a savannah environment - is shared by Tula-Waja, Samba-Duru, and other 'Adamawa' groups. Their common ancestors apparently inhabited a contiguous area in the savannah belt, before the continuum became separated, possibly reinforced by the southward expansion of Chadic and the emergence of Savannah states.*



## Word order in the NP in “ADAMAWA”

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- “Adamawa” languages in general : Head – Modifier
- But in associative constructions :
- A) 'possessor' follows the 'possessed'  
Tula-Waja; Longuda; ...  
Kebi-Benue; ...
- B) 'possessor' precedes/may precede the 'possessed'  
Central Adamawa (Samba-Duru; Mumuye; Yandang)  
Bua; Kim (?)

## Word order in associative constructions (B)

### Lɔŋto

(Kleinewillinghöfer 2011)

*gàr ligó*  
chief house

chief's house

*gàr.yɔ* chief.CL1

*mí ligó*  
1s house

my house

### Samba

(Fabre 2002: 100)

*Àbdú nà*  
Abdu cow

Abdu's cow

(“la vache d'Abdou”)

*nà má*  
vache 1s

my cow

(“ma vache”)

## Variation in the word order in associative constructions (1)

- **Beiya, Gəmme, Vəmṇəm, ...** : (Kleinewillinghöfer 2011)  
distinction between “**possession**” and “**modification**”
- **Beiya**
- *gbilə máám*                      river's water; water *of/in* the river                      (POSS)  
river water
- *máám gbilə-m*                      river water; water *of/from* a river                      (MOD)  
water river -CONC
- *miñ te²*                                  my tree ~ stick                                  (POSS)  
1s tree
- *te² miñ-gə*                              a/the tree ~ stick of mine /for me                      (MOD)  
tree 1s -CONC

## Variation in the word order in associative constructions (2)

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- **Mumuye** : (Shimizu 1983)  
no clear semantic difference (?), both orders are used
- **Yandang** (of Donadda) : (Kleinewillinghöfer, field notes)  
variation in the position of the possessive pronouns to express
- |          | <b>inalienable</b> | vs. | <b>alienable</b> possession |
|----------|--------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
|          | body - POSS        |     | POSS - house                |
| my       | <i>ĩ-náj</i>       |     | <i>man lébi</i>             |
| your     | <i>ĩ-lok</i>       |     | <i>bɔɔ lébi</i>             |
| his, her | <i>ĩ-ní</i>        |     | <i>míní lébi</i>            |

## S-AUX-O-V-X / S-V-O in Central Adamawa

- **Lɔŋto**

*ø dá hɔ́ɔ́g anzà.nɛ.*

3s AUX herb burn.INF

He is burning the herbs/ bush.

**S-AUX-O-V-X**

*ø ànzà hɔ́ɔ́g vən kúmɛ́.*

3s burn herb with oil

He has burned the herbs/bush with petrol.

**S-V-O**

- **Vɔmɲəm**

*í píí gwaá womí.kò.*

3p AUX house build.VN

They are building a house.

**S-AUX-O-V-X**

## Summary

- Most (or all?) languages and groups commonly classified as 'Adamawa' are rather part of a larger 'Adamawa-Gur' complex. The cultural vocabulary common to 'Adamawa' and Central Gur languages indicates that their common ancestors dwelled in a wooded savannah environment and farmed millet and guinea corn.
- The composition and internal classification of the 'Adamawa-Gur' complex is, however, still unresolved. The morphological evidence linking certain 'Adamawa' groups and Central Gur is convincing, but comparable data is lacking from other subgroups.
- The evidence so far presented in lexicostatistical studies is deficient and thus unpersuasive to support the 'Adamawa' subdivisions found in current overviews.
- 'Adamawa' may be understood as denoting 'Adamawa-Gur' languages spoken in and around the wider *geographically defined Adamawa area*.



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*Thank you  
for your attention*



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