

## **The Mbum of Ngaoundéré**

### **Grammaticalization on the borderland between language contact and Variation**

#### Abstract:

Mbum (Kebbi-Sanaga, Adamawa) is spoken by an average of 50.000 speakers in the cities of Ngaoundéré, Ngan-Ha, Mbang Mboum and Tibati and their surrounding villages on the Adamawa-Plateau of the Republic of Cameroon. Since the immigration of the Fulbe people and the rise of their cultural and social dominion in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the indigenous languages of northern Cameroon and Nigeria are threatened with extinction.

In the case of the Mbum of Ngan-Ha and Ngaoundéré, Ardo Issa (leader of the Fulbe of Ngaoundéré in that time) and Belaka Koya (leader of the Mbum of Ngan-Ha in that time) brought the long lasting war between the two peoples to an end by introducing a somehow bizarre law, that every Fulbe man should take a Mbum as his wife and shortly after, the Mbum converted to Islam, connecting their destiny to the good-will of the Lamibe (Fulbe leaders) but remaining their language and their cultural heritage at the same time.

As the case stands, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Mbum language has come to play a major role in the lives of the Fulbe royal family where the tradition holds, that every Fulbe prince marries a Mbum wife, with the outcome, that their children are raised multilingual. Their mother tongue is Mbum irrespective of a patrilineal or matrilineal perspective. Usually, both their father (the Lamido) and their mother were raised in a household where Mbum was the language of familial interaction. Nevertheless, Fulfulde remains the language of politics and economy, the language of everyday urban interaction with French being the official language in municipal and educational life. On the side of the proper Mbum community, their language is losing ground. It is only spoken within the family, leaving the language of urban interaction to Fulfulde, even within the Mbum community.

In my presentation of grammaticalization patterns in Mbum I will, on the one hand, focus on those constructions, which are probably connected to the linguistic influence of Fulfulde, and hence can be considered as contact-induced changes in the grammar. On the other hand, I will give a preliminary overview of language internal variation, which may include the phonology, as well as the lexicon and the morpho-syntax of the language.

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