

PREFACE

Some general remarks on Adamawa research

“Adamawa” is a group of languages (about 90) mostly spoken in the area of the Adamawa Plateau (Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad). Its genetic unity was proposed by Joseph Greenberg (1963) who included the Adamawa languages into Adamawa-Eastern (Adamawa-Ubangi). Adamawa languages are one of the least studied groups within the Niger-Congo macrofamily, new data on these languages are of great importance for further research in the field of comparative Niger-Congo studies. Some first systematic research on Adamawa languages goes back to the late 1970s and was quite common during the 1980s and early 1990s. Most grammars and language descriptions available on Adamawa languages go back to this period. Until the early 2000s, not many new contributions were published nor much research was conducted. Since then a new wave in Adamawa language research launched. This led to a reinforcement of Adamawa studies. With new linguistic methods researchers gained more insights in language structure and could start a reclassification of the languages. Additionally, language groups and languages that were not a point of interest in former studies came to the fore. Working groups on Adamawa languages appeared e.g. in Mainz (Germany), Paris (France), St. Petersburg (Russia) and field work was intensified. Nowadays an increasing number of international researchers who are partly represented in this volume currently work in the field of Adamawa language studies.

The first Adamawa conference

The idea of working more closely together goes back to September 2016 when participants of a congress on Niger-Congo languages in Paris met to found the Adamawa Language Studies Group. It became clear that meetings to exchange findings and data was a common interest of all members. As a result of this meeting and because of the wish for a closer cooperation we decided to organize the first Adamawa conference in Mainz. After we presented the concept within the work group the resonance from our colleagues was overwhelming and convincing. Therefore, a few months later, the first Adamawa Conference took place from 9 to 11 September 2019. It was hosted at the department of Social Anthropology and African Studies of the Johannes Gutenberg University bringing together a number of linguists from six countries representing various research institutions:

France	French National Centre for Scientific Research Paris University of Orléans
Germany	Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz Goethe University Frankfurt Humboldt University of Berlin
Nigeria	Theological College of Northern Nigeria Jos University of Jos Federal University Wukari
Russia	St. Petersburg State University Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of RAS
UK	SIL International University of Cambridge Kay Williamson Educational Foundation
USA	Princeton University

This conference with the participation of many international researchers is seen as a starting point for many more to come. In the final plenary session, it was decided to launch a regular biennial conference taking place at different universities in different cities.

Contributions at the conference and in the present volume

This volume includes the proceedings of the first Adamawa conference. All articles present new data on languages, some of which had hardly more than a wordlist with a few hundred items up to date. Some therefore are preliminary in nature since much more research is needed. Nevertheless, they are invaluable for further studies on the particular language or language group and for a better understanding of the Adamawa language family as a whole as the establishment of a comprehensive data base consisting of many Adamawa languages is important for future typological and classificatory research. Only research in linguistic subfields excelling lexical comparison and comprising phonology, morphology and syntax completes this data base. With this in mind the conference brought together several Adamawa experts working on specific linguistic subareas and language groups within the Adamawa language family.

The first day of the conference started with a Round Table Discussion. It was led by Ulrich Kleinewillinghöfer on a classificatory question concerning a proposed subgroup Waja-Jen. Overall, the conference was divided into thematic sections according to subgroups of the Adamawa language family. The first section focused on Bena-Yungur languages. **Lora Litvinova** presented her colleague **Jakob Lesage**'s data on tonal peculiarities of Kam (he could not be present himself). **Dmitry Idiatov** and **Mark van de Velde** summarized specific tonal characteristics of the afore-mentioned language group. **Sabine Littig** and **Alexander Zheltov** also worked with comparative methods in the second section representing the Samba-Duru and Yendang groups. In their presentations on adpositions and plurality marking, they discussed their form and function in different languages of the groups. **Gwenaëlle Fabre**'s investigation referred to a poly-functional morpheme, which takes on special functions in Samba Leko and, as became clear in the subsequent discussion, also plays a role in other Adamawa languages. **Raimund Kastenzholz** closed

the first day of the conference with his talk on auxiliaries and co-verbs in Pèdè.

The second day was mainly devoted to the Nigerian Adamawa languages. **Ines Fiedler**, **Julius Elstermann** and **Tom Güldemann** first presented their new theoretical and analytical approach to the description of nominal classes using Longuda as an example. **Friederike Vigeland** followed with a synchronic and diachronic investigation of the numerical system in the same language. **Lora Litvinova** undertook an analysis of the tonal system of Wam (Kugama), while **Anastasia Lyakhovich** dealt with possessive pronouns in Waka. After the lunch break, **Matthew Harley** presented first data on Kyak, a language that has so far been undocumented except for a few word lists. **Russell Norton** showed his lexicostatistical study of the Jen cluster, which is mainly based on phonological data. **Peace Benson** talked about ideophones in Jenjo. **Roger Blench**'s contribution illustrated new data on the nominal class system of kiTule. In his sociolinguistically oriented talk on contact phenomena of Mbum spoken in Ngaoundéré, **Klaus Beyer** presented some interesting data on the Mbum cluster. The second day ended with a joint reception. This offered the opportunity to talk to each other in a relaxed, collegial atmosphere, to discuss open questions and to make new contacts. The conference closed with some of the results of the Bua research group and another classificatory discussion. **Pascal Boyeldieu**, **Raimund Kastenholz**, **Ulrich Kleinewillinghöfer** and **Florian Lionnet** showed some of their recent results on the nominal class systems of the Bua languages. This was followed by **Pascal Boyeldieu** with his talk on personal pronouns within the same group. **Dmitry Idiatov** and **Mark van de Velde** evoked further discussion with their presentation on the Bena-Mboi group. In doing so, they mainly cited lexical reconstructions as evidence to support the thesis that the languages are closer to Benue-Congo languages than to Adamawa languages. This talk was followed by a discussion in which questions from the Round Table Discussion on the first day of the conference were also taken up. From both discussions on the first and last day it became clear that (1) classificatory questions

in particular will have to be attended to in the future and (2) that questions in this regard should be discussed more within the Adamawa network.

The classification of the African languages in four language macrofamilies after Greenberg (1963) has been known for over 55 years. Since then the classification of Adamawa languages considering Adamawa as a subbranch of Adamawa-Eastern within Niger-Congo holds (Greenberg 1963: 9). Although some attempts for a reclassification were made, these innovations were not always accepted or widely taken in account. Thirty years ago, Boyd (1989) established the classification for Adamawa languages. This classification comprises Adamawa-Ubangi, Gur and Kru as a North-Central Niger-Congo unit (Boyd 1989: 179) but is still based on Greenberg's classification and numbering. Williamson & Blench (2000) combine different classifications in their approach in which Gur and Adamawa-Ubangi are considered a continuum. Blench (2012: 2) comments and refines this classification: In this paper the Ubangi languages are not described as a genetic unit. The reason for the variability of the genealogical classification of Adamawa languages is due to the lack of data on these languages. In the past ten years the knowledge of specific linguistic features increased due to descriptive grammars and typological approaches to Adamawa languages. Still it lacks a detailed reclassification based on comparison of distinct features, which is needed for a reclassification. Newer approaches see a stronger relation between Adamawa and Gur languages. Therefore, an Adamawa-Gur continuum is postulated by different authors (Kleinewillinghöfer 2020, Kramer & Kießling 2018).

A collection of the talks was put into writing and will be presented within this special issue. You will find articles focusing on the single languages Jenjo (Benson), kiTulé (Blench), Kyak (Harley), Pèdè (Kastenholz) and Samba-Leko (Fabre) whereas others take a look at some language clusters, as the Jenjo cluster (Norton & Othaniel) and the Longuda cluster (Vigeland). Other authors focus more on subgroups, such as Bua (Boyeldieu and Boyeldieu & Kastenholz & Kleinewillinghöfer & Lionnet), Bena-Yungur (Idiatov & van de Velde), Samba-Duru (Littig)

and the Leko and Yendang groups (Zhel'tov). **Russell Norton and Nlabephee Othaniel** presented a detailed comparative analysis through lexicostatistics and sound correspondences of the Jen cluster. With thorough evidence from lexicostatistics, isoglosses and sound correspondences they come to the conclusion that the cluster can be divided into two primary branches thereby revising an older classification. Throughout their analysis, they examine how to adapt and adjust the orthographies of the languages according to the new insights.

Phonological approaches are mostly comprised in grammars of single languages like Samba Leko (Fabre 2003), Mambay (Anonby 2011), Mundang (Elders 2000) and Kolbila (Littig 2016). Kleinewillinghöfer (1991) describes the phonology of Waja in detail as well as morphological aspects. Boyeldieu concentrates on the Bua group with one complete grammar of Lua (1985). In general, detailed phonological descriptions were rather marginal in Adamawa research. This luckily changes nowadays due to the establishment of the research group around **Dmitry Idiatov and Mark van de Velde** in Paris (LLACAN) who are represented with a paper on consonants and tone schemes in Bena-Yungur and their internal reconstruction. They especially focus on the diachrony of tone development, for example how the three-tone opposition came into being and how former tone schemes can still be observed in certain circumstances today.

The morphology of the Adamawa languages offers a broad and interesting field of study. Particularly noteworthy is the nominal classification:

“Noun class morphology – in addition to lexical resemblances — is the very characteristic that Greenberg used to confirm Adamawa as a branch of Niger-Congo. It also provides the decisive evidence for establishing the internal structure of Gur (Manessy 1999). In Adamawa, however, class languages – where class membership is still marked by characteristic suffixes and where sets of pronouns and bound morphemes are used to mark grammatical agreement (“concord”) — amount to merely a quarter. They occur in only five groups: Tula-Waja (Kleinewillinghöfer 1996b), Longuda (Jungraitmayr 1968/69), Yungur (Kleinewillinghöfer

1993), Samba-Duru (Kleinewillinghöfer forthcoming), and Bua (Boyeldieu 2012; Kastenholz n.d.).” (Kleinewillinghöfer 2020: 224)

As Kleinewillinghöfer points out, some languages have a very elaborate and diversified nominal class system, which is characterized by a large number of classes that are apparent through suffixes on the noun and agreement marking within the noun phrase and sometimes even beyond (e.g. agreement on the verb in Kobom). There are similarities to the Gur languages, not only in the morphology but also in the semantics of the individual classes and genders. However, a comparative overview and description comparable to the ones existing for Gur languages (see Mieke, Reineke & Winkelmann 2012) is still pending. From a synchronic viewpoint, however, the languages are in different stages of losing the nominal class system. For example, in some Bəna-Mboi languages there is only one general agreement marker for attributes (Kleinewillinghöfer 2020: 2). The gender system itself is reduced and only has three singular and three plural classes (van de Velde & Idiatov 2017: 5). Finally, in other Adamawa languages, only remnants of a former noun class system can be found (e.g. in Kolbila, see Littig 2016). Thus, within the Adamawa groups the languages show different states of reduction of their noun class system. On the one hand a retention of the number of classes is observed, on the other hand there are languages showing a reduction of concordance marking, i.e. in adjectival constructions (Littig 2018). If one takes concordance as a definitive feature (Kleinewillinghöfer 2020) some languages lack a functioning noun class system. These languages still show traces as defective class morphemes, appearing as lexicalized elements that form part of the nouns (Littig 2016).

Most articles in this volume concentrate on morphology, syntax and their interface. It is especially the noun class system or the remnants of them that spark many researchers’ interest. The outcome is represented by four articles on noun classes and nominal morphology in different languages and language groups. **Alexander Zheltov** analyses existing data enriched with his own so far unpublished data on plurality

in the Leko and Yendang groups. He focuses on plurality marking and its possible correlation to the noun classification, distinguishes different strategies the languages use and aims to show remnants and innovations.

Roger Blench takes a look at the former noun class system in kiTule which has undergone many alterations and thus shows a very diverse synchronic picture with a wide range of possible number marking. The different alterations are analysed and disassembled. In addition, some information on the phoneme inventory, tones, the \pm ATR vowel harmony and demonstrative pronouns is given.

The noun class system of the Bua language family is closely studied in a historical perspective by **Pascal Boyeldieu, Raimund Kastenholz, Ulrich Kleinewillinghöfer, Florian Lionnet**. They suggest a new reconstruction of the noun morphology of these languages. Unlike done in former attempts, they do not only look at the noun class suffixes but include determiners that can be found in Kulaal today and that were stacked onto the noun form in other languages in the past.

Friederike Vigeland describes the numerals in Longuda, a language cluster with an overt noun class system, and analyses their morphology, agreement behaviour in noun phrases and the derivation strategies employed by ordinal numerals. She concentrates on three of the five Longuda varieties, making it a comparative description. She compares her findings to other Adamawa languages.

The reduction of functioning noun class systems and their agreement on attributes influences the morphosyntactic structure of the languages. Characteristic of those languages is the extensive use of specific elements such as adpositions, particles and other free elements to express certain grammatical categories and to mark discourse acts (compare e.g. Bonhoff & Boyd 2003, Boyeldieu 2013, Kastenholz 2011, Kramer 2014, Littig 2016). They can occur as free forms or phonologically bound clitics. A larger section of this volume compiles articles discussing such characteristic parts of speech like discourse markers, adpositions, pronouns and adjectives (ideophones).

Gwenaëlle Fabre discusses a clause-final control marker in Samba Leko that, depending on the context, can be analysed as having different

functions. She shows the different scenarios in which the polyfunctional morpheme is attested and questions this phenomenon in a wider context within Adamawa languages.

The contributions of Sabine Littig and Pascal Boyeldieu present their comparative research within specific sub-groups concentrating on one specific feature. **Sabine Littig** presents spatial adpositions, focussing especially on Samba-Duru languages with data based on her own fieldwork. Accompanied by theoretical and cross-linguistic considerations she gives an overview on their form and function.

Pascal Boyeldieu outlines the personal pronoun systems, their structures and behaviour in eight underdocumented Bua languages based mostly on unpublished data. He presents new findings and observations on an inclusive/exclusive contrast, logophoric pronouns, tonal polarity and possessive constructions.

Peace Benson presents a topic that so far is rather underrepresented in Adamawa research. She studies ideophones in Dzə and describes their phonological and morphosyntactic behaviour which often differs considerably from all other parts of speech in that language. Her contribution is interesting for the study of Adamawa in general as there is not much information on ideophones and the language group she works in is rather underdocumented.

The approach of **Raimund Kastenholz** combines the description of a single language and the focus on a specific morphosyntactic feature. The author shows that Pédé has a wide set of co-verbs and auxiliaries forming complex predicates or serial verb constructions which are a rather distinct feature within the Duru group. He describes the partially overlapping functional ranges of co-verbs and auxiliaries in such constructions and the differences they show on the syntactic level.

Aiming to close one of the gaps concerning underdocumented languages, **Matthew Harley** presents a sketch on phonological, morphological and syntactical features of Kyak, a to date almost undescribed language. He gives an overview on the phoneme inventory, some aspects of noun and verb morphology and finishes with some of the most salient features of the language. His sketch with focus on specific

features gives interesting insights in the grammar of Kyak and can function as a base for further studies.

About the special Adamawa issue in “Language in Africa”

The journal “Language in Africa” is very “young” — up to the moment just two volumes have appeared. This special Adamawa issue (the third volume of the journal) is our first experience of making a special volume on a specific topic. We consider the opportunity to host the Proceedings of the first Adamawa Conference to be an important moment in the very short history of the journal. The work was not easy but the result seems to be fruitful and successful. We appreciate the cooperation between the editors of the Journal and the co-editors of the Issue, and it gives us a chance to declare that the journal is open for further collaboration of this sort.

It is worth noting that the special issue has its specifics. Taking into account the importance of new data on Adamawa languages and the fact that for some languages the submitted papers are the first published works we accepted the fact that some data and analysis are preliminary. Nevertheless, we should stress that all submissions were subject to the standard double-blind reviewing procedure according to the general policy of the journal. We appreciate both the competence of reviewers and the efforts of the authors for improving the texts. We are happy to present the first special issue of “Language in Africa”, that also seems to be the first special volume on Adamawa languages. Let us hope that the Russian proverb “The first pancake is always lumpy” is not true in this case.

Acknowledgements

Bringing together many specialists on Adamawa languages for the first time researching in fields ranging from phonology to morphosyntax and lexicostatistics to sociolinguistics was inspiring and strengthened

the network for future research in the field. We are looking forward to many more conferences as well as workshops and other get togethers.

We would like to thank all authors for making these proceedings a diverse and interesting volume on Adamawa languages. The conference and subsequently these proceedings would not have been possible without funding from the Sulzmann-Stiftung, the Initiativfonds Lehre of the Rhine-Main-Universities and the African Linguistics of the Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. A special thanks also goes to the Kay Williamson Foundation for financing additional print copies to be distributed to the participating institutions and universities in Nigeria. We are also very grateful to the administration of the Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow) and the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg), the cofounders of the Journal, whose support made this special Adamawa issue possible.

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