

## HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT - TOWARDS A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

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The aim of our project B6 "Towards a genesis of the ethnolinguistic situation at the southern and western fringes of lake Chad basin" within SFB 268 "West African Savannah" is to analyse the emergence and development of the complex present-day ethnolinguistic patterns in a region which may be historically labelled as southern and western periphery of the Borno empire. For the first time, a model of migratory routes was put forward based on combined research efforts of the disciplines involved in our project.

Below we shall attempt to summarise the main points and reflections of our findings. Our specific approach as a whole is based on applying the respective research methods of the individual disciplines represented in our project, namely anthropology, ethnomusicology, history and linguistics and eventually on integrating the results into a systemically coherent picture.

As a starting point some observations based on linguistic analysis of data collected from one Saharan and 11 Chadic languages with dialects are presented. These are the Saharan Kanuri with the six dialects Manga, Mowar, Bodoi, Koyam, yerwa and Suwurti and the Chadic languages Bade (Bade of Katamma and of Dakfum), Duwai, Ngizim, the Jalam, Kwar ta Mataci and B↔rkayu dialects of Karekare, Ngamo Gudi and Ngamo Yaya, Bole, Bura, Pabir, Margi (Margi Babal and Margi Tart↔m), Kyibaku and Malgwa.

Secondly patterns of the cultural complexes in the musical environment of our area of study will be shown. Thirdly the anthropological assessment with regard to the funeral rites of some of the groups under study will be discussed.

Finally the above considerations within the framework of the seventy oral traditions collected by our team in settlements within the study area will be correlated and a plausible picture of migratory routes will be drawn, a picture which serves as a model for interpretation and basis for further questions to be solved in the near future.

As a result of the increasing number of newly collected linguistic materials from the languages and dialects of the region, a broad basis for comparative work was established; hereby insights into unknown dialectal divisions like e.g. those of Karekare and Ngamo were achieved. In addition, degrees of varietal differentiation were recognised, as e.g. in the case of Malgwa, and, legitimate doubts regarding the dialectal status of Bura and Pabir arose.

As a first step for quick orientation and confirmation of previous results concerning the Chadic languages of the area, the lexicostatic method

regarding the so-called basic vocabulary was applied. Besides the anticipated results which confirm the existing group classifications of the languages considered (cf. JUNGRAITHMAYR & IBRISZIMOW 1994), it appears that Bura, Margi and Kyibaku are closer to Bade, Ngizim and Duwai than to Bole, Karekare and Ngamo.

From the history of migration which will be discussed below we know that there has been a phase of immediate contact and therefore, probably linguistic exchange for more than three generations among the Bole and the Bura. Interestingly enough, there seems to be no overt evidence for this fact in the so-called cultural vocabulary.

Regarding the latter considered for the whole area and organised in semantic fields based on special lists comprising 1500 lexical items, one might observe four categories of semantic groupings.

1. Group distribution – items whose distribution is strictly connected with the distribution of the language groups. As an example, the semantic field of ‘weapons’ may be quoted where every language group has its own lexeme for ‘spear’: Bade, Ngizim and Duwai – *n↔↔gasan/↔↔ngas, ngas, íngas*; Bole, Karekare and Ngamo – *ronlí, ranlí, renlí/ranlí*; Bura, Pabir, Margi and Kyibaku – *mwásu, móssu, másu, móshi*, and Malgwa *úupa*. Similar is the case with the reflexes for ‘bow’ and ‘arrow’. ‘bow’: Bade, Ngizim and Duwai – *abán/abák, abák, bák*; Bole, Karekare and Ngamo – *riyá, rinka, rinká*; Bura, Pabir, Margi and Kyibaku – *láli, láli, lága, lélai*, and Malgwa *↔↔lke*. ‘arrow’: Bade, Ngizim and Duwai – *dígan/↔íga, ídga*; Bole, Karekare and Ngamo – *fósshó, faskú, ho'osho*; Bura, Pabir, Margi and Kyibaku – *áfa, áfa, γήáφυ, ηάφα*, and Malgwa *gúrme* [Only hightones are marked].

2. Global distribution – lexemes which are to be found in the whole area irrespective of linguistic groups. These are loan-words from Kanuri or Hausa, mainly from the field of ‘horse-ware’, ‘weaving’, ‘wood-carving’, ‘metals’ (namely gold and silver), and ‘religion’. This category covers on the one hand words which have come into the region with the introduction of the respective objects or notions; or, on the other hand, due to the Islamic/Arabic and Kanuri spread into the region a word has become a generic term for objects already existing. This is the case e.g. with the word *gangá* ‘drum’, which stands from the point of view of the ethnomusicology for completely different types of drums.

3. Isolated distribution – lexemes which are to be found in the whole area with the exception of one or two languages within a language group. This category looks formally similar to category 2 ‘global distribution’ above, but at the same time it seems that an individual language has resisted the adoption of the wide-spread word. Further analysis of this category may reveal significant characteristics of the respective society like e.g. in the case of the word for ‘market’, *gomá*, which is unique among the Bole and Ngamo, and not the Kanuri word *kasúwu* or the Hausa *kaasúuwáa*, as the speakers of all other languages use according to their regional distribution. This fact might be connected with a specific market cycle among the Bole and Ngamo. This

category has parallels in the findings of the ethnomusicology and anthropology (see below).

4. Regional distribution – lexemes which are shared by neighbouring languages which belong to different linguistic groups. This category is the largest one and gives immediate hints of contact phenomena among the speakers. As an example the word *gadhái* ‘outside granary’ may serve which is common for Karekare and Ngizim. In addition, it is noteworthy that these two groups have also another special underground granary in common. This category has parallels also to the findings of the ethnomusicology and anthropology. In a wider perspective, it might also be correlated with the appearance of common phonological structures like the presence of lateral consonants in Karekare, and the Bade-Ngizim group. The following chart summarises the categories:

Tab. 1: Categories

Type of distribution	Range of distribution	Type of findings
1. Group	restricted to the language groups	linguistic
2. Global	irrespective of language groups	linguistic, ethnomusicological
3. Isolated	occurring in one language or language group	linguistic, ethnomusicological, anthropological
4. Regional	specific to neighbouring languages of different linguistic groups	linguistic, ethnomusicological, anthropological

Special attention regarding the degree of contact in historical perspective was paid to the ethnonyms used by the various linguistic groups, equally to the autonoms and xenonyms. Here it appears that the individual groups have a different ethnic labelling which should be interpreted within a framework of their various social and political environments. E.g. Ngamo Yaya call all the peoples north of them *Gozumakú* (i.e. *Ngizim*), all the people west of them ‘people of the west’ and all other strangers *Tangalakú* (i.e. *Tangale*). The Karekare have a peculiar term for the Hausa, *Múkdo*; the Bura call the Hausa *Asámpwá*, with the meaning ‘people who drink corn flour’; whereas all others use the Kanuri term for the Hausa, *Afunó*, which is said to mean ‘people using skin loin-cloth’.

The closest discipline to the linguistics is certainly the ethnomusicology especially regarding the concept of the people towards language and music performance.

The patterns of the musical landscape must be seen as a multilayered system of continuous exchange between different factors of influence. The most dominant of them is a cultural strata strictly related to Islam. All lute instruments, bowed or plucked, built in spike or inner-spike construction,

should be regarded in a wider Islamic context. The same refers to the complex stratification of different groups of musicians, e.g. the praise singers and the court musicians, both being extremely important as a source of oral traditions relevant for the history of the region. Not all Islamic influences are of great age; in some ethnic groups we observe just nowadays changes which can only be explained as recent adoptions of Islamic values.

The above mentioned categories of linguistic analysis have their parallels in the field of distribution of musical instruments. Whereas a strict relationship between ethnolinguistic groups and distribution of instruments cannot be observed (category 1, 'group distribution'), pendants of categories 2, 3 and 4 can be described.

Widespread in all the groups we find drum ensembles based on the above mentioned *gangá*, 'drum', with differentiated social function (category 2, 'global distribution').

Instruments within smaller and well-recognisable neighbourhoods are the harp, called *s↔mb↔l*, of the Margi and Kyibaku (category 3, 'isolated distribution') on the one hand and the xylophone *tsínza*, played by the Bura and the Tera on the other (category 4, 'regional distribution'). At the same time there are cases of instruments distributed in a broad area like the flute, *shilá*, which cannot be found among the Bura.

It is worth mentioning that *tsínza* and *s↔mb↔l* carry a high potential of identity within the respective groups. In relation to the natural environment the use of the so-called rock-gongs relates groups from the eastern part with those from the western part of our research area - petrophones occur as well in the Gwoza Hills as in the Uba area and in Shira (cf. SEIDENSTICKER, BROß & BABA 1996). Due to uncertain historical significance of the use of these instruments, their pattern of distribution and relation to rock paintings needs further investigation.

With regard to the social function of music we observe regional activities fully independent of ethnic and language boundaries. Special reference should be made here to the music performed within the hunter associations. This kind of music also reveals important aspects of historical information.

Whereas music played during possession rituals (which have nothing to do with Hausa *boorí* performance) might uncover relationships between the eastern and western part of our area of research, e.g. Malgwa, Kotoko on the one hand and Ngamo on the other, the research carried out on funeral rites shows already more consistent patterns.

The choice of funeral rites as our anthropological focus is due to the fact that they were – and to some extent remain – major loci of expressive culture and a privileged point of entry for the study of regional cultural complexes and culture history. For the first time, an extensive research focussing on a great number of details related to burial ceremonies was carried out and compared based on a group of variables, for instance mode of death announcement,

leading of the funeral procedures, burial places, clothing and positioning of the corpse and architectural structures of the graves.

Within our area, from a general point of view we are able to identify a number of several groups of common characteristic features. Parallel to our linguistic and ethnomusicological categories the following points may be put forward:

In the whole of our area both in Islamic and non-Islamic societies the male corpse is positioned with the head southwards, facing east. It is only the Kyibaku society which places the corpse with the head towards east, facing north and the Ngizim society where the corpse is placed with the head to the north facing east (category 3, 'isolated distribution'). A feature shared amongst two neighbouring groups is the practice - unique in our area of study - of destroying the compound after the head of a household dies. This is the case among the Karekare and Ngizim (category 4, 'regional distribution'); a fact which might be related to the mobility of the two groups as it is going to be mentioned later in the analysis of the history of the migrations. Another common feature linking distant groups is the overt display of wealth and thus the social position of the deceased by means of affluent use of burial clothes as in the case of Bura, Margi, Kyibaku on the one hand and the peoples of Auyo, Teshena and Shira on the other.

Regarding the burial architecture, we are dealing with two forms of graves for commoners, namely a grave with cylindrical shaft and elongated chamber at the base and a grave having a subcircular opening and subterranean chamber. The former type was observed among the Bura, southern Margi, Karekare and Ngizim; the latter one among the Bade, Ngamo Gudi, Kyibaku, Malgwa and the peoples of Auyo, Teshena and Shira. The third known form of grave, that is with a circular shaft is only for chiefs who are buried in a sitting position among the Bura, Margi, Karekare and Ngamo Gudi.

At this point it becomes apparent that the facts shown up to now are rather like scattered pieces of a mosaic. Now it is time to consider the peoples own interpretation of history, i.e. the oral traditions of migrations, and to interpret them mutually in the framework of our systemic approach.

In the collection of the oral traditions, the historical method was used. The method is concerned with the collection of data, paying due attention to its origin, sequence, growth or expansion and development of the phenomena under study. In this regard, the traditions of origin collected were correlated to the written sources as well as to relevant linguistic and anthropological evidence. This was done through collecting separately the traditions of origin of each of the Chadic speaking groups of the area of study and eventually through comparing them collectively as well as cross-checking them.

Through the separate and collective analyses of these traditions of origin, we attempt at finding out the nature and pattern of the migrations, including the group contacts that took place. Thus, in this way, further insight is realised from each migration and a general overview of the nature and origin of the migratory pattern is made.

The fact that migrations did take place is based on the evidence that the Chadic speaking groups in the area of study preserved such traditions of origin, which is also supported by their widespread presence in the Chad Basin. Their histories are therefore deeply interwoven with one another and others they met in the past. Furthermore, evidence gathered from places, stations and other peoples mentioned in these traditions corroborated these claims. These include over fifty towns and settlements which were visited and data collected by our interdisciplinary team. Most of the interviews were conducted as far as possible in the original languages; where it was not possible, Hausa and/or Kanuri were used. The bulk of these source materials are of great historical value and equally have tremendous anthropological and linguistic potentials if further evaluated.

The result of the immediate assessment of these traditions of origins are many, which will be presented in detail in a volume under preparation (cf. IBRISZIMOW ET AL.), but the substantially significant ones are summarised as follows:

There is a clear emergence of a dual pattern of migrations which is based on southern and northern routes from the shores of Lake Chad into the western and south-western parts of the Chad basin. This division seems to be a reflection of the nature of the occupational needs and requirements of the migrant groups. A common characteristic of almost all the groups is the existence of a history of hunters as one of the most prominent professional groups who directly or indirectly determined the course of their migrations, choice of settlements and security. Also to a certain extent fishing was practised by some of the groups (e.g. the Bade, Duwai, Tera and Bole of Guduku, Ngalda and Gole) in both the spatial migratory formations. However the main characteristic feature of the southern migratory groups was the prevalence of rearers of mainly cattle who met and mixed up with earlier settled farming groups thereby also adopting farming as an additional occupation. This is supported by the traditions of origin of Bole (Fika) and Tera (Hina) that they migrated as herders of livestock including cattle which was not known or owned by the autochthonous groups they met, the Ngamo and Yamaltu, respectively. That was the likely explanation of the choice of the southern route of migration along the Mandara mountains, through Biu into Gombe hilly areas like Kalam continuing further to Daniski and Gudi Hills. Hence, the physical features such as the tall and flat-topped hills, deep and wide valleys, the Gongola river and its tributaries like the Ngeji, the presence of dense vegetation cover full of game and grasses, all acted as secure heights or depressions, assuring sources of water supply, of hunting, fishing, grazing,

and above all as permanent dependable beacons that guided and provided safe corridors throughout the ages for the migrant groups.

On the other hand, the migrant groups who followed the northern routes were mainly fishermen, farmers of cereals like guinea corn and millet, rearers of small animals like goats, sheep and chicken. This is based on the fact that the northern migratory groups exhibited a characteristic of a mobile farming population like the Karekare, the Ngizim, the Manga, the so-called Ngazar and Lere who were also prominent in the rearing and owning of beast of burden like camel, donkey and horse. In the case of Ngizim and Manga this was due to their involvement in the Sudanic salt and natron trade. The mobile farming migrant groups with their animals followed the northern route guided by the course of the river Yo from the western shore of the Lake Chad and the fringes of the desert in the north, into the western and south-western plains of the Chad basin. This made it easy for them to move safely in an organised pattern in and out of the plains when faced with serious dangers which were a common peculiarity of the open Sudanic belt of the Chad basin.

The preliminary analysis of all the migrations of the northern and southern routes showed common claim of Yemeni or Eastern origin. Accordingly, all the migrant groups in one way or the other were in the immediate vicinity of the Lake Chad and had in one way or the other contacts amongst themselves. But, it is apparent from the migratory movements into the Chad basin, that the various groups of migrants moved independently of each other at least from the shores of Lake Chad. This is corroborated by the traditions of origin and the established trend of each migrant group, within the general pattern of their migration as supported by the fact that, most of their ancient settlements were the foci of various migrant groups which were distinct and clearly occupied by them alone, in some cases up to date. However, it is important to note that these migrants as a whole were not the first group of occupants of the stations or places on their migratory routes and current habitats in particular. This is based on the existing evidence from their traditions of origin, that they met people inhabiting the places they passed through or later settled. Hence in the southern route the Tera of Hina met the Yamaltu at Bima hill, the Bole of Kalam and Daniski met the Tangale and Ngamo, and earlier on their way after their separation with the Kanuri and others they met the Kilba, Dera (Kanakuru) and Pabir (cf. IBRISZIMOW 1996). Along the northern route, the Karekare and Ngizim met existing ruins like the Garaganya, Yanda, the ancient wells of Tikau Nane and Potiskum. This route might have been inhabited thousands of years before the migration of the above mentioned groups as the recently discovered Dufuna dug-out suggests (cf. BREUNIG 1995). Furthermore, it is significant to mention the fact, that all the migratory groups that occupied the western and south-western parts of the Chad basin did not mention the Hausa and Malgwa as part of, or those met in the course of their migrations. On the other hand, the Kanuri and Pabir were the most widely spoken of as the groups with whom they migrated with, or met, separated and left in the course of their migrations. In addition, most of the

migrant groups identified with particular ancient settlements, which became the foci of their secondary migrations within the Chad basin. We have a strong evidence that Buratai, Shani, Tigali, Mugni, Ngojin, Jalam, and the hills of Bima, Kalam, Gudi, Daniski acted as the main cross-roads or centres of secondary migrations by the Chadic speaking groups from the northern to the southern route and vice versa, with an outflow into the Benue valley, Bauchi and Jos Plateaus respectively.

Hence, the inter-connection between the northern and southern migratory routes of the Chadic speaking groups were apparent in about three identified corridors that linked the established pattern earlier mentioned.

These are: i) Damaturu/Daya to Dau'ra to Daniski, through Kalam into the Gombe area; ii) Shani through Bajoga to Daniski and Gudi; iii) Kalam to Daniski and Gudi hills up to Jalam and Potiskum, giving rise to an interwoven north-south migratory interconnectedness.

The migratory movements studied is the tip of a vast field of urgently required empirically co-ordinated interdisciplinary co-operation to fully analyse the available data and further mobilisation for the continuation of the current momentum in a better way. In fact, the immediate requirements call for more research so as to find out the missing links and gaps in our current knowledge. This includes the investigation of the 'corridors of migrations', spark-off points and rendezvous of the migratory movements from the Lake Chad to the western and south-western parts of the Chad basin.

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