The position of Kam (Central-Eastern Nigeria) within Niger-Congo

And the overestimation of genealogical uniformity in African languages

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• Since Greenberg (1963): four super-families (Afro-Asiatic, Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Khoisan)

• For decades, questions of uniformity and diversity preferred genealogical answers over areal patterns and contact scenarios (cf. Güldemann 2018b)

• This view neglects natural dynamicity and diversity of languages and cultures and gives an unrealistically static picture of the African past

• Contact scenarios are, however, everywhere in Africa (Güldemann 2018b: 454-472)
Reasons for this presentation

• Making comparative data available on an undescribed language

• To typologists: African languages are not adequately classified; be careful when sampling!

• Any feedback from traditions that have been more critical of Greenberg’s proposals and macro-comparative research?

• Case-study of language that is difficult to classify if the only model we want to use is genealogy
Niger-Congo classification

- Fairly well established as a unit (be it as a ‘domain’, ‘pool’, ‘phylum’ or ‘family’)
  - Noun class morphology
  - Pronominal paradigms (Güldemann 2017)
  - Numerals (Güldemann 2018a, Pozdniakov 2018)
  - Some phylum-wide vocabulary (tongue, person, people)
- Sub-classification (41 low-level groups; 5 higher-level groups): different methods with different degrees of robustness
  - B: Regular sound correspondences (+ morphology): 11 sub-subgroups, e.g. Bantu (which is actually a sub-sub-sub-subgroup)
  - C: ‘Obvious’ relatedness (+ lexicostatistics, morphology): 22 sub-subgroups, e.g. Igbo
  - D: ‘Scattered resemblances’ (mass comparison): 8 sub-subgroups and all 5 higher-level groups, e.g. Adamawa, Benue-Congo, Gur

Good (2017)
Kam (àñòm): an Adamawa (Niger Congo) language?

• 5,000-20,000 speakers, 20 villages
• Farmers-fishers-hunters
• Claim Jukun descent (kororofa kingdom) – close contact (e.g. religion, Meek 1931b,c)
• Trade language: Hausa; Fulfulde major language since Fula jihad (early 19th century)
• Close contact with various other groups, e.g. Mumuye (‘Adamawa’), Jirim (‘Dakoid’), Chamba Leko (‘Adamawa’), recently Glavda (Chadic)
Kam classification

• Kam: claim Jukun origin
• Meek (1931c): not Jukun, but claimed resemblances with Cross River, Bendic, Kushi
Kam classification

• Greenberg (1963): Adamawa (based on Meek’s 100 words)

• Adamawa-Gur continuum or genealogical/areal pool (Kleinewillinghöfer 2010)

• Little evidence for genealogical unity: high-level Niger-Congo isolate? (Güldemann 2018b; Hammarström et al. 2018)
Reevaluating Kam classification

• Sample of features:
  • Unusual typology: phonology, logophoricity, serial verb constructions, clause-final negation, STAMP morphs (auxiliaries), plural words
  • Noun structure: a- and N-prefixes
  • Subject pronouns: 1SG, 2SG, 1PL, 2PL
  • Lower numerals: 2, 3, 4, 5
  • Basic lexicon: Leipzig-Jakarta list (Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009)
Reevaluating Kam classification

• Sample of languoids
  • Proto-Niger-Congo: Güldemann (2017) for pronouns, Güldemann (2018a) for numerals and some basic vocabulary
  • Potential genealogically distant contact languages? Chadic, Kanuri, Hausa, Adamawa Fulfulde → no obvious links at this point
  • Geographically close Niger-Congo languages
    • Jukunoid (Shimizu 1980, Storch 1999)
    • Mumuyic (Shimizu 1979)
    • ñesam (Eveling Villa, p.c.) and Yendangic (Blench n.d. & Güldemann 2018a)
  • Other Niger-Congo languages
    • Edoid (Elugbe 1989)
    • Potou-Akanic (Stewart 2002)
    • Central Gur (Manessy 1979)
Comparative Kam 1 – Typology and the Macro-Sudan belt

• Kam is areally and typologically part of a linguistic Macro-area, i.e. the Macro-Sudan Belt (latest: Güldemann 2018b)
  • Labial-velar consonants (kp, gb)
  • Nasal vowels (but rare)
  • Logophoric pronouns
  • STAMP morphs (TAM on pronouns)
  • Clause-final negation
  • Plural word

= chain of overlapping clusters with areal features; areal and not genealogical

Güldemann (2010)
Comparative Kam 2: noun structure, nominal prefixes, and Central Jukunoid

- 1/3 of noun stems in Kam have a prefix-like element
  - à- (276), e.g. à-gbáŋ ‘stool’; àgbáŋ ‘chin’, àbì ‘song’, àtfì ‘child’
  - Ì- (108), e.g. m̀pùŋ ‘jug’; m̀fɔ ‘forest’; ñtàm ‘medicine’; ñmkpɔŋ ‘agama lizard’
- No indications of noun class functions synchronically, but occurrence of a- is phonologically conditioned: non-postpausally → i- or ø-
- cf. Central Jukunoid noun class prefixes, e.g. Jukun Takum (Shimizu 1980: 121-122); other Jukun (Storch 1999: 308-320)
  - no other language in the sample has something similar.
Comparative Kam 3: subject pronouns and numerals → Mumuyic & Yendangic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>1PL(.E)</th>
<th>2PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kam</td>
<td>N-; ɲim</td>
<td>a; ɲa</td>
<td>juru</td>
<td>ɲo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-NC</td>
<td>°mE</td>
<td>°mO</td>
<td>°TI</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumuyic</td>
<td>°mE; °N</td>
<td>°mo</td>
<td>°rO, wO</td>
<td>°noO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yendangic</td>
<td>°m(E)</td>
<td>°mO</td>
<td>°tO</td>
<td>°nO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jukunoid</td>
<td>°-mi</td>
<td>°-wu</td>
<td>°-jE</td>
<td>°-nE(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potou-Akanic</td>
<td>*-mE</td>
<td>*wO/fO</td>
<td>*jɛ</td>
<td>*mO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edoid</td>
<td>*mhe</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>*-mhanhi</td>
<td>*bha(dhi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Gur</td>
<td>°mE</td>
<td>°mO</td>
<td>°TI</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>two</th>
<th>three</th>
<th>four</th>
<th>five</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kam</td>
<td>jirâg</td>
<td>tjâr/l/d</td>
<td>ɲ.nấr/l/d</td>
<td>ɲ.ấwûn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-NC</td>
<td>°Ri</td>
<td>°ta(C)</td>
<td>°na(C)</td>
<td>°nU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumuyic</td>
<td>°zi.î (?)</td>
<td>°taa.ti</td>
<td>°(d)nee.ti</td>
<td>°maâni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yendangic</td>
<td>°iDNE(t)</td>
<td>°taa.t</td>
<td>°naa.t</td>
<td>°nû.n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jukunoid</td>
<td>°pan, cj</td>
<td>°tar, cj</td>
<td>°(-)NE.(n), cj</td>
<td>°to.n, cj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potou-Akanic</td>
<td>*(-)ŋɔ</td>
<td>*-tâ</td>
<td>*-nâ</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edoid</td>
<td>*-və</td>
<td>*-cha.Gɪ</td>
<td>*-në</td>
<td>*-chi.Nə.nhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Gur</td>
<td>*le, °-nyo</td>
<td>*ta, °sa</td>
<td>*na:(si), °nyi</td>
<td>*nu, °-mu.wa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = homorganic nasal; I = close vowel; E = front vowel; O = back vowel; T = alveopalatal consonant (t, d, l, r); R = rhotic; C = unidentified consonant; ° = psuedo-reconstruction; * = cited reconstruction; cj = Central Jukunoid

Note: analogical changes in numerals (Pozdniakov 2018): blurs regular sound correspondences, but at the same time provides other opportunities for comparison
Analogical changes in numerals (Pozdniakov 2018)

- Analogy = irregular phonetic changes of adjacent numerals which makes these numerals resemble each other
- Kam: 3-4: final consonant; 4-5: initial consonant
  - 3-4 grouped together: also in other ‘Adamawa’ languages
  - 4-5 grouped together: also in other ‘Adamawa’ languages

<table>
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<tr>
<td>jirāg</td>
<td>tʃàr/l/d</td>
<td>ŋ.nár/l/d</td>
<td>ŋ.ʃùn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparative Kam 4: lexical comparison

• Collection of Leipzig-Jakarta list for sampled (proto-)languages
• Attempt to find comparative series → failed
• Superficial similarities (borrowing or inheritance with little change, or chance):
  • Central Gur: 8/58 = 14%
  • Mumuyic: 6/54 = 11%
  • ɲesam (Yendangic): 10/90 = 11%
  • Jukunoid: 7/79 = 9%
  • Edoid: 4/59 = 7%
  • (Potou-Akanic: 2/20 = 10%)
Comparative Kam 4: lexical comparison, shared across multiple languages (9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>bird</th>
<th>bone</th>
<th>breast</th>
<th>dog</th>
<th>mouth</th>
<th>come</th>
<th>grind</th>
<th>water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kam</strong></td>
<td>núŋ</td>
<td>à.kùb</td>
<td>à.ví</td>
<td>wó</td>
<td>ŋé</td>
<td>pè</td>
<td>nàm</td>
<td>mìŋ.káŋá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ńesam</td>
<td>ʔbẹnuẹ</td>
<td>kúbì</td>
<td>nwe</td>
<td>bèzã</td>
<td>ne</td>
<td>inaŋ</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jukunoid</strong></td>
<td>*ki-/li-nùn</td>
<td>*ku-/a-kup</td>
<td>*ki-/a-bjan</td>
<td>*i-bu</td>
<td>*u-/i-ndut</td>
<td>*ba</td>
<td>*kwa</td>
<td>*mbjed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Edoid</strong></td>
<td>*a-pí</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>*a-bhẹa</td>
<td>*a-nuẹ</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>*lɔ</td>
<td>A-mɪN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Comparative Kam 4: lexical comparison

- 12 words shared between Kam and one other language
- 76 words without any links so far (78%)
- Much more work has to be done on reconstruction and documentation (e.g. Yendangic), and probably more links – possibly with comparative series – will be found.
Comparative Kam 4: lexical comparison

One very interesting case of near-homonymy:

<table>
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<td>Kam</td>
<td>nūŋ</td>
<td>à.nūŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumuyic</td>
<td>dʒaV-nun</td>
<td>ṅun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detail that may only be explainable with common inheritance.

No other case of homonymy like this attested anywhere else in an African language (RefLex, Segerer & Flavier 2011; Pozdniakov, p.c.; Pozdniakov & Segerer under review)
Conclusions

• Introduction: genealogical explanations have traditionally been the default go-to models in Africa (and elsewhere?) for explaining convergence and divergence

• Both genealogy and contact are required to model language change and to paint a realistic picture of the (linguistic) past of any community

• The historical contexts for language contact are in fact much more natural than the contexts needed for ‘regular’ inheritance

• So there’s no problem for assuming contact scenarios, even if there is no historical evidence for it; at least no bigger problem than assuming inheritance scenarios
Conclusions

• Contact is obvious in Kam on various layers
  • Areal typological profile (Macro-Sudan Belt)
  • Nominal prefixes suggest a link with Jukun, but only in part of the vocabulary
  • Not mentioned: religious terminology and proper names often of Jukun origin
  • Not mentioned: imperfective aspect construction is very similar to Jukun
  • Vocabulary shared with different languages, sometimes extremely similar

• Genealogy?
  • Pronouns and numerals: Yendangic + Mumuyic; fits with Niger-Congo
  • Vocabulary: some shared vocabulary with geographically distant Gur, also Yendangic & Mumuyic
  • But: no regular sound correspondences so far
  • Near-homonymy in Kam and Mumuyic: bird & eye
Some speculation

• Oral history: Kam encountered and conquered an unidentified ethnic group when they went to live in Kamajim

• Jukun elements and Mumuyic/Yendangic elements may suggest superstrate-substrate influence

• Possibly, some elements of Kam are the remnant of an absorbed earlier population

• Alternatively, Kam was the unidentified ethnic group (Mumuyic?), and the conquering involved ‘Jukunization’ of Kam in terms of religion, oral history, and part of the language

• Note that a specific group of Mumuye, Pugû, mysteriously claims Kam ancestry, and the Mumuye claim to come from a place they say was founded by the Kam, Yoro (Meek 1931a: 448-449)
Complex genealogy and contact in Central-Eastern Nigeria and West-Africa (Güldemann 2018b: 458)

- Not just ‘meeting place of three major African phyla’ (Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Afro-Asiatic)
- Majority of people belong to ‘minority groups’, incredible ethnic diversity and complex alliances that supersede simple categories such as ‘Christian vs. Muslim’, ‘Hausa vs. Jukun’, ‘Farmer vs. herdsman’, ‘tribe A vs. tribe B’. Ethnicity does not coincide with language affiliation.
- Language shift as a recurrent phenomenon
- Restructuring of many ‘colonizing’ Chadic languages as they came into contact with local languages.
- “Benue-Gongola-Chad Basin”: high language density of many related languages
- Identification of near-extinct language isolate Jalaa and its interaction with Waja-Jen languages (and these in turn with Chadic) (Kleinewillinghöfer 2001) points to high degree of genealogical diversity, as well as complex contact scenarios in the past.
kómâ, ń tšánájì
References (1)


References (2)


