Areal typology, language families, and linguistic reconstruction: the case of Proto-Bantu and Proto-Niger-Congo

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1 Towards an early macro-areal profile of Africa
+ linguistic area:
  wide sense = distribution of features according to a "compact" geographical entity
  independent of historical explanation
  narrow sense = distribution of features according to a "compact" geographical entity,
  which is not well explained by genealogical inheritance > "contact area"

+ pan-African survey of diagnostic linguistic features for the identification of large geographical areas with some type of linguistic commonality
  (a) restricted geographical scope (except Greenberg 1959, 1983; Heine 1975, 1976)
  (b) between languages unrelated according to Greenberg's (1963) lumping classification

+ types of areas:
  (1) genealogically and typologically homogeneous areas > (recent) spread zones
  (2) large-scale clustering of diagnostic isoglosses whose geographical distributions do not correlate with distributions of genealogical language groups

+ different types of areal isoglosses (importance in the order of appearance):
  (1) "cross-linguistic quirks" (Gensler 2003), e.g. clicks
  (2) "continental diagnostics" (typologically unremarkable, but areal), e.g. word order
  (3) subareal features (can, but must not be quirky)
  > avoid feature interdependence (e.g. word order correlations, medial–final verbs in verb-final languages, etc.)

+ identified features surveyed across all sufficiently known lineages
> according to secure families, not to Greenberg's (1963) "supergroups" like Khoisan, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Kordofanian, because large linguistic contact area is alternative to unproven genealogical entity

+ proposed macro-areas of Africa (Güldemann forthcoming) > Map 1
(I) Berber spread zone - as genealogical offshoot of (II)
(II) Chad-Ethiopia
(III) Macro-Sudan belt
(IV) Bantu spread zone - as genealogical offshoot of (III)
  - "Bantu nucleus" as an areal effect of homogenization after colonization
  - periphery adopted features of neighbouring areas to varying degrees
    (e.g., clicks in southern Bantu, what about Macro-Sudan)
(V) Kalahari Basin
+ one larger area unaccounted for: southern Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, northern Tanzania
+ see: http://email.eva.mpg.de/~gueldema/pdf/AfricanMacro-areasH.pdf

Map 1: Linguistic macro-areas in Africa before recent large-scale colonizations
2 The Macro-Sudan belt
(= Greenberg’s (1959, 1983) “African core area”, see Güldemann 2008)
- genealogical composition > Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Stock</th>
<th>Greenberg’s Supergroup</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CORE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mande</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kru</td>
<td>Niger-Congo</td>
<td>NK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gur</td>
<td>Niger-Congo</td>
<td>NK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kwa</td>
<td>Niger-Congo</td>
<td>NK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benue-Congo (except Narrow Bantu)</td>
<td>Niger-Congo</td>
<td>NK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adamawa-Ubangi</td>
<td>Niger-Congo</td>
<td>NK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongo-Bagirmi</td>
<td>Central Sudanic</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moru-Mangbetu</td>
<td>Central Sudanic</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PERIPHERY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>(Niger-Congo)</td>
<td>NK</td>
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<td>Dogon</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chadic</td>
<td>Afroasiatic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ijo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>NK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrow Bantu (Benue-Congo)</td>
<td>Niger-Congo</td>
<td>NK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilotic</td>
<td>East Sudanic</td>
<td>NS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Families partaking in the Macro-Sudan belt

- implosives, does not separate area from Bantu spread zone (Maddieson 2005a)
- labial-velar consonants (Maddieson 2005c) > Map 2

Map 2: Labial-velar consonants in Africa

- labial flap consonants, sub-areal feature in the east (Olson and Hajek 2003) > Map 3

Map 3: Labial flap consonants in Africa

- three and more level tones (Clements and Rialland 2008, Maddieson 2005d)
- vowel nasalization (Hajek 2005)
- ATR harmony (Hall et al. 1974, Dimmendaal 2001, Maddieson 2005b) > Map 4

Map 4: ATR vowel harmony in Africa
• logophoricity (Güldemann 2003b) > Map 5

(1) Kera (Chadic, Afroasiatic)

a. \( w\-\text{míntí tó kóoré } \)
   \( 3\text{M.Sx QUOT 3M.S.LOGx go.away} \)

b. \( w\-\text{míntí } w\-\text{kóoré} \)
   \( 3\text{M.Sx QUOT 3M.Sy go.away} \)

Er sagte, daß er weggehe [he said he would go] (Ebert 1979: 260)

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Map 5: Logophoricity in Africa

• word order S-(AUX)-O-V-X (Gensler and Güldemann 2003) > Map 6

(2) Koranko (Mande)

\( ù\-\text{sí wò lā-būi } yì rò \)

1S PROSPECTIVE that.one CAUS-fall water in

I'm going to throw her into the water (Kastenholz 1987: 117)

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Map 6: Word order S-(AUX)-O-V-X in Africa

• comparative construction with '(sur)pass' (Greenberg 1983, Stassen 2005)
• word order V-O-NEG, sub-areal feature in the east (Dryer forthcoming) > Map 7

Map 7: Word order V-O-NEG in Africa
**3 Bantu and the Macro-Sudan belt**

+ Bantu origins in (?the southern periphery) of the Macro-Sudan belt (Greenberg 1972):
  - most closely related to eastern Benue-Congo, particularly Bantoid, languages in Cameroon and Nigeria > homeland of Pre- and Proto-Bantu in this wider area
  - limits of Bantu, and hence its exact genealogical position, unclear (see, e.g., Nurse and Philippson 2003: 3-10); holds also for higher levels like Bantoid, Benue-Congo, etc.
+ Bantu and the Macro-Sudan features
  - implosives
  - in Northwest Bantu, eastern coastal area, and southeast (Maddieson 2003: 28-9)
  - labial-velar consonants
  - in numerous Bantu languages of zones A, C and D
  - not in rest of Narrow Bantu
  - isolated occurrence in Mijikenda (E70), from labialized velars
  - labial flap consonants
  - not in Narrow Bantu
  - isolated occurrence in Nyanja (N31a) and Shona (S10)
  - three and more level tones
  - not in Narrow Bantu: predominantly H vs. L
  - exceptions: Kamba (E55), Chaga (E60), Nguni (S40) (Kisseb. and Odden 2003: 59)
  - vowel nasalization
  - not in most of Narrow Bantu, but possibly to be reconstructed (Dimmendaal 2001)
  - isolated occurrence in Fang (A75), Gyele (A801), Teke (B70), Ngungwel (B72a), Bembe (H11), Umbundu (R11), Yeyi (R41) (Maddieson 2003: 23-4)
  - ATR vowel harmony
  - not in most of Narrow Bantu
  - exceptions in the north, e.g., Nande (D42) (Maddieson 2003: 20-3)
  - logophoricity
  - not in most of Narrow Bantu
  - exceptions in some Northwest Bantu languages
  - word order S-(AUX)-O-V-X (see §4 below)
  - in some Northwest Bantu languages for pronoun objects
  - not in most of Narrow Bantu, but can be reconstructed for early Bantu chronolocet: S-(AUX)-O-V-X restricted to pronominal objects "petrified" as a morphotactic pattern in verbs: S-INFLECTION-O-VERB.STEM (see §4 below)
  - comparative construction with *[sur]*pass
  - widespread in Bantu as a likely inherited feature

(3) Swahili (G42d)

a. na-ndì-kä haraka kupita mìì
  1-PST-write fast INF-pass 1S
  He writes faster than me.

- word order V-O-NEG
  - not in most of Narrow Bantu: generally with verbal prefix negation

(4) Shona (S10)

a. ndài-dä
  1S:HAB-want NEG:1S:HAB-want
  I used to like
  I did not used to like (Dale 1972: 266)

b. ndè-pè
  ndè-su-pè
  1S-give:SUBJ 1S-NEG:give:SUBJ
  I should/may give
  I should/may not give (Dale 1972: 264-5)

**4 The early typology of Bantu and Niger-Congo**

+ history of science:
  - Bantu is numerically and geographically THE major language family in Africa
  - Bantoidic tradition important for African linguistics
  - assumes occasionally the role of a standard by which the structure of other Niger-Congo languages is measured; cf. Semitic vs. Afroasiatic, Sinitic vs. Sino-Tibetan
  + verb stem structure
    - contrast between mono-/disyllabic verb stems in Kwa vs. polysyllabic verb stems in Bantu (and Atlantic) (Hyman 2004)

(7) Ewe (Kwa)

ghës dzu-dzë fu-nyâ
  say DUPL-wait knead-knead
  say cease knead (Hyman 2004: 70)

(8) Yao (Bantu, Bantoid, Benue-Congo)

-taam-uk-ul-igw-aasy-an-il-a
  sit-IMPOSITIVE-REVERSIVE-PASS-CAUS-RCPR-APPL-FV
  cause each other to be unseated for/at (Hyman 2004: 70)

(9) Ful (North Atlantic)

-ma66-it-ii-an-ii
  -shut-REVERSIVE-COMPREHENSIVE-DAT-PST.ACT
  opened all for (Hyman 2004: 70)

"Comparing Ewe with either Yao or Fula, the natural question to ask is: Why are these related languages so different? To answer this question, we assume, following Givón (1975) and Voeltz (1977), first, that the above Bantu/Atlantic verb-stem structure represents the Proto-Niger-Congo situation, and second, that Niger-Congo languages such as Ewe, Nape, Yoruba, etc. which conform to the Westermann and Bryan characterization of Kwa […] have modified the proto system – most likely in an areal fashion." (Hyman 2004: 71)
A Geographical Typology of African Languages

a. Syntax: synthetic > analytic
   (head-marking > dependent or no marking)
b. Morphology: agglutinative > isolating
   (suffixation > marking by syntactic elements)
   - reconstruction of a great number of verb extensions (Schadeberg 2003: 72)
   > still unclear what Pre- and Proto-Bantu exactly looked like typologically
   Could all extensions be stacked on each other as in Atlantic and Yao-type Bantu?
   - Benue-Congo in and close to the Macro-Sudan belt, including Northwest Bantu,
     contrasts with Savannah Bantu: restriction on the maximal number of stem syllables,
     affecting i.a. the verbal derivation system (cf. (8): Yao verb with 8 syllables):

(10) Koyo (Bantu, Bantoid):
    tás-x-ar-a
    see-CAUS-RCPR-FV
    show each other (Hyman 2004: 80)

(11) Mankon (Grassfields, Bantoid):
    ɔi-na
    know-RCPR
    know each other (Hyman 2004: 85)

(12) Igbo (Igboid):
    bè-re
    cut-BEN
    cut for (Hyman 2004: 71)

> ⊗ to second, but ⊗ to first assumption by Hyman (2004)
+ predicate structure
- contrast between grammatical particles/clitics in eastern Benue-Congo vs. prefixing
  inflection in (most of) Bantu for marking participants and predication operators before
  the verb stem - Güldemann (2003a: 183-7)
- slightly different take on Givón's (1971) "today's morphology is yesterday's syntax"
- O-V-X, besides V-O-X, widespread in Benue-Congo, and particularly in Bantoid (e.g.,
  Mambiloid, Tikar, Beboid, Grassfields, Mbam) (Güldemann 2007)
- preverbal objects restricted to certain grammatical contexts:

(a) presence of auxiliary

(13) Tikar (Bantoid, Benue-Congo)

a. wù sh-è mìn
   2S say-IRR 1S
   Si tu me l’avais dit, ... (Stanley 1991: 71)

b. à tà ı́she she
   3S IFPV luggage carry
   Il porte le bagage. (Stanley 1991: 103)

c. à dànninì nun jî fe
   3S begin:PFV 3S food give
   Il a commencé à lui donner de la nourriture. (Stanley 1991: 133)
References


Clements, Nick and Annie Rialland. 2008. Africa as a phonological area. In Heine and Nurse (eds.).


