

**Mambiloid Inside and Out:
Mambiloid Integrity revisited and
the situation of Somyev within Mambiloid**

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1. Introduction: The integrity of Mambiloid revisited

- outline of paper
 - Mambila classification ‘through the ages’
 - issues in Mambiloid comparative linguistics
 - why Somyev?
 - brief excursus on methodological matters
 - sound correspondences in Mambiloid
 - comparative morphological evidence
 - concluding remarks

2. Mambiloid classification through the ages

- Westermann & Bryan (1952)
 - include Mambila and others in their section on isolated language groups
 - lexicon indicates it unrelated to any other language; loan-words from Bantu, other Class languages, and Vute
 - Vute is itself considered to be an isolated unit
- Guthrie & Tucker (1956); Richardson (1957)
 - treat Vute as an isolate; “non-Bantu”

- Greenberg (1963)

- first to see a relationship among the Mambiloid languages

- includes Mambila, Vute, Ngoro with Tiv, Bitare, Batu, and Bantu, as Bantoid within

Benue-Congo.

- Williamson (1971)

- first to bring the various languages together as a sub-group, labelled Mambila-Wute,

a branch of non-Bantu Bantoid.

- Mambila cluster, Mbongno, Tep, Mvanip), Somyev), Ngoro, Wawa and Vute

- establishes the essential membership of Mambiloid, and non-Bantu Bantoid North

Bantoid.

- based largely on lexical evidence, but also on morphological (affixing) characteristics.

- classification now fairly fixed
 - subsequent work presented few challenges, served mainly to add languages (e.g. Kwanja)
 - debate exists as to the relationship between Mambiloid and the rest of Bantoid
 - weight of opinion appears to maintain the division (Williamson & Blench 2000).

- Endresen's (1989, 1991) diachronic study of Nizaa
 - challenges the placing of Nizaa within Mambiloid, by extension Mambiloid itself
 - classification has not been based on systematic comparative work, is therefore inadequate
 - no justification to include Nizaa within Mambiloid
 - his evidence suggests there is no reason for separating Nizaa from Bantu generally.

- Thwing's (1987) study of the Vute noun phrase

- she arrives at a similar conclusion with respect to Vute

- based on a comparison of ostensible noun class markers (suffixes) in Vute with those of

Bantu, together with a listing of sound correspondences.

- Connell (2000) The integrity of Mambiloid

- probably a unified group

- tentatively suggested to be closer to Bantu than previously suggested; a challenge to the top

bifurcation in Bantoid

- Problems and unresolved questions
 - Endresen was right; no systematic comparison had been done
 - a complex group
 - do Nizaa, Vute, Wawa, form a cohesive subgroup within Mambloid?
 - if so, are Mvanip, Mbongo, and Tep also a part of this group?
 - or, are their similarities a result of shared retention, rather than innovation?
 - is Somyev part of that grouping, or are the similarities it shares a result of contact?
 - finally, and perhaps most curiously, is Mambila part of Mambloid?

- Somyev, its unique status
 - known to and used only by a blacksmith community in the Mambila region.
 - sometimes marked it as a variety of Wawa, or of Vute
 - such views have more to do with the fact that the Somyev were for long associated with the Wawa people, not on linguistic grounds.
- now down to its last two speakers, it still has much to say about Mambiloid and its region

3. An excursus on methodology

- Morphological Correspondences or sound correspondences?
- Nichols' view on the role of morphology vs phonology in historical linguistics
- diagnostic evidence for relatedness does not come from the comparative method, but precedes its

application; i.e the comparative method is applied to languages for which there already is convincing evidence of relatedness.

- such evidence comprises (based on Meillet), morphological paradigms, lexical sets
- morphological evidence is given pride of place, as being resistant to borrowing

Meillet cited: “Grammatical correspondences are proof, and only they are rigorous proof”

but

“Wherever the phonological systems are in precise agreement, regular correspondence makes it possible to recognize the shared origin of the words and the phonological system, and the systems of grammatical forms can be explained on the basis of a shared prototype, genetic relatedness is obvious”

(Quotations from Nichols 1996: 47)

- several questions arise from these statements and Nichols’ use of them
 - what to do with languages which have little or nothing in the way of grammatical paradigms?
 - are these in principle impervious to the comparative method?
 - but sound correspondences are necessary to establish the cognacy of the elements participating

in the paradigms

- the existence of sound correspondences is at the root of establishing relatedness

- Lass (1997: 109): “We assign languages to a family first because they (intuitively) have so many consistent similarities that we reject the chance of borrowing as the causes”

- on diagnostic features: “In standard practice, the character-field of choice is the ‘equivalence’ or ‘regular correspondence’, a complex of repeatable phonetic correspondences (not ‘similarities’), and certain kinds of vaguer but still useful semantic properties” (pp 123-4).

and

“[A]ll larger-scale reconstructions depend ultimately on regular segmental phonological correspondences (and to some extent, but more weakly, on morphosynatctic and lexical correspondences). But phonological correspondences... are uniquely privileged as primary indexes of cladogenesis” (p. 126).

4. Sound correspondences in Mambiloid

- only a subset of Mambiloid is presented

– two lects from each of the two Mambila clusters (Ba, Lemele, W Mambila; Cambap,

Maberem, E Mambila)

- one of three Kwanja lects (Ndung)

- one of three Wawa lects (Oumiari)

- Vute, Tep, Mvanip, Nodoro, Nizaa

- empty cells in a table represent either a non-cognate form in the language in question, or an absence

of data

- forms in parentheses are generally of uncertain cognacy, but may be included for other reasons of

interest

- Table 1 shows palatalization of consonants in C1 position relative to cognate forms in Proto-Bantu.
- They are of interest for three primary reasons:

i) they show clear divisions within Mambiloid suggestive of a primary subgrouping (i.e. a possible division between Mambila and the others, as well as the possible separateness of each of Mvanip, Ndooro, and Nizaa;

ii) they show a relationship to Proto-Bantu which has implications for putative higher level branching within Bantoid;

iii) all available items attesting this correspondence are nouns; this suggests the route by which the observed sound change was mediated (a preceding noun class marker, now lost), and at the same time buttresses (ii).

Table 1: Palatalization of *k (c = IPA [tʃ]; PB forms from Tev BRLII).

<i>Index</i>		437	238	462	33	497
<i>Gloss</i>		<i>road/path</i>	<i>fowl</i>	<i>night (darkness)</i>	<i>navel</i>	<i>death</i>
W Mambila	Ba	cēr	cūār	cībī	kībī	cīō
	Lemele	cīr	cōr	cīp	kō p	cìè
E Mambila	Cambap	cíndī	cōndō	cīmbú	kúmbūn	cē
	Maberem	cīndī	cōndō	cīmbēn	kúmbēn	
	Somyev		cū̀r, cuorə	(simnə)	cùtʃábī	fūrè kūrā
	Wawa	(dʒīr)		cīmbē n	cómbāi	cōi
	Kwanja		cī n	cìtʃūŋ	cīm	sā (?)
	Vute	(dʒīr)	cānē	cīm	cómè	cé
	Mvanip	(dʒúā)	səndu	ʃimbímì	kup (< Mb)	
	Tep		cōn	cīmī	c ^w ē m	cúā
	Ndoro		ʃóōrā		cúmā	cā
	Nizaa	(jē r)	sìw (?)		cō w, kómni	c ^w āā
Tikar		-cín	–	kwèbbí	–	
Proto-Bantu		-cíndà (Cl 5) (-jèdò)	-kóndá (Cl 9) (bird, pigeon)		-kóbú (Cl 5)	-kúà (Cl 5; 9)

Implosives

- early classifications of Mambiloid held Nizaa and Vute formed a subgroup.
 - Endresen (1990/91) rejected this
 - possible point of agreement is the presence of implosives
 - both Nizaa and Vute have /b/ and /d/, neither of which is found elsewhere in Mambiloid.
- three hypotheses may be mooted to account for the presence of these implosives:
 - i) they are a shared development between Nizaa and Vute, which would provide solid evidence for a Nizaa-Vute subgroup within Mambiloid;
 - ii) they are separate, independent innovations in the two languages;
 - iii) they are retentions from an earlier common parent language; i.e. Proto-Mambiloid.
- Endresen favours (iii), Thwing is equivocal

Table 2: Correspondence between implosive /b/ in Nizaa and Vute and other Mambiloid languages.

<i>Index</i>	627	831	723	444	662	690	782
<i>Gloss</i>	<i>ask</i>	<i>two</i>	<i>add to</i>	<i>cloud</i>	<i>squeeze</i>	<i>bury</i>	<i>red</i>
Ba	bīē-bīē - `	fā		(bògè)		fù-furú - `	bìfì-sí
Lemele	bīε-nē´	fāl	bērēnē´	(bək)		furōnē´	bìfī
Cambap	bí-kā	fē:	bédì-níà	(bùŋ)		wùrā	bèrē
Maberem	bīε	jà:n	bōrē	bērē-nεp		wón:è	bìrì
Somyev	bo	hà:n		berε-ba		fər	bierə
Wawa	bórá			bērā	bándá-ŋgā	bùrā-ŋgā	
Kwanja		fe			bā:	fūr	bè̄ɿ
Vute	ɓwèn-nĩ	ɓāám, ɓĩríp	ɓà-nĩ	ɓĩ̄	ɓáín-nĩ	vĩrĩ-nĩ	
Mvanip				beru			
Tep	bēb	há̄		(bũ ŋ)		hù	bē rē
Ndoro		hā:lā	āhĩ n bān				hīlá
Nizaa	ɓēē	ɓāārā	ɓāā	ɓēē, ɓār	ɓééŋ	ɓūū	ɓèr
Bantu	báđi / búuđi (?)	bàđi		(bĩŋgù)		bĩk	bìđi

Alveolar implosive

- /d/-words in Nizaa and Vute have far fewer cognates than seen for /b/ elsewhere in Mambiloid, though where they do occur, the correspondence is almost always /d/.
- like plosive /b/, plosive /d/ is rare in both Nizaa and Vute
 - when it does occur there are few cognates found in other Mambiloid languages
- the overall picture of implosives in Nizaa and Vute suggests there is little evidence of their presence

being a shared innovation for the two languages

- Endresen's assertion that their presence in Nizaa is a retention is probably correct

Table 3: Correspondences between /d/ in Nizaa and Vute and other Mambiloid languages.

<i>Index</i>	212	594	678	682	747	563	632	763
<i>Gloss</i>	<i>horse</i>	<i>pull</i>	<i>hoe</i>	<i>plant (crop)</i>	<i>close (door)</i>	<i>dream (v.)</i>	<i>sing</i>	<i>be straight</i>
Ba								dəlí
Lemele								líléŋ
Cambap	dáŋ			dórâ			dùâ	ɖírí-nī
Maberem	dáŋ							də̀gə̀rēm
Somyev		dam			dom			
Wawa	dáŋáí	dám áŋgā						
Kwanja	díŋ	dàm		dò		ɖʒim	dø̃ n	dūŋə̃nə̃
Vute	dě	dām-nī	dènì nǐ	dòŋ-nī	dèn-nī	dzəm	sòŋ-nī	
Mvanip	deŋ							
Tep	déŋ			dò				
Ndoro				dúē			dūē	
Nizaa	dúáŋ	dām	dān	dōg	dūn	dēw	dōg	dūr
Bantu			dīm ?	dìk		dó	dīm ?	dùngam

Table 4: Laterals and their correspondences in Mambiloid.

<i>Index</i>	543	544	693	8	760	660	54	529
<i>Gloss</i>	<i>bite</i>	<i>lick</i>	<i>extinguish</i>	<i>tongue</i>	<i>be heavy</i>	<i>weave</i>	<i>intestine</i>	<i>sleep (n.)</i>
Ba	nēmā	nāgā	njīmē	lébā	līē	līè-līe - `	lī	lóm
Lemele	nīmā-nē´	nōɔ-nē´	nīm-ē´	nómāl	lūà	luɑ-nē´	lè	lóm
Cambap	númâ	nánâ	njīm-jâ	nōmān	lū	lûâ	làn	lōm
Maberem	númwá	nángá	nīm-gī	nōmān	nūā?		(nàjèp)	
Somyev	nom-dai	nep	ɛɾim	lùēb			lara	
Wawa	námá-ɲgā		jímtá-ɑɲgā	lémnāi			lài	
Kwanja	núm	nâɲ	nī m tí	nēm	lík tu	lõ	lõ	nôm
Vute	nóm-nī	nèm-nī	līm nī	(júúm)	lúhīm	lù:	lèé	(wūúm)
Mvanip				nemen				
Tep	nām	nē-rè	njóm	némē	lílāp	lò	là tʃār-è	lèm
Ndoro	nâm			(mēlā)	úrúrá		(lēbí?āi)	nímâ
Nizaa	lóm	lāɲ	lím	kí-lém-nī	lúr	lūg	(ràɲ)	līm
Bantu	dóm	dák	dim	dímì	dītò	dòk (plait)	dà	dó

5. Morphological evidence

- an as yet incomplete picture of the morphological structures found across Mambiloid
- in general, languages exhibit varying degrees of morphology
 - all languages show remnants or other evidence of noun classification, as well as other nominal morphology.
- verbal morphology: Vute and Wawa the most complex
 - each shows agglutinative characteristics, inflectional and derivational, reminiscent of Bantu.
- the verb phrase of at least certain Mambila lects appears to be isolating
 - at least by the analysis of Perrin (1991)
- for the most part languages of the group remain insufficiently documented to permit detailed study.

5.2. Nominal morphology

5.2.1. Noun classification

- remnant noun class markers, both prefixes and suffixes (Connell 2000, Thwing 1987)

Table 5: Words with possible Cl 6a marker (i.e. liquids/mass nouns)

	<i>blood</i>	<i>urine</i>	<i>tear(s)</i>	<i>water</i>	<i>oil</i>	<i>wine</i>	<i>beer</i>
Ba	hwóm	nɕám	jíme	nìmò	kómó	ndèmà	mbè
Cambap	wámá	mbā:mā	jímí	nìmì	kúmni	ndùmàn	mbòrò
Kwanja	kfēm	nɕàā	nɕɛ́r	njòm	kôen	lògòm	kân
Somyev	dʒɛ́m	núōm	jáɾì			duoma	kam
Mvanip	ɕiram			mboo			
Wawa	díem	ndʒíndō m	ʔéɾim	mbūm	kùm	bárá	sém
Vute	tím	nínìn	ísìm	mvúm	kúrúm	ɓāà	ɲmgbāā
Nizaa	jām	tʃúŋ			kúm	ɓèèŋ	

5.2.2. Associative (genitive/possessive) Constructions

Table 6: Associative constructions marked on the modifying noun (the second element).

Ba	- `
Lemele	- `
Cambap	- ì
Maberem	- è
Somyev	- ì
Wawa	- ì
Vute	-i, -e (adds a syllable or lengthens the vowel)
Tep	
Ndooro	
Nizaa	

5.3. Verbally derived nouns

- several processes available in Mambiloid languages for deriving nouns from verbs.
 - affixes derive infinitives and/or gerunds, some abstract nouns.

Table 7: Derivational affixes in Mambiloid

	Pfx-	-Sfx	-Sfx	-Sfx
Lemele	CV-	-ně		-´
Ba	CV-			-`
Cambap		n, -niâ		
Maberem				-ŋgé
Somyev			-dá	
Wawa		-nè		-(a)ŋgē
Kwanja		-ni		
Vute		-nī		
Mvanip				
Tep		-nè		
Ndooro			-θā, ā	
Nizaa				

5.4. Mambiloid Pronouns

5.4.1. Basic Personal Pronouns, Independent Subject

- used as evidence for comparative purposes, pronouns are controversial
 - concern arises as to potential interference through language contact.
- typically mark Subject and Object with the same form
 - possessive pronouns differ in at least some persons.
- nevertheless, the Mambiloid pronouns are interesting in this respect.
 - particularly so, the 2s and 1P forms for Mbongo Mvanip, and Somyev, 2S for Tep
 - set these four languages apart.
- also forms for Nizaa, Ndoro, Vute and Wawa set each of these apart

Table 8: Mambiloid Subject/Object Pronouns

	1S	2S	3S	1P	2P	3P
Lemele	mè	wò	bǒ	bí	běn	bǒn
Ba	mè	wò	à	bé	bí	bó
Cambap	mì	wù	bǒ	bèrī	bì	bó
Maberem	mì	wē	bō	bər	bī	bó
Somyev	mó	bā	wô	tê	nà, barai	bǎkǎbá
Wawa	mǎ	wǔ	mū	nám	nūŋ	bókò
Kwanja	mó	wù	wūō	bí	bón	bō
Vute	mī	wū	ŋgé; ŋgáá	nīm	ŋí	ŋgáb, -bī-
Mbongno	mē	bè	è	tè	nè	bò
Mvanip	mē	bè	(ùvâm)	tù	nù	bōkō
Tep	mē	bè	wō	bī	ŋē	bō
Ndooro	nímè	níbâ	wùní	nájà	nénjìnà	nébù
Nizaa	mī	wū	ŋwū	ŋí	ŋjú, dīwū	ōū

5.5. Numerals

- numerals also of dubious usefulness in doing comparative work.
 - lower numerals, more stable and resistant to borrowing.

- table 9 shows lower numerals in selected Mambiloid languages

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ba	tʃén	fà	tāgá	nèà	tín	téndʒén	tébē	téndēlé	tárnèà	jùlà
Lemele	tʃɛ:n	fà:n	tā:r	na	tɪ:n	té:ndʒén	téfəl	téndār	tórónà	jùlà
Cambap	tʃínī	fè:	tā:r	nà:	tʃúên	tʃéndēr tʃínī	tʃéndfɛjē	tʃéttár	tʃénnà:	jūtār
Maberem	njúñū	jà:n	tár	nà:	té:n	tínī	tóránjē	tīndārīe	tinnà	jūtā
Somyev	mwē	hà:n	tà:r	nà:n	tíên	témwē	ténà:n	téntà:r	ténnà:n	tʃóŋ
Wawa	mõi	bəm-bó	tā-bó	nārē-bə	téên-bə	témōi	tébəm-bó	téntā-bə	ténārē-bó	tʃóŋ/bəntā
Kwanja	má n	fe	tār	nà	tʃú:n	tʃāmān	tʃén fè	tʃé tā	tʃénà	bùfē
Vute	mūi	bāán		nà:sɪp	ŋgɪ	tín mūi	tɪbāám	sór	bwétʃóŋ	tʃóŋ
Mvanip	ndɪŋ	bə-hà:n	bə-tā:r	bə-nà:	bə-tíên	tíên mò	tíênhà:n	tíētār	tíênà:	jōbəlù
Tep	mō	hà:	tá	nâ	té	tē mō	tē ná	tíētā	tíênâ	jō
Ndooro	jírè	hà:lā	tā:rā	ɲà	só:nī	só:n kírè	són kwàlà	són tā:rā	són njá	jóbōt
Nizaa	mūm	bāārā	tā:rā	nāārā	tɛɛnā	tán mūm		sâr		jēr

Conclusions

Progress:

1. Mambiloid exists
2. Status of Nizaa: it is Mambiloid
3. Other branching within the group is difficult to ascertain at this stage and state of knowledge
4. Status and place of Somyev?
5. Status of Mambiloid within Bantoid

and

6. Methodology: sound correspondences vs morphology (!)

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Sources

In addition to the published materials listed in the references, material from the following sources was used:

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Supplemented by:

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