

Songhay (aka sonrai, songoy)
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proposed external relationships

- Nilo-Saharan (Greenberg with query, Ehret, Bender)
 - weak lexical evidence; attacked by Nicolai
- Mande connection: striking morphological and typological similarities (Delafosse, Creissels)
 - S-infl-OVX constituent order (in part), Infin *ka*, bidirectional *na*, Neg *na/mana*, ...
 - but (so far) no series of convincing lexical cognates
- Nicolai (speculating): a Berber/Arabic relexified creole with Mande substratum
 - interesting but not widely accepted, many tortuous etymologies (metathesized, etc.)
- phonological issues: *ɣ, labiovelars (*ɲ^w etc.), tones reconstructible; 5- vs. 7-vowel proto-lg unclear

needed: substantial corpus of reconstructed stems and morphemes for each lg family
 test for theory that reconstructions based on typology and sound correspondences converge

"mainstream" (riverine, montane, urban) Songhay

Western Songhay (WS)

- Koyra Chiini (KCh): from Timbuktu upriver to Niafunke
- Djenne Chiini (DjCh): isolated urban enclave in Djenne

Eastern Songhay (ES)

- east of Timbuktu along Niger R. down to 3-way Niger-Benin-Nigeria border
- Koyraboro Senni (KS), Songhay-Kaado, Zarma, riverine "Dendi"
- montane Songhay pockets in Mali well south of Niger R.
- Humburi Senni (HS), in Hombori, related to KS
- Tondi Songway Kiini (TSK), in Kikara, the most conservative ES
- also urban Dendi enclaves in Benin (Kandi, Djougou)

WS and ES distinguished by several phonological & morphological characters, e.g.

*z and (affricate) *j merge as WS *j*

WS *Cow* verbs correspond to ES *Ca(a)* verbs: WS *jow* = ES *za(a)* 'take'

*Cuun verbs become *Cuu* (ES) or *Cun* (WS)

Northern Songhay (NS)

- several heavily Tuareg-ized languages, people culturally Tuareg
- Tadaksahak (NE Mali), about 95% Tuareg vocabulary but Songhay basic morphology
- Tagdal or Tihishit, including Tabarog (N Niger)
- Tasawaq, including extinct Enghedeshie (N Niger)
- Korandie (W Algeria)

how does Northern Songhay fit into the genetic tree? two views:

- a) first split is NS versus mainstream, which then splits into ES and WS
 - b) NS is close to WS (this view is gaining converts)
- publication of good data on NS needed to proceed further
 because of heavy Tuareg vocabulary, limited reconstructible (north-west-east) proto-Songhay vocab

Songhay's theoretical contribution to deep reconstruction—typological variation

- ES and WS rather close phonologically, lexically, morphologically
- cognates usually transparent, few disfiguring sound changes
- even NS cognates are fairly obvious (though swamped by Tuareg vocabulary)
- but: significant variation in "classic" typological features

constituent order (O included in postverbal X, if it is not preverbal)

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WS, NS | <i>S-infl-VX</i> |
| ES (TSK) | <i>S-infl-O-V-X</i> |
| ES (others) | mixed <i>S-infl-O-V-X</i> (canonical transitives, "OV" verbs 'hit', 'cut', 'eat', ...) and <i>S-infl-VX</i> (weak transitives, "VO" verbs 'get', 'see', 'forget', ...) |

extraction (relative clauses, focalization)

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WS (KCh) | zero (trace) in original position ('the men who I saw ___') |
| ES (KS) | full resumptive pronoun ('the men who I saw them') |
| ES (HS) | "resumptive" 3Sg pronoun ('the men who I saw him/her', 'you who I saw him/her') |
| DjCh | none (no extraction processes) ('I saw [the men Relative]') |

head/dependent marking

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|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| most lgs | <p>head marking: little or none</p> <p>no subject agreement on verb, or possessor agreement on noun</p> <p>'I <i>Imperfective</i> [you(r) dog] kill'</p> <p>ES VO verbs incorporate 3rd person object pronouns (3Sg <i>-a</i>, 3Pl <i>-ey</i> etc.)</p> <p>--but absent if object NP is present</p> <p>KS: <i>diy-a</i> 'saw him/her', <i>diy-ey</i> 'saw them'</p> <p><i>dii agey</i> 'saw me', <i>dii hans-oo</i> 'saw the dog', etc.</p> <p>simple postpositions (follow NP, pronoun)</p> <p>KS: marginal nominal head-marking (pronominal kin-term possession only):</p> <p>DefSg suffix <i>-oo</i> (< *-<i>òó</i>) or allomorph for nearly all nouns (DefPl <i>-ey</i>)</p> <p><i>hansi</i> 'dog', <i>hans-oo</i> 'the dog', cf. <i>hans-ey</i> 'the dogs'</p> <p><i>-oo</i> functions as 3rd person possessor marking for three kin terms (Sg)</p> <p><i>baab-oo</i> 'his/her father', <i>ay baaba</i> 'my father', <i>ni baaba</i> 'your-Sg father'</p> <p>dependent marking: little or none</p> <p>no structural case marking for subject or object (except as below)</p> <p>KS: <i>har-oo ga hans-oo kar</i></p> <p>man-DefSg Impf dog-DefSg hit</p> <p>'the man hits/will hit the dog'</p> <p>possessed noun: <i>[[NP (Poss)] N...]</i>, with optional noun-like Poss marker (*<i>ŋ^wánè</i>)</p> <p>construction is roughly appositional: <i>[[my (possession_s)] house_s]</i></p> <p>KS: <i>[ay (wane)] hug-oo</i></p> <p>[1Sg (Poss)] house-DefSg</p> <p>cf. <i>ay wan-oo</i> 'mine-Def', Fr <i>le mien</i> (w. unstated possessed noun)</p> <p>junction marking (particle between two constituents, both of which are overt)</p> <p><i>S-infl-O-V-X</i> type is <i>[S na O-V-X]</i> if Infl is zero (<i>na</i> = bidirectional case marking)</p> <p>appears only in (unmarked) perfective positive indicative clauses</p> |
| ES (HS) | <p>develops rich head-marking system for possessed nouns</p> <p>distinct "alienable" and "inalienable" suffixal paradigms</p> <p>new 1st/2nd person suffixes</p> <p>3Sg inalienable (< *-<i>òó</i>) also separates tonally from old Definite suffix</p> <p>"inalienable" head-marking suffixal paradigm also applies to postpositions</p> <p>(1st/2nd person suffixes)</p> <p>innovations reflect a chain reaction triggered by merger of 1Sg <i>*ay</i> and 3Pl <i>*i</i></p> <p>incipient verbal head-marking?</p> <p>Imperative Sg suffix <i>-ŋ</i> (plus tone changes)</p> <p>no evidence for sub-/adstratum influences on these HS changes</p> <p>key motivation: monophthongization of 1Sg <i>*ay</i> to <i>i</i> (merging with 3Pl <i>*i</i>)</p> |

conclusion:

Some morphosyntactic patterns can change quickly even among closely related languages.

Situation not hopeless for typological approach to history but requires multiple features.

Candidates for typological stable features in Songhay (except in most extreme contact situations)

- a) absence of NP-level case-marking and of pronominal agreement on verb
- b) primary alternation of Perf (zero), PerfNeg, Impf, and ImpfNeg inflectional categories
- c) dative and spatiotemporal postpositions
- d) infinitival VPs (in complement and chained clauses)
- e) imperfective inflectional morphemes related to 'be (somewhere)' and 'not be (somewhere)'

References

northern Songhay

SIL survey: <http://www.sil.org/silesr/1999/008/nsonghay.html>