

## **“Areal alignment and the diversification of Bua languages (Chad)”**

Bua languages, usually subsumed under the unsupported "Adamawa" grouping, form a relatively compact group of 10 extant languages spoken by very small communities in southern Chad. Recent research has shown that the Bua languages are split into two noticeably different branches: Riverine languages along the Middle Chari River, and Inland languages further east (Kastenholz 2017, Boyeldieu et al. 2018). Comparative data show that proto-Bua had ATR contrasts and harmony, three contrastive plosive series (voiceless, voiced, implosive), and two contrastive tone heights (Boyeldieu et al. 2018). I show how Riverine languages lost the ATR contrast, reinterpreted ATR harmony as height harmony, developed interior vowels and a series of prenasalized consonants (Lua and Tun only), and innovated a third tone. Inland languages, on the other hand, are overall more conservative: they have maintained the proto-Bua vowel and tone systems; they have also started to simplify the three-way plosive contrast into a two-way contrast by merging implosives and plain voiced stops. I argue that the changes that took place in Riverine Bua languages amount to an alignment of their phonological profile with the Central African area in which they are spoken (Rolle, Lionnet, & Faytak 2020), and involved intensive contact with neighboring languages through small-scale multilingualism (Lüpke 2016) and shift-induced substrate effects (Thomason & Kaufman 1988). The conservatism of Inland languages, as well as the few changes in their consonant system, on the other hand, show that their phonology is not under the influence of any Central African areal signal.

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