# The Bakassi Buffer Zone: Genetic versus areal classification

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1   Introduction

[1] The *Bakassi Buffer Zone* is a name I'm giving to a linguistic area straddling the Cameroon-Nigeria border, where the various branches of Benue-Congo, a branch of Niger-Congo, come together.

[2] I borrow the notion of a buffer zone from Stilo (2004).

[3] I name this area the Bakassi Buffer Zone because (i) all the obvious names for the area have been co-opted as language family names and (ii) Bakassi is a small peninsula right at the "bend" of West Africa which is disputed by Nigeria and Cameroon.

[4] Linguistic map of Nigeria (Crozier and Blench 1992)
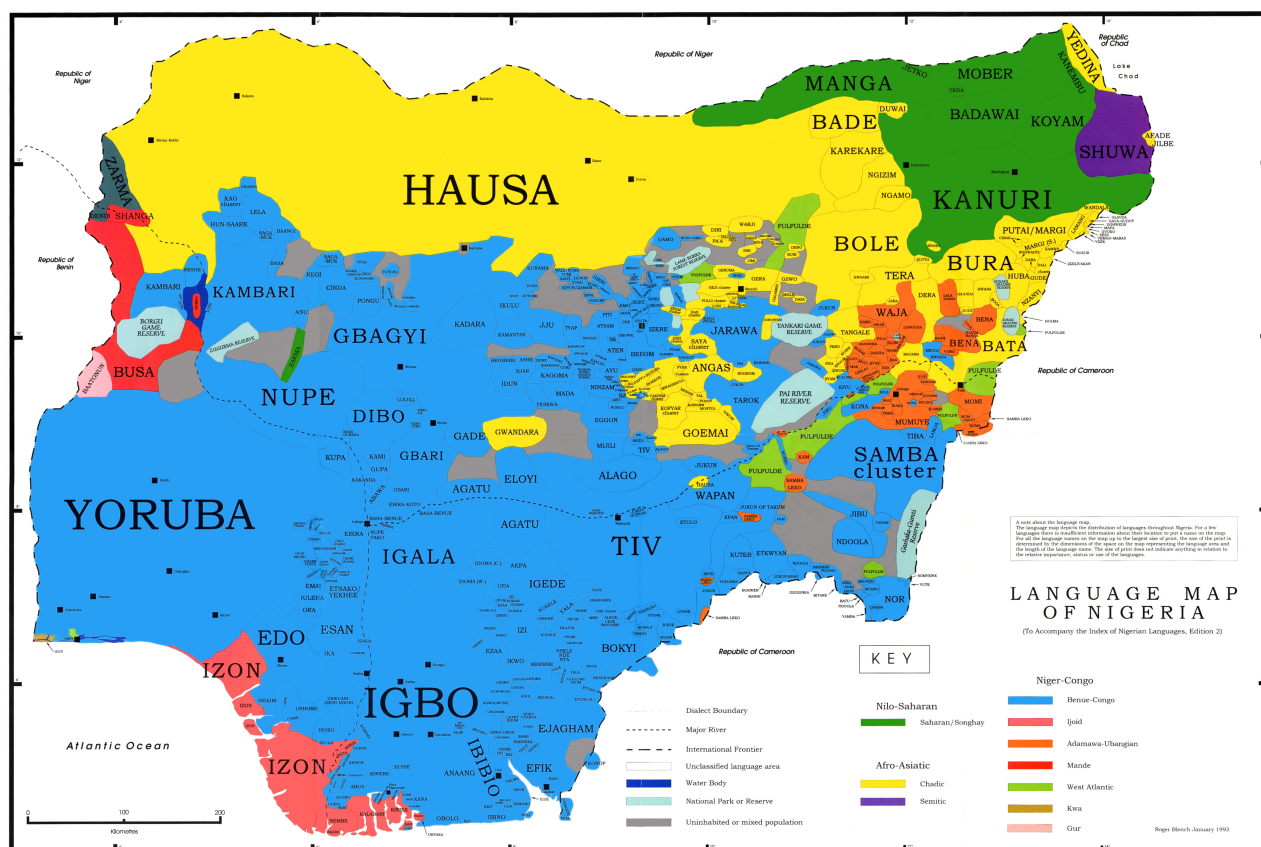
[5] Here, we'll be looking primarily at blue languages. However, we'll also see some data from Ewe, a Kwa language—Kwa sneaks into Nigeria, on this map, in the southwest corner of the country.

[6] For our purposes, it would be useful to have the blue further broken down since Nigeria is where Benue-Congo is most greatly diversified—all major proposed branches of the family are found in the country.

[7] By contrast, under current classifications, all of the Narrow Bantu languages are generally classified as a sub-sub-branch of Benue-Congo.

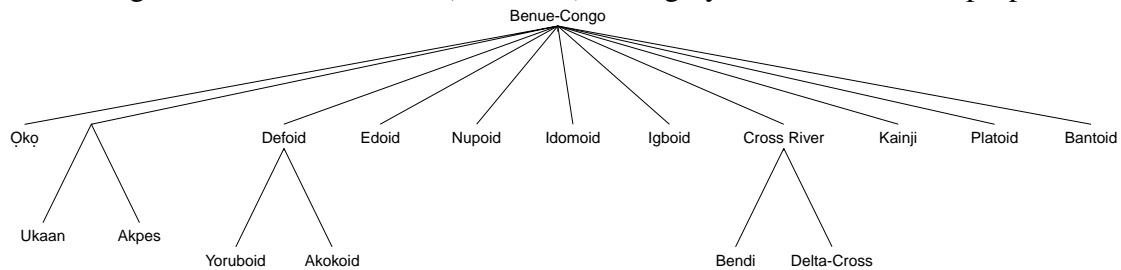[8] Linguistic map of Cameroon (Dieu and Renaud 1983:369)

FAMILLES ET GROUPES LINGUISTIQUES AU CAMEROUN
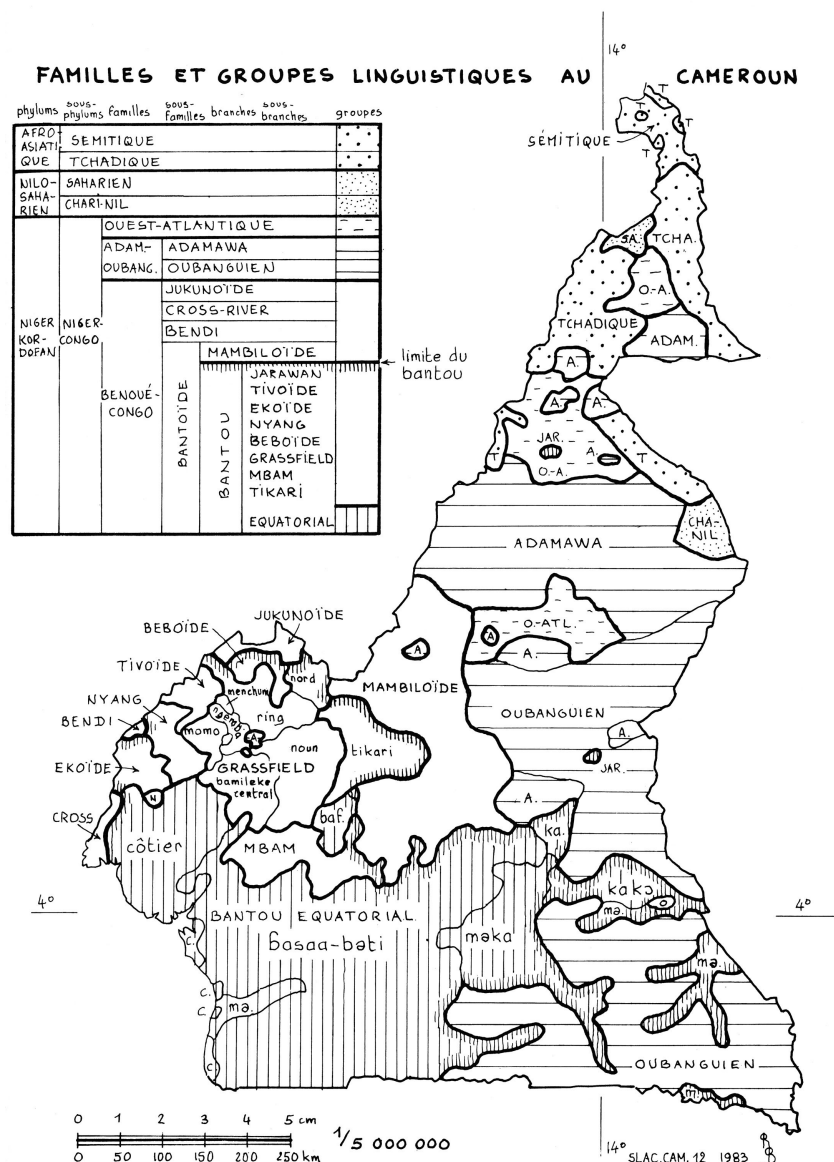
[9] Cameroon shows considerably less diversity than Nigeria in terms of containing different branches of Niger-Congo.

[10] However, its Northwest is where many branches of Bantoid can be found, making the country of particular interest in understanding the spread of Narrow Bantu.

[11] Also, of course, from a linguistic perspective, the Nigeria-Cameroon border is arbitrary. If a Benue-Congo dividing line were to be drawn anywhere, it would probably make sense to put one somewhere in southern Cameroon to separate out reconstructed Narrow Bantu from the less genealogically secure Benue-Congo languages.

[12] All of the languages being discussed here are uncontroversially considered to be genealogically related—belonging to the Benue-Congo language group. However, the internal relationships among the languages are far from clear.

2 Proposed relationships within Benue-Congo

[13] I'm not going to go through all the proposed relationships within Benue-Congo since none of them are very well-supported.

[14] The following tree, from Williamson (1989:261) is roughly indicative of most proposals.

```
                                    Benue-Congo
        _____/____/___|___|___|_____
       /        /          /    /    |   |   |    \     \     \          \
     Ọkọ      Defoid     Edoid Nupoid Idomoid Igboid Cross River  Kainji Platoid Bantoid
    /  \      /   \                                    /    \
 Ukaan Akpes Yoruboid Akokoid                       Bendi  Delta-Cross
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[15] Note the suspicious branching. Williamson (1989:269–272) interprets it as meaning there was a sudden, abrupt split.

[16] Most of the subgroups seen in the above tree are uncontroversial. However, it is not clear to me what the evidence is for them all.

[17] Cross River, for example, a classification introduced by Greenberg, has been uncontested as a valid group (though his internal groupings have been contested (Faraclas 1989:382)).

[18] However, Connell (1998:24) points out that, though the unity of Cross River is plausible, it cannot be considered established. (Some of the subgroups of Cross River are, however, well established according to him.)

3 The classificatory problem

[19] A superficial examination Benue-Congo languages gives strong indications of a genealogical relationship—thus, Greenberg's mass comparison method raises a reasonable Benue-Congo "hypothesis".

[20] However, the detailed reconstruction work necessary for achieving "proof" of relationship is quite difficult in the Benue-Congo case and has not been systematically undertaken.

[21] Consider, for example, Indo-European classification if:

[a] There were no Sanskrit, Greek, or Old Irish
[b] There were no German, French, English, Russian, Hindi
[c] That is, if there were no "old" or "big" languages

[22] Or, consider classifying Romance if:

[a] There were no Latin
[b] There were no French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian—only dialect clusters

[23] Related to this: The modern-day sociolinguistic patterns indicate that borrowing was almost certainly prevalent historically. Borrowing among languages already having cognate vocabulary can be quite hard to unravel.

[24] Adding to the complications, there is little reason to believe that the language groups of this area have had particularly stable locations historically.

4   The two prototypes: Kwa and Bantu

[25] On present classifications, discussion of Kwa languages doesn't belong here since Kwa is considered to be its own branch of Niger-Congo coordinate with Benue-Congo.

[26] However, understood typologically, the western Benue-Congo languages (e.g., Yoruba and Igbo) can be classified as "Kwa".

[27] Westermann and Bryan (1952:90–4) give the following properties as typical for Kwa. (Their Kwa includes Igboid, Yoruboid, and Nupoid.)

[a] Seven vowel phonemes

[b] Labiovelars *kp* and *gb*

[c] "Tone is of outstanding importance" (both lexical and grammatical tone are common, two or three tones can be found)

[d] Most roots (verb or noun) are monosyllabic, consisting in CV

[e] Compound nouns are very common and so are compound verbs

[f] No true noun classes, but relics of them can be found in the form of nominal prefixes, and there is no concord.

[g] Word order is important in signalling grammatical relations. Basic word order is SVO.

[h] "The dative is often expressed by the Verb to give."

[i] There are no verbal derivatives (e.g., passives, causatives, applicatives)

[28] We can contrast this with the properties prototypical to "Bantu"

[a] Reconstructed seven vowel system

[b] Labiovelars not common

[c] Lexical and grammatical tone

[d] Canonical verb roots are -CVC-, though longer roots are not uncommon. Due to the appearance of an inflectional final vowel, verbs generally surface as minimally -CVCV.

[e] Compound nouns are typically marked with an associative marker. Compound verbs are uncommon (I can't think of any clear cases).

[f] Some of the most robust noun class systems in the world, with extensive concord and agreement.

[g] Grammatical relations signalled by verbal marking and word order.

[h] The "dative" is typically expressed with a preposition or is unmarked and the verb appears with an applicative extension.

[i] A number of verbal extensions (e.g., passive, applicative, causative) can be reconstructed for the family, forming derived verbal stems.

[29] Or, more crudely and succinctly

[a] Kwa is isolating, Bantu agglutinating

[b] Kwa is dependent marking, Bantu head marking

[30] And the languages in between Kwa and Narrow Bantu?

One consequence of this accidental skewing is that when languages still more divergent from southern Bantu languages were discovered in the Cameroun-Nigeria area, they were almost automatically regarded as non-Bantu. These languages, most of which attracted little study because of their small size, showed features which were strongly reminiscent of Bantu as defined by Meinhof [1948]. Most of them possessed noun class systems which recalled those of Bantu, but the concord was often less regular than that of Bantu, the noun prefixes often differed from the well known Bantu ones, and singular and plural classes could often not be paired into genders in the characteristic Bantu fashion. Similarly, many of their vocabulary items were strikingly like Bantu, but it was not easy to see regular sound-correspondences by which they could be related to well known Proto-Bantu forms. The term 'Semi-Bantu', used by Johnston (1919), was intended to to indicate both the Bantu-like features and the divergences of these languages, but it is unfortunate that it assumes a Bantucentric point of view which has hindered investigation of the relationships which obtain between 'Bantu' and 'Semi-Bantu' languages. (Williamson 1973:246)

[31] Some Ewe sentences (Kwa—in both a typological and an accepted genealogical sense)

[a] *ŋútsùá ɖé kplé srɔ̃á kpákplê víawo wónɔ́ anyí le duá ɖé me.*
man one and wife and child.PL they lived being town one in
"A man lived in a town with his wife and children." (Westermann 1930:207–8)

[b] *ɛ́ ɖù nú ɖi ƒo éyè wò tsí afíma ƒe ɖeké sɔ́ŋ.*
he eat food become full and he stay there year one quite
"He ate until he was satisfied and remained there for one whole year." (Westermann 1930:207–8)

[32] Some Yoruba sentences (Kwa typologically, Benue-Congo genealogically)

[a] *èmí tiẹ̀ lò-ré̩ ko̩n tó jẹ́ pé wọ́n wá gbe be ní-lé*
I even have-friend one who it.is say they come take.it meet.her in-house
"There is even a friend of mine to whom it was brought." (Bambgoṣe 1966:143)

[b] *ìgbà tó bá ló-wó si á á ra káńtà kékeré*
time that.he happen have-money to.it he will buy counter small
"When he has more money, he will buy a stall." (Bambgoṣe 1966:146)

[33] Some Chichewa sentences (Bantu)

[a] *Ti-na-mang-its-ir-a atsikana alenje mbuzi.*
1p-PST-tie-CAUS-APP-FV 2.girl 2.hunter 10.goat
"We made the hunters tie the goats for the girls." (Sam Mchombo, personal communication)

[b] *Alēnje a-na-mény-án-its-á mbûzi.*
2.hunter 3p-PST-hit-REC-CAUS-FV 10.goat
"The hunters made the goats hit each other."

[c] *Chitsîru chi-na-gúl-ír-á atsíkána mphátso.*
7.fool 7S-PST-buy-APP-FV 2.girl 9.gift
"The fool bought a gift for the girls."

[34] Some Tùnɛn sentences (south-central Cameroon straddling the Bantoid/Bantu border)

[a] *mɛ̀ ná nìfunú kòtoko   bekɔlakɔl*
   1sS PST 5.kola crunch.PST.PROG evening
   "I crunched the kola nut in the evening." (Dugast 1971:309)
   (Presumably, the word for 'evening' is derived, perhaps a class 8 nominalization?)

[b] *mɛ̀ ná wò   mondo buhínə batolòn*
   1sS PST 1.this 1.man 14.debt claim.PST
   "I claimed the debt from this man." (Dugast 1971:309)
   (Perhaps the verb can be further analyzed?)

[35] Some Leggbó sentences (Cross River, in the Bakassi Buffer Zone)

[a] *Wàdum sɛ́ e-dzi lídzil.*
   man   the 3s-eat food
   "The man ate food."

[b] *ɛ-vɔ́ŋi tàa   ɛ́-kaà   lɛval ɛ̀-sɛŋ nkɛ ɛppya.*
   3s-want COMP 3s-carry race 3s-go at   market
   "He wants to run a race to the market."

[c] *Wàɛ́ ǹtààmi nǹ-nii.*
   child gift   1s.NEG-give
   "I didn't give a child gifts."

[36] Some Naki sentences (Beboid, in the Bakassi Buffer Zone)

[a] *Kūm àjēn   lī.*
   Kum eat.NEAR.PST PART
   "Kum was (recently) eating."

[b] *Kūm èjēn   lī.*
   Kum eat.FAR.PST PART
   "Kum was eating (not recently)"

[c] *M' āmé   wə̄.*
   1sS see.1.NEAR.PST 2sO
   "I've seen you."

[d] *M' āmə̄ng   wə̄.*
   1sS see.2.NEAR.FUT 2sO
   "I will see you"

5   How to become a Kwa language

[37] Williamson (1985) illustrates some of the pitfalls for discovering genealogical relationships in this part of the world.

[38] Though we won't talk about it here, Hyman (2004) takes up the basic theme of her paper and expands upon it in ways that have informed what I'm discussing here.

[39] The languages of interest here are the Ogoni languages, a subgroup of Cross River (which is in the Delta-Cross branch of Cross River seen in the tree above).

[40] Some characteristics of one Ogoni language, Eleme (based on Williamson (1985:427–8), with additional information added where indicated)

[a] Seven vowel phonemes.

[b] Has labiovelars *kp* and *gb*.

[c] Has contrastive tone, both lexical and grammatical (Bond (2002), citing Obele (1998)).

[d] Monosyllabic CV roots are common, though disyllabic ones are common, too.

[e] I have no data on noun compounding. Compound verbs do not appear to be common, but serialization is found (the line between the two phenomena is unclear).

[f] All nouns begin with a prefix (either *à-*, harmonizing *È-*, harmonizing *Ò-*, or a homorganic nasal *Ǹ-*. There does not seem to be any noun class agreement or concord—Bond (2002) states that nouns are not marked for "case, number, or gender". However, there is (a complex system of) verbal person agreement (Anderson and Bond 2003a).

[g] Primary/secondary object system (Anderson and Bond 2003a). So, "dative" certainly does not need to be marked with *give*. (Though this does not mean it cannot be. Leggbó allows this optionally.)

[h] I can find no examples of verbal derivational suffixes like a causative or applicative, though there do seem to be a range of TMA markers which can appear on(?) verbs. The closely related Kana language has remnant verbal valence-changing suffixes and various productive TMA "extensions" (Ikoro 1996:141–160).

[41] Some Eleme sentences (Anderson and Bond 2003a)

[a] *ò-bo-í-ru   e-ma:-ì   àdádʒi ɔnɛnɛ*
2-should-2PL-PRTCL DEP-bring-2PL Adaji   gift
"You should give Adaji a gift."

[b] Or could it be. . .
ò bo   í   ru   e   ma: ì   àdádʒi ɔnɛnɛ
2 should 2PL PRTCL DEP bring 2PL Adaji   gift
"You should give Adaji a gift."

[c] *àbà ba-bere   tʃú ǹsã no nɛ́-e*
3PL 3PL.DEF-PERF take book DEM give-3SG
"They have picked up the book and given it to him."

[d] Or could it be. . .
àbà ba   bere tʃú ǹsã no nɛ́ e
3PL 3PL.DEF PERF take book DEM give 3SG
"They have picked up the book and given it to him."

[42] By the way, we could do something similar to a Bantu language, but it would be less drastic in overall effect. The following data comes form Rugemalira (1993:189).

[a] *a-ka-mu-kor-ez-á* egáari
3s.SUBJ-PST-3s.OBJ-repair-APP.TRANS-FV bicycle
"She had the bicycle repaired for him."

[b] *a ka mu kor-ez-á* egáari
3s.SUBJ PST 3S.OBJ repair-APP.TRANS-FV bicycle
"She had the bicycle repaired for him."

[43] Eleme thus conforms very closely to the characteristics of Kwa language. Had it been found spoken in the west of Nigeria, isolated from close relatives and adjacent to, say, Yoruba, there is little doubt that it would have been classified immediately as Kwa. (Williamson 1985:429)

[44] The relationship of Eleme to Khana is obvious and has never been questioned. (Williamson 1985:429)

[45] Some comparative vocabulary (source: Williamson (1985), Guthrie (1970a),Guthrie (1970b), *A dictionary of the Yorùbá language* (2003)).

GLOSS	PROTO-BANTU	GOKANA	KHANA	OGOI	ELEME	YORUBA
'steal'	*-yìb-	zìb	yìb	jǐi	j̀ì	jí
'extinguish'	*-dím-	gǐmɛ̀	zímɛ̃	dìmɛ̀	j̀ǐɛ̃	—
'bite'	*-dúm-	dɔ́mí	dám	dɔ̃ɔ̃	dũ̀	—
'neck'	*-mịd- 'swallow'	a-mɛ̃n	mɛ̃ɛ̃	mɛ̃ɛ̃	ɔ̀-mɛ̃	ẹmi
'child'	—	ṹín	w̃íí	w̃íí	ò-w̃í	èwe
'see'	*-bón-	m̀ɔ̀n	mɛ̀ɛ̀	mɔ̃ɔ̃	m̀ɔ̀	mọ̀ 'know'
'person'	—	nɛ̃n	nɛ̃ɛ̃	nɛ̃ɛ̃	ɔ̀-nɛ̃	enia
'ear'	*-bókò	bá	bá	bá	ɔ̀-bɔ	ọwọ́
'food'	*-dí- 'eat'	gyã́	zíã́	ǹ-zã́ã̃	ǹ-já	onjẹ
'ashes'	*-tó-	—	tɔ́	ǹ-tɔ́	ǹ-tɔ́	ẽrú
'egg'	*-gí	ké	kɛ̃	ké	ò-kĩ̃	ẹyin

[46] The Ogoni sets are those of Williamson. (The Ogoni languages in the table are Gokana, Khana, Ogoi, and Eleme.)

[47] I have chosen the Proto-Bantu and Yoruba forms. I have tried to ensure that the Proto-Bantu forms represent cognates. I am less certain of the Yoruba forms with respect to cognacy. (Aside: Despite appearances, it was *much* more difficult for me to find possible Yoruba cognates than Proto-Bantu ones.)

[48] Williamson's generalizations about such correspondence sets (Williamson 1985:441)

[a] A language reducing CVCV to CV(V) like Eleme superficially looks like Yoruba (or "Kwa")

[b] A language like Gokana which loses its noun class prefixes looks very unlike Yoruba (or "Kwa")

[49] As very simple sound changes of the kind illustrated can make fairly closely related languages look different in word structure, it is obvious that the characteristics of Kwa languages cited by Westermann and Bryan are quite superficial typological criteria, which are not due to any common innovation and are therefore useless for genetic classification. (Williamson 1985:443)

[50] Two further Eleme sentences (Anderson and Bond 2003b)

> [a] *ɔ̀nɛ   ɔ̀tɔwɛ   dʒìra   ǹséminè: a-fì-ma-ri   ǹtitó-yába*
> person REL.teach believe children 3.DEF-be.good-INSTR-3PL work-3PL.POSS
> "The teacher believes the children enjoy their work."

> [b] *ɔ̀nɛ   ɔ̀tɔwɛ   rɛ̀   dʒí-dʒìra   ǹséminè: a-fì-ma-ri   ǹtitó-yába*
> person REL-teach NEG REDUP-believe children 3.DEF-be.good-INSTR-3PL work-3PL.POSS
> "The teacher does not believe the children enjoy their work."

(The second sentence is slightly altered to reflect what I believe to have been an error in the handout—the alteration, if anything, makes Eleme look more like Yoruba than not.)

6   Nasal Prefixes in Bantoid languages

[51] The Proto-Bantu noun classes based on Maho (1999:51). (This list leaves out some possible, relatively minor, classes.)

SINGULAR		PLURAL	
1	mù-	2	βà-
3	mù-	4	mì-
5	lì	6	mà-
7	kì-	8	βį̀-
9	nì-	10	lį̀-nì-
11	lù-		
12	kà-	13	tù-
14	βù-		
15	kù-		
16	pà-		
17	kù-		
18	mù-		
19	pį̀-		

[52] Noun class prefixes and prefixal concord in Luganda (E.15) (data courtesy Larry Hyman)

*e-**ki**-tabo   **ky**-ààngè e-**ki**-nénè   **kì**-nó **kí**-gwá*
AUG-7-book 7-my   AUG-7-big 7-this 7-fall
"This big book of mine is falling."

*e-**bi**-tabo   **by**-ààngè e-**bi**-nénè   **bì**-nó **bí**-gwá*
AUG-8-book 8-my   AUG-8-big 8-this 8-fall
"These big books of mine are falling."

[53] Narrow Bantu languages are generally taken to be very conservative in their retention of noun classes.

[54] In the Bakassi Buffer Zone, many of the noun class prefixes show clear affinities with Bantu noun classes but lack nasals in classes 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, and 10.

[55] Hyman (1980:179) offers the following contrastive pairings (which deviate in some ways from the above table in the Proto-Bantu reconstructions), representing an idealized situation.

CLASS	BANTU PREFIX	NON-BANTU PREFIX
1	mù-	ù-
3	mù-	ú-
4	mì-	í-
6	mà-	á-
9	Ǹ-	ì-
10	Ǹ-	í-

[56] This change in the prefixes is, from a phonological perspective, non-trivial and, therefore, would seem potentially valuable for determining genealogical affiliations. (Nasal versus non-nasal prefixes have been called the Greenberg-Crabb criterion for Narrow Bantu versus non-Narrow Bantu classification.)

[57] In Meinhof's classes 3 and 4, Bantu has prefixes *mu- and *mi- as against Semi-Bantu and West Sudanic *u- and *i-. This certainly a Bantu innovation [sic]. In the pronominal referents for these classes Bantu has, however, *yu- and *yi-. This can be explained in light of Semi-Bantu and West Sudanic forms as a survival of the period when the noun prefixes did not begin with a nasal. On the other hand, the Bantu forms cannot explain Semi-Bantu and other West Sudanic forms. (Greenberg 1966:35)

(NB: I can't find an explicit statement in Greenberg (1966) as to what Meinhof work he was citing, perhaps Meinhof (1948:28–67).)

[58] The nasal dichotomy splitting [Eastern Grassfields Bantu] and [Western Grassfields Bantu] along genetic lines is thus very important for our understanding of both the nasal phenomenon itself and the exact subgrouping of languages in the area. Since there is one [Proto-Grassfields Bantu], which includes consistent nasal and consistent non-nasal noun class systems, it cannot be the case that the nasal innovation took place at one time and in one genetic group only. Rather, it probably took place in waves and spread from language to language. In order to justify this claim, it will be necessary at this point to study these classes in the remaining Bantu and Bantoid subgroups. (Hyman 1980:185)

[59] Comparison of noun classes 1, 3, 6, and 9 in Eastern and Western "Grassfields" (Voorhoeve 1980:60). (Class 10, the plural of class 9, typically resembles it segmentally.)

	PERSON (CL. 1)	ROOT (CL. 3)	EYES (cl. 6)	MONKEY (cl. 9)
EASTERN				
Mankon	ŋ̀-wɔ̀	ŋ̀-gàŋɔ̀	ɨmɨ́ɣɔ̀	ŋ̀-kɔ̌
Limbum	ŋ̀-ɛ̀ɛ̀	ŋ̀-ɣāŋ	ḿír	ŋ̀-káá
Mfumte	ŋ̀-gwì	ŋ̀-gɔ̀	(nšì) mí?	ŋ̀-kɛ́
WESTERN				
Moghamo	wɨ̂t	á-ɣāŋ	á-ɣɨ́	ká
Kom	ə̀-wúl	é-ɣá⁺ŋ́	á-sî	ɔ́-ká⁺ín
Noni	ẁ-wì	gbáŋ	ɛ-jisɛ	`cān

[60] The Western and Eastern Grassfields languages (somewhat out of date; source Stallcup (1980:50))
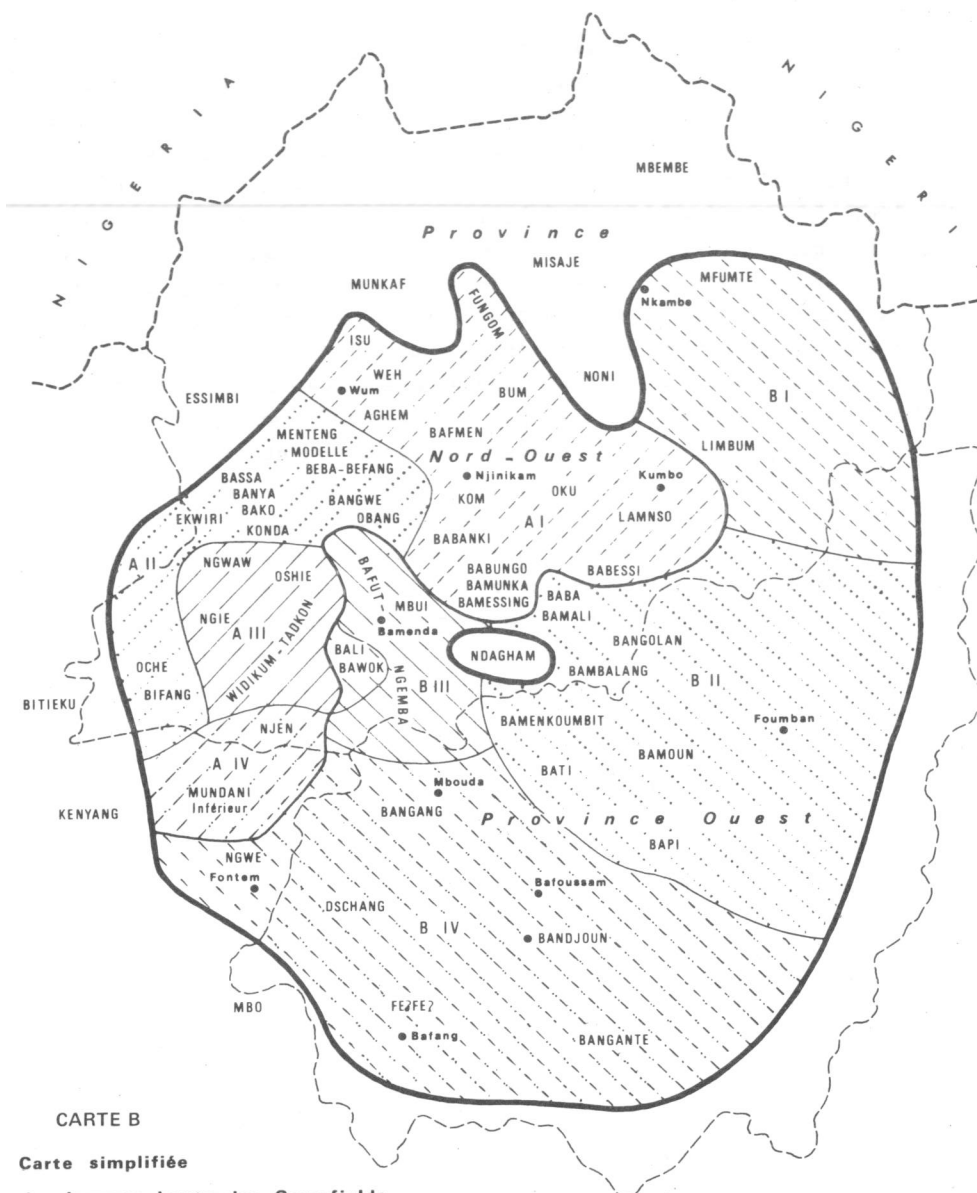
CARTE B

Carte simplifiée

des langues bantu des Grassfields

(Provinces Ouest et Nord Ouest du Cameroun)

- - - - - Frontière d'Etat

- - - - - Frontière de province

——— Bantu des Grassfields

Sous-groupes majeurs

Grassfields de l'ouest: A

Mbam - Nkam: B

Sous-groupes mineurs

I	Ring
II	Menchum
III	Widikum
IV	Mundani Inf.-Njen
I	Nkambe
II	Nun
III	Ngemba
IV	Bamileke

[61] The investigations and reconstruction efforts of the Grassfields Bantu Working Group (GBWG) have clearly demonstrated that there is a viable linguistic unit that we refer to as Grassfields Bantu. (Hyman 1980:181)

[62] There is a second dimension to the nasal noun classes: Whether or not the class concord also shows nasals.

11

[63] Concord in Naki noun classes (tentative, based on field work and Hombert (1980:87)). (Naki is a Beboid language, so not in the Grassfields in a genealogical sense.)

CLASS	MORPH	CONC	SEMANTICS
1/2	Ø/bu-	w`-/b´-	humans, misc.
3/6	Cw/-ng	w´-/n´-	not established
5/6	Ø/-ng	w´-/n´-	body parts, misc.
6a	N-	m´-	liquids
9/10	´/	y`-/y´-	animals, misc.
12/8	a-/(b)i-	k´-/by´-	body parts, misc.
14/14	u-/u-	w´-/w´-	not established
19/26	fy-/m	fy´-/m´-	diminutive

[64] Phrasal examples

CLASS	SINGULAR	PLURAL	GLOSS
1/2	mū wɔ̀	būnī bɔ́	'the man/men'
3/6	fwī wɔ̀	fɔ̄ng nɔ́	'the moon/the moon'
5/6	gí wɔ̀	gɔ́ng nɔ́	'the egg/the eggs'
6a	nggú mɔ́		'the water'
9/10	nyàm yɔ̀	nyām yɔ́	'the animal/animals'
12/8	ānyènà ké	bīnyènà byɔ́	'the bird/birds'
14/14	ūdāà wɔ́	ūdāà wɔ́	'the bridge/bridges'
19/26	fyīdāà fyɔ́	mdāà mɔ́	'the culvert/culverts' (i.e. "small bridge")

[65] Naki actually shows an interesting twist (traces of which can be found in other Beboid languages) of a nasal *suffix* in Class 6.

[66] The Proto-Eastern Grassfields and Proto-Western Grassfields noun class and concord systems as reconstructed by Hyman (1980:182)

	PROTO−EASTERN GRASSFIELDS		PROTO−WESTERN GRASSFIELDS	
CLASS	PREFIX	CONCORD	PREFIX	CONCORD
1	Ǹ-	ù-	ù(n)-	ù
1a	Ø-	(=1)	—	—
2	bɔ̀-	bɔ́-	bɔ́-	bɔ́-
3	Ǹ-	ú-	ú-	ú-
3a	ì-	(=3)	—	—
4	—	—	í-	í-
5	lì-	lí-	í-	í-
6	(=6a)	(=6a)	á-	gá-
6a	mɔ̀-	mɔ́-	mə-	mɔ̀-
7	à-	í-	kí-	kí-
8	bì-	bɨ́-	bí-	bí-
9	Ǹ-	ì-	ì(n)-	ì
10	Ǹ-	ɨ́-	í(n)-	Cɨ́-
13	—	—	tí-	tí-
19	fɔ̀-	fɔ́	fí-	fí-

[67] Some generalizations

[a] Class 6a, the liquid class, may have had a nasal in both branches of Grassfields (if there really are two branches). (The Proto-Bantu word for water *-jí is reconstructed in class 6, a nasal class. Also, reflexes in some languages indicate it should be reconstructed *-njí.)

[b] Nasals are more prevalent in prefixes than concords. (This holds of Narrow Bantu as well.)

[68] Some options for reconstruction. . .

[a] Give up on the unity of Grassfields and apply the so-called Greenberg-Crabb criterion for Bantu versus non-Bantu—then all the similarities among Grassfields Bantu languages prompting their reconstruction as a unified genealogical unit will need to be viewed as areal phenomena

[b] Give up on the Greenberg-Crabb criterion and treat nasal classes as an areal phenomenon

[c] Either way, we'll need to invoke areality. . .

[69] But it's not really even that simple.

So would Ekoid Bantu satisfy the criterion—and it was Ekoid which led Crabb (1965) to place so much emphasis on the nasal prefixes in the first place. In most Ekoid languages there are nasals in the appropriate classes; however, Ekoid R and S show, once again, the merger of the prefixes in classes 6 and 6a, but distinct concords, yá versus má, respectively (Watters 1980).

(See, for example, Watters (1980:133).)

[70] Even worse, consider this data from Tùnɛn (south of Grassfields area, considered Narrow Bantu (A.60) but at its fringe) (data noted by Hyman (1980:192), original source Dugast (1971:67–90)).

CLASS	PREFIXES
1	mò-, mù-
3	mò-, mù-, óN-, úN-
4	mè-, mì-, ìN-, èN-
6	mà-, mʷə̀-
9/10	mè-, mì-, ìN-, èN-

[71] It should be noted that the difference between mV- and VN- can be predicted in the relevant classes on the basis of the stem-initial consonant: if the stem-initial consonant is /b,d,j,g/ or a nasal, the prefix will be VN- (with simplification of VN-N to V-N); if the stem begins with any other consonant—or if it begins with a vowel—the prefix will be mV-. (Hyman 1980:192)

[72] An additional layer of complexity in Tùnɛn is found in collective forms (noted by Hyman (1980:192), data taken from Dugast (1971:72–9)).

CLASS	SINGULAR	PLURAL	COLLECTIVE	GLOSS
5/6	nèbɔ́m	màbɔ̀	àmɔ́m	'yam ridge'
5/6	nɛ̀fɛ	màfɛ	àmbɛ	'melon'
5/6	nìbíl	mʷə̀bíl	ə̀míl	'palm tree'
9/10	èmɔ́t	èmɔ́t	màmɔ́t	'necklace type'
9/10	èŋgas	èŋgas	màŋgas	'spite'
9/10	ìnjəŋ	ìnjəŋ	mʷə̀njəŋ	'xylophone'

(The nasal in class 5 in Tùnɛn is apparently a relatively recent innovation from Proto-Bantu *lì-.)

7   Conclusion

[73] Though there are clear genealogical relationships among languages in the Bakassi Buffer Zone, understanding the nature of the relationships is hampered by areality.

[74] Here, we have focused on stem shape and noun classes.

[75] Other areas worthy of similar attention

- [a] Lexicon (the obvious one)

- [b] Vowel harmony

- [c] Tone systems (innovations beyond two-tone systems)

- [d] Verb agreement (none versus person/number versus noun class)

- [e] Word order (especially OV order)

- [f] Serialization, auxiliaries, and argument marking (the facts of Leggbó in this part of grammar are actually why I began looking into this part of the world as an "area" in the first place)

- [g] TMA systems (is there anything coherent about tense versus aspect?)

- [h] Experiencer constructions (Stative-Active in Africa?)

[76] Also, what is needed, is a more thorough understood of the sociolinguistics of the area, including multilingualism patterns. (I haven't looked into this too thoroughly yet, perhaps some of it has been done—maybe by anthropologists or historians.)

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