High vowel fricativization as an areal feature of the northern Cameroon Grassfields

Matthew Faytak

WOCAL 8, 京都 — August 23, 2015

Overview

High vowel fricativization is an areal or contact feature of the northern Grassfields, which carries implications for Niger-Congo reconstructions

1. What is (not) a fricativized vowel?
2. Where are they (not)?
3. Why is this interesting?

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Fricative vowels

Vowels with a fricative-like supralaryngeal constriction, which may or may not consistently result in audible fricative noise

Not intended to encompass:

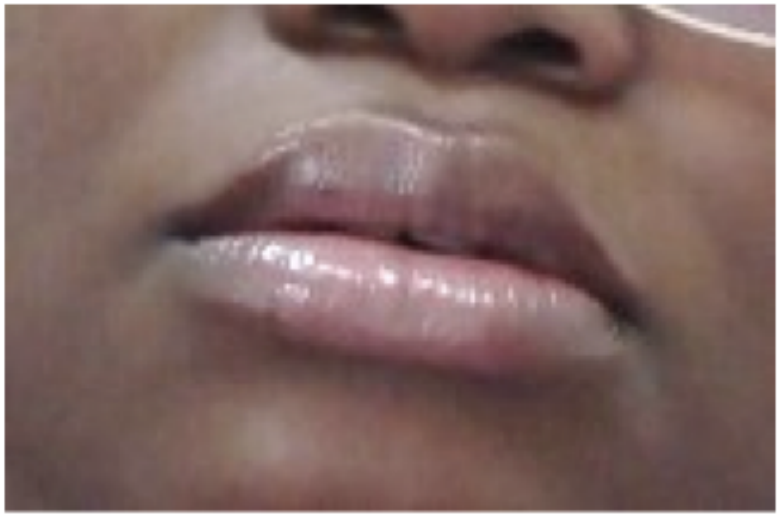
- Devoiced or voiceless vowels — Smith (2003)
- Pre-/post-aspirated vowels — Helgason (2002), Mortensen (2012)
- Articulatory overlap at high speech rate
- Wall noise sources in high vowels — Shadle (1990)

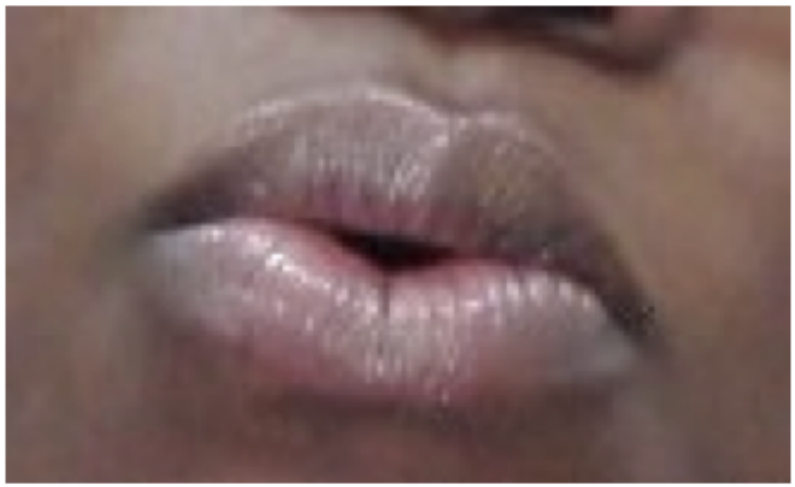
Prior mention

Vowels that **do** fit one or both of the given definitions:

- Apical vowels in Chinese — Lee (2005), Feng (2007), Lee-Kim (2014)
- Viby-i, Göteborges-i, etc. in Swedish — Holmberg (1976), Engstrand et al. (2000), Schötz et al. (2011)
- Fricative vowels in Bantoid — Medjo Mvé (1997), Connell (2007)

Articulatory evidence of constriction





Olson and Meynadier (2015)

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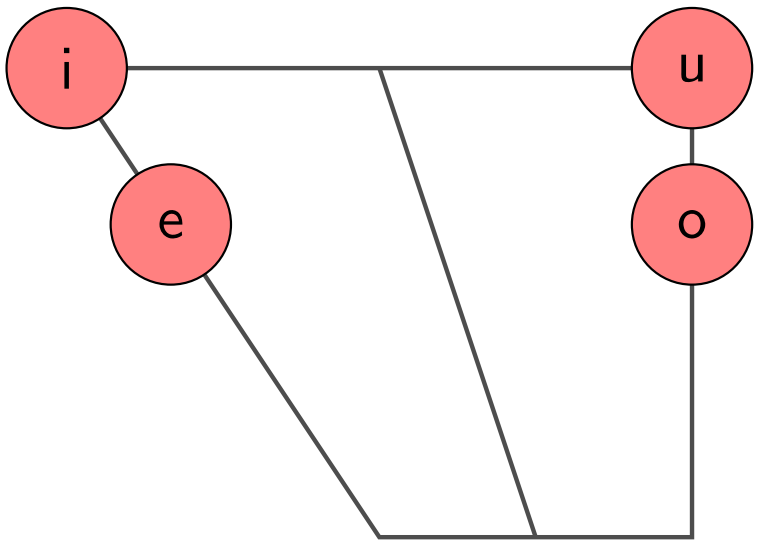
High vowel fricativization (HVF)

Fricative vowels arise from normal high vowels /i u/, often in tandem with raising of the next-lowest vowels Faytak (2014)



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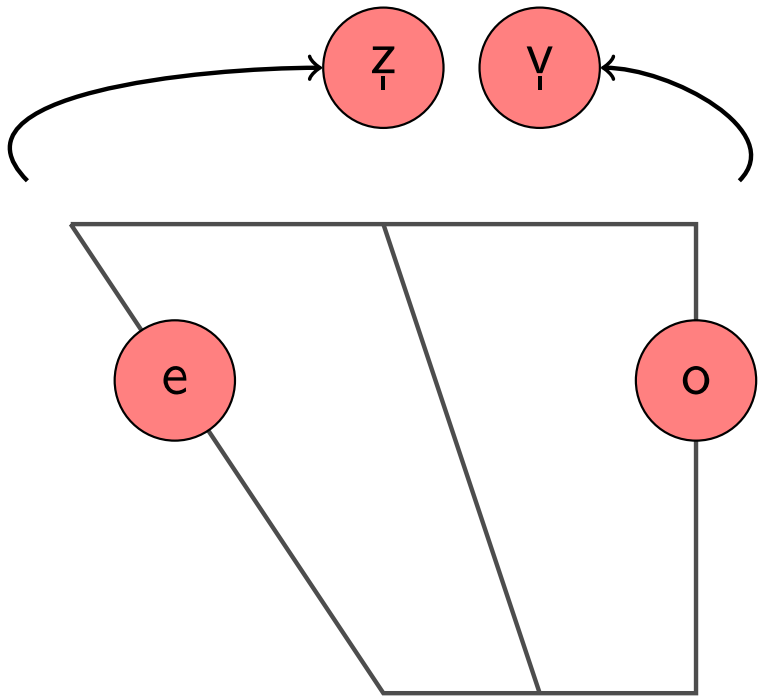

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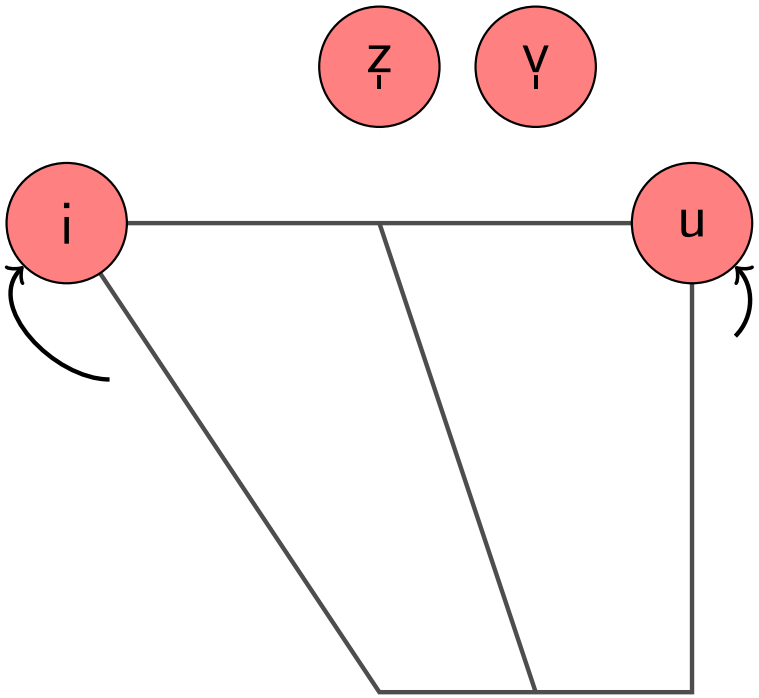

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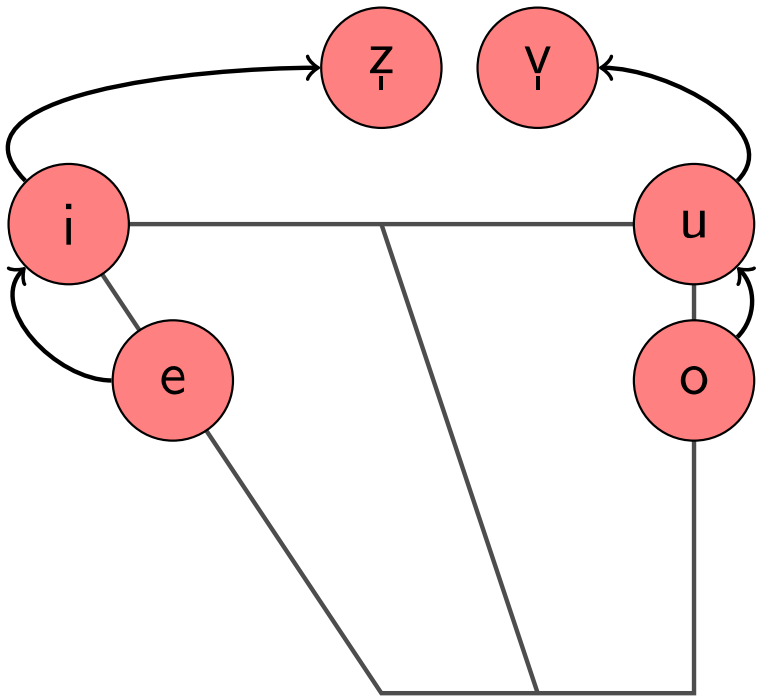

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All non-Bantu Bantoid languages, mapped

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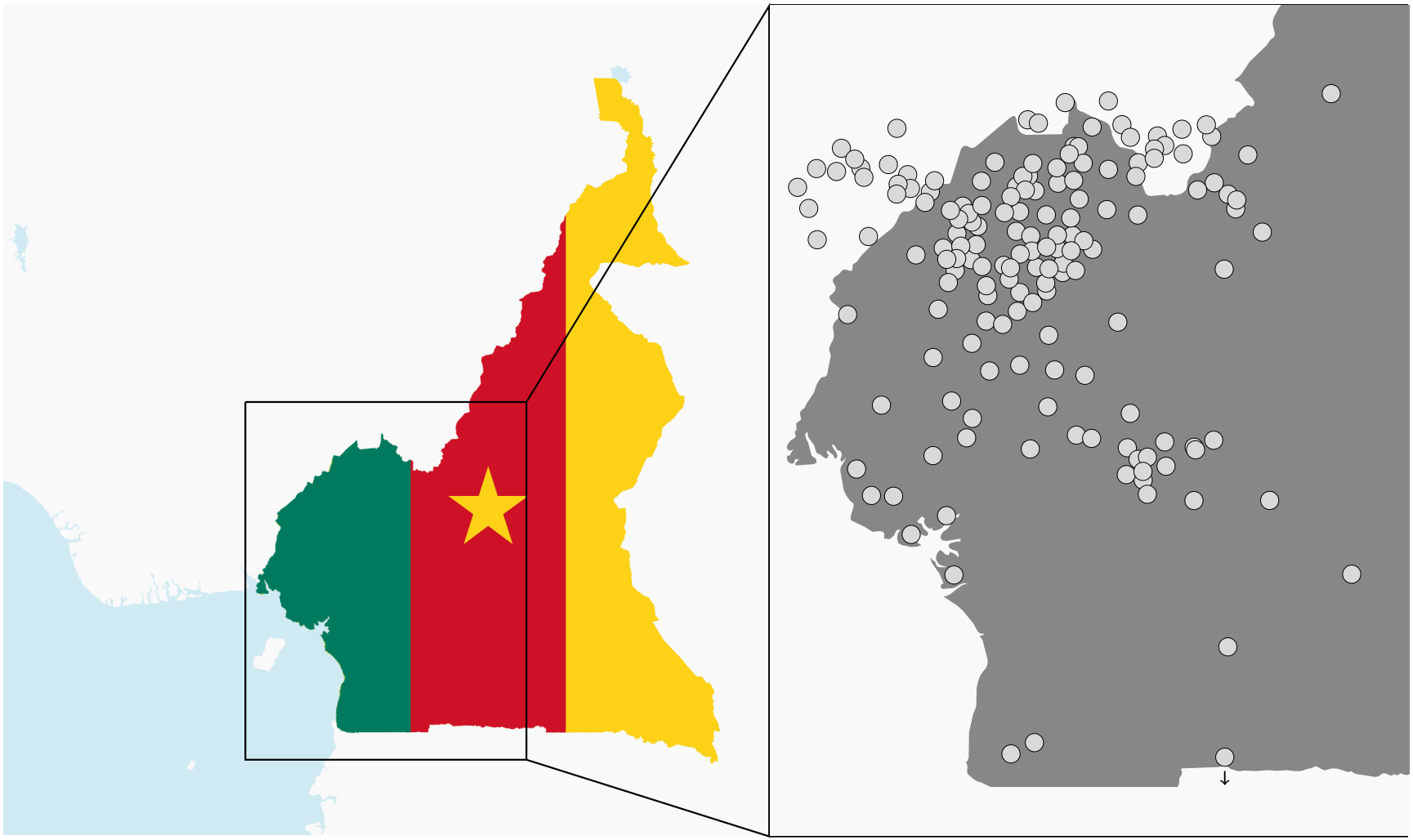

Genetic grouping

Several branches of Bantoid at issue

Piron (1995); Grollemund (2011)

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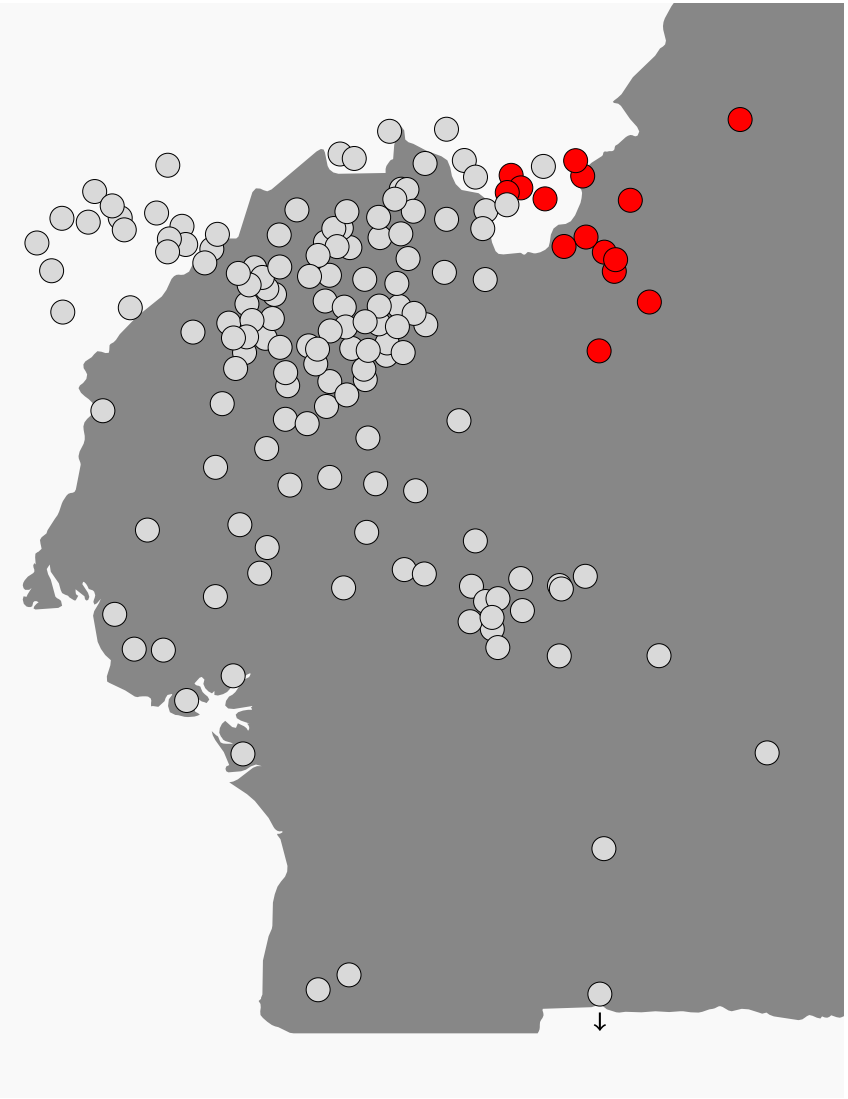

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  - incl. Mambiloid

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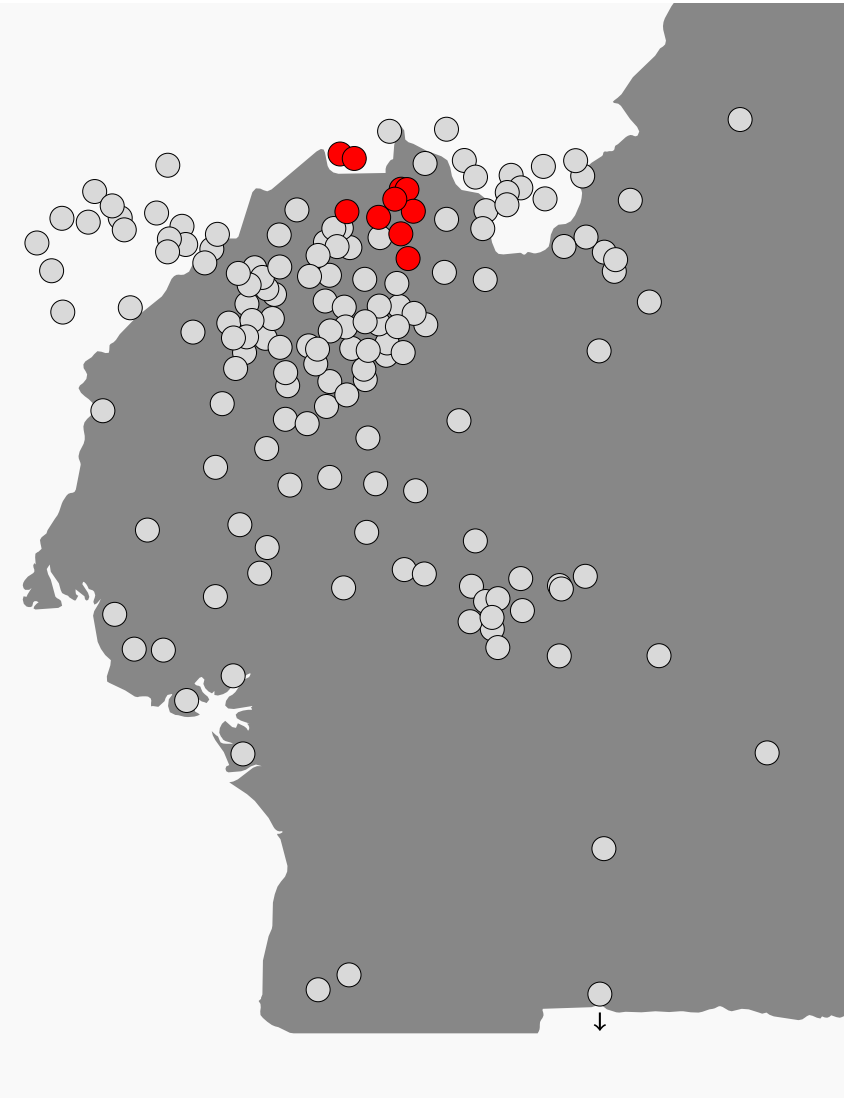

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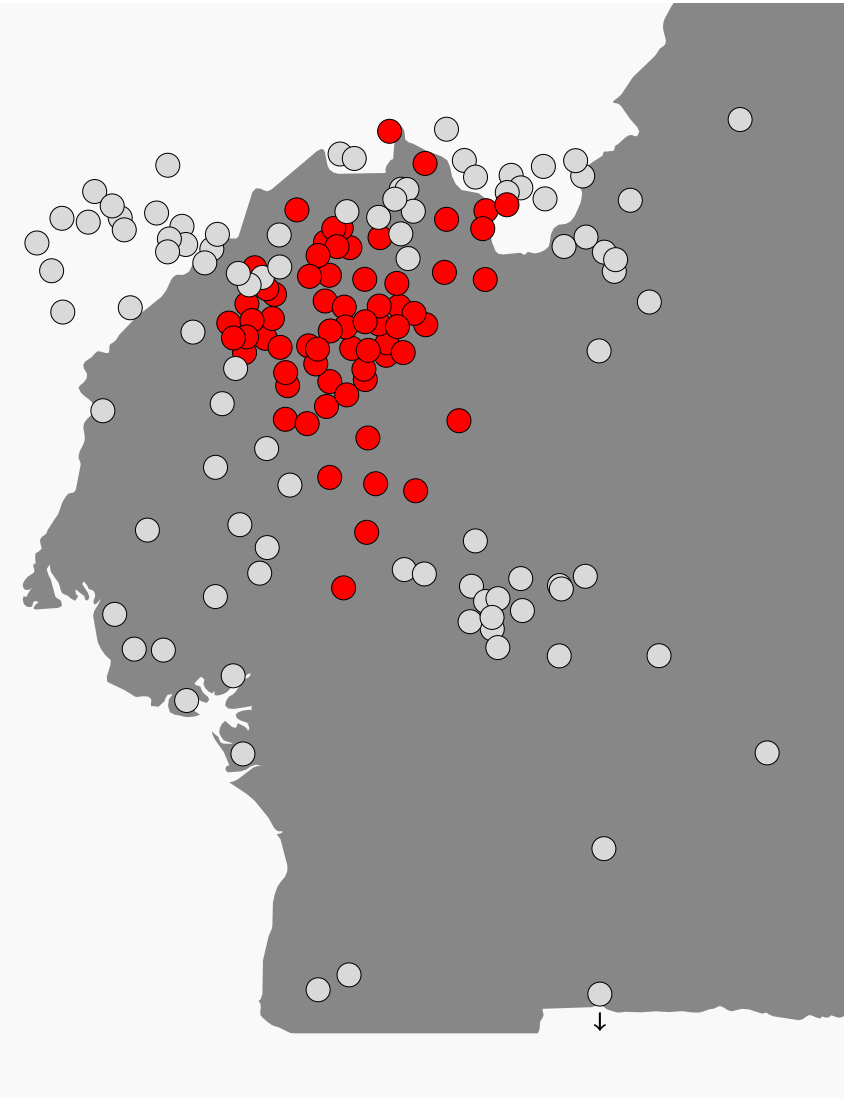

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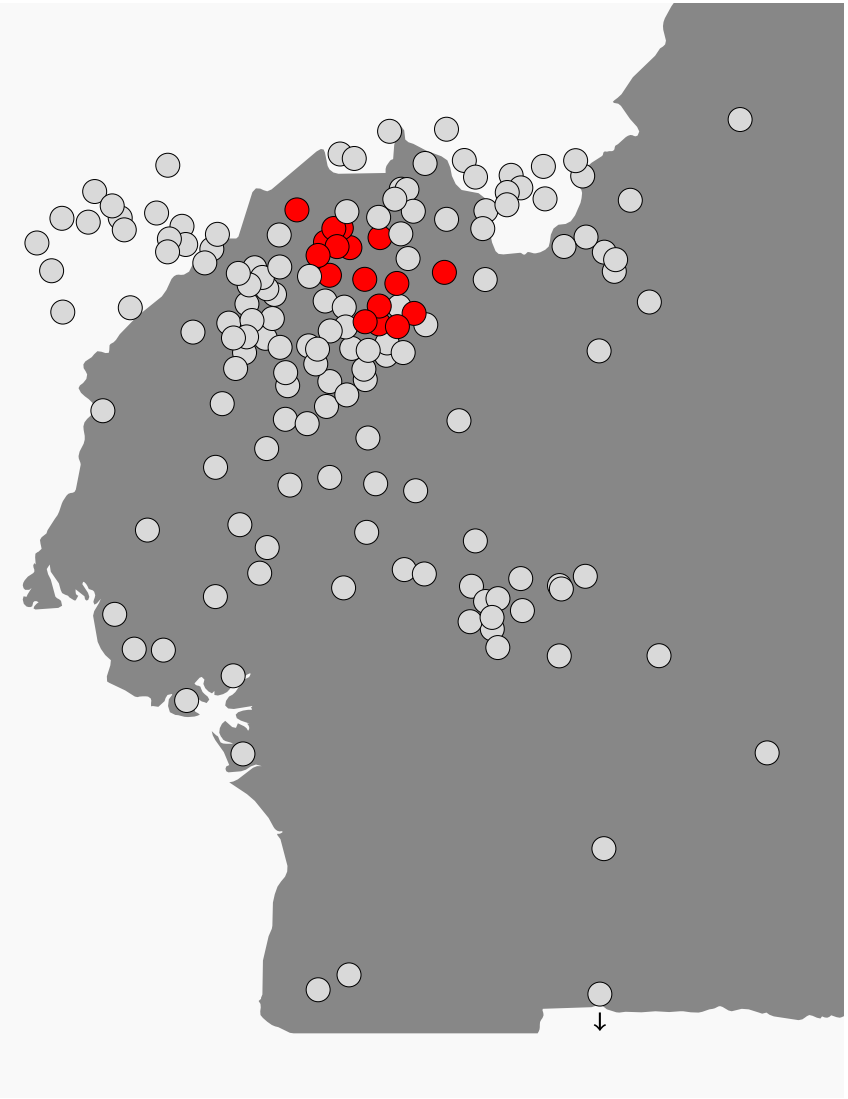

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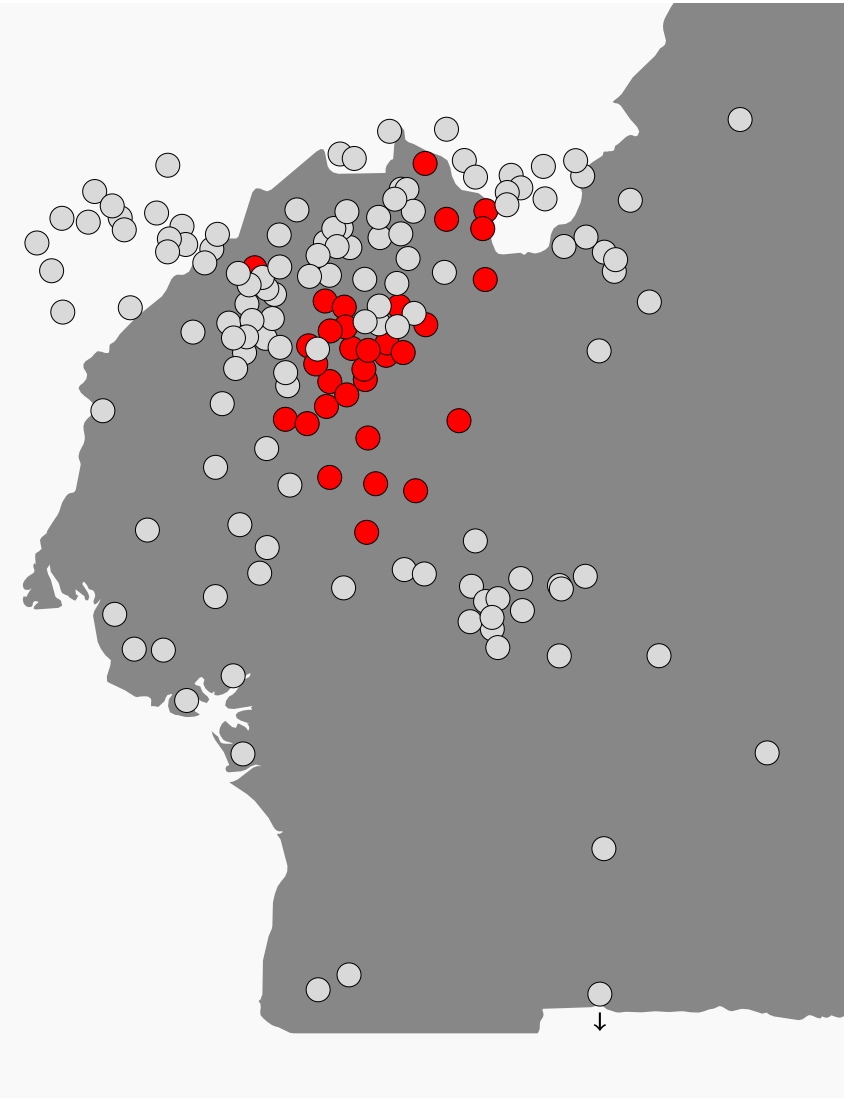

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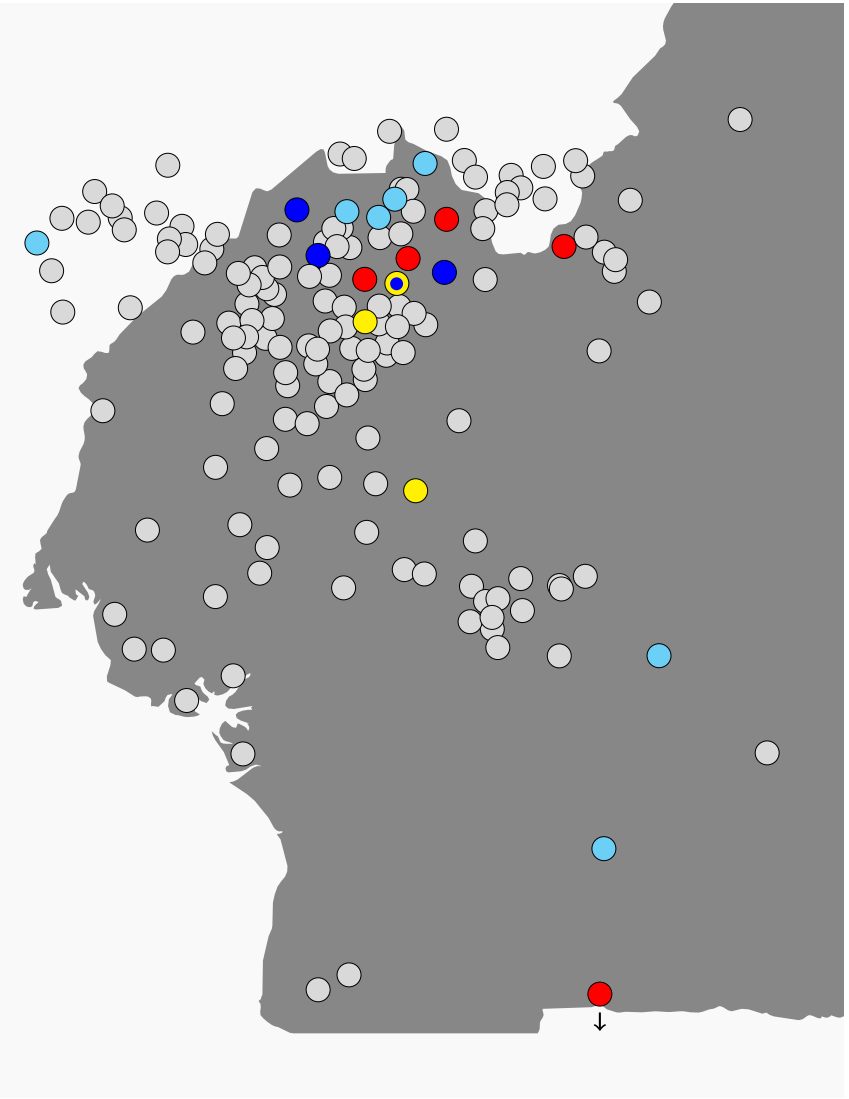
Languages with fricativized vowels

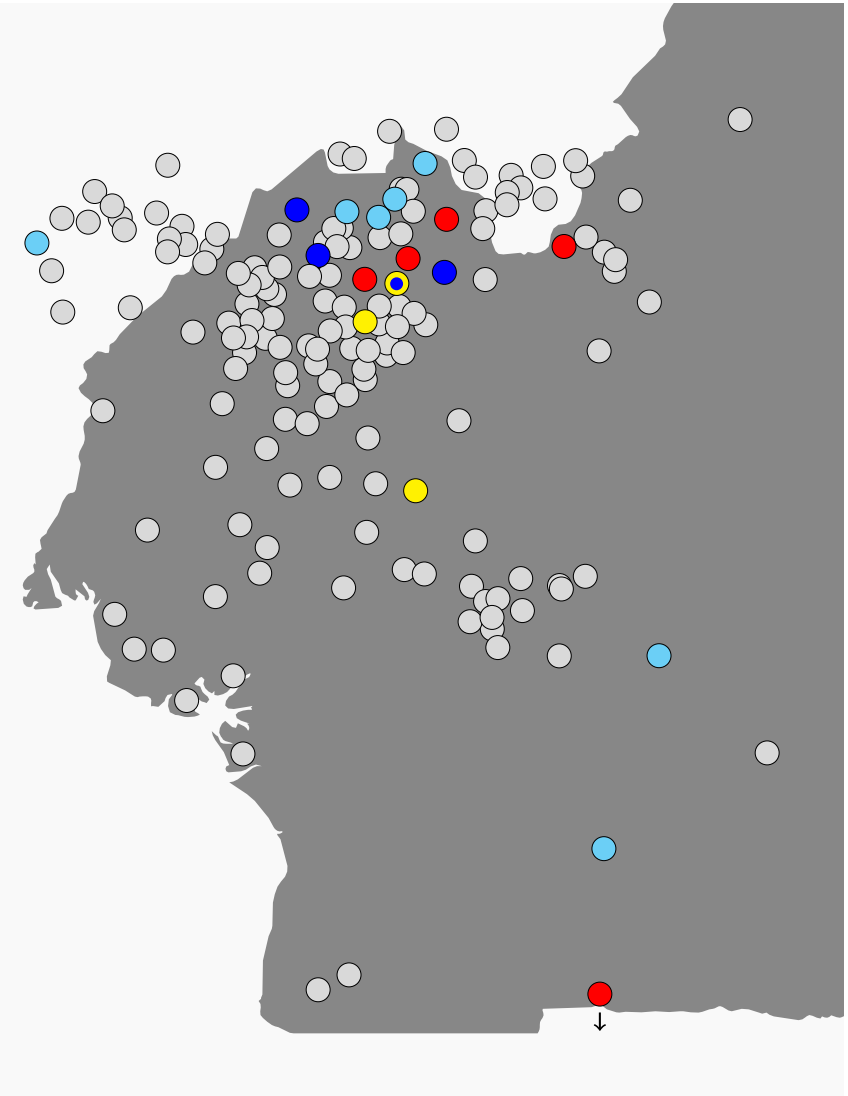
Different realizations, varying levels of evidence



- Confirmed, frication
- Confirmed, low-frication
- Centralized, restricted
- Suspected

Confirmed, with frication

Recorded audio evidence, fricative noise



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  - Labial
  - Coronal
- Noni [nhu] Hyman (1981)
- Limbum [lmp]
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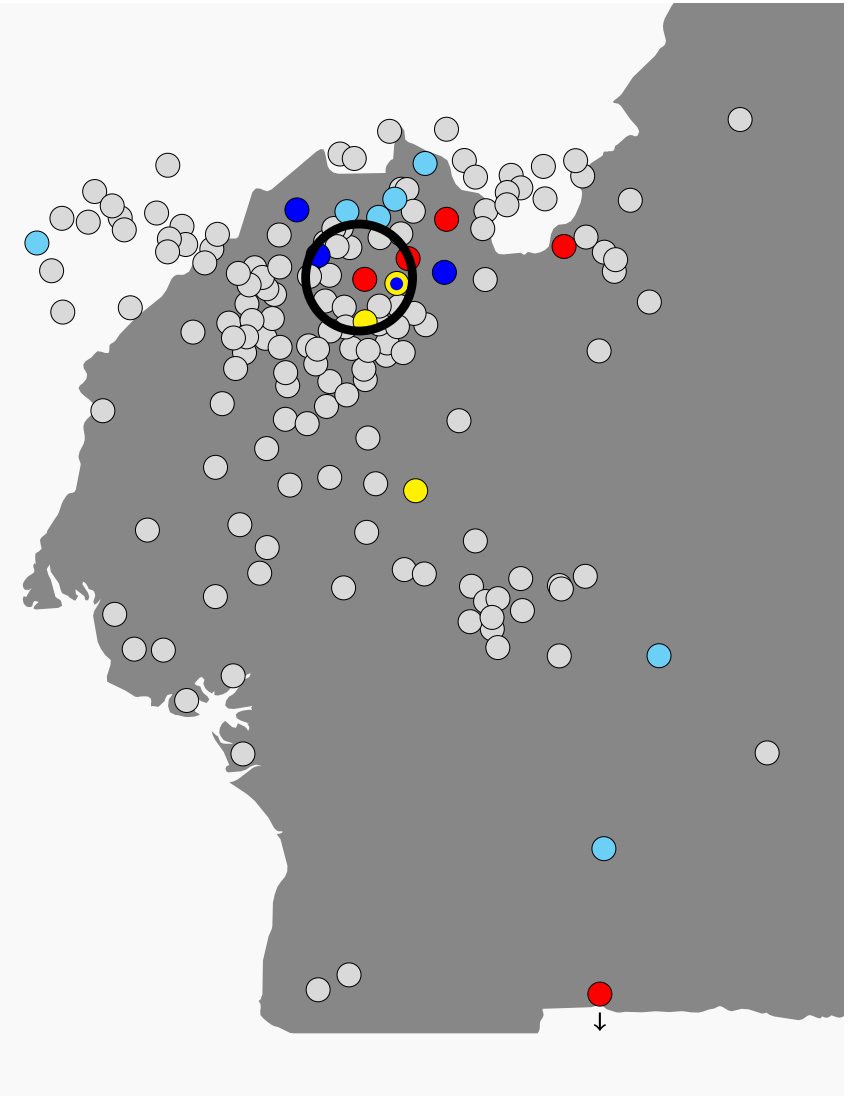

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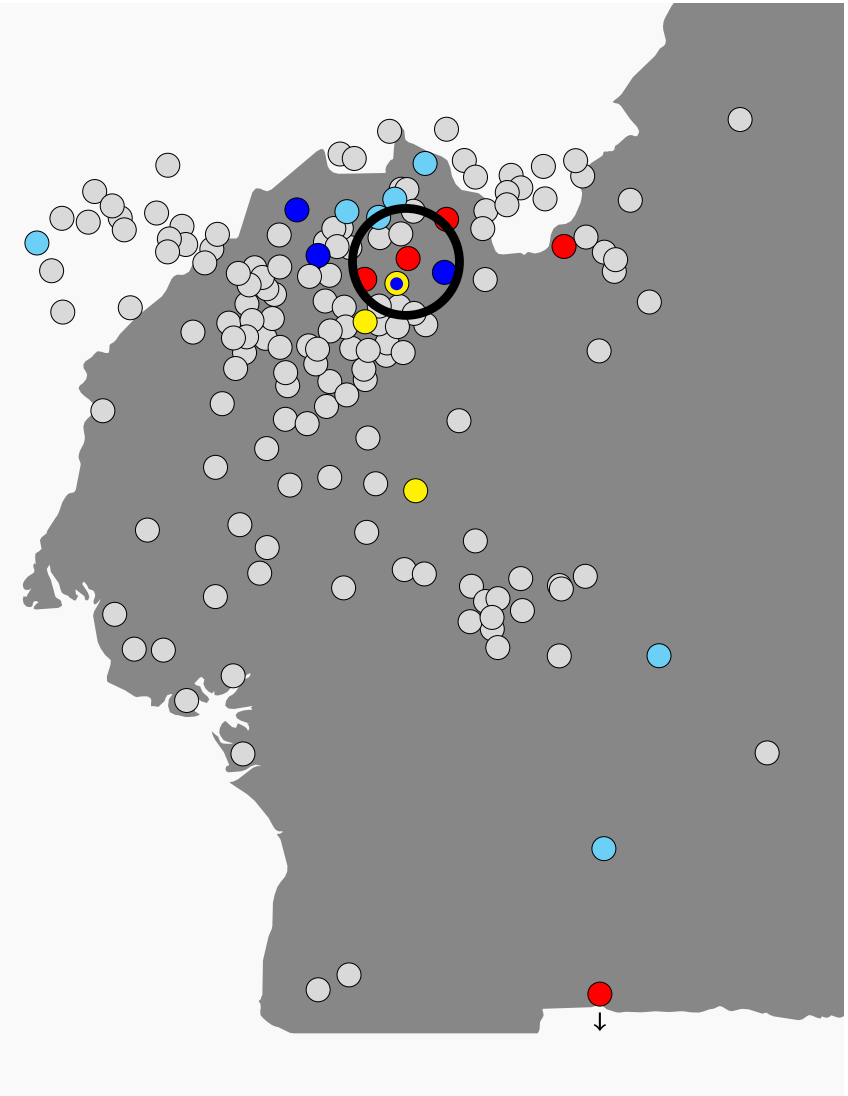

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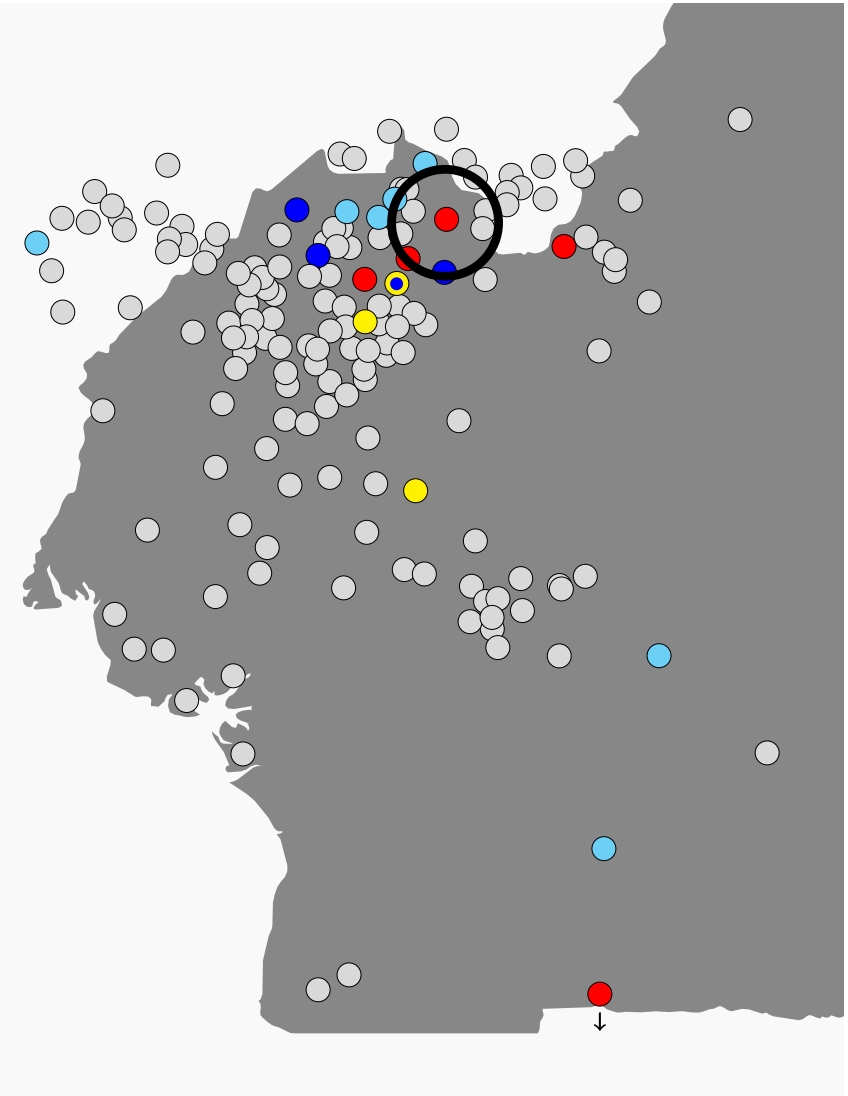

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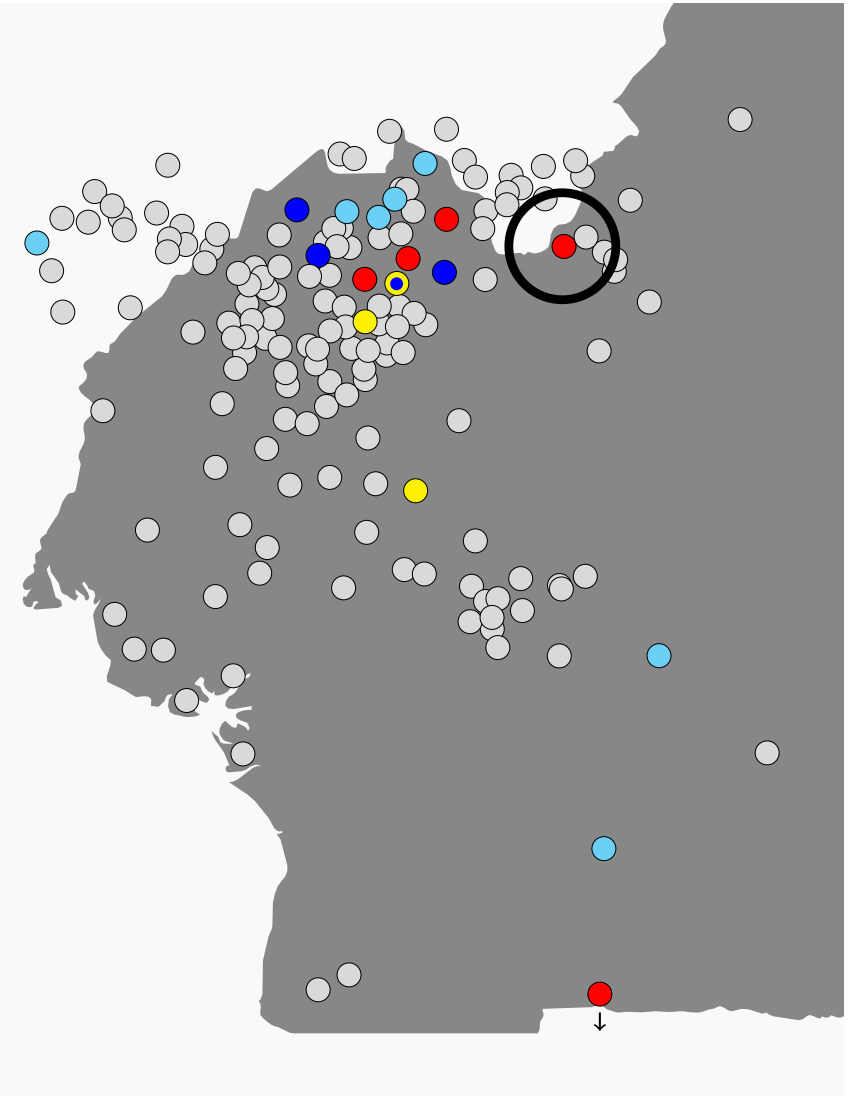

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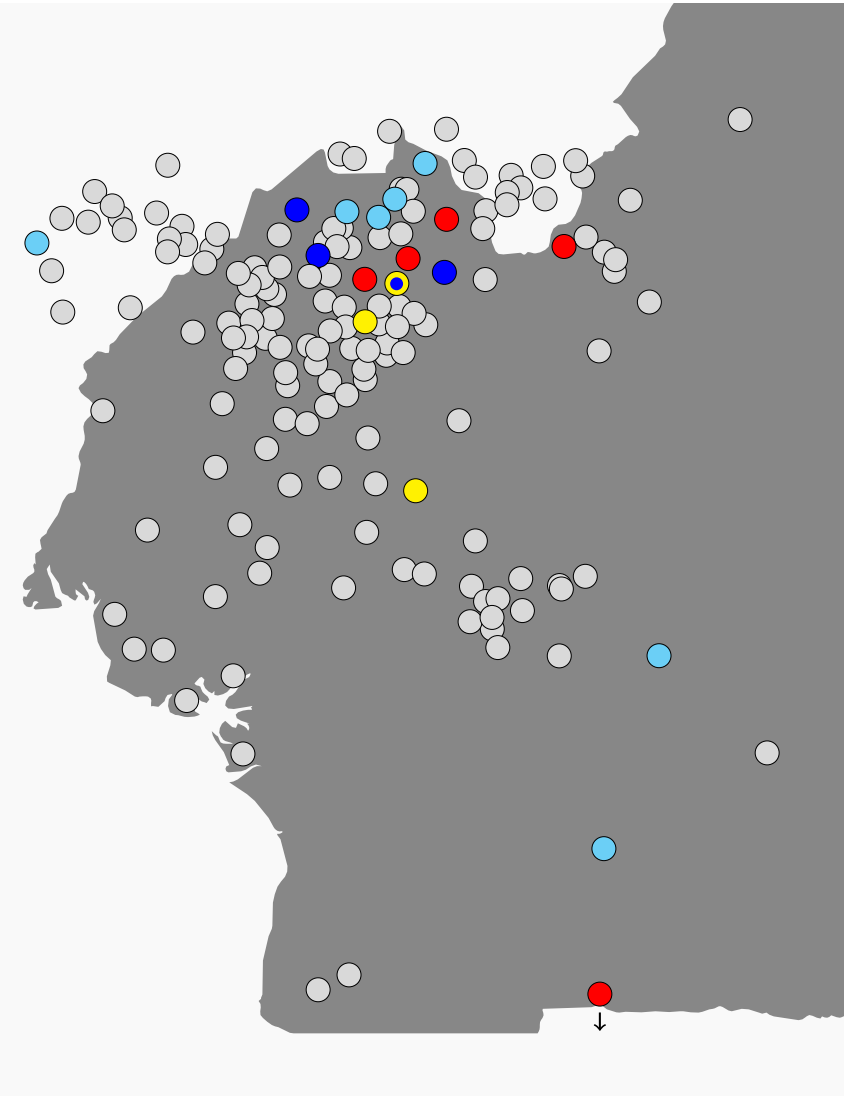

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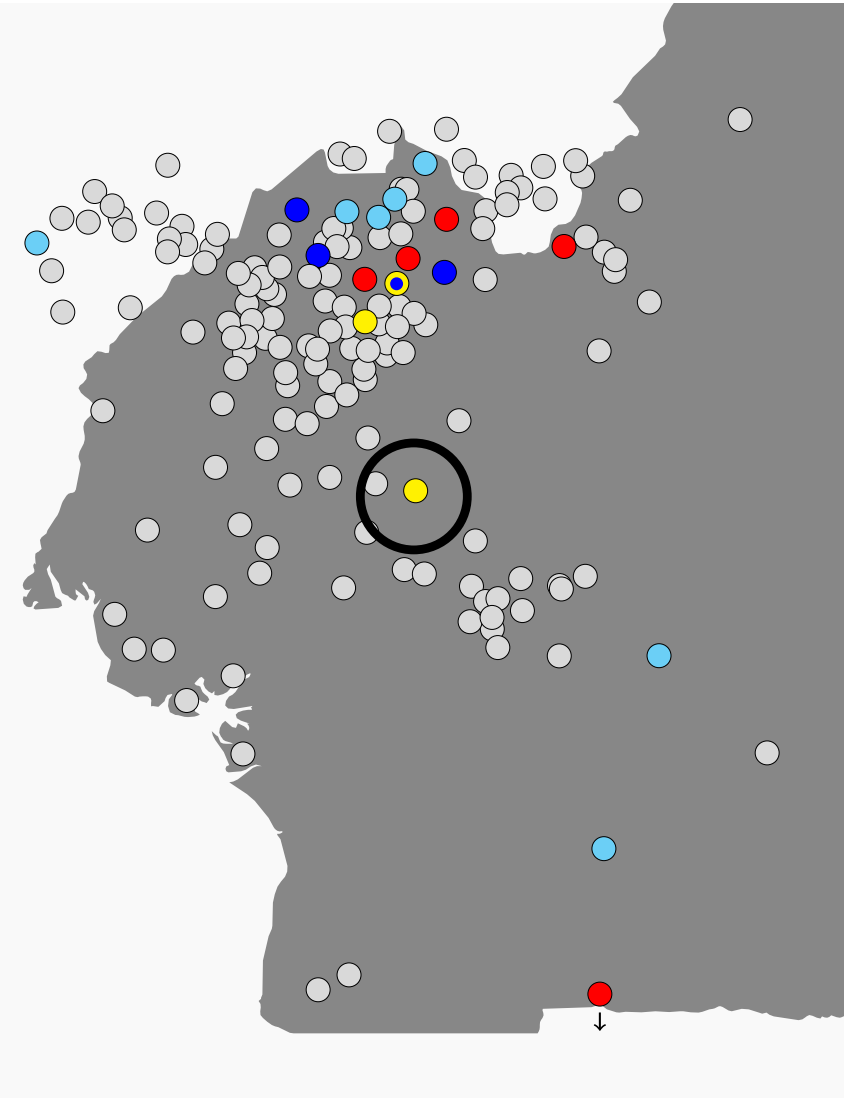

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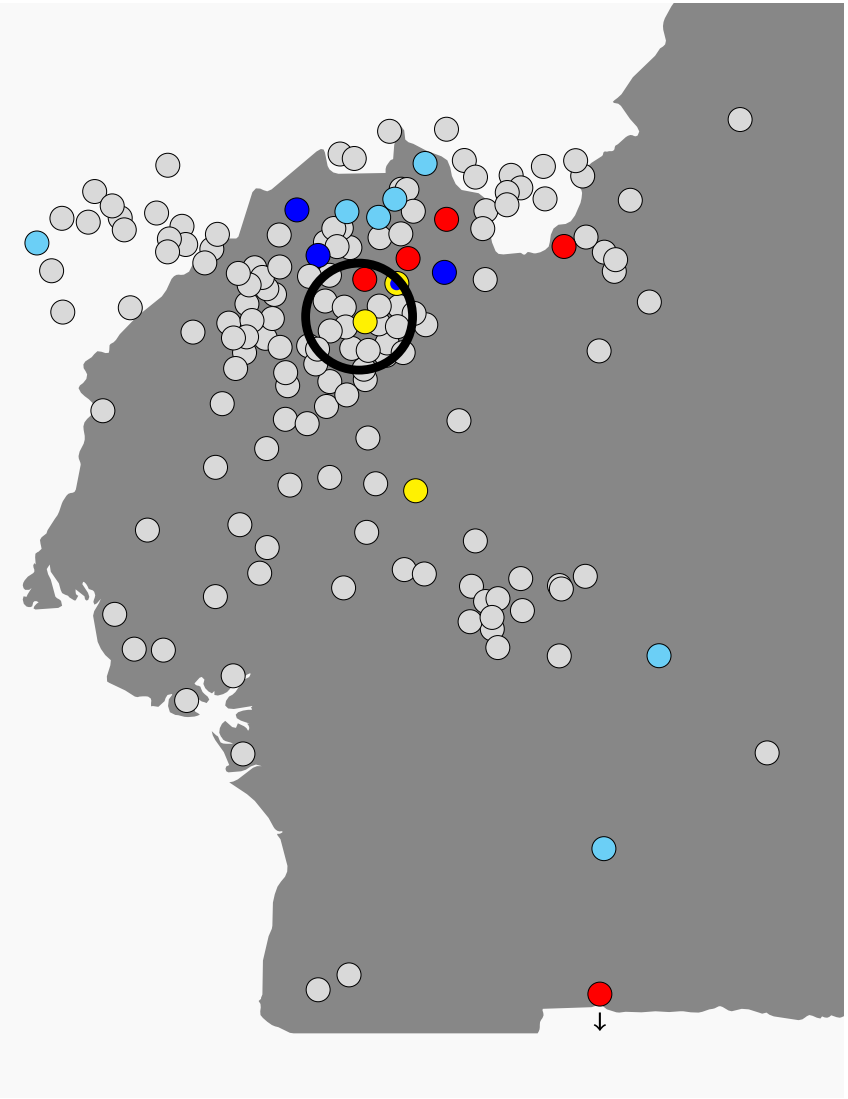

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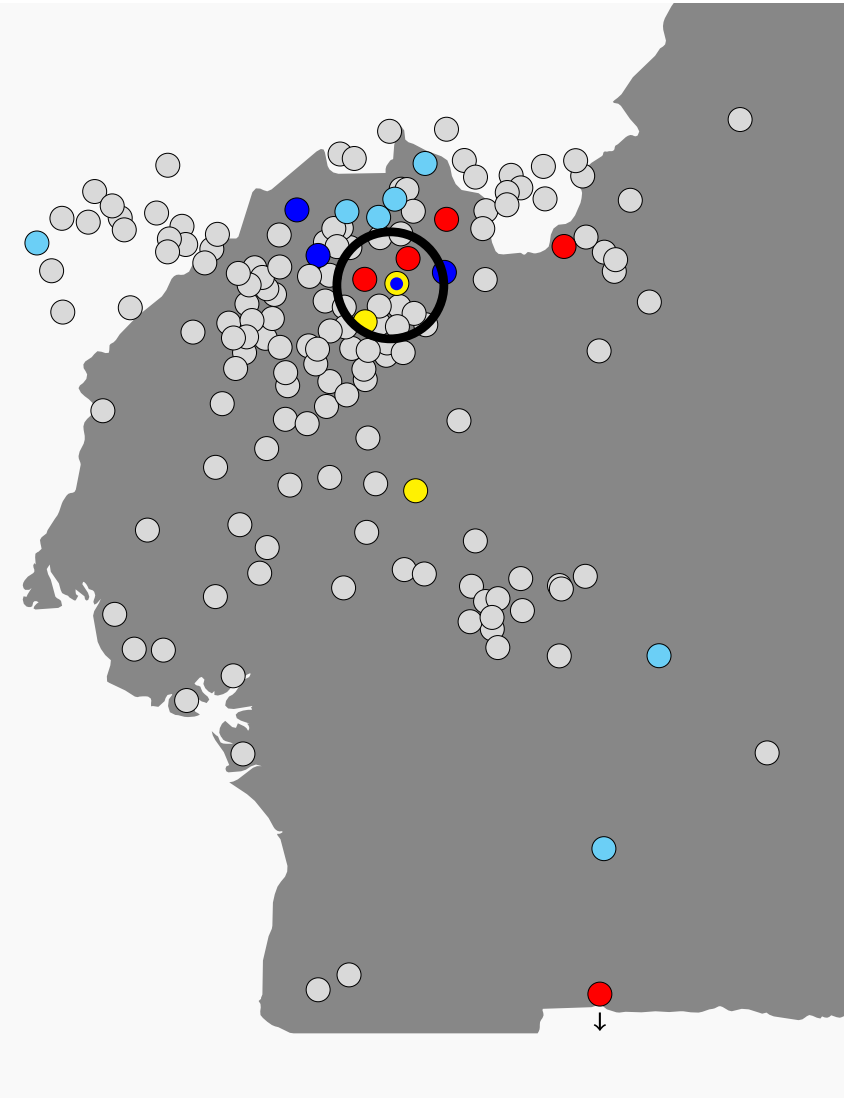

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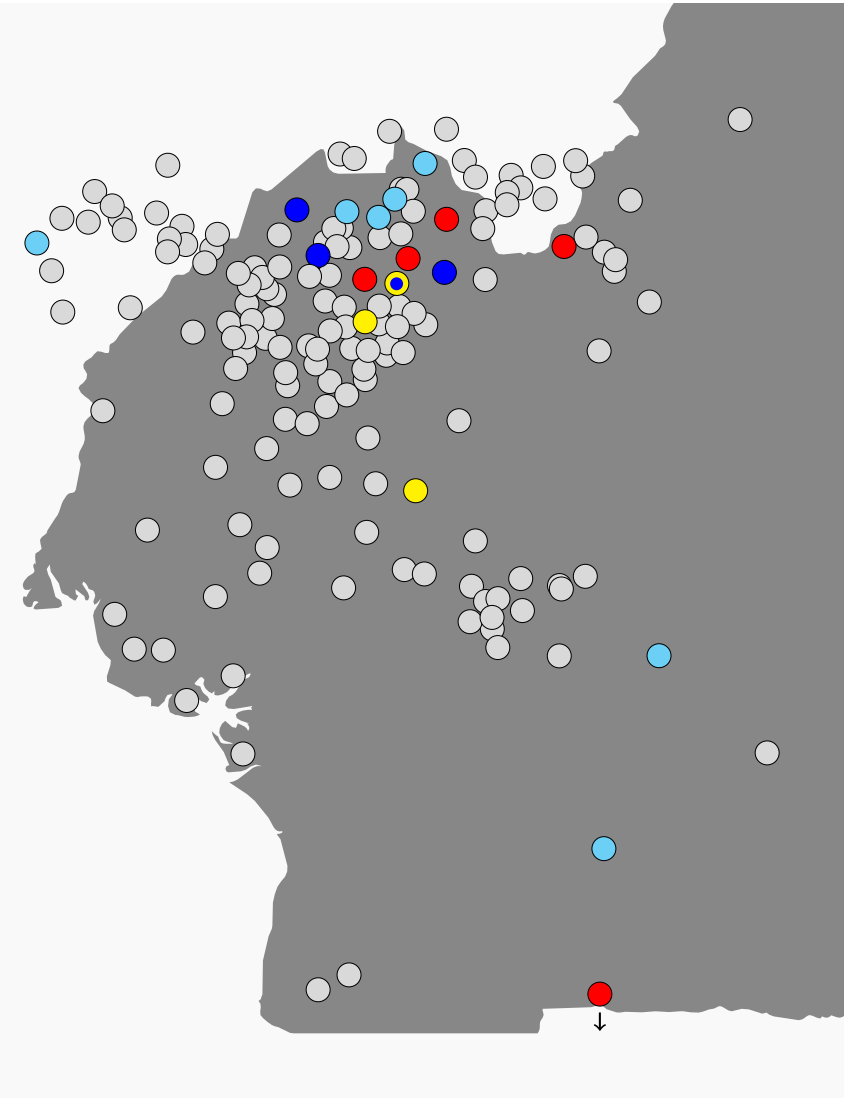
Non-peripheral vowels after fricatives or affricates (sometimes /ɲ/)



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  Front Back

- Isu [isu]

  Back vs. [u]

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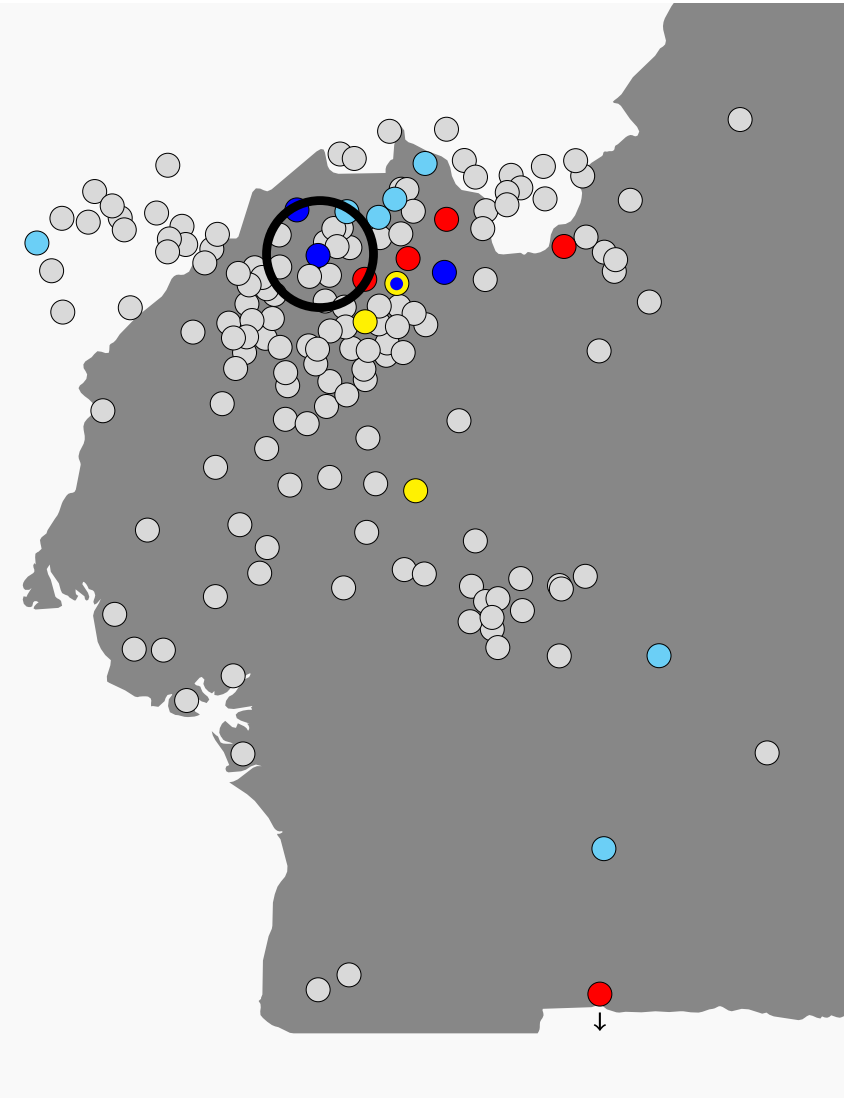

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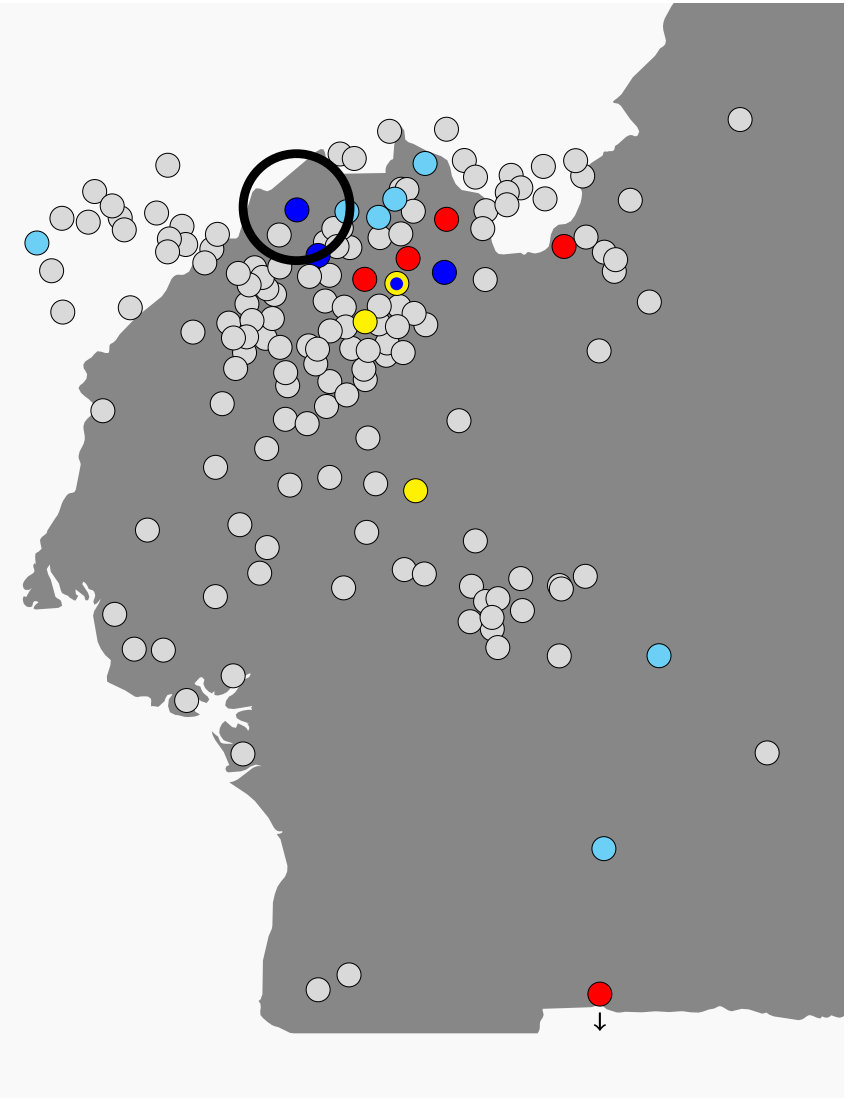

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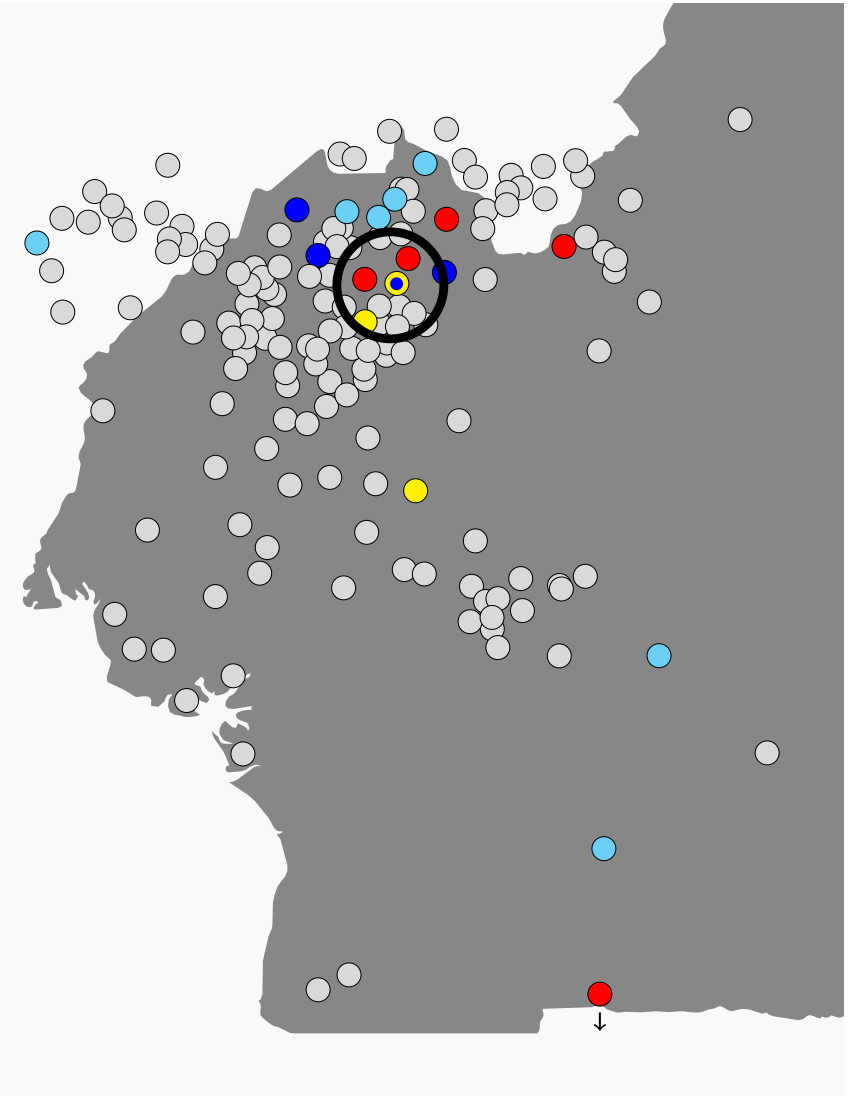

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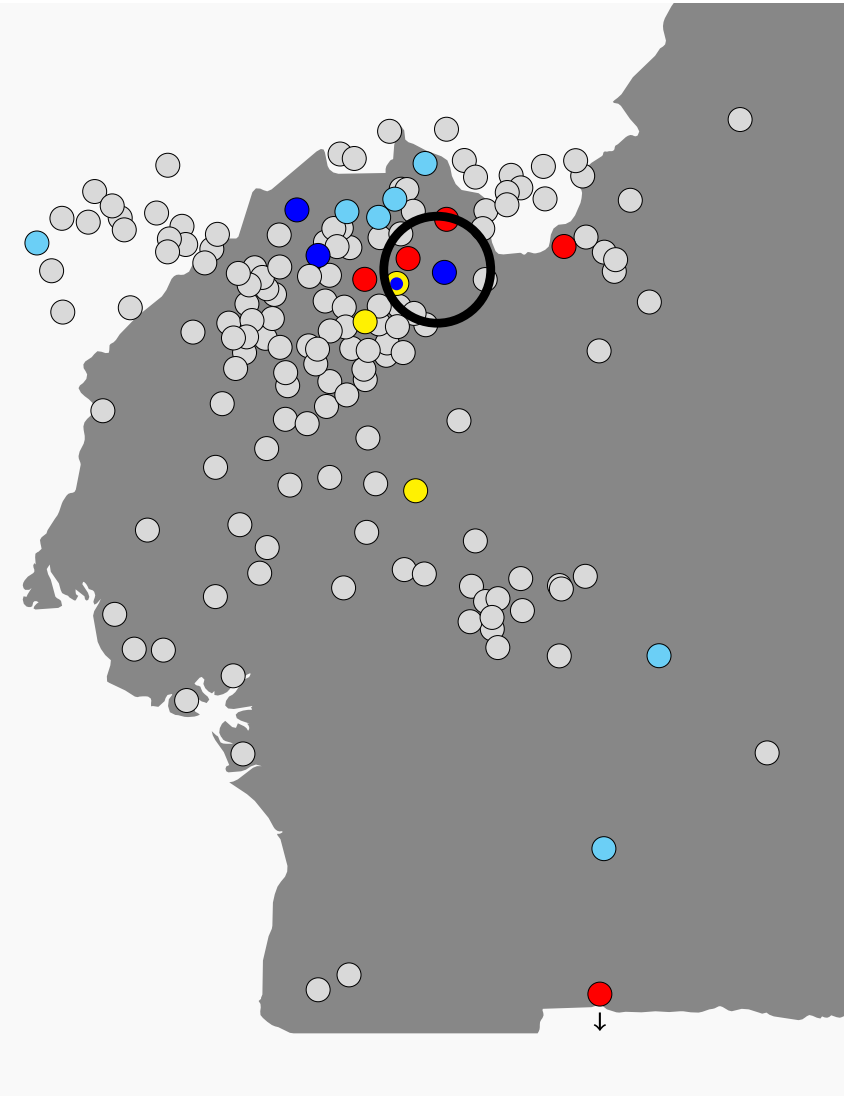

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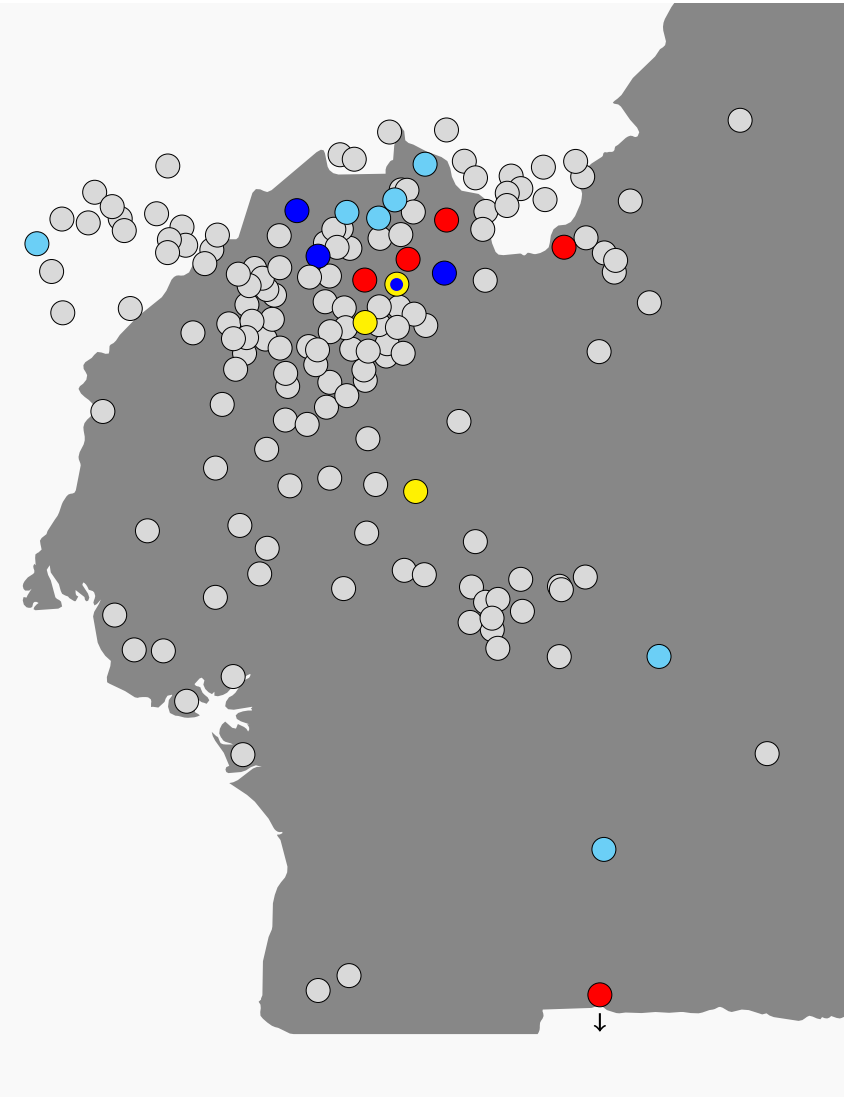

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  Labial, Mbuk

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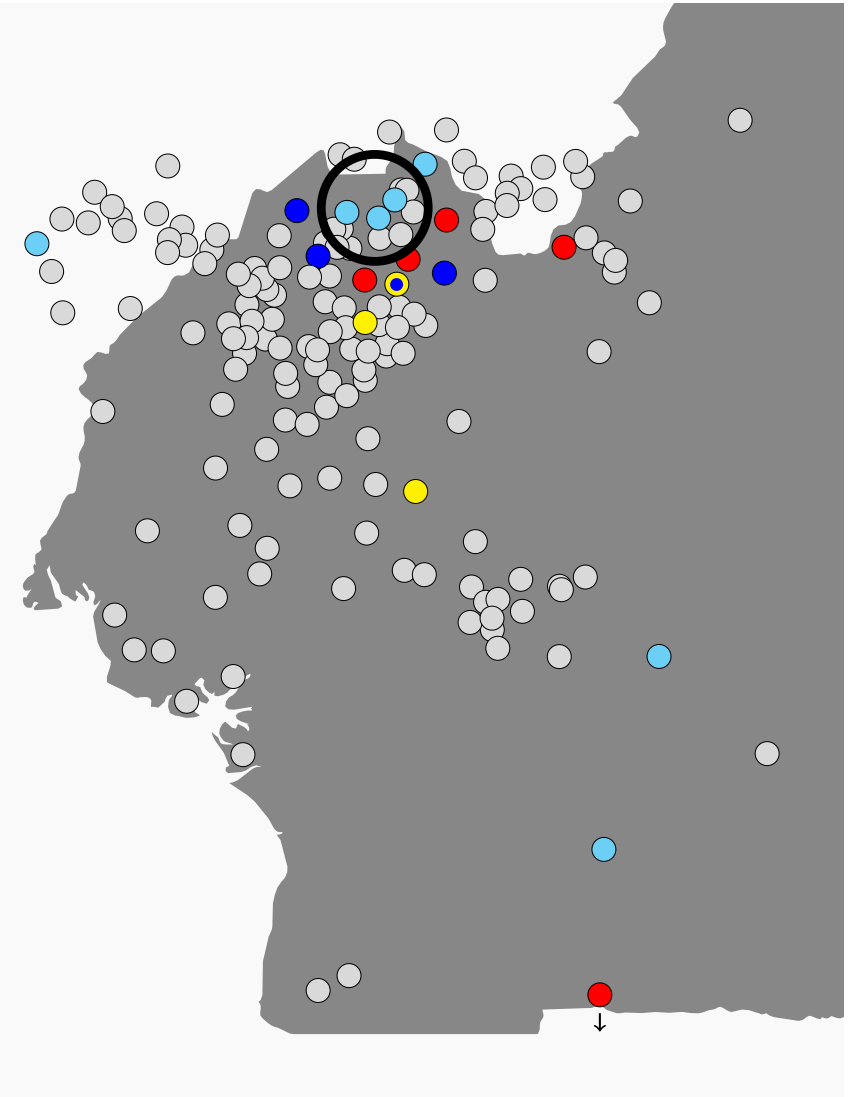

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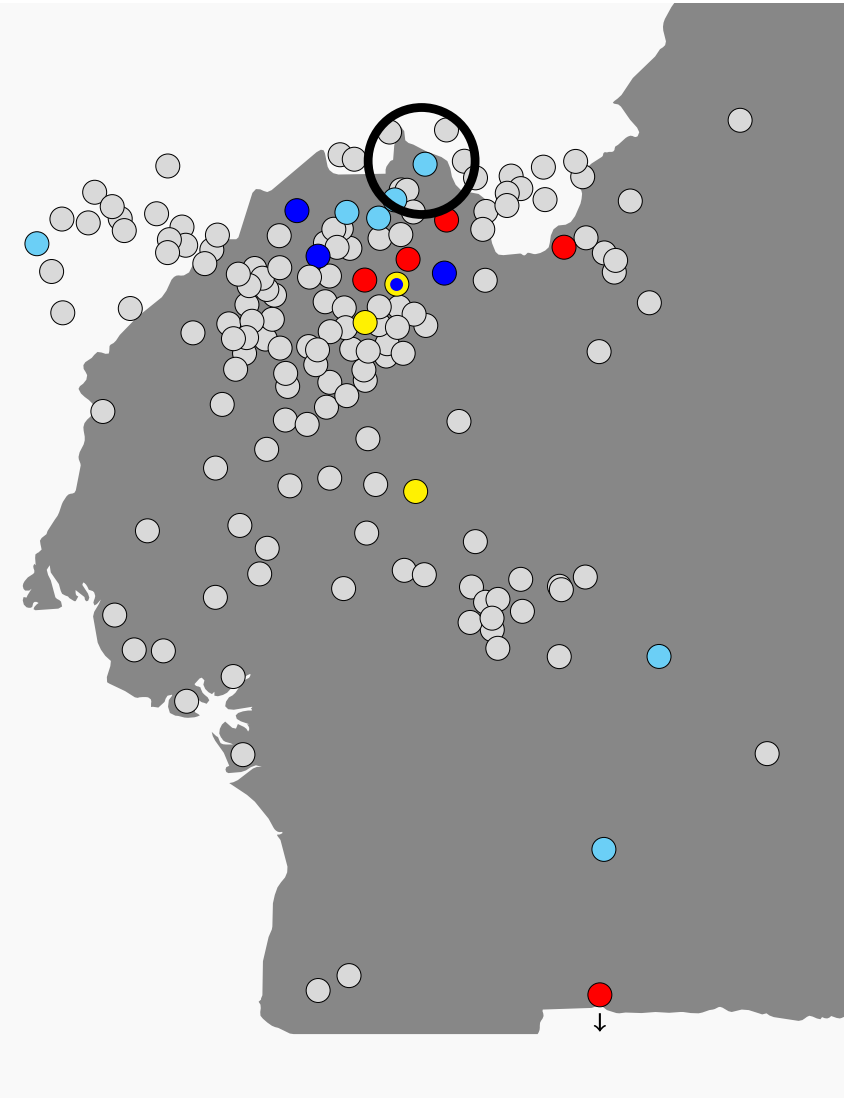

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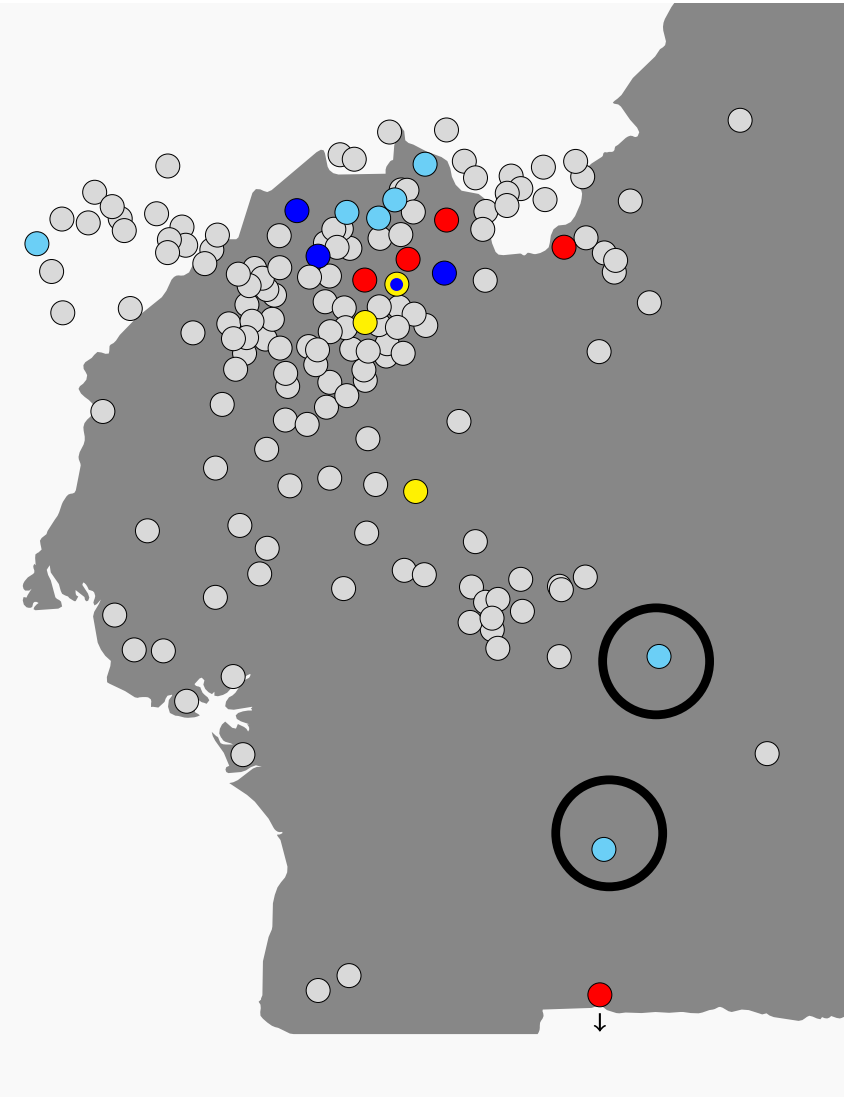

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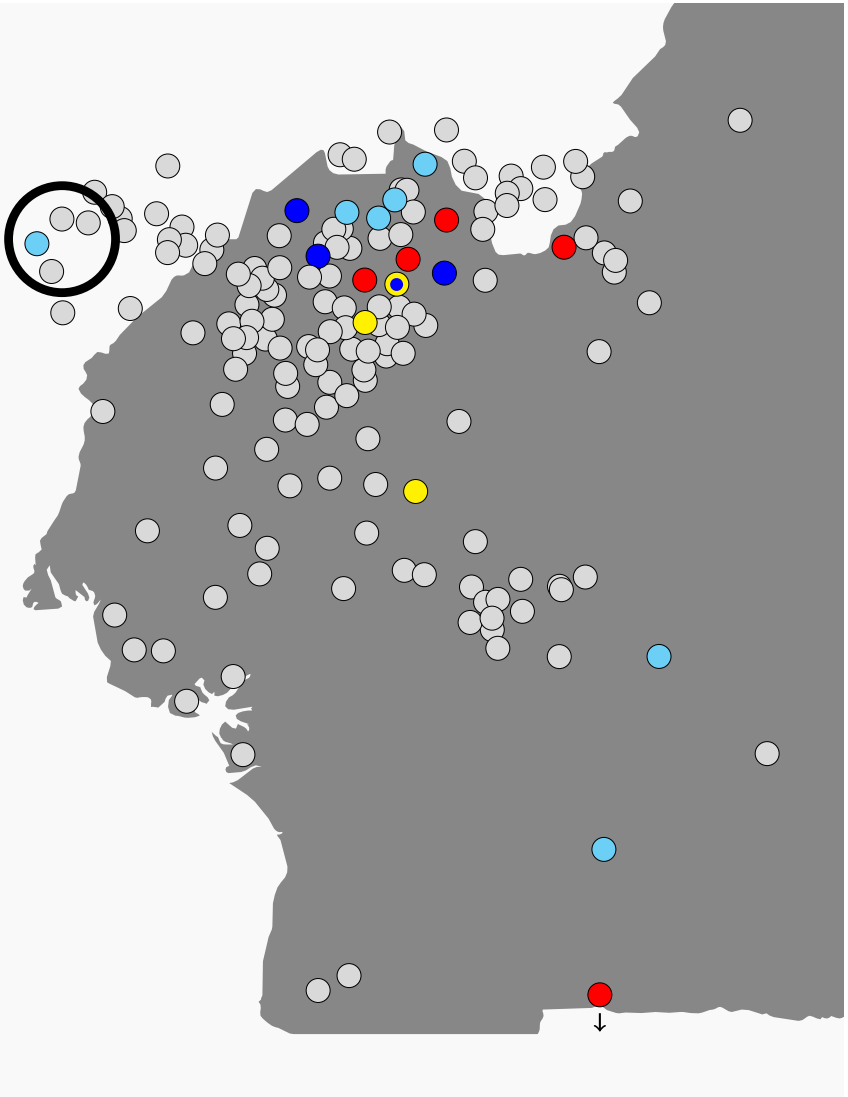

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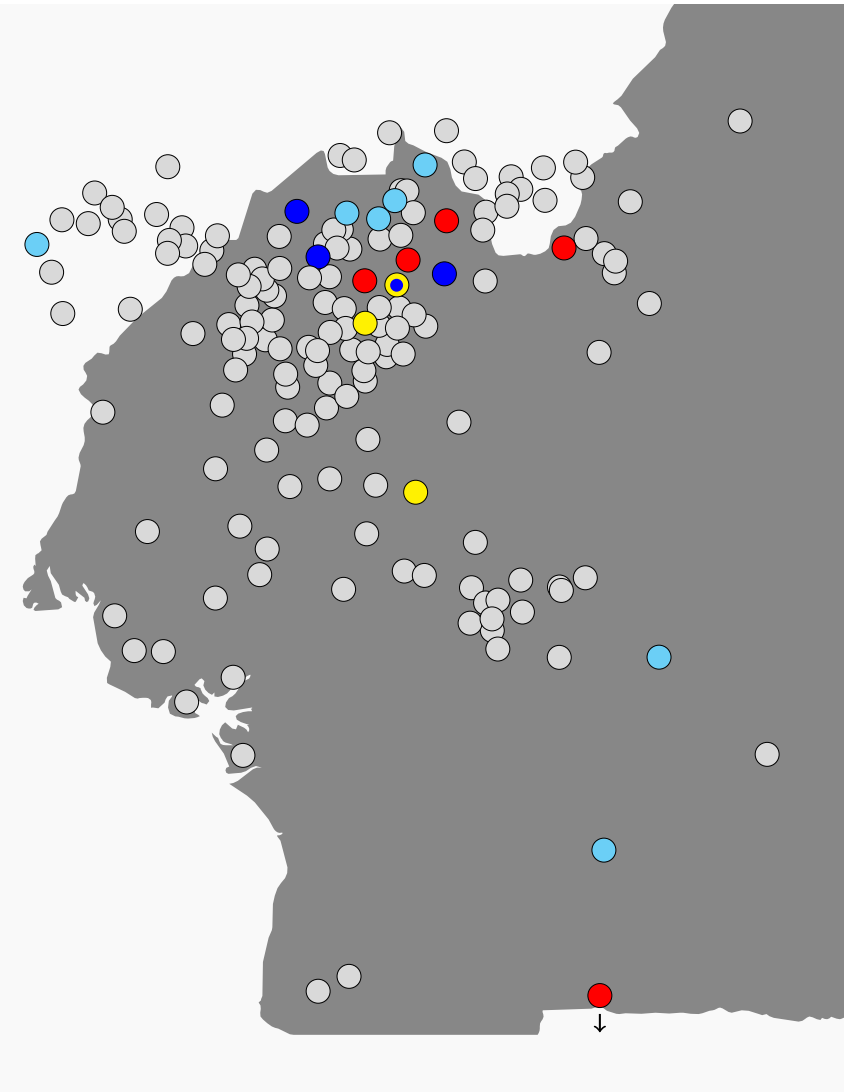
Defining the core area

Centered in northern Grassfields, in Beboid, Lower Fungom, Ring Road area



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- Spatial pattern suggestive of gravity model, change radiating from centers to other centers Trudgill (1974)
- But do we have reason to think this is not genetic?

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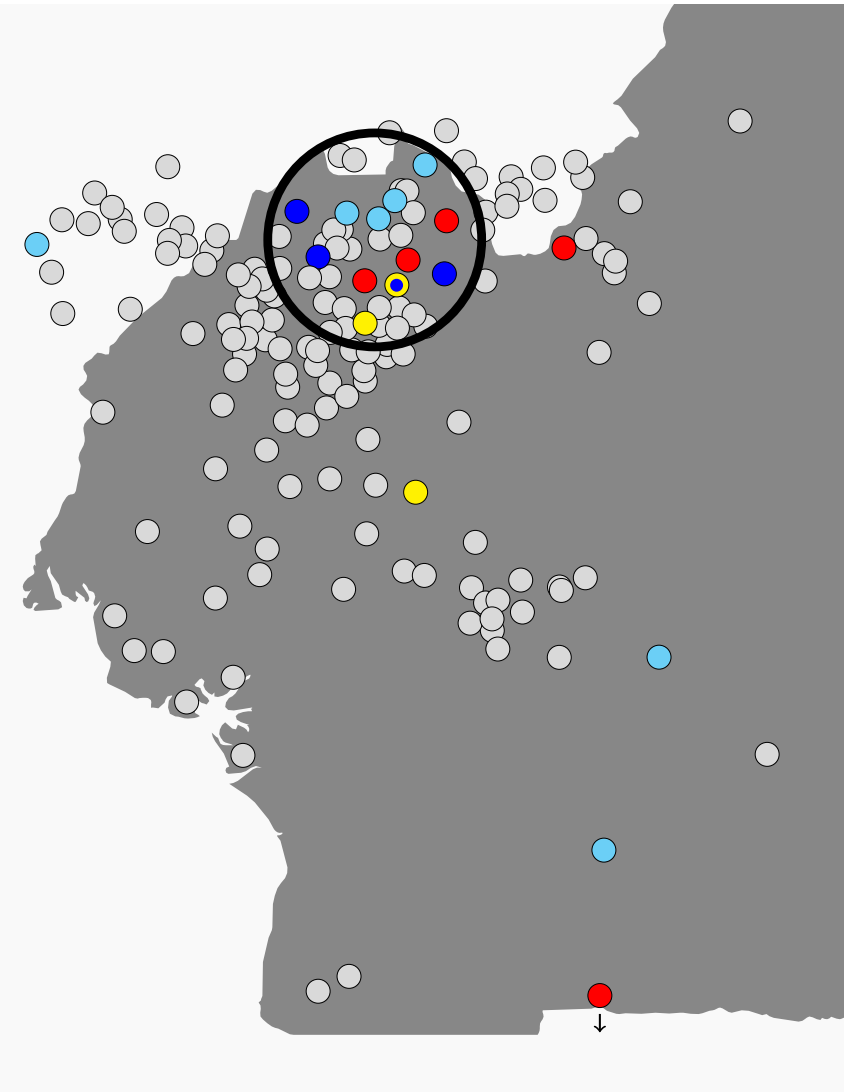

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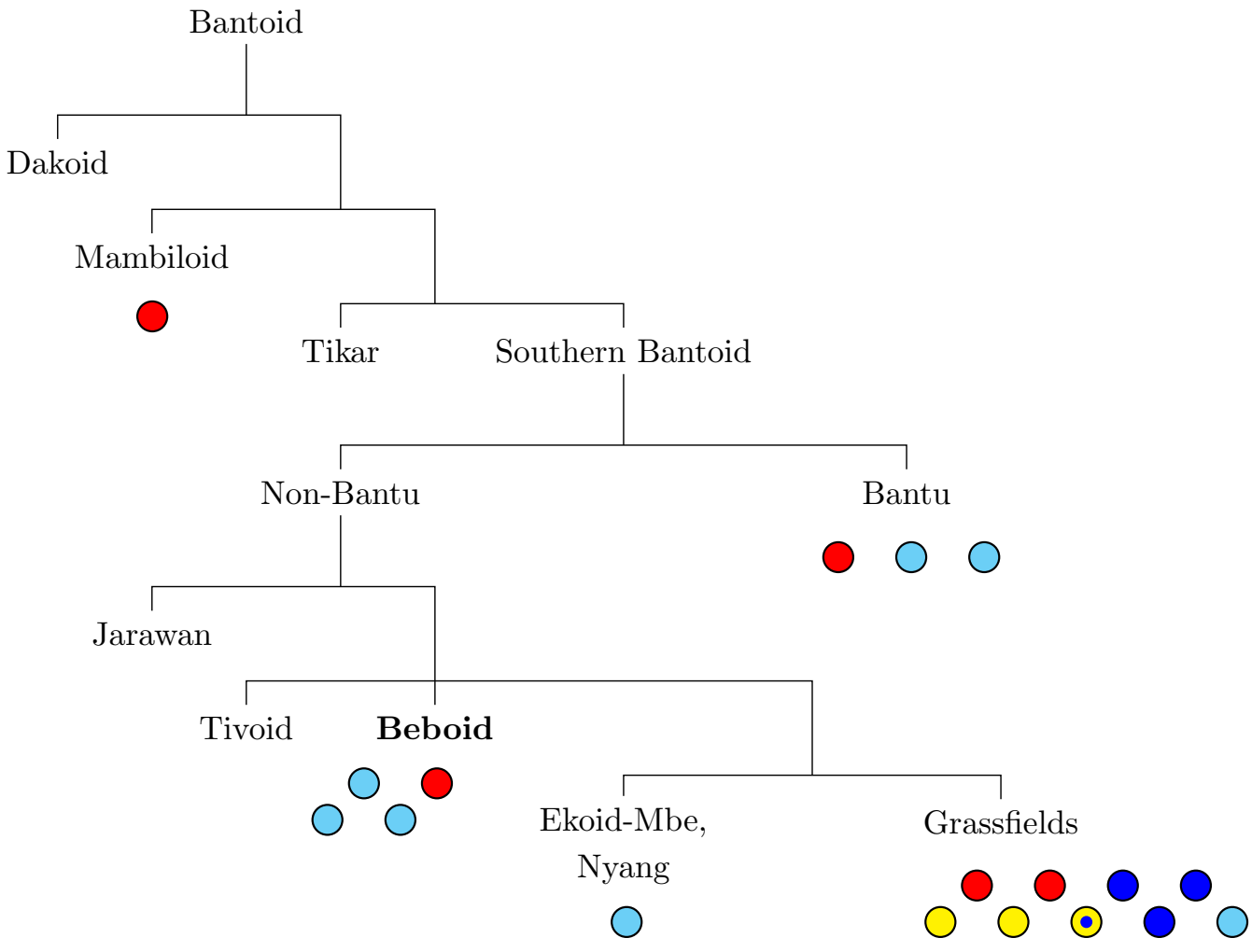
HVF is geographically restricted

Languages of several genetic subgroups, but only in N. Grassfields



Schadeberg (2003)

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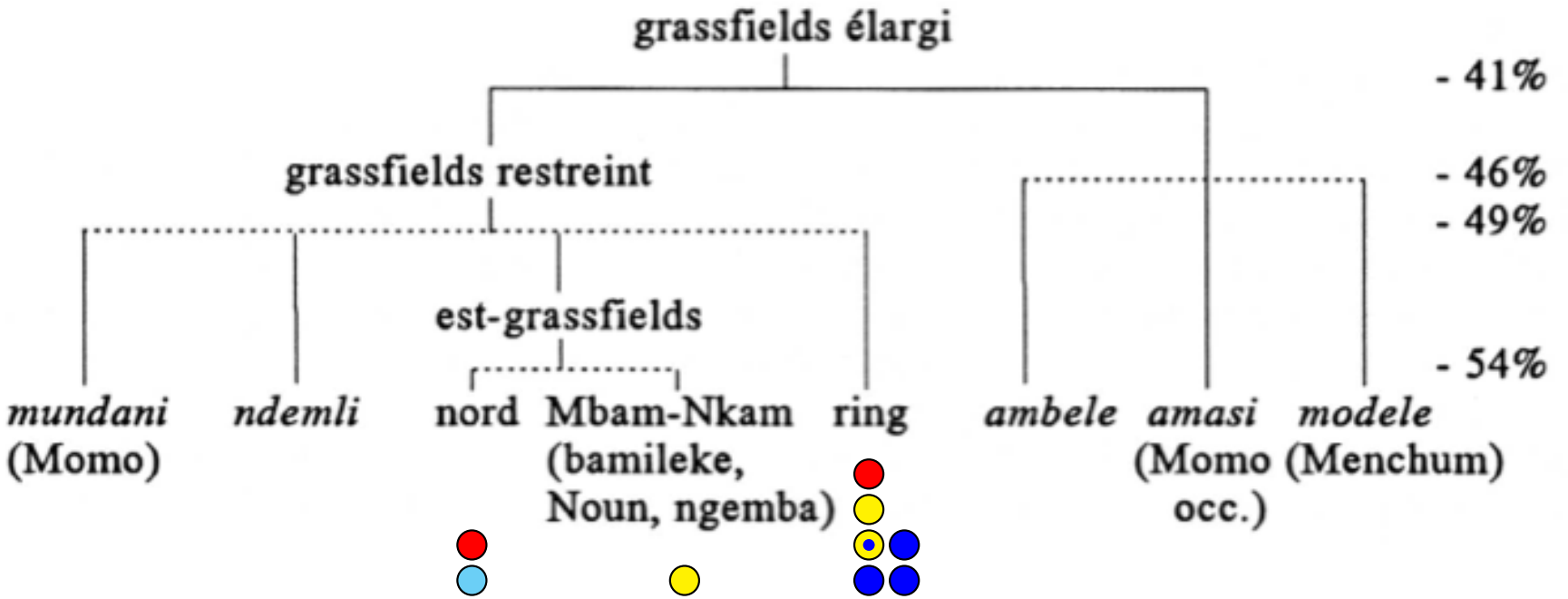


Piron (1995)

HVF is recent

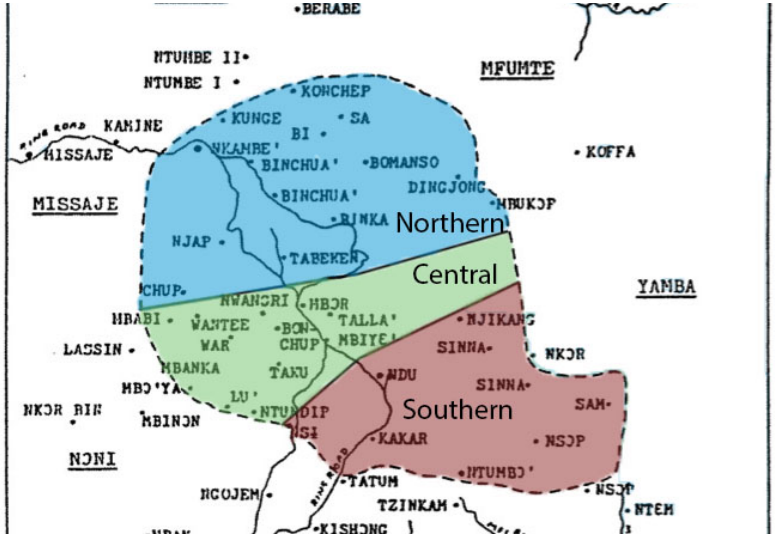
Recency: HVF post-dates several language and subgroup-specific sound changes, e.g. Kom simplification of VV sequences and labial dissimilation

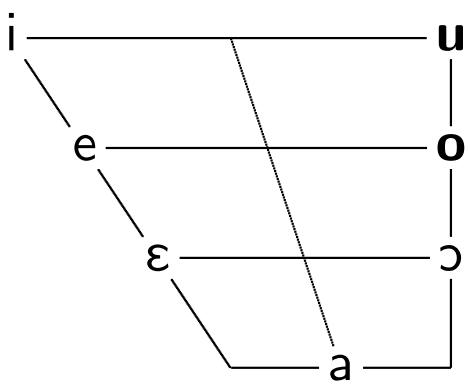
PCR	**Kom**	**PKom**	**Oku**	**Bum**
***-ua**	-v/-ɯ	*-u	-uo	-u
***jua** to hear	ʒv	ʒu	juo	ju
***tua** to spit	tʃv	tʃu	tuo	tʃu
***kua** to die	kv	ku	kuo	k͡pu
***fua** to burn	fɯ	fu	fuo	—
***bua** dog	bɯ	bu	buo	bu

Hyman and Jisa (1978)

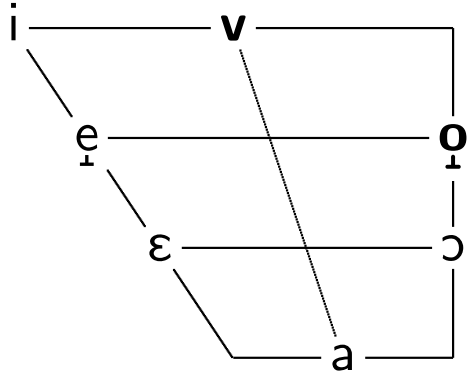
Case: Limbum /u/ ∼ /v/

More fricativization the closer to core area

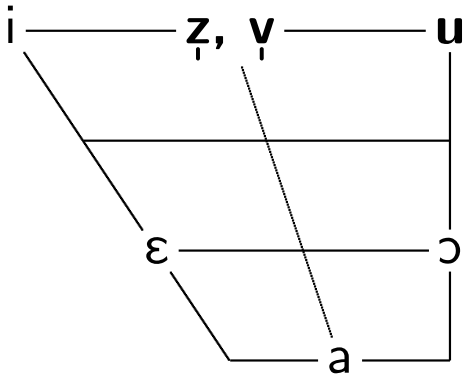




Chup (North)



Wat, Taku (Center)



Ndu (South)

Fiore (1987); Fransen (1995)

Overview 3

High vowel fricativization is an areal or contact feature of the northern Grassfields, which carries implications for Niger-Congo reconstructions

1. What is (not) a fricativized vowel?
2. Where are they (not)?
3. Why is this interesting?

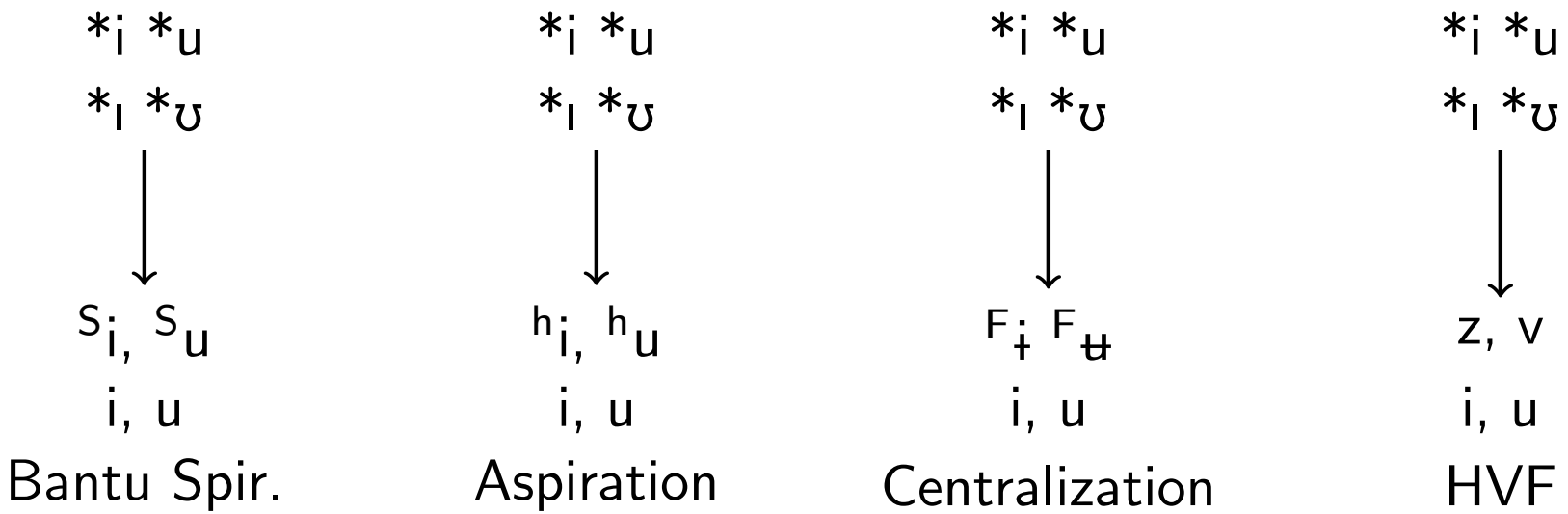
Historical details

I suggest that the original occurrence was a distinct but related reinforcement of old Bantoid category contrasts

- I do not claim HVF is a retention of some reconstructible vowel quality, since it most likely areal and recent
- I do claim: precursor to several well-known sound changes can be pinpointed
  - High vowel "fricativization"
  - Bantu "Spirantization"
  - Bamileke "aspiration"

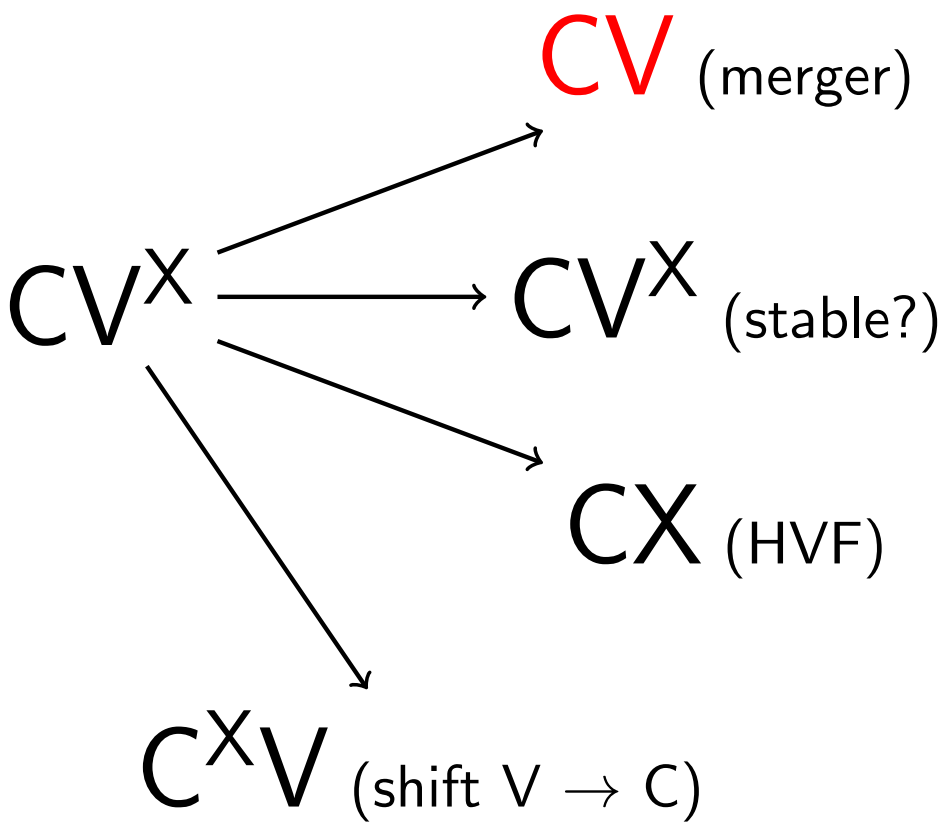
Deg. 1 and deg. 2 vowels

A potentially unstable contrast in ancestor of Bantoid: "degree 1" and "degree 2" high vowels. To avoid merger . . . Schadeberg (1994)



Reflexes of Deg. 1 vowels

The important part: what happens to the highest vowel suggests noise or constriction as a common precursor or intermediary stage



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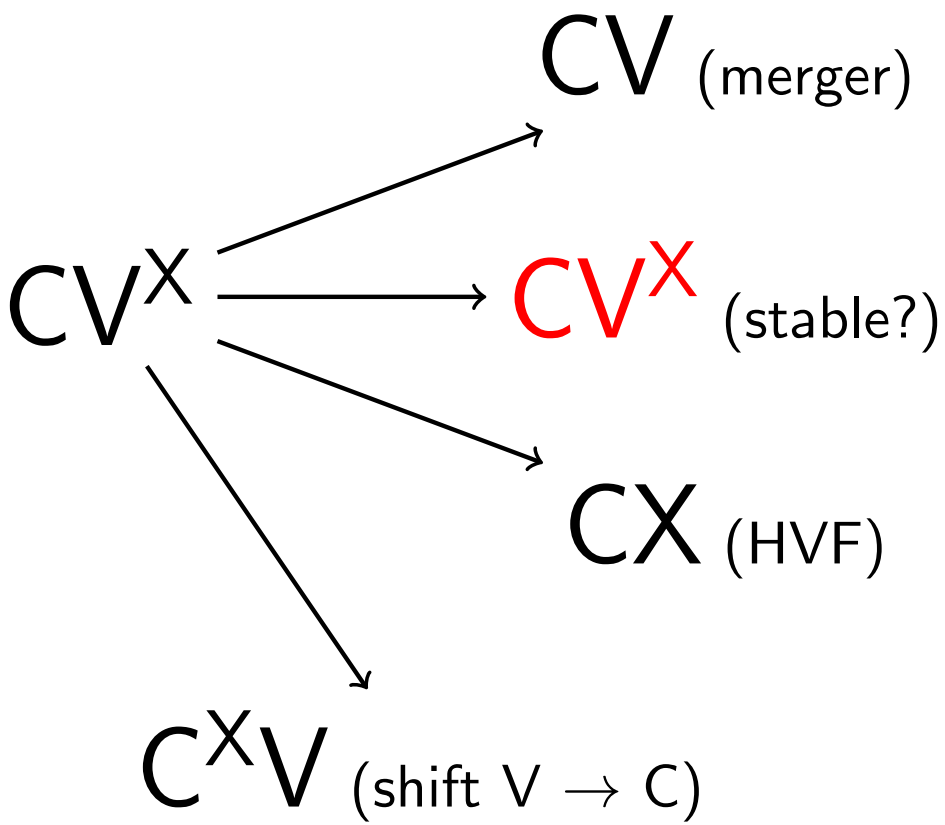

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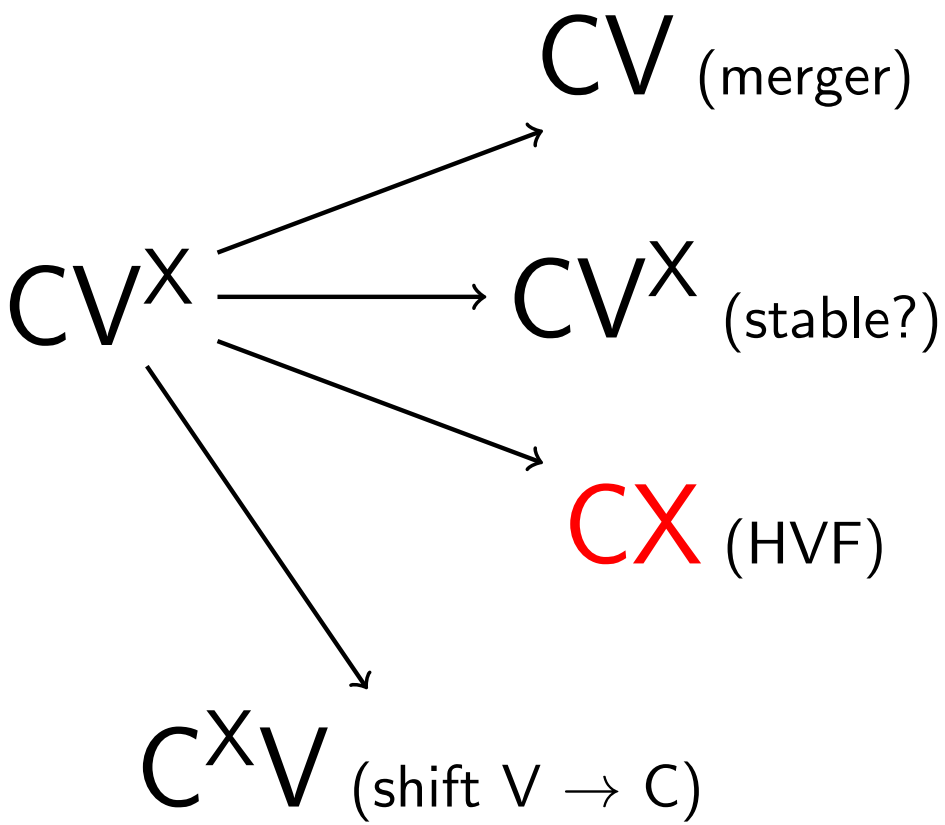
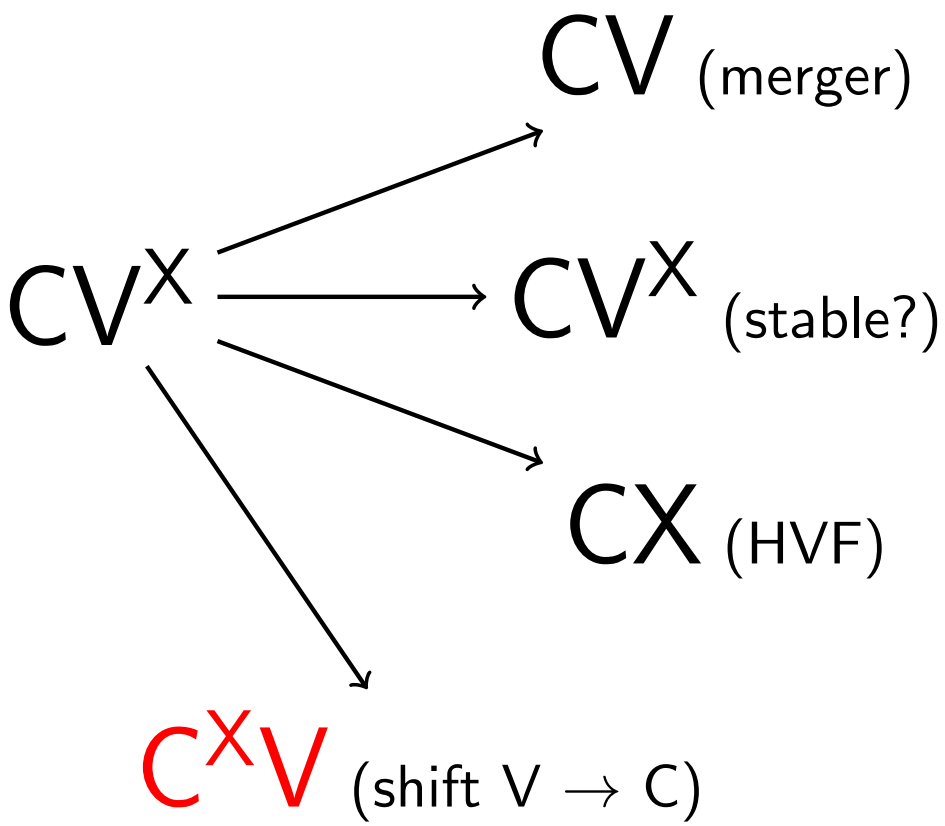


Reflexes of Deg. 1 vowels

The important part: what happens to the highest vowel suggests noise or constriction as a common precursor or intermediary stage



Conclusions

Re fricativized vowels:

- Fricativized vowels are interesting and potentially informative
- Strong presence in N. Grassfields
- There might be more (the /ɨ ʉ/ problem)
- One of several possible reactions to Deg. 1 and Deg. 2 vowels

Re linguistic areas:

- Detailed case study → broader area
- Cameroon "gap"?

These slides can be found at goo.gl/XFDcFP

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どうもありがとうございます

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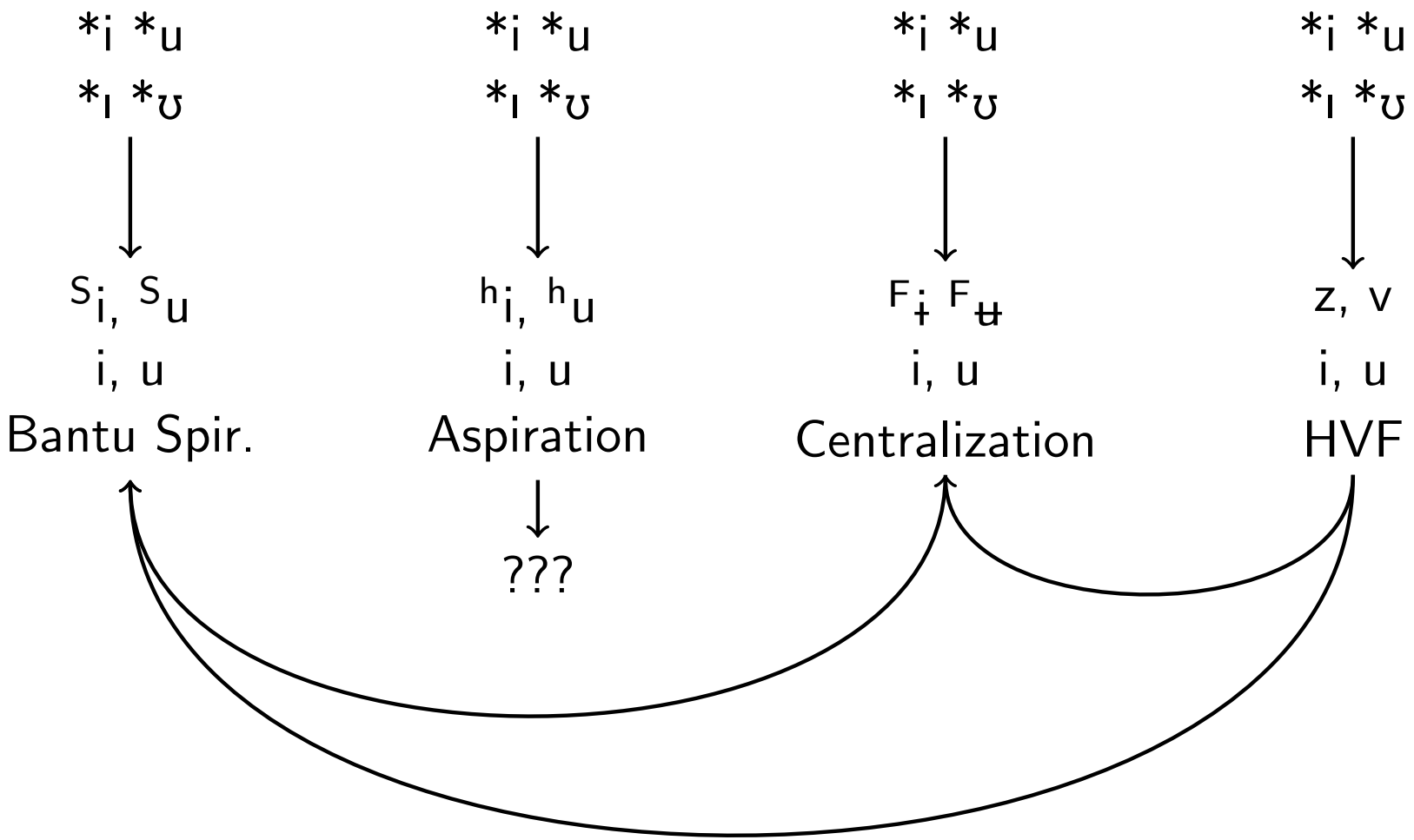
Deg. 1 and deg. 2 vowels: it's complicated

A potentially unstable contrast in ancestor of Bantoid: "degree 1" and "degree 2" high vowels. To avoid merger . . . Schadeberg (1994)



Appendix: language sources

Language	ISO	Source
Len Mambila	[mcu]	Connell (2007)
Ekajuk	[eka]	Crabb (1965)
Dzodinka	[add]	Bruce Wiebe, p.c.
Ewondo	[ewo]	Redden (1979)
Fang (Cam.)	[fak]	Jeff Good, p.c.
Fang (Gabon)	[fan]	Medjo Mvé (1997)
Medumba	[byv]	Olson and Meynadier (2015)
Naki	[mff]	Jeff Good, p.c.
Kemezung	[dmo]	Cox (2005)
Noone / Noni	[nhu]	Hyman (1981)
Mbuk	dial. [cug]	Jeff Good, p.c.
Aghem	[agq]	Hyman (1979)
Isu	[isu]	own notes, Anderson (2014)
Oku	[oku]	own notes
Lamnso'	[lns]	own notes
Kom	[bkm]	own notes
Kijem / Babanki	[bbk]	own notes
Limbum	[lmp]	Fiore (1987); Fransen (1995)