

## Areal diffusion in the Chadic-Kanuri contact zone

(Workshop 3: Areal Phenomena in Northern Sub-Saharan Africa)

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### Abstract

It has been proposed that before its advent in the Lake Chad region Kanuri was part of a linguistic alliance in the East of Africa. Heine's (1976) typology of African languages appears to have been the first work to point out a convergence zone of Nilosaharan and Afroasiatic languages in north-eastern Africa. By the same token Amha & Dimmendaal (2006) discuss typological convergence between Nilosaharan languages (Saharan and Nubian) and Afroasiatic languages of Ethiopia (Omotic, Cushitic and Semitic). As shared typological properties they propose converbs, verb-final syntax, and extensive case marking. These properties are still found in present-day Kanuri.

However, today Kanuri is the westernmost language of the Saharan branch, and it has been in contact with languages of the Lake Chad region for several centuries, especially Hausa and other Chadic languages. Intense multilingualism led to mutual transfer of linguistic features between Kanuri and its neighbouring Chadic languages. The transfer of linguistic features is visible in several domains, e.g. borrowing of content words, borrowing of function words and borrowing of derivational affixes. Furthermore, the linguistic transfer in the wider Lake Chad region is not restricted to form-meaning units, but also concerns replication of structural features, i.e. transfer of mere meanings (including grammatical meanings and functions).

In my contribution I will focus on grammatical replication and discuss typological convergence as an outcome of long-standing multilateral interaction in the Lake Chad region. It has already been recognized that Kanuri had a strong impact on the vocabularies of neighbouring Chadic languages, e.g. content words, function words. However, I will argue against an exclusively unidirectional line of "Kanuricisation" of Chadic languages, and I will show that Kanuri itself owes a fair degree of its typological structures to interference with its neighbouring Chadic languages. Evidence comes from several features common to Kanuri and Chadic languages, but which are absent in the Saharan languages Teda-Daza and Beria.

I will reassess criteria already proposed in literature and propose new typological features which are shared between Chadic languages and Kanuri, e.g. lack of ATR vowel harmony, special negation of non-indicative mood, dichotomy in standard negation, tense/aspect as a means of coding information structure, "exceed comparatives", conjunctive predicative possession, "with" noun phrase conjunction, use of polar question particles.

My presentation aims at expanding our understanding of areal phenomena in the Lake Chad region, and it will address the question how those phenomena can contribute to a better understanding of shared structural similarities and diachronic mechanisms in the macro-zone of the Sudanic belt.

### References:

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