

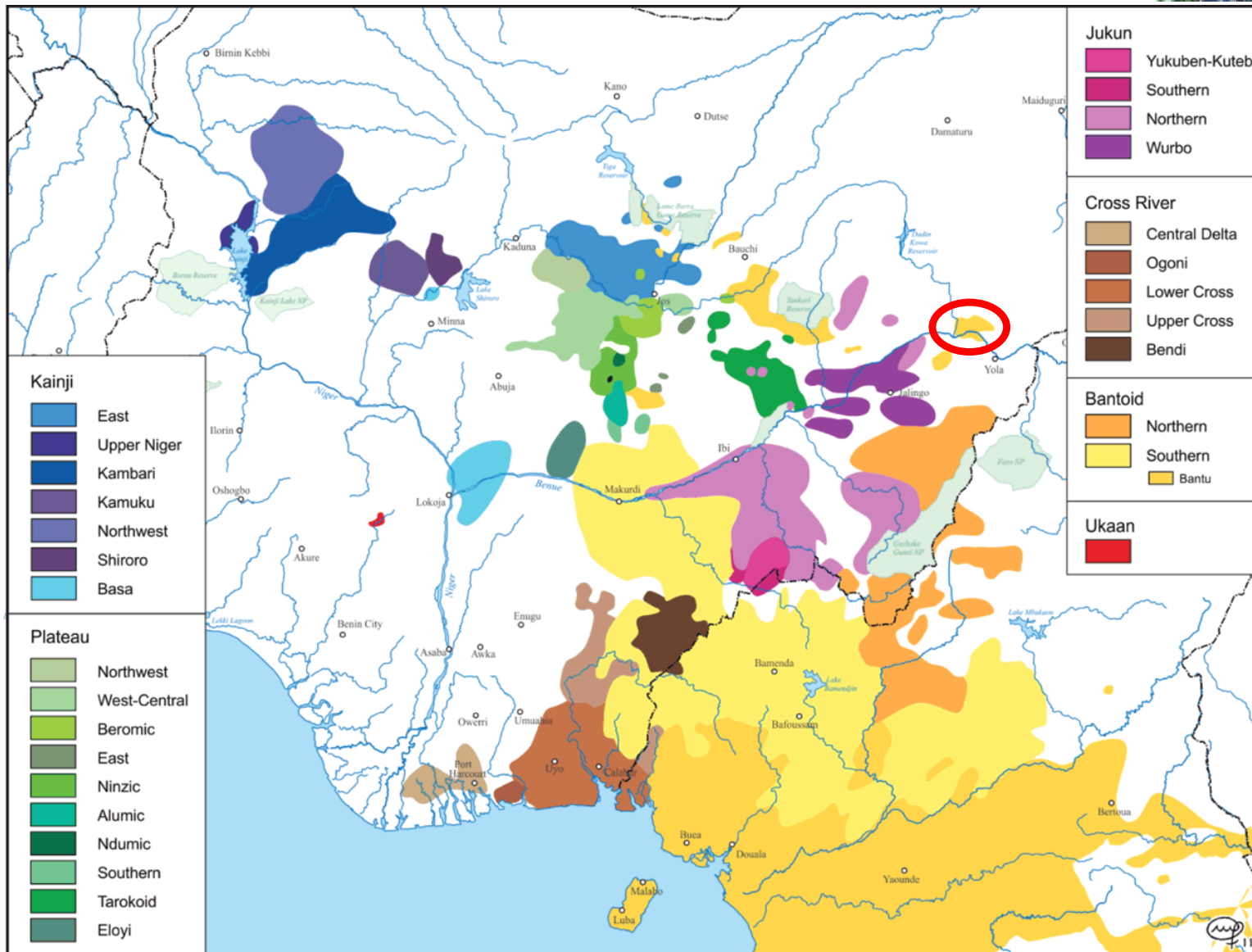


A FIRST ANALYSIS OF MBULA

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LLACAN







- One of the Jarawan Bantu languages
- Numan < Nigerian Jarawan (Maddieson & Williamson 1975)
- Earlier work:
 - Lukas & Gerhardt. (1981). Bemerkungen zur Sprache der Mbula. *Festschrift Vorbichler*. (Henceforth L&G)
 - some word lists
 - Mbula Bible translation and language development project (Borong): WeSay database 10735 entries; New Testament
- Hardly any grammatical work on Jarawan Bantu, but recently Chris Green on Mbat



1. Phonology
2. Tense-Aspect
3. Verbal derivation
4. Numerous cognates shared with other Bantoid languages



front central back

high i u

mid e ə o

low ε a ɔ





- /ɛ/ & /ɔ/ often [ʰa] & [ʷa];
- /i/ and /u/ are centralised in closed syllables;
- Vowel length is distinctive, vowels are lengthened in front of NC clusters;
- L&G: “ɔ, o, ə are never long”, but we have /o:/;
- /ə/ < short, non-final /e/, /o/;
- Vowels are nasalised after a nasal consonant (m < n < ɲ < ŋ);
- Nasal vowels: $\tilde{v} \sim v\eta$



Consonant sounds

	labial	alv.	palat.	velar	lab.-vel.	glottal
plosives	p b	t d ts dz	tʃ ɟʒ	k g	ᵛkp ᵛgb	ʔ
implosives	ɓ	ɗ				
nasals	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	ᵛŋm	
fricatives	f	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
approximant		l	y		w	
rhotic		r				



L&G:

- no: \widehat{gb} , ʔ , tʃ , ɕ , z , mb , nd , mp , $\widehat{\eta m k p}$
- but: k

mbá:lí ‘jealousy’, *mb̀̀rín* ‘wild soursop’, *nd̀̀m̀̀* ‘tuwo’ ...

η̂m̂kp̂al̀̀n ‘hare’, *mp̀̀:* ‘hole, cavity’

n̂z̀̀ ‘fish’ (transcribed as *ǹ̀j̀̀* in L&G)



Frequent lenition or elision of C2 consonants, e.g.

(1) ‘do, make’

a. pàw tùrô

b. pè: ‘Do it!’ |pàw-ì|

c. pàkámì ~ pàámì ‘Do it for me!’





- Two tone system
- Up to three tones on one syllable
- Major tone rules:
 - tone spreading
 - tonal absorption
 - LH rising tones tend to be realised as M



(2) a. rǔ ‘a body’

b. rwĩ ‘the body’

(3) a. gîlâ^m |gîl-^H-âm| ‘Write for me!’ (no t.a.)

b. gápâ^mĩ |gáw-^H-âm-ĩ| ‘Split it for me!’ (HL → L / H_)

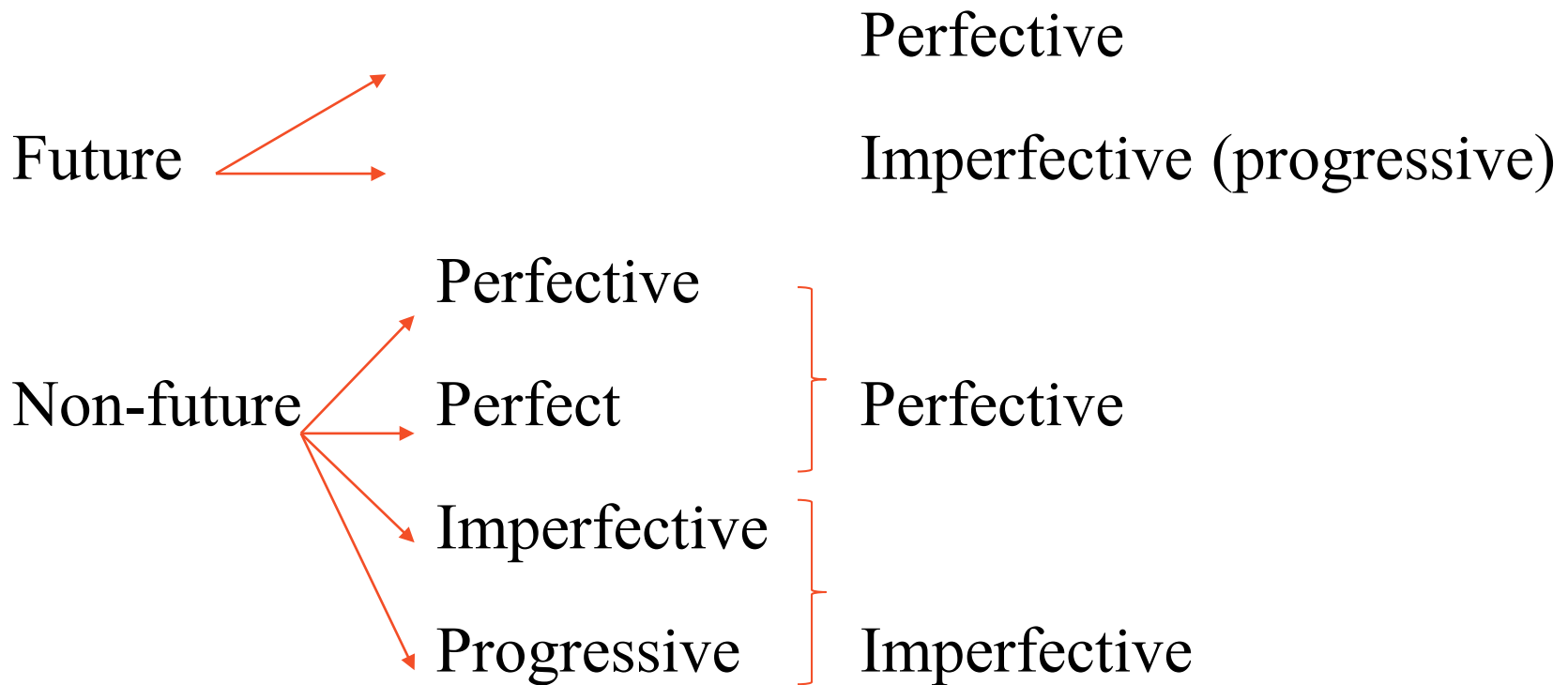
c. kârâ^mĩ |kâr-^H-âm-ĩ| ‘Bend it for me!’ (HL → H / _L)





Mbula	Proto-bantu	gloss
ḡálâ	*bàd	‘count’
ḡá:rì	*bàdí	‘two’
bù	*bókò	‘arm’
mbù	*-bú	‘mosquito’
mbùló	*-búdà	‘rain’
mbùl	*-búđi	‘goat’
ʔim	*cimbá	‘lion’
zòḡò	*-cúngé	‘moon’
làmb	*dám̄b	‘cook, boil’
lì	*dí	‘eat’





NB Verbs have no citation form, so recognising their root is not trivial.



Screeves are marked by

- paradigm of subject markers
- suffixes (Perfect)
- auxiliaries

	SG	PL
1	ñ ^H -	sən-
2	à ^H -	wù-
3	∅-	à-

Perfective

	SG	PL
1	ń-	sən-
2	á-	wù-
3	∅-	à-

Imperfective

	SG	PL
1	mó-	sən-
2	áN-	wù-nè
3	nè-	à-nè-

Future





- (4) a. pà: **mó**kúndé dǎŋ ‘I will not wait.’
b. ápà: **nó** kúndé dǎŋ ‘You (sg) will not wait.’
c. pà: **nè** kúndé dǎŋ ‘He will not wait.’

- (5) a. pà: **sèn** kúndé dǎŋ
b. **sè** pà: **nè** kúndé dǎŋ
‘We will not wait.’

	SG	PL
1	mə-	sèn-
2	áN-	wù-nè
3	nè-	à-nè-





1. Perfective

Least marked form of the indicative: SM-stem (?)

(6) kàr ntà ~ kàrà ntà ‘He made/makes (lit. bent) a bow.’

2. Perfect

SM-stem-*nà*

(7) tú: kùmsènà mùr á: gír ‘Dust has covered everything.’

-nà < copula *n(d)à* ?

(8) bèrì nâ ‘He is a stranger.’



3. Imperfective

SM-*kə^H* stem (?)

(9) *ńgè páw tùró à b̀à:b̀ân*

‘I used to work at the farm.’ / ‘I work at the farm.’

(10) a. *ʔèrtfê nàm ndá* ‘He likes beef.’

b. *ńgè ʔértfê byâw* ‘I need a knife.’

< PB **gì* ‘go’



4. Progressive

Different forms in main and subordinate clauses

(11) mǎ-ndá: bán súsô
1SG.FUT-COP place bathe
'I am bathing.'

(12) a. mánā kàn **gíyâ**? 'What is he frying ?'
b. ndà: bán kán nǒzì 'He is frying fish.'



Gerhardt, Ludwig (1988). A note on verbal extensions in Jarawan Bantu. *JWALL* 18:2, 3-8.

- “no valency changing verbal extensions, only aspectual suffixes”
- “only nasal consonants in verbal extensions”

However, so far we have found:

- causative *-sə*
- applicative *-k^H*
- pluractional *-ki*
- petrified: reflexive **jĩ-*, applicative **-ɪd...*



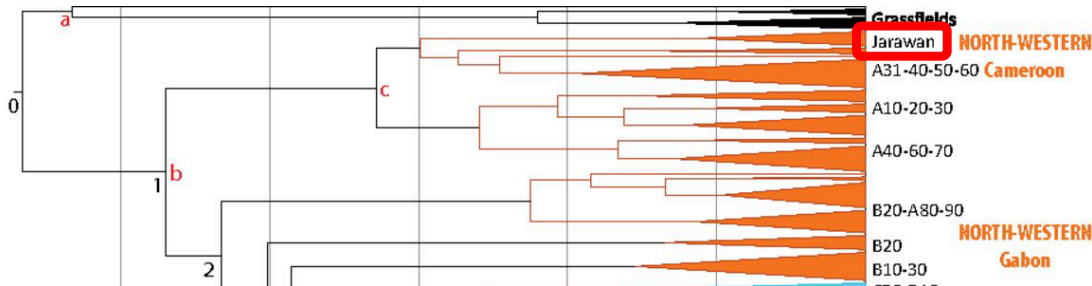


- Clearly Bantoid and very close to Narrow Bantu
- How close?
- If they are Narrow Bantu, do they form a clade with any particular group of languages in zone A? (or other zones...)





- Blench (2006): “A member of the A group of Bantu languages, probably A42 [Bankon > A24 Duala?] and related”
 - Similarity with zone A languages in reflexes of C1 of PB *dóm ‘bite’, *jìj ‘come’, *gí ‘egg’, *tíkù ‘night’, *gùbò ‘skin’
 - PB3 *kómǐ ‘10’: Mbula *lǔm* || Duala A24 *dóm*, Mokpe A22 *li-ome*
 - ...But a lenis C1 (g, ɣ, Ø) in ‘10’ can be found in A70, B20, B30, B40, C40...
- Grollemund et al. (2015): [[Jarawan][A50[A31[A44-46;A60]]]]





- Many similarities with zone A languages, also including A41-43, A60, A70, A80, A90
- But no smoking gun so far...





- Frozen REFL prefix PB **(j)í-* (Meeussen 1967)
 - Mbula *tfàmé* ‘stop (vi); stand’ vs. *tàmsè* ‘stop (vt)’
 - Ngwo (Momo Grassfields) *tām* ‘rise up, wake up, stand’
 - PB3 **tém* ‘stand’ BLR 7475 (zones: A B C), but Akoose A10 *tyèèm* ‘stand’ → PB **í-tám*





- Mbula *ɲkàlɔ̀n* ‘coal’, *káɲ* ‘fry’
 - Jarawan ‘coal’: Kulung (*ɲ*)*kala*; Mama *kala*, Jarawa *kal*, Jaku & Bankala *kól*.
 - PB3 **kádà* (N 5/6) ‘ember(s) ; charcoal’, VAR in zone A: **kádàgà* (N 5); PB3 °*kád* ‘carbonize, smoke’ (zones: C, D)
 - PB3 **kádáŋ* ‘fry, roast’ (zones: C D E F G K J L M P)
 - PB3 **káŋ* ‘fry, roast’ (zones: A B C E G H K L M R S)
 - Velar C3:
 - A43: Basaa *lì-kálâk* ‘braise f; charbon m ardent ou charbon éteint’ (5/6)
 - A44: Tunen *y-ǎ:nàkà* ‘embers’
 - C3 = ng ~ nk: A60: Elip *gì-kánà* ‘charcoal’, Tuki *ì-yáná* ‘charcoal’
 - Benue-Congo: Birom *hālɔ̀n* ‘roast on coals’ > *hwalɔ̀n* ‘coal’; Rukuba *an-kala*, Mada *n-klambri* ‘coal’ ; Proto Lower Cross **ɲ-káɲ* ‘charcoal’





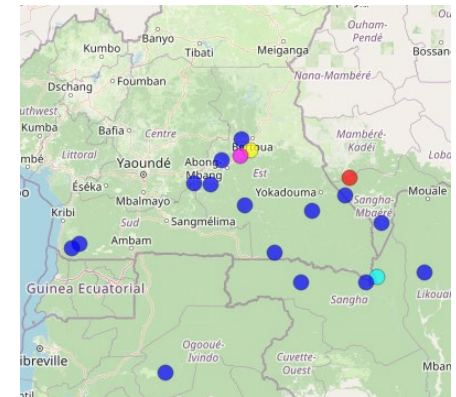
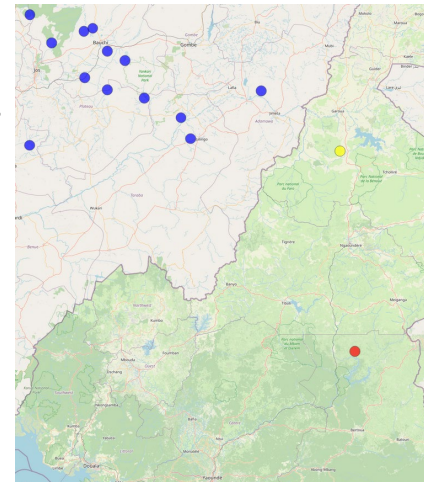
- Mbula (R1) *só:* ‘pour’, < sokki > ‘pour on’, < sukki > ‘pour out, away, forth’; *só:lǎ* ‘pour’; (R2) *swáp(ə)* ‘pour’
 - **R2**: no comparable PB3 form, but cognates are found in **A15** Mkaa *sòb* ‘pour’, **A43** Basaa *səp* ‘pour out, spill’, **A70**, **A80**, **B30** and **B70**
 - **R1**: PB3 **cùk* ‘wash, cleanse’ also ‘rinse’ with regional APPL **cùkid* ‘pour’ (zones: D L)
 - APPL **cùkid* of PB3 **cùk* ‘rinse’ > ‘pour (out)’ is also attested in zone A (Mmala A62, Basaa A43) and B (B22a Kele)
 - Mbula *só:lǎ* ‘pour’ is **frozen APPL **cùkid***
- Mbula *só:* ‘pour’: PB3 **cùk* ‘rinse’ > ‘pour (out)’ **without APPL**
 - PB3 **cùk* ‘rinse’ > ‘pour (out)’ **without APPL** found so far only in **A80-90**, **B20** and **B70**.
 - **Shared innovation?**
 - Outside of Narrow Bantu no shift ‘rinse’ > ‘pour (out)’ has been found so far.





- Closer affinity with A80-A90?
- Plausible in terms of possible migration routes:

- The location of the extinct
 Cameroonian Jarawan languages
 Mbonga and Nagumi.

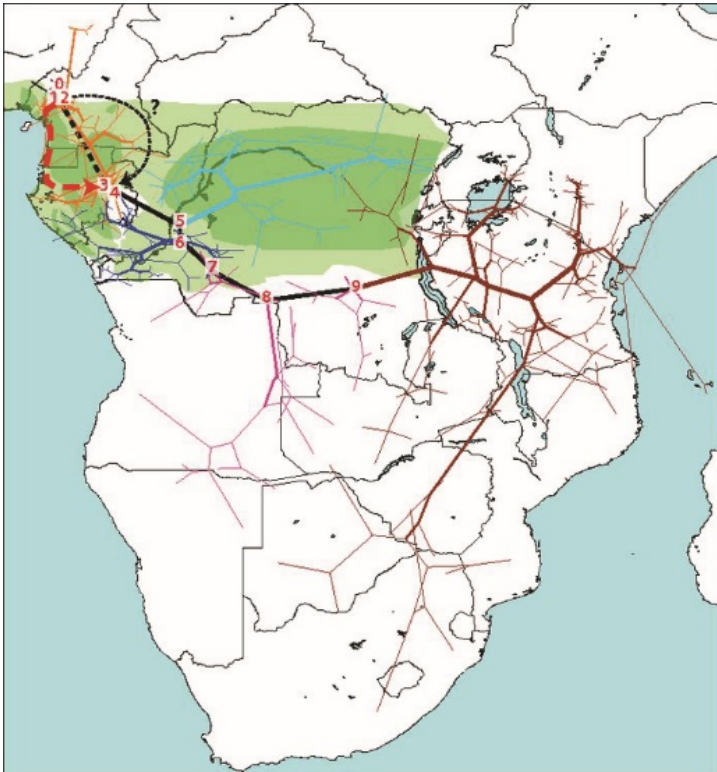


- Oral traditions of Mbula (cf. Meek 1931) reporting a downstream migration along the Benue to the current location





- Intriguing link to zone B, viz. B70
- Closer affinity with A80-A90?



- Idiatov & Van de Velde (2021:100-101) on what lexical frequency of LV stops can tell us about Bantu expansion routes.
- The ancestral populations of A80-A90 took the Sangha River Interval route and some of these populations later shifted to the West-Coastal Bantu languages of B50-80.

