

THE LANGUAGES OF WEST AFRICA

Handbook of African Languages Part 2

Diedrich Westermann and M. A. Bryan

LINGUISTIC SURVEYS OF
AFRICA



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Volume 14

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DIEDRICH WESTERMANN AND M. A. BRYAN

First published in 1970 by Dawsons of Pall Mall

This edition first published in 2018

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-138-08975-4 (Set)

ISBN: 978-1-315-10381-5 (Set) (ebk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-09658-5 (Volume 14) (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-10523-9 (Volume 14) (ebk)

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THE LANGUAGES OF WEST AFRICA

BY
DIEDRICH WESTERMANN
AND
M. A. BRYAN

With a supplementary bibliography
compiled by
Professor D. W. Arnott

Published for the
INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN INSTITUTE
by
Dawsons of Pall Mall
Folkestone & London
1970

First published for the
International African Institute
by the Oxford University Press in 1952
New edition 1970

Dawsons of Pall Mall
Cannon House
Folkestone, Kent, England

ISBN: 0 7129 0462 X

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Unwin Brothers Limited
The Gresham Press, Old Woking Surrey England
A member of the Staples Printing Group

FOREWORD

THIS volume presents a survey of the languages of West Africa, that is to say, the languages spoken in an area extending from the Atlantic coast at the Senegal River eastward to the Lake Chad region. The eastern limit of the area has been more or less arbitrarily determined,¹ since available information is not adequate for a strictly linguistic boundary to be drawn. The area covered by this volume being thus a geographical one, it follows that not all the languages included are related to one another, though a certain degree of homogeneity appears.

The languages of West Africa have been the subject of much study and research, and numerous classifications have been made by, e.g. Delafosse, Drexel, Cust, and Greenberg; the basis of classification adopted in this volume is in the main that of my *Westliche Sudansprachen*. Nevertheless there are areas where, on the basis of existing information, classification is far from easy, and there are languages whose place within the system here set forth may be disputed (see p. 95). Moreover, although the importance of tone in certain West African languages has long been recognized, tonality has not hitherto been used as a basis of classification; the possibility of its use is being explored (see *Africa*, 19, 3, pp. 213-19).

Every effort has been made to take account of all available information, both published and unpublished, but it is highly probable that much more material exists, or may become available as a result of current researches. The International African Institute, therefore, will welcome any comments, criticisms, or additional data which readers of this volume are able to furnish. This is the more to be desired since the preparation of this volume has revealed many lacunae in the existing material, and many cases where information is clearly unreliable, and should be checked and supplemented.

I wish in the first place to express my debt to the late Professor Ida Ward, who revised the first draft, though her death most tragically prevented her from seeing the completion of the work. Thanks are specially due to my collaborator Miss M. A. Bryan, who analysed, classified, and arranged the greater part of the material; to Professor Lukas, for most generous assistance, not only in supplying material and advising on arrangement, but also in drafting several sections of the present text; to Mr. I. Richardson and Dr. Emmi Meyer, who supplied material for the Cameroons area; to the Director of IFAN, who provided data for French West Africa; to the Rev. Professor G. van Bulck, S.J., for much valuable information, especially on the Chad area; and to numerous others who generously and patiently answered inquiries and otherwise placed their knowledge and experience at our disposal.

D. WESTERMANN

March 1952

¹ e.g. KANURI and some languages in the Chad area are dealt with in another volume of the Handbook.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
INTRODUCTORY NOTES	7
I. WEST ATLANTIC LANGUAGES	11
II. MANDE LANGUAGES	31
III. SONGHAI	46
IV. KRU LANGUAGE GROUP	48
V. GUR LANGUAGES	55
VI. KWA LANGUAGES	76
VII. ISOLATED GROUPS OR UNITS (Class Languages)	95
VIII. ISOLATED GROUPS OR UNITS (non-Class Languages)	133
IX. CHADIC LANGUAGES	153
X. CHADO-HAMITIC LANGUAGES	162
BIBLIOGRAPHY	178
SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY	203
INDEX	265

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

THE method of classification used in the Handbook of African languages is based on a technique devised for the purpose by the Linguistic Advisory Committee of the International African Institute.¹

1. *The BASIC UNIT of classification*

The starting-point for the classification is not the large area but the individual language. Since the individual language is the basic unit of classification, it is necessary to determine exactly what this unit is. In some cases this proves difficult, particularly where several dialects have been recognized of one 'language'. Thus it is necessary to distinguish different types of basic unit:

- (a) a language, without recognized dialectal variations;
- (b) a language, with which are associated dialects of lesser importance.
Both these types of unit are termed LANGUAGE.
- (c) a number of dialects, no one of which appears to dominate.
This type of unit is termed DIALECT CLUSTER.

For purposes of classification, however, they are all regarded as basic units at the same level of classification.

In the case of the simple LANGUAGE, i.e. type (a), no subdivision is necessary; the other units, however, may be subdivided into dialects, that is, into something smaller than a unit. Useful or even necessary though this subdivision may be for purposes of reference, it must be emphasized that this is a kind of fragmentation, since the dialect is smaller than the basic unit.

2. *The LANGUAGE GROUP*

Basic units known to be related are grouped together into larger sections which have a linguistic significance, since the principal criteria of grouping are linguistic. These are termed LANGUAGE GROUPS; the term 'Group' being used exclusively to denote a number of related languages or dialect clusters, any loose use of the word becomes undesirable, in view of the precise linguistic significance given to it. The criteria governing the establishment of Groups are linguistic; in certain cases, where these criteria are indecisive, it may become necessary to take other factors into consideration.

3. *The LARGER UNIT*

In some cases, however, it can be seen that several Language Groups and/or Single Units (see par. 4 below) show an over-all relationship. Thus the classification of Language Groups into some larger unit may be necessary. This is shown in the linguistic notes, where the characteristics of a larger unit consisting of several language groups can be comprehensively described. No attempt is, however, made to attach any label (such as 'family') to these larger units, which are limited in number. Thus, in the West African geographical area, the Larger Units are: the KWA languages, the GUR languages, the West Atlantic languages, the MANDE languages, the Chado-Hamitic languages, and the Chadic languages (?).

4. *The SINGLE UNIT*

In some cases a Language or Dialect Cluster can be seen to belong to one of the Larger

¹ *Africa*, 16, 3, 1946.

Units, while yet not sufficiently closely related to any other to form part of a Language Group. This is termed a SINGLE UNIT, e.g. WOLOF.

5. *The ISOLATED GROUP*

On the other hand, a Language Group may be found to display inter-relationship between its constituent basic units without forming part of any Larger Unit. This is termed an ISOLATED GROUP, e.g. the 'Togo Remnant' Languages.

6. *The ISOLATED UNIT*

Finally, there are many basic units which cannot be considered to have any relationship with any other. These are termed ISOLATED UNITS.

Isolated units may be of two kinds:

- (a) those of which enough is known for it to be reasonably certain that they are unrelated to any other unit, e.g. SONGHAI Dialect Cluster;
- (b) those which cannot be classified owing to lack of linguistic evidence, e.g. many of the 'Class Languages' of Nigeria.

Although the same term is used to designate both kinds, the latter is indicated by the use of a question mark.

The use of question marks is, in fact, fundamental to the scope of the Handbook at its present stage, and the presence or absence of a query should be taken throughout as an indication of the reliability of the information available.

Note on typography

NAMES of languages and tribes are given as follows:

1. Roman Capitals: (a) name of language or dialect by which it is known to Europeans—alternative spellings in brackets, including French (Fr.) and Portuguese (Port.); (b) names by which known to other tribes.
2. Italic Capitals: (a) name of tribe or section by which known to Europeans (variants as above under (1)); (b) names by which known to other tribes.
3. Heavy type lower case: name of language or tribe in the 'Africa' orthography, with tone marks where known.
4. Ordinary type in inverted commas: name of locality when used as the name of language or tribe.

Abbreviations used

TP = Tax-payers. C = Consonant. V = Vowel

Notes on phonetic symbols used

For the spelling of vernacular names, and in the linguistic notes, the 'Africa' alphabet is used, with the following additional symbols:

i, u	open i and u;
j, ɥ	(p. 128) used by Prof. Guthrie for close i and u;
æ	(p. 142) as in English 'hat';
ɑ	(p. 130) back a;
u	unrounded u;
ʌ	central vowel as in English 'but';
ö, ä, ü	central vowels;
'y	(p. 170) implosive y;
ɥ	semi-vowel as in French 'huit';
p', t', k'	unexploded plosives;
ɠ	uvular voiced plosive;
ħ	(p. 130) pharyngeal fricative;
kp, gb	labio-velar plosives;
kβ, gβ	labio-velar implosives;
ɽ, ɾ, ʒ	retroflex t, r, z;
ɱ	(p. 129) unvoiced m;
ɬ, ɮ	(pp. 108, 159) lateral fricatives.

SECTION I
THE WEST ATLANTIC LANGUAGES
(LARGER UNIT)

THE West Atlantic languages are spoken in the coastal area of West Africa from Senegal to River Loffa (Liberia), with *ADYUKRU* far to the south-east on the Ivory Coast.

SINGLE UNIT: ADYUKRU

ADYUKRU. LANGUAGE.

Spoken by: ADYUKRU (*AʃUKRU*, *ADʃUKRU*, Fr. *ADYOUKROU*, *A-DʃOUKROU*), call themselves **adyukru** or **adiukru** (Sing. **odiukru**),¹ called 'Dabu' by the *ANYI*, also known as *BUBURI*.

Where spoken: In the southern Ivory Coast, Cercle Lagunes, north of Ebrié lagoon around Dabou (Dabu) and Toupa.

Number of speakers: 30,000 (Labouret);² 21,000.¹

Parts of the New Testament have been translated.

SINGLE UNIT: GOLA

GOLA, own name **egola mie**. LANGUAGE (or DIALECT CLUSTER?).

Spoken by: GOLA, call themselves **gola**, called *GULA* by the *MENDE*.

Where spoken: Western Liberia, between Rivers Moa and St. Paul; also on the left bank of the St. Paul.

Number of speakers: 150,000 (about 8,500 in Sierra Leone³).

The *GOLA* consist of several sections, calling themselves:

deŋ gola (from the *GOLA* name for the St. Paul river);

toldil (toodii), south of the **deŋ gola** on the left bank of the river;

téŋe gola, on the right bank of the river, adjoining the **deŋ gola** on the west, the *KPELLE* on the east;

sənye gola, north of the **téŋe**;

mána gòbla (gòbla gola), on the right bank of the St. Paul as far as River Loffa;

kɔŋbaa gola, on the right bank of the St. Paul;

pio gola, also on the right bank.

Nothing is known of dialectal differences within *GOLA*.

¹ Bertho, 'La place du dialecte adiukru par rapport aux autres dialectes de la Côte d'Ivoire' (*Bull. IFAN*, 1950). Note that he considers *ADYUKRU* to have vocabulary affinities with the *KWA* languages, but this is due to recent borrowing.

² Figures cited 'Labouret' are taken from his contributions to *Afrika: Handbuch der angewandten Völkerkunde* (ed. H. A. Bernatzik), Innsbruck, 1947.

³ 1931 Census.

THE WEST ATLANTIC LANGUAGES

LANGUAGE GROUP? KISSI-LANDOMA

Consists of: KISSI	Language.
BULOM	Dialect Cluster?
MMANI	Language?
LIMBA	Language.
TEMNE	Language.
BAGA	Dialect Cluster?
LANDOMA	Language?

Where spoken: French Guinea and Sierra Leone.

KISSI, BULOM, and perhaps MMANI are closely interrelated, as are TEMNE, BAGA, and LANDOMA. LIMBA differs somewhat from the other units in this Group.

KISSI. LANGUAGE.

Spoken by: KISSI (*KISI*), call themselves *kisi* or *gisi*, called *gizi*, *gih*, *gi* by neighbouring tribes, *GIZI*, *GIZIMA* by the Liberians, *dei* by the *GOLA*.

Where spoken: Mainly in French Guinea, Cercles Macenta, Guékédou, Kissidougou, and Dabola; also in a strip of territory on both sides of the Liberia–Sierra Leone border.

Number of speakers: about 240,000 (French Guinea 164,346,¹ Sierra Leone c. 35,000,² Liberia 25,000).

In the Sierra Leone–Liberia border area three sections of the *KISSI* have been distinguished: *KAMA*, *TENG*, *TUNG*.

IFAN³ names a dialect LIARO spoken in Cercle Macenta.

Two Gospels have been published (multigraphed).

BULOM. DIALECT CLUSTER?

Spoken by: *BULOM* (*BOLOM*, *BULLOM*, *BULLUN*), also known as *SHERBRO*, call themselves *bulom*, called *MAMPA*, *AMAMPA* by the *TEMNE* and *VAI*.

Where spoken: Sierra Leone, Sherbro District, and in coastal villages of Sierra Leone peninsula.

Number of speakers: *BULOM* and *SHERBRO* 167,200, *KRIM* 44,600.⁴

There appear to be several sections of the *BULOM*; those living in the Bome River area are known as *BOME* (*BUM*, *BOMO*); those in the Krim River area call themselves *KIM*, *KIMI*, and are known as *KRIM* (*KIRIM*, *KITTIM*); the name *MAMPA* (*MAMPWA*) is used to denote in particular the *BULOM* of Sherbro, who are called *SHIBA* (a corruption of the English 'sea-bar') by the *VAI*.

¹ *La Guinée Française* (published in connexion with the Exposition coloniale internationale, Paris, 1931).

² 1931 Census.

³ Information marked IFAN in this and other sections of the Handbook was supplied by the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire.

⁴ From recent (1945) Government sources.

Dialects: The 'BULOM' and 'MAMPA' of Koelle appear to differ; the dialect of the *BUM* is closely akin to that of the *MAMPA*. There may be other dialects, as the class system of *BULOM*, according to Koelle, differs from that given by Sumner, as does the vocabulary to some extent.¹

A Gospel has been translated into BULOM; there is also a Prayer Book.

MMANI. LANGUAGE?²

Spoken by: *MMANI*, call themselves *MMANI*, called *MANDENYI* (*ME-NDENYI*) by the *SUSU*.

Where spoken: On the coast of French Guinea between Rivers Grand Scarcie (Kolente) and Morebaya.

LIMBA. LANGUAGE.

Spoken by: *LIMBA*, call themselves **limba** (variant **yimbe**).

Where spoken: Sierra Leone, between Rivers Rokel and Scarcie, north of the *TEMNE*; according to IFAN, also in French Guinea, Cercle Mamou.

Number of speakers: 174,400 in Sierra Leone.³

Thomas⁴ gives vocabularies from the following localities: Sella, Safroko, Biriwa, Tonko, Warawara. Dialectal differences do not appear to be significant.

A Gospel has been translated; another is in the press (1950).

TEMNE. LANGUAGE.

Spoken by: *TEMNE* (*TIMNE*, *TIMENE*, *TIMMANNEE*), call themselves **a-temne** (Sing. **ɔ-temne**).

Where spoken: Sierra Leone, north and north-west of the *MENDE*, between Rivers Little Scarcie and Sewa; according to IFAN, also in Mellacorée (Mellakori) on the coast of French Guinea in Cercle Forecariah.

Number of speakers: Sierra Leone 505,600.³

The TEMNE are in two sections (it is not known whether they speak different dialects):

SANDA TEMNE in the north;

YONNI TEMNE in the south.

There is a small amount of vernacular literature, including the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament. The Sierra Leone Protectorate Literature Bureau is encouraging the production of literature.

BAGA. DIALECT CLUSTER?

Spoken by: *BAGA* (*BARKA*), call themselves **baga**.

¹ Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana*; Sumner, *A handbook of the Sherbro language*.

² M. Houis, 'Les minorités ethniques de la Guinée côtière. Situation linguistique' (*Et. Guinéennes*, 1950), from an unpublished study of the MMANI language by Moity.

³ From recent (1948) Government figures.

⁴ Specimens of languages from Sierra Leone.

Where spoken: Scattered along the coast of French Guinea, from Conakry to River Compony.

Number of speakers: 4,000 (Labouret); 23,436;¹ 50,000.²

The various *BAGA* sections are designated, by names of localities. They include:³

BAGA 'Kalum', in Kalum (Kaloum) peninsula. They are almost completely assimilated to the *SUSU* (see p. 37) and only the old people still speak *BAGA*.

BAGA 'Koba', in Cercle Boffa. They are in process of assimilation to the *SUSU*.
BAGA 'Sobane'.

BAGA 'Sitemu' ('Sitémou'), on Rio Nunez.

BAGA 'Madure' ('Mandouré'), on islands in the Rio Nunez delta (very few in number).

Note: For *BAGA FORE* see below, under *NALU*.

Arcin⁴ suggests that the *WAELE* in Futa Djallon may be a *BAGA* remnant, and perhaps speak a *BAGA* dialect.

LANDOMA (LANDUMA). LANGUAGE?

Spoken by: *LANDOMA* (*LANDUMA*, Fr. *LANDOUMAN*), call themselves **landoma** or **landuma**.

Where spoken: French Guinea, between the upper Rio Nunez and upper Rio Pongas (Pongo), inland from the *NALU*.

Number of speakers: uncertain: Méo gives 28,000 in Cercle Rio Nunez,⁵ Labouret a total of 12,500.

A dialect of *LANDOMA* is said to be spoken by the *TIAPI* (*TYAPI*, *TAPESSI*) in Cercles Gaoual and Boké; they appear to be a section of the *LANDOMA*.

Number: 10,000 (Labouret); 8,179.⁶

SINGLE UNIT? *NALU*

NALU. LANGUAGE?

Spoken by: *NALU* (Fr. *NALOU*).

Where spoken: On the coast between Rio Nunez in the south and Rio Tombati in the north, on both sides of the French Guinea-Portuguese Guinea border.

Number of speakers: 10,000 (Labouret).

According to Houis,⁷ the so-called *BAGA FORE* ('Black *BAGA*') of Monchon speak a dialect which differs markedly from the *BAGA* dialects, but is very closely akin to *NALU*, and may be a *NALU* dialect.

¹ *La Guinée Française*, 1931.

² France d'outre-mer leaflet.

³ Houis, loc. cit.

⁴ *Guinée Française* (1907).

⁵ 'Études sur le Rio Nunez' (*Bull. Com. Et. hist. et scient. de l'A.O.F.*, 1919).

⁶ M. M. Kéita, 'La famille et le mariage chez les Tyapi' (*Et. Guinéennes*, 1947).

⁷ Loc. cit.

LANGUAGE GROUP OR SINGLE UNIT? BANYUN

Little is known about the languages or dialects spoken by the following tribes, except that they are said to be related to each other:

BANYUN (Fr. *BAÏNOUK*, Port. *BANHUN*), call themselves *BANYUN* (Sing. *ANYUN*),¹ *BANYUNG* or *BANYUK*, called *banyuŋka* by MANDE-speakers; also known as *ELOMAY*, *ELUNAY*; in Portuguese Guinea, between Rivers Casamance and Cacheo, and in Senegal, in the Sedhiou-Bignona-Ziguinchor area.

Number: 18,000 (Labouret).

KOBIANA (about 300); and *KASANGA* (Port. *CASSANGA*, Fr. *CASSANGUE*) (420)² who call themselves *IHAŋA* (*IHAGE*); both in the same area as the *BANYUN*.

LANGUAGE GROUP OR SINGLE UNIT? BALANTE³

The languages or dialects spoken by the following tribes are closely interrelated: *BALANTE* (*BALANT*, *BALANTA*, *BULANDA*), call themselves *BALANT* or *BELANTE* (Sing. *ALANTE*), also known as *BRASSA*; in Portuguese Guinea, between Rivers Casamance and Geba; also in Senegal, around Ziguinchor and Sedhiou.

There are two sections of the tribe (northern and southern), with some dialectal differences.³

Number: 154,246,² including the *BALANTA MANE*, who are much mixed with *MANDINKA*.

The *NAGA* north-west of the *BALANTE* are closely related to them, and probably speak a related dialect.

KUNANTE, call themselves *KUNANTE* or *KUNĀT*; in Portuguese Guinea, on the borders of the administrative districts of Bafata and Mansoa.

Number: 6,050.²

LANGUAGE GROUP OR SINGLE UNIT? MANDYAK

The languages or dialects spoken by the following are closely related both in vocabulary and structure:

MANDYAK (Fr. *MANDŋAQUE*, Port. *MANŋACO*), call themselves *MANDYAK*, *MĀDYAK*, or *MANDYAKO*, also known as *KANYOP*; in Portuguese Guinea, on the coast between Rivers Cacheo and Mansoa, and on Pecixe Island; also in Senegal, in the Ziguinchor-Sedhiou area.

Number: 12,000 in Senegal (Labouret); 71,712 in Portuguese Guinea.²

¹ *ba-* (*BANYUN*, *BALANTE*) and *ma-* (*MANDYAK*, *MANKANYA*) are plural prefixes. See Tastevin, 'Vocabulaires inédits de 7 dialectes . . .' (*J. Soc. Afric.*, 1936).

² 1950 Census.

³ Information on the location of *BALANTE*, *MANDYAK*, and related tribes from L. Brierley (personal communication).

PEPEL (*PAPEL*, Port. *PAPEI*), call themselves *PAPEL* or *PEPEL* (*pepeɫ*); in Portuguese Guinea, mainly on Bissao Island; also in French Guinea.

Number: 36,341.¹

MANKANYA (Fr. *MANCAGNE*, Port. *MANCANHA*); also known as *BOLA*, *BRAME*, called *BURAMA*, *BURAM*, *BULAMA* by the *BALANTE*; in Portuguese Guinea, between Rivers Cacheo and Mansoa; west of the *MANŶAKO*, east of the *BALANTE*; also on Bolama Island.

Number: 16,300.¹

There appear to be two dialects, *SHADAL* or *SADAR*, spoken on the mainland, and *BURAMA*, spoken on the island. The names *MANKANYA* and *BOLO* or *BRAME*, supposed by some writers to denote different tribes, are, however, as pointed out by Carreira,² two names for one tribe.

The languages or dialects spoken by the following may also be related to the above: *BIAFADA* (*BIAFAR*, *FADA*, Port. *BEAFADA*), also known as *BIDYOLA*; in Portuguese Guinea, on both banks of the Geba estuary.

Number: 11,851.¹

According to Nogueira³ they call themselves *BEDŶOLA* (Sing. *DŶOLA*); Richard-Mollard⁴ calls them '*DŶOLA* de Boké'; the *YOLA* (2,000-3,000) on River Compony are said to be a section of the *BIAFADA*. There may, however, be some confusion with the *DYOLA* (see p. 17); linguistic material available is insufficient to show the affiliations of their language or dialect.

BIDYOGO (*BUDŶAGO*, *BUGAGO*, Fr. *BIŶOUGOT*, Port. *BIŶAGO*), call themselves *BIDYOGO* (*bidyoŷo*, *bidoyo*, or *bizago*); on Bijago (Bissagos) archipelago.

Number: 10,332.¹

The dialect spoken on Roxa (Canhabaque) Island differs from that of the other islands; the people of Roxa call themselves (Port.) *ANHAQUI* (*anyaki*).⁵

SINGLE UNIT? TENDA

TENDA is a general name comprising a number of tribes or tribal sections, and the languages or dialects spoken by them, on the Senegal-French Guinea border. Little is known about them. The following names are given by various writers as those of *TENDA* sections:

BADYARA (*PAŶADE*, Fr. *BADYARANKE*, Port. *PAŶADINCA*), call themselves *BADYAR* or *BADYARE*, called *badyaranke* by MANDE-speakers, also known as *GOLA*, *AGOLA*, *BIGOLA*, *AXUS*; around the point where French Guinea, Portuguese Guinea, and Senegal adjoin.

Number: 10,000 (Labouret).

¹ 1950 Census.

² *Vida social dos Manjacos*.

³ (Note in *Bol. cult. Guiné Port.*, 1946.)

⁴ Map of populations of West Africa prepared for IFAN (unpublished).

⁵ D. A. G. Alves (note in *Bol. cult. Guiné Port.*, 1947).

KONYAGI (*KONYAKI*, Fr. *COGNIAGUI*, Port. *CONHAGUE*), called **awôhě**, **azɛn** by neighbouring tribes; in French Guinea, east of Youkounkoun, extending to the border of Senegal.

Number: 85,000 (Labouret).

BASARI, call themselves *BASAR*, also known as *AYAN*, *BIYAN*, *WO*; on the borders of French Guinea, Senegal and Gambia, around Youkounkoun.

Number: 11,500 (Labouret).

Note: Arcin¹ divides the *TENDA* into:

TENDA;

TENDA BOENI on the lower Miti and middle Tomino rivers (included in *BASARI* by Richard-Mollard² and described by him as 'TENDA foulisés');

BADYARANKE;

KONYAGI;

BASARI.

SINGLE UNIT? DYOLA

DYOLA. DIALECT CLUSTER?

Spoken by: *DYOLA* (*DIOLA*, *ȝOLA*, *YOLA*).³

Where spoken: Between Rivers Gambia and Cacheo, in Senegal and Gambia.

Number of speakers: 125,000 (Labouret); 19,467 in the Gambia,⁴ 115,000 in Senegal.⁵

The *DYOLA* consist of a number of sections (15 according to Labouret), mostly known by place-names. They include:

'Karonés', also known as 'Dyembaren (Dyembering) Karones', on the rivers of the same names;

BLISS, in much the same area as the above;

'Carabane', on Carabane Island;

DYAMATE, call themselves *KUDAMATA* (Sing. *ADAMAT*); on the right bank of River Casamance;

FONY (*FOGNY*), between Bignona and River Sangrogrou (according to IFAN, extending as far as Sedhiou); also in the Gambia, and south of Carabane. The dialect of the *FONY* is the most widely understood of the Cluster.

BAYOT (*BAIOT*, Fr. *BAYOTTE*), south of Ziguinchor, mainly in Portuguese Guinea (4,373⁶);

FLUP (*FELUPE*, *FULUP*, *FILHAM*, Fr. *FLOUP*, *FELOUP*), call themselves **u-luf**;⁷ between Rivers Casamance and Cacheo (8,167⁶).

SINGLE UNIT? SERER

SERER. DIALECT CLUSTER.

Spoken by: *SERER* (*SERRER*, Fr. *SERÈRE*, &c.).

Where spoken: Mainly in Senegal, south of Cayor; also in the Gambia.

Number of speakers: 300,000 (Labouret).

¹ Op. cit.

² Loc. cit.

³ Not to be confused with *DYULA* (see p. 35).

⁴ Report of the Senior Commissioner on the Annual Census of the Protectorate of Gambia, 1945.

⁵ France d'outre-mer leaflet.

⁶ 1950 Census.

⁷ Tastevin, loc. cit.

Dialects: There are two main dialects, spoken by:

SERER NON (NONE), also called *DYOBA*; on the coast in the region of Thiès;

SERER SIN (SINE-SINE), also called *KEGEM* ('Ndyegem', 'Dyéguémé'—a place-name); in the Saloum valley, around Joal. (These are the *BARRACIN* of old Portuguese writers.)

IFAN further mentions dialects:

NYOMINKA, spoken around Kaolack and Foundiougne;

SEGUM, spoken at M'Bour;

NDOUTE, spoken in the Thiès area.

SINGLE UNIT: WOLOF

WOLOF (Fr. VOLOF, OUOLOF, &c.). LANGUAGE OR DIALECT CLUSTER.

Spoken by: *WOLOF*, call themselves *wɔlof*; they call their country *dyɔlof*, and this name (*YOLOF, DYOLOF*) is also used by Europeans to denote both the people and their language.

Where spoken: Mainly in Senegal, from the left bank of River Senegal to Cape Vert, but also in *SERER* country as far south as the Gambia, and (according to IFAN) extending in the north into Mauretania.

Number of speakers: 640,000 (Labouret); 28,510 in the Gambia.¹

Dialectal differences have been noted, especially in the speech of St. Louis, Cayor (Kayor), Walo, Saloum, and Lébou.

WOLOF is an important trade language spoken or understood throughout Senegambia. Parts of the Bible have been translated, and there are some religious and educational books.

SINGLE UNIT: FULANI

FULANI (FUL, FULA, PEUL, POULAR, &c.), own name **fulfulde**. DIALECT CLUSTER.

Spoken by: *FULANI*, call themselves **fulɓe** (Sing. **pulo**), called *FULANI* (*FUL, FULA, &c.*) by many Europeans, *FILANI* by the *HAUSA*, *FULATA, FELATA* by the *KANURI*, *PEUL (PEULH, POULAR, &c.)* by the French. In the north-west (i.e. mainly in Senegal) they are called *TOUCOULEUR (TUKULOR, &c.)* by the French.

Where spoken: Scattered over a vast area of West Africa from Senegal and Mauretania to Sierra Leone in the west, and extending as far east as Bagirmi and Wadai. The main *FULANI* concentrations are in Senegambia, Macina in the French Sudan, and Adamawa in Nigeria.

Number of speakers: The total number of *FULANI*-speakers cannot be estimated, in view of the enormous distribution of the *FULANI* and the great number of people who have adopted *FULANI* or who speak it as a second language. The following figures give some indication of approximate numbers of *FULANI*:

¹ Report of the Senior Commissioner . . ., 1945.

French West Africa:¹ Mauretania 12,000; Senegal 250,000; French Sudan 600,000; Ivory Coast and Haute-Volta 52,000; Dahomey 54,000; Niger 269,000; plus *TUKULOR* in Senegal, French Sudan and a few in Mauretania 240,000, and '*FULA*' in Futa Djallon 720,000;

Gambia 50,000;²

Portuguese Guinea 108,400;³

Nigeria (Northern Provinces) 2,025,200;⁴

French Cameroons 257,680;⁵

giving a total of well over 4 millions.

Dialects: No detailed study of the dialects of FULANI has yet been made. The following main geographical areas where different dialects are spoken have been distinguished:⁶

Futa Sénégalais (dialect PULAR, Fr. POULAR, according to Cremer);

Futa Djallon (dialect FULA);

Macina, Haute-Volta, and the Niger bend;

Northern Nigeria, with main centres Kano and Katsina;

Nigeria: Adamawa Province and adjacent territory;

Nigeria: Bauchi Province and part of Plateau Province;

Bagirmi (dialect FOULBÉRÉ according to Cremer).

In Nigeria the dialect of Kano and Katsina may be considered as the most widely understood. The name 'Western FULANI' is applied in Nigeria to dialects of FULANI other than that of Adamawa.

Parts of the Bible have been published in the dialects of Adamawa, Futa Djallon, and Macina. There is little other vernacular literature.

Linguistic notes on the West Atlantic Languages

The West Atlantic languages do not form nearly so close a unit as, for example, the GUR languages. There is great diversity in vocabulary and in the Noun Class system, also in many grammatical details. Their common features are: (a) Noun Classes formed mostly by Prefixes; (b) *nomen rectum* following *nomen regens* in the Genitive construction (for exceptions to (a) and (b) see below); (c) a common vocabulary containing words not occurring in other West African languages.

The linguistic position of FULANI has long been in doubt, largely owing to the fact that Meinhof classed it as HAMITIC.⁷ The possibility of some relationship between FULANI and languages of the West Atlantic Larger Unit (notably SERER, WOLOF, and BIAFADA) has been pointed out by various writers,⁸ and it now appears certain that FULANI belongs to this Larger Unit.

¹ Labouret; figures in France d'outre-mer publications differ considerably with regard to distribution, but add up to approximately the same total.

² Report of the Senior Commissioner . . ., 1945.

³ 1950 Census.

⁴ 1931 Census.

⁵ 'Inventaire ethnique et linguistique du Cameroun sous mandat français' (*J. Soc. Afric.*, 1934).

⁶ Cremer, *Dictionnaire français-peul*; information on Nigerian dialects from F. de Ste-Croix.

⁷ *Die Sprachen der Hamiten*.

⁸ e.g. Faidherbe, 'Essai sur la langue poul . . .' (*Rev. de linguistique*, 1875); Klungenheben, 'Die Permutationen des Biafada und des Ful' (*Z. Eingeb. Spr.*, 1914-15); Delafosse, 'Classes nominales en wolof' (*Festschrift Meinhof*, 1927); Homburger, 'Le sérère-peul' (*J. Soc. Afr.*, 1939); Greenberg, 'Studies in African linguistic classification. 2. The classification of Fulani' (*Southwestern J. of Anthropol.*, 1949).

A. *Languages other than FULANI*

Only a limited number of these languages has been sufficiently investigated, so that in most cases it is not possible to make definitive statements on the nature of their sounds or on grammatical structure. Further research is badly needed.

1. Many languages appear to have a nine-vowel system. Thomas¹ distinguishes thirteen vowels in TEMNE, Sumner² nine, while in BULOM there are, according to Sumner,³ seven.

Nasalized vowels are rare.

2. The labio-velar sounds **kp**, **gb** are of frequent occurrence in the eastern languages (ADYUKRU, GOLA, TEMNE, BULOM), while in the western languages they are rare or absent.

ADYUKRU has unusual consonant combinations such as **kl**, **bm**, **gn**.

Nasal compounds exist.

3. Tone is important in at least a number of languages, but little is known about it.

Examples from GOLA: **dii** ground; **díi** maize.

4. The majority of Word Roots consist of CVC(V). Roots consisting of CV are far less common. The second consonant of a Root may be preceded by a nasal:

GOLA	ò-kándâ	chief	ké-kómbò	smoke
TEMNE	kombila	shell		

5. Apart from the Class Affixes there are few Noun Formatives, while Compound Nouns are frequent:

GOLA **daa-gwɛ** 'Lord of the Sun' (a proper name for men)

6. Noun Classes are formed mostly by Prefixes, in some languages by Prefixes and Suffixes. These Affixes may also be used for forming a Definite and Indefinite Form of the Noun.

Examples from GOLA (the Indefinite Form of the Noun has no Affix in the Singular):

kándâ	chief	Plur. a-kándâ (nyã)
fè	eye	ma-fè
saa	house	ma-saa
kul	tree	ma-kul

The **ma-** Class also denotes liquids:

ma-mal water **ma-gwala** rain **ma-han** salt

¹ *Temne grammar and stories.*

² *A handbook of the Temne language.*

³ *A handbook of the Sherbro language.*

The Definite Form of the Noun in GOLA:

kándâ	chief	Definite: o-kándâ , kándâ-ɔ , o-kándâ-ɔ
fè	eye	e-fè
dî	head	e-dî dî-lè e-dî-lè
kul	tree	ke-kul kul-ɛ ke-kul-ɛ
ma-mal	water	ma-mal-ma

Note also **e-gola** crying < **gola** to cry.

Examples of Class Concord in GOLA:

e-gwa fua-lɛ	white bone; Plur. ma-gwa fua-ma
ke-kul ye	this tree
ma-mal me	this water

Noun Classes in BULOM:

li-pal	sun	li-kin	knife	li-wu	death (< wu die)
la	house	Plur. i-la			
kulu	goat	si-kulu			
mende-nɔ	Mende man	a-mende			
bik	mat	i-bik ; i-sim	standing (< sim stand)		
i-tu	pot	n-tu			

The Nasal Class also denotes liquids:

ŋ-kusi	oil	n-da-kɔ	nut oil
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The Definite Form of the Noun in BULOM:

na	cow	Plur. si-na	na-lɛ	the cow	Plur. na-si-lɛ
kɛ	snake	si-kɛ	kɛ-lɛ	the snake	kɛ-si-lɛ

KISSI has no Noun Classes. The Plural of Nouns is formed by Suffix, a frequent Plural Suffix being **-ɔ**, **-o**.

ADYUKRU appears to have only remnants of Noun Classes:¹

ob	thing	Plur. m-ob
l-ab	knife	m-ab
li-gbileb	yam	i-gbileb
lo-kleb	banana	o-kleb
nyaman	eye	a-nyaman
ɛ-gŋ	man	a-gŋ
mi-ji	water	mi-jei oil

Plural of persons may also be formed by suffixing the 3rd Person Plural Pronoun **lɛ** (**ɛl**):

us-labm-eb-s-ɛl 'land-money-taking-person-they' (tax collectors).

WOLOF has a system of Noun Classes expressed in the Qualificatives² of the Noun

¹ But see Bertho, 'La place de l'adiukru.'

² For definition of 'Qualificative' see Doke, *Bantu linguistic terminology*.

(in the following examples the Particles following each Noun are Demonstratives denoting different degrees of distance from the speaker):

bai bi	bai bu	bai ba	father
fas vi	fas vu	fas va	horse
safara si	safara su	safara sa	fire
ker gi	ker gu	ker ga	house
nit ki	nit ku	nit ka	man
ndei dyi	ndei dyu	ndei dya	mother
ndox mi	ndox mu	ndox ma	water
ngelao li	ngelao lu	ngelao la	wind

The same alliteration takes place in Numerals, Adjectives, and in Relative, Interrogative, and Indefinite Pronouns.

In the Singular of most Nouns there is a definite relation between the initial consonant of the Noun and the Qualificative. Note, however, that **nit** (man) has the Concord **k-**, while in **ngelao** (wind) the Concord is with the second consonant (**ng** being regarded as one). For the **m-** Concord with **ndox** (water) cp. **m-**, **ma-** Prefix for Nouns denoting liquids in other languages.

The Concord for the Plural of Nouns of all Classes is **y-**. This **y-** is identical with the **i-** Prefix which forms the Plural of the indeterminate Noun without regard to Classes:

garap	tree	Plur. i-garap
paka	knife	i-paka

while in Determinate Nouns the Plural is expressed in the Qualificative only:

bai yi	bai yu	bai ya	fathers
fas yi	fas yu	fas ya	horses
safara yi	safara yu	safara ya	fires

7. There is no grammatical gender.

8. In GOLA the Verb undergoes vocalic changes, e.g.

<i>Perfect</i>	<i>Imperfect</i>	<i>Infinitive</i>	
na	ne	niie	come
gwa	gwe	gwiie	wash
yele	yele	yilie	cut
gola	golɔ	gulie	cry
wawa	wɔwɔ	wuwie	prepare

9. Verbal Derivatives¹ are formed by means of Suffixes.

Examples from BULOM:

-a assimilated to the Root Vowel:

gbal	write	gbal-a	be writing
sem	stand	sem-e	be standing
kul	drink	kul-ɔ	be drinking

¹ For definition of 'Verbal Derivatives' see Doke, *Bantu linguistic terminology*.

-i	duk	fall	duk-i	throw down
	piθ	be black	piθ-i	blacken
-ni	fɔ	beat	fɔ-ni	beat repeatedly
	fɔ-i-ni	beat each other repeatedly,		fight
-ma	kɔ	go	kɔ-ma	go with
-il	sɛm	stand	sɛm-il	stand close by
-l	sɛk	be dry	sɛk-ɛl-i	make dry
-k	jo	eat	jo-k	eat from
	cɔ	fight	cɔ-k	fight with

TEMNE has a Causative Suffix **-əs**, **-s**:

bak	be heavy	bak-əs	make heavy
dira	sleep	dir-əs	cause to sleep

Examples from WOLOF:

-lo	sopa	love	sopa-lo	cause to love
-le	ligei	work	ligei-le	help work
-i	ub	close	ub-i	open
-an	binda	write	bind-an	write habitually
-ul	sopa	love	sop-ul	not to love

10. In most of the languages there is no Passive Voice, but there is a Passive-Reflexive in WOLOF, with Suffix **-u**:

sopa	love	sop-u	be loved
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and in LIMBA, with Suffix **-o**.

11. Word order in the simple sentence is Subject-Verb-Object:

ADYUKRU **s ij ob** we eat thing
aḡḡ ana eke bo eb m ɛl eci ḡbugḡ ɛm people are (there) who
 will take me their house in (Luke xvi. 4)

GOLA **o na kīi okanda bawa** he then gave the chief (a) sheep

12. In the Genitive construction the *nomen rectum* follows the *nomen regens* in most languages:

GOLA **fɔ gola** country of the Gola

Note, however, that in Compound Nouns and in the Intimate Genitive the *nomen rectum* precedes the *nomen regens*:

kul-koma tree-fruit **ogola fela** Gola man
egola mie Gola language

WOLOF **fas u bur ba** horse of chief Plur. **fas i bur ba**

In ADYUKRU the *nomen rectum* precedes the *nomen regens*, sometimes with Linking Particle **eci**:

nyam eci odad God's word
egb beb ɛi ejagb kpakp (of) seed some fell road's surface

The Possessive Pronoun follows the Noun in GOLA:

o-di me-ɔ my cow Plur. **a-di me-nyã**

but precedes it in ADYUKRU:

ŋ eci odad your (Sing.) speech
in eci ob his thing
ɛm ɛs my father

and in WOLOF:

suma fas my horse
sa ndei your (Sing.) mother

13. The Demonstrative Pronoun follows the Noun:

GOLA **o-fola wê** this man Plur. **a-fola nyê (nyênyã)**
o-fola wé¹ that man Plur. **a-fola nyé (nyényã)**
ma-mal mê this water
ma-mal mé that water

ADYUKRU **ɛŋɪ i** this man

In WOLOF it may follow or precede the Noun:

fas vi or **vi fas** this horse

14. The Numeral follows the Noun in GOLA, but precedes it in WOLOF.

B. FULANI

1. There are five vowel phonemes: **i, e, a, o, u**. Vowel length is significant, both in Roots and in Suffixes.

2. Characteristic consonants are: **ɓ, ɗ, 'y** (implosive y), **'** (glottal stop).

Consonants (including glottal stop) may be long.

There are true nasal compounds, the oral part of which is a voiced plosive or affricate, e.g. **goo-ŋga** truth.

Nasal and voiced plosive may also stand together as parts of different syllables (heterosyllabic nasal combination), e.g. **'in-de** name.

3. All syllables begin with a consonant or nasal compound. The vowel of a syllable may be short or long. A closed syllable can never be closed by more than one consonant.

'o he **naa-ŋge** sun **min** we

4. An outstanding feature of the language is initial consonantal change for grammatical reasons. This change is known as Permutation, according to which the consonants concerned appear in three Stages as:

(1) Fricatives and semi-vowels	w	y	r	f	s	h	
(2) Plosives	b	g	j	d	p	ty	k
(3) Nasal compounds	mb	ŋg	nj	nd	p	ty	k

¹ Note change of vowel and tone.