

NOTES AND COMMENTS

HAUSA AND CHADIC: A REPLY

By PAUL NEWMAN

In the preceding volume of this journal Mr. F. W. Parsons raises the question whether Hausa should be classified as a Chadic language.¹ When he typifies his position on the subject as 'idiosyncratic' I suggest that he has been guilty of British understatement, for, on reading his article, one discovers that Parsons' conclusions are widely off the mark and his arguments completely beside the point. Space limitations do not permit me to write a full critique of Parsons' position, but I trust that even these few brief comments can serve to set the record straight. In openly challenging the views of a man whose erudition has earned him the recognition as the world's foremost authority on Hausa, I take defence in the fact that Parsons' knowledge of Chadic languages other than Hausa is, by his own admission, 'superficial and entirely secondhand'.²

I will limit my discussion to two issues, first the question of whether Hausa is in fact a Chadic language, and second, an evaluation of the phonological arguments offered by Parsons against the inclusion of Hausa within Chadic.

1. *The Classification of Hausa*

If a language A (e.g. Hausa) is related to a group of languages P (e.g. the Bolewa group) and that group P belongs to a family Z (e.g. Chadic), then A is necessarily a member of the family Z. The inclusion of Hausa within the Chadic family follows from this basic principle of phylogenetic classification. The Newman and Ma article on Comparative Chadic³ which bears the brunt of Parsons' criticism was not concerned with the classification of Hausa or any other particular language, but rather with the thesis that the group consisting of Bolewa, Dera, Bade, Angas, etc. ('Plateau-Sahel') and the group consisting of Tera, Margi, Higi, Wandala, etc. ('Biu-Mandara') were branches of a common family Chadic. In support of this thesis, we described regular sound correspondences between the two groups and presented a cognate list of over a hundred highly probable items.⁴ As far as I am aware, the view that Chadic, with all its internal diversity, does indeed constitute a single family is now universally accepted.

In order to prove that Hausa is Chadic, therefore, one simply has to show that

¹ 'Is Hausa really a Chadic language? Some problems of comparative phonology', *ALS*, XI, 1970, 271-88.

² Parsons, 274.

³ P. Newman and R. Ma, 'Comparative Chadic: Phonology and Lexicon', *JAL*, V, 1966, 218-51.

⁴ We have subsequently rejected about 25% of the original list but added about 150 new cognates.

it is related to Bolewa and other Plateau-Sahel languages. This relationship, however, has been recognized for over 50 years, having been pointed out by F. W. Migeod,⁵ H. D. Foulkes,⁶ R. C. Abraham,⁷ J. Lukas,⁸ J. H. Greenberg,⁹ N. Pilszczikowa,¹⁰ and H. Jungraithmayr,¹¹ among others. The answer to Parsons' question, 'Is Hausa a Chadic language?' is thus an unequivocal 'Yes'. I present the following items of evidence not to prove that Hausa is related to the Bolewa group—this needs no further proof—but rather to illustrate how very closely they are related.

	Hausa	Bolewa		Hausa	Dera
one	ɗaya	modi	head	kai	koi
two	biyu	bollo	ear	kun-ne	kumo
three	uku	kunu	eye	ido	yero
four	fudu	podɗo	mouth	ba-ki	bo-k
five	biyar	badi	body	ji-ki	yi-k
eat	ci	ti	what	me	mə
drink	sha	sa	who	wa	ma
go	je	ji	nominalizer	wa	ma
throw	ya-da	yi	negative	ba . . . ba	wo . . . (w)u
go out	fitɗa	pata	here	nân	nénè
say	fadi	poru	there	nán	néné

	Hausa	Karekare		Hausa	Karekare
I	ni	ɗə-nau	we	mu	ɗə-mu
you	kai	ɗə-kan	you (pl.)	ku	ɗə-ku
you (fem.)	ke	ɗə-ci			
he	shi	ɗə-ni	they	su	ɗə-su
she	ita	ɗə-tau			

2. Hausa and Chadic Phonology

(a) *Symmetry*. According to Parsons Hausa 'is a language which has an almost unnaturally tidy and symmetrical [phonological] system',¹² a fact which

⁵ *The Languages of West Africa*, 2 vols., London, 1911-13.

⁶ *Angass Manual*, London, 1915.

⁷ 'Comparative morphology of the Hausa-Boli-Angass group'. Unpublished MS., Kaduna Archives, Nigeria. (I wish to thank Dr. John Ballard for bringing this manuscript to my attention.)

⁸ 'The linguistic situation in the Lake Chad area in Central Africa', *Africa*, IX, 1936, 332-49.

⁹ 'Studies in African linguistic classification. IV. Hamito-Semitic', *Southwest Journal of Anthropology*, VI, 1950, 47-63.

¹⁰ 'Contribution à l'étude des rapport entre le haoussa et les autres langues du groupe nigéro-tchadien', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, XXII, 1958, 75-99.

¹¹ 'Zum Bau der Aspekte im Westschadohamitischen', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, CXVI, 1966, 227-34.

¹² Parsons, 274.

he deems important for the classification of Hausa. To this I have two objections, one regarding fact and one regarding significance. (i) *Fact*. The Hausa phonological system is *not* unusually symmetrical, neither absolutely nor in relation to other Chadic languages. Compare, for example, the ragged obstruent system of Hausa with that of Tera (in both cases eliminating labialization and palatalization as secondary articulations).

Hausa					Tera			
f/h	t	c	k	ʔ	p	t	c	k
ɸ	ɗ		ƙ		ɸ	ɗ	ʔj	ʔg
b	d	j	g		b	d	j	g
	s	sh	h		mb	nd	nj	ng
	ts				f	s	sh	x
	z				v	z	zh	ɣ

(ii) *Significance*. Even if it were true that Hausa had a beautifully symmetrical phonological system and other Chadic languages did not, this could not qualify as evidence against the inclusion of Hausa within Chadic. The development of a symmetrical system in a present-day language from an earlier asymmetrical system is a normal, expectable change. Conversely, the development of gaps, exceptions, pattern breaks, and additional elements in a previously balanced system is also not unusual. Symmetry and asymmetry in phonological systems result from the combined effects of various diachronic processes and language specific historical events. They are not characteristics that one inherits from an ancestor language and thus they are of no relevance for phylogenetic classification.

(b) *Unique phonemes*. A second phonological problem that troubles Parsons is the origin of the Hausa phonemes /ɸ/ and /ts/ not found elsewhere in Chadic. While I admit that like Parsons I have no ready answer to this question, I do not see how our ignorance can be adduced as evidence in support of his thesis that Hausa is not a Chadic language. The solution to the problem may have a bearing on the classification of Hausa but the mere existence of such a problem is not itself significant. The origin of /ɸ/ and /ts/ is only one of a myriad of unsolved problems in comparative Chadic. While this particular one has caught Parsons' fancy, it is far from the most serious problem facing us and I predict that it will not prove to be the most difficult to solve.

(c) *Richness*. A third phonological matter that in Parsons' opinion demands an explanation is the richness of the Hausa consonant system compared with that of Proto-Chadic, which 'according to Newman and Ma had but sixteen phonemes'.¹³ This objection is based on a misunderstanding of our article, for which I presume

¹³ Parsons, 273.

we as authors must accept the blame. In the first place, we never meant to suggest that those sixteen consonants for which we were able to establish regular reflexes in the two branches of Chadic constituted the total consonant inventory of the proto language. Secondly, by not discussing palatalization and labialization, we did not mean to imply that they did not exist in Proto-Chadic. On the contrary, if Margi and other Biu-Mandara languages are any indication, Proto-Chadic probably used these secondary articulations with a full range of simple consonants, resulting in considerably *more* phonological contrasts than are found in modern Hausa.

In closing, I should point out that one characteristic of valid hypotheses is that they bear fruit. Having accepted the view that Hausa is definitely a Chadic language I have been able to find Chadic etymons for Hausa basic vocabulary, describe historical sound changes, account for seemingly anomalous morphological and syntactic features of the present-day language, and, most recently, discover the historical origin of the remarkable Hausa grade system. Ironically, many of these discoveries would have been impossible except for the sophisticated and insightful synchronic studies of Hausa by the man now attracted by the romantic notion of Hausa as the Basque of the Sudan.

A NOTE ON 'THE HAMZIYA DECIPHERED'

By G. S. P. FREEMAN-GRENVILLE

In his valuable article 'The Hamziya Deciphered' (*ALS*, IX, 1968, 52-81), Dr. Jan Knappert gives convincing reasons for believing the date of the translation of the poem into Swahili to have been 29 Rabi'ū al-Awwal A.H. 1062. According to the text, this day would have been a Monday. Dr. Knappert transposes the date to the Christian calendar as 9th March, 1652, and says: 'Unfortunately this day is a Wednesday. I do not think we shall ever solve this problem.'

The purpose of this note is to offer a tentative solution. Dr. Knappert's calculations are dependent upon my *The Muslim and Christian Calendars*, 1963.¹ I venture to think that he has not read this wholly correctly, for his transposition overlooks the fact that 1652 was a Leap Year if one is calculating by the New Style, that is to say, the present Gregorian calendar. Bearing in mind that this was a Leap Year, 29 Rabi'ū al-Awwal A.H. 1062 was Friday, 10th March, 1652, a solution which *prima facie* would only seem to make matters worse.

In the Introduction to my work I remarked, however, that: 'while the following tables are calculated strictly within terms of the actual changes of the Moon, the results cannot be applied with the same strictness. Since the observation of the New Moon is necessary to begin each month, where there has been

¹ J. Knappert, 'The Hamziya Deciphered', p. 55 and n. 12.

cloudy weather, it is quite possible to find, as the writer himself has done, three adjacent villages each claiming a different date as correct, according to the day on which the New Moon had been sighted. It is necessary to make allowances for this in comparing documents, or in hearing evidence in the course of which the witness has given a date according to the Muslim Calendar.' ²

The beginning of any Muslim month depends upon the sighting of the New Moon. In Dar-es-Salaam in 1955 the end of Ramadhan took place in very cloudy weather, and, in order that the fast might be terminated, and the celebration of the *'id al-Fitr* begun, the then Liwali of Dar-es-Salaam, Sheikh Hemedi Saleh al-Busaidi, O.B.E., went up over the clouds above the town in an aircraft, and, having observed the New Moon, declared that the month of Shawwal had begun. Many of the more conservative spirits amongst Muslims in the town declined to honour this observation, saying that it was nothing but an innovation, and that in their view the New Moon must be sighted from the ground. In 1962, when I was in Aden for Ramadhan, the more modern spirits ceased from fasting when the sighting of the New Moon was announced on Cairo radio. Nevertheless the *imam* of one of the more important mosques declared that he would have none of this. He and his followers barred the doors of the mosque, and refused to celebrate the *'id al-Fitr* on 1 Shawwal until two days later. On both these occasions, therefore, in both of these towns two different interpretations of the Muslim Calendar were being followed by different sections of the people. I have no doubt that a careful search of literature could reveal many more such occasions in addition to these two within my own recollection.

During nearly ten years on the eastern African coast I would have said that the month of March is almost invariably cloudy. It would therefore seem to me that the discrepancy which has worried Dr. Knappert in no way invalidates the accuracy of his explanation.

² G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, *The Muslim and Christian Calendars*, O.U.P., 1963, p. 3.