

H. Jungraithmayr and J.-P. Caprile, eds., *Cinq textes tchadiques (Cameroun et Tchad)*. (Marburger Studien zur Afrika- und Asienkunde, ser. A: Afrika, 12.) Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1978. 247 pp. DM 28.00.

Reviewed by Paul Newman

The title of this book is misleading and underrates its importance. It is not so much a collection of texts as it is a collection of individual grammatical sketches, each illustrated by an annotated text, and accompanied by a short word list, generally comprising only words that happen to be found in the texts. The volume thus constitutes an important source of primary information on five hitherto essentially unknown Chadic languages: Mofu-Gudur (II.A.5), Kotoko (II.B.1), Tobanga (III.A.2), Somrai (III.A.1), and Zime (IV).¹

Daniel Barreteau's analysis of Mofu-Gudur is undoubtedly the linguistically most ambitious and imaginative in the collection. The central phonological problem concerns the minimal number of contrastive vowel phonemes needed to account for the wide range of phonetic vowels that occur in the language. Barreteau at first states (p. 10) that Mofu-Gudur has only two vowels (*/e/* and */a/*), an analysis that parallels the one proposed for the closely related Mandara language by Mirt (1969) — whose pioneer study he does not cite. The surface forms are accounted for by a major rule (uneconomically treated by Barreteau as two independent rules) which weakens the two contrastive vowels in non-final closed syllables into a single reduced vowel schwa (where non-final refers to the phonological phrase and not the word), plus a series of lower-level rules specifying the exact phonetic shape of the vowels (reduced and unreduced) in terms of the adjacent consonants. A few pages later (p. 13), however, Barreteau suddenly declares that he needs a third vowel phoneme */ə/* to account for the occurrence of reduced vowels in open syllables, e.g. */də̀vá/* 'leopard', */wə̀déz/* [*wùdéz*] 'tree', vs. */tà̀ràk/* 'shoes', */tétèhl/* 'bone'. He is obviously not satisfied with this solution — he footnotes (p. 13) three alternative analyses to avoid it — but accepts it in desperation: "faute d'explication satisfaisantes pour le moment...". Barreteau's initial intuition, however, was right, and the need for a third vowel was a problem of his own making, resulting from an earlier analytical error. When first presenting his two phonemic vowels (*/a/* and */e/*), Barreteau asserts that they cannot co-occur in the same word, i.e. words of the form *CaCa* and *CeCe* are allowed but **CeCa* and **CaCe* not. If one rejects this claim, however, the problem of *[ə]* in open syllables solves itself without recourse to the unwanted third phoneme: it simply represents an underlying non-matching vowel, i.e. the examples above with the presumed phoneme */ə/* are simply the surface forms of */dè̀vá/* and */wà̀déz/*.

The schwas result from a general rule which reduces non-syllable-final vowels in open as well as closed syllables except in the case of open syllable vowels supported by a following identical vowel. Barreteau's capitulation in accepting /ə/ as a third phoneme was premature.

In many cases, Barreteau's abstract generative analyses seem well justified, for example, his interpretation of the [ɔk]/[ak] contrast as being a difference between underlying /ak^w/ and /ak/. He is almost certainly wrong, however, in treating final [ɲ] and [ɲ^w] as allophonic variants of /ɲg/ and /ɲg^w/. The motivation is of course to do away with the distributionally defective phonemes /ɲ/ and /ɲ^w/ and thus simplify the phonemic inventory. But whereas it is a common Chadic (and universal) phenomenon for /ɲ/ to be restricted to final position, it is very un-Chadic to have prenasal consonants finally—note the absence in Mofu-Gudur of the other prenasals (*mb*, *nd*, *nj*) in that position.

Barreteau's description of Mofu-Gudur (which also includes valuable morphological and grammatical information) and his meticulous presentation of the accompanying text is followed by a curious second article *qua* addendum. Here he recants his original phonological analysis, an analysis which effectively ignores the autonomous phonemic level, and makes amends by rewriting his text in a pristine phonemic transcription. Although a few interesting linguistic points emerge from this artificial exercise, they hardly compensate for the disappointment one feels in seeing a young linguist with imaginative ideas succumbing to a rigid institutional orthodoxy.

At first sight, Paul Bouny's Kotoko sketch would look like a simple, straightforward description of the facts as they occur; but having done field research on this language myself,² I would suggest that this is not so. For example, Bouny claims (p. 79) that vowel length in Kotoko is a non-phonemic conditioned variable and thus she does not mark long vowels anywhere in her examples, although phonetically she could hardly deny their existence. She does not defend this claim in any way nor does she explain the presumed conditioning factors that would allow one to determine from her transcription whether a vowel was phonetically long or short. My opinion, however, is that vowel length in Kotoko is phonemic (at least as concerns /a/ and /aa/), having a distinctive value both lexically and grammatically, cf. *fādē* 'night' vs. *màadè* 'lower leg'; *hləmángàdàn* 'their name' vs. *hləmángàadà* 'her name'.³

Other points where I have doubts about Bouny's transcription and/or analysis are her postulation of long final consonants (e.g. *skəŋŋ* 'nose', *gəyy* 'tortoise') and of *PəNC-* forms as synchronically underlying and actually occurring variants of words with initial NC- (i.e. *msl* = and < *Pəmsl* 'owner', *ɲgə* = and < *Pəɲgə* 'to see', etc.).

The essential problem with Bouny's entire sketch is that she is trying

to describe a language about which she obviously has little understanding or insight. This may sound harsh, but let me illustrate with two simple examples concerning noun plural formation. She states (p. 82) that nouns ending in a closed syllable form the plural by a suffix *-è*. (In fact, the tone varies according to the form of the singular and, as her own examples show, is Lo only about half the time.) She also notes that there is a consonant alternation (the nature of which is left unspecified) if the final consonant of the singular is /ŋ/, e.g. *tàŋ* 'earth', pl. *tàré* (cf. also *skàŋ* 'nose', pl. *skàrè*). What she fails to realize is that this alternation has nothing particularly to do with plural formation but is a function of a more general (morpho)phonological alternation between [ŋ] (= /n/, not /ŋ/!) and intervocalic [r], that applies automatically throughout the system regardless of the type of grammatical construction involved.

In illustrating plurals formed by "vocalic alternation", she includes the pair *mèlèwàngù* 'friend', pl. *mèlèwéngù*, also entered as such in the word list. The forms, however, mean 'my friend/my friends', these being absolutely regular possessives built on the noun forms *mèlèù* 'friend', pl. *mèlèùwé*. Every linguist is guilty of such a blunder now and then, but in Bouny's case, this lapse appears symptomatic, not exceptional.

Jean-Pierre Caprile's chapter on Tobanga is a model of what a good basic description ought to be for a volume of this type. He briefly outlines the phonological inventory, provides pronoun paradigms, and then limits himself to a description of one aspect of the grammar, the verb morphology. The strength of Caprile's analysis is that he eschews Chadic comparativist conceptions about aspect dichotomies— a trap into which Barreteau fell (p. 23)—and provides a straightforward description of Tobanga verbs in terms most suitable for this language, namely, a basic form (aorist) plus three morphologically marked forms (infinitive, jussive, and directional-completive).

The few weaknesses in the article are essentially of a notational sort. Tobanga has four tonemic levels, all four apparently distinctive: *á* (High), *ā* (Mid-High), *à* (Mid-Lo), and *ā* (Lo). To indicate contour tones, almost always MH-ML, Caprile adopts the device of using double letters as tone carriers, i.e. /*āà*/ indicates not a long vowel but a short vowel with falling MH-ML tone. But of course when the reader sees an alternation between *sòlè* (infinitive) and *sòól* (aorist) 'to see' (p. 136), he cannot help but get the mistaken impression that the alternation involves internal vowel lengthening as well as loss of the final vowel—especially since the convention is not explained until p. 159! Admittedly, it is typographically easier to spread contour tones over two letters than on one, but Caprile is wrong to persist in this idiosyncratic device (which he adopted earlier for his Tumak dictionary (Caprile 1975)), given the well-established and practical

convention in African linguistics of using double letters to indicate long vowels.

Caprile notes (p. 125) that some Tobanga words optionally occur with an initial glottal stop while others are always vowel-initial; nevertheless he decides to ignore the difference by transcribing all the words without the glottal stop. From the comparativist's point of view, this was an unfortunate decision, since the two sets probably have different historical origins, the one reflecting initial **w* (in Proto-East Chadic), the other initial **∅*. Just the few words mentioned as having the potential glottal stop illustrate why, historically speaking, the glottal element cannot be ignored, cf. Tobanga *ʔəsə* 'bone', *ʔūsà* 'cough' with Proto-Chadic **Jasu* and **Jahla*, respectively (Newman 1977a, items 13, 29).

Herrmann Jungraithmayr's description of Somrai is also a good first sketch. In a few pages, we get an overall picture of the phonemic inventory, the existence of grammatical gender, the formation of plurals, and the formation of verb stems, presented in a generally clear, straightforward manner. In his treatment of the verbal nouns, Jungraithmayr rejects his earlier apophony analysis (1976) in favor of a (morpho)phonological analysis along the lines proposed in Newman (1977b)—a work which, along with his own earlier paper, he chooses not to cite. In a brief but important paragraph (p. 189), Jungraithmayr documents the existence in Somrai of "plural verbs", a topic of current discussion among Chadic comparativists, but he neglects to point out the interesting fact, discoverable from his word list, that plural formation for verbs follows much the same rules as that for nouns.

In his transcription, Jungraithmayr adopts the scientifically pernicious convention (widespread among Chadicists because of the influence of Hausa orthography) of not writing initial /*ʔ*/ even when it is considered phonemic—note the ludicrous example (p. 186) of *ásá* 'cough' being used to illustrate verbs of the canonical shape CVCV. Previously, when we thought that no Chadic language had vowel-initial words, orthographic initial V was automatically understood to represent /*ʔV*/, so that there was no problem. But we now know that there is no such pan-Chadic rule and thus it is important to have an accurate phonemic representation for each individual language being described. From Jungraithmayr's own description, I would guess that glottal stop in Somrai is not phonemic (in spite of his explicit statement to the contrary), and that his transcription is therefore fortuitously correct. But the general point remains, namely, that whatever the phonemic analysis adopted for glottal stop (or any other potential phoneme), the decision should be clearly and unambiguously reflected in the corresponding representation system.

Michka Sachnine's description of Zime is the briefest in the collection. This is unfortunate, since the entire Masa group, to which Zime belongs,

is very poorly known and its position in the family is still the thorniest question in Chadic classification. The focus of Sachnine's brief sketch is the division of Zime verbs (in certain tense/aspects) into tone classes based on the initial consonant. Verbs with an initial voiceless or glottalized obstruent have Hi tone; those with a voiced obstruent (including prenasalized consonants) are Lo; those beginning with a sonorant apparently can be either. But a glance at the word list shows that a similar type of consonant/tone correlation also applies to nouns, so that it is difficult to know what particular significance to ascribe to its functioning in the verbal system. There is also the question of how Mid tone in the language fits into the consonant/tone correlation system. The Zime-French word list at the end of the article is presented not in alphabetical order but according to the organization of the phoneme chart (p. 215). Fortunately, this silly idea is ignored in the French-Zime list, which is presented in the scientifically absurd alphabetical order with which we are all familiar.

In recent years, various publications in linguistics have appeared under the title "working papers", the label often misused to refer to the inexpensive process of production and publication rather than to the nature of the content. In the case of this volume, the term would have been apt. This is not meant to demean the value of these sketches, which at this juncture constitute an important addition to our knowledge of individual languages in the Chadic family. But it is clear that the sketches have to be considered as preliminary reports, which hopefully will be superseded by fuller, more detailed studies, written in most cases by the authors of the present articles themselves.

NOTES

1. The classificatory position of the group to which each language belongs is indicated according to the reference system given in Newman (1977a).
2. Supported by NSF Grant SOC-7205563, with the assistance of the Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages, Bayero University, Kano.
3. In accordance with normal Chadic practice, I use /ə/ for the sixth vowel in Kotoko in place of the unnecessary symbol /y/ adopted by Bouny.

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Richard J. O'Brien and Wim A. M. Cuypers, *A Descriptive Sketch of the Grammar of Sebei*. (Georgetown University Working Papers on Languages and Linguistics, 9.) Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. 190 pp. \$ 1.50.

Reviewed by Chet A. Creider

The number of reasonably complete grammars of East African languages is still very small, and it is a pleasure to welcome a new one. In addition to completeness of coverage it has the virtue of being written in an explicit analytical framework (tagmemics) which, despite its limitations (pointed out by Postal 1964), provides interesting and accurate analysis at a number of potential pitfall points. The only other grammar of an African language written within a tagmemic framework is Painter's (1970) grammar of Gonja (Ghana). Sebei is a Southern Nilotic language in the Nilotic branch of the Eastern Sudanic sub-family of the Chari-Nile family in Greenberg's (1966) classification. In the classification of Tucker and Bryan (1966) it is a Paranilotic language and belongs to the "Kalenjin" group of these languages. Sebei is primarily spoken in Uganda. Its closest realtives are Nandi-Kipsigis (Kenya) and more distantly Päkot (Kenya) and Datog (Tanzania).

The grammar is a product of the collaboration between a missionary (Cuypers) and a linguist (O'Brien). The grammar was written without access to native speakers, and, particularly in the areas of segmental phonology and tonology is deficient. Despite these limitations, however, it will prove to be a useful tool for future investigators as well as providing a sound basis for pedagogical work on Sebei.

The phonology is based on the analysis of Montgomery (1966), and it is the vowel system which is of greatest interest. The chart (p. 11) below displays the vowel phonemes (short vowels are marked by a diaeresis).

	Front		Back	
High	i		u	
		ĩ	ü	
Mid	e	ë	ö	ò
		ä	ö	
Low	a		o	