

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI "L'ORIENTALE"  
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

Studi Africanistici  
Serie Ciado-Sudanese

7

**SELECTED PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
SYMPOSIUM ON WEST AFRICAN  
LANGUAGES**

University of Naples "L'Orientale"  
*Naples 27-28 March 2014*

*Edited by*

GIAN CLAUDIO BATIC and SERGIO BALDI



NAPOLI 2015



Studi Africanistici

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Serie Ciado-Sudanese

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**La Serie Ciado-Sudanese è diretta da**

**Sergio Baldi  
Rudolf Leger  
Herrmann Jungraithmayr  
Luigi Serra  
Henry Tournoux**

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## Introduction

The first Symposium on West African Languages (SyWAL) was held at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” (Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies) on the 27th and 28th of March, 2014. The aim of SyWAL, was to serve as a venue for scholars working on West African languages under a wide spectrum of theoretical perspectives and research approaches. The aim of this international meeting was to highlight descriptive, documental and theoretical issues from different regions and linguistic phyla of West Africa.

Scholars from Austria, Cameroon, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, and the United States have contributed to the success of this friendly and fruitful meeting. Of the 22 papers presented at the SyWAL, 20 have been selected for publication in the present volume.

The symposium was divided into four main thematic sessions: (a) description and analysis, (b) description and analysis of the Bole-Tangale languages, (c) language, society and culture, and (d) Chadic and linguistic theory. The proceedings mirror the same thematic organisation.

The first section is dedicated to the description and analysis of West African languages. In his opening paper, Herrmann Jungraithmayr discusses Chadic under a historical perspective, focusing on the process that brought Afro-Asiatic grammatical and lexical features into contact with Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo and Nilo-Saharan properties. Norbert Cyffer analyses subordination in Kanuri (Nilo-Saharan) and some of the grammatical changes that modulated it over the last two centuries. John Keegan’s paper describes a particular form of comitative as displayed in the Sara and Sara-Kaba languages (Nilo-Saharan). Komla Amegashie analyses a certain number of dictionaries of Ewe (Niger-Congo) under a comparative and metalexigraphic perspective, namely discussing their consistency with today’s language.

The second section targets Bole-Tangale, a group of West Chadic languages spoken in northern Nigeria. Anne Storch’s paper deals with interjections, ideophones and other ‘small words’ in Maaka, a Chadic language spoken in Yobe State. Used to frame propositions in terms of



plausibility and reliability, this class of words play an important role in conveying information and avoiding ambiguity. Rudolf Leger focuses on verbal plurality in Kupto, Kwami, and Widala, and highlights some aspects of the paradigmatic employment of agreement and semantic plurality. Gian Claudio Batic offers an overview of the verbal system and its morphology in Bure, a dying language belonging to the Bole proper. Georg Ziegelmeier discusses the major strategies of noun phrase and event coordination in Bade and Ngizim, arguing that coordination was not a prominent feature at an earlier stage of the language but evolved instead from a diachronic extension of comitative markers.

The third section is dedicated to the intertwining relationship bounding language, culture, and society. Henry Tourneux focuses on the communication gap between different cultures and proposes the creation of a *linguistique du développement*, a discipline aimed at an effective transmission of knowledge on intercultural basis. Aliyu Mu'azu delineates the current situation of Nigerian languages from the point of view of language planning, while Comfort Ojongnkpot and Alexandra Esimaje analyse the degree of language endangerment in the Manyu Division (South-West Cameroon). Sabrina Machetti and Raymond Siebetchu illustrate the results of a sociolinguistic survey on the use of the Bamiléké languages by Cameroonians residing in Italy. Izabela Will discusses the postural semantics of Hausa women, namely those gestures conveying disapproval or discontent and that could hardly be expressed by means of verbal statements. Sergio Baldi deals with animal-centred Hausa proverbs and discusses their symbolic and moral significance as well as their cultural significance from a didactic standpoint.

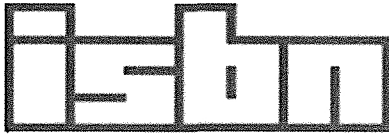
The third section, devoted to the contribution of Chadic studies to linguistic theory and African linguistics, is introduced by Nina Pawlak. In her paper, Pawlak discusses the potential of Chadic languages for testing and developing theoretical language models. Mahmoud Adam analyses the presence and adaptation of Hausa words in the lexicon of Ghanaian languages. Yakubu Azare deals with the issues of Hausa-English translation, and pays special attention to the lexico-semantic

innovations arising from the creativity of Hausa bilinguals. Hafizu Yakasai discusses the relation between bodily gestures and rising tone in Hausa, arguing that gestures function as emphatic markers and can be accompanied by specific tonal patterns. Usman Fagge proposes an analysis of count and mass nouns in Hausa highlighting the semantic and pragmatic constraints that govern the conversion of mass nouns into count nouns and vice versa.

Organised with determination and joy by Sergio Baldi, Gian Claudio Batic, and Alessandro Suzzi Valli, the SyWAL owes its success to all the scholars who attended the meeting. Our warmest thanks go to the four keynote speakers who kindly accepted our invitation: Herrmann Jungraithmayr (Frankfurt am Main), Anne Storch (Cologne), Henry Tourneux (Villejuif-Paris), and Nina Pawlak (Warsaw). We would also extend our gratitude to Mansour Ghaki and Mahmoud Adam who assisted us during the editing process.

On a proposal by Herrmann Jungraithmayr, we readily embraced the idea to dedicate this volume to the late Claude Gouffé (1926-2013).

*Gian Claudio Batic  
Sergio Baldi*



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