ADAPTATION AND DELIMITATION
SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE KANURIZATION
OF THE GAMERGU

Norbert Cyffer, Doris Löhr, Editha Platte and Abba Isa Tijani

Introduction

The area around the Lake Chad is characterized as an example for a region where ethnic changes abundantly took place and still do. For example some Kanuri districts, or the leaders of those districts, are (unofficially) named after other ethnic names (e.g. *Margi, Shuwa*) or Kanuri clan names are identical with ethnic names of other groups, eg. Tera, Bade. Both people speak a Chadic language and live in the south and west of the Kanuri respectively. These are indications that the Kanuri formerly absorbed and integrated these peoples.

These processes are not only a phenomenon of the past. In the case of the neighbouring Gamergu people an ongoing process of ethnic change towards a Kanuri identity is observed until present. The research projects[1] have revealed that the concept of "ethnic units" is far from being static which the term may suggest. This especially applies to the German *Stamm*, which implies a static concept of ethnicity. However, in Borno the dynamics of ethnic and linguistic change are prevailing. Therefore Ronald Cohen rejected the term "ethnic unit", or even "tribe" for the Kanuri and preferred "nation" instead (COHEN 1967). Umara Bulakarima argued along the same line but used "ethnic group" for Kanuri sub-units, e.g. Manga, Mowar, Suwurti (BULAKARIMA 1991).

There is no doubt that the Kanuri played a dominant part in the history of the Lake Chad area during the past centuries. Therefore the "Kanurization" process may not surprise. However, in the following it will be revealed that the processes of contact and resulting adaptations and delimitations are not necessarily uni-directional from Kanuri to other groups. At least in some cases they may go into the opposite direction, e.g. from Gamergu to Kanuri.

It could be possible that the process of "Kanurization" has to be considered from the linguistic point of view whereas the question of "Gamergurization" might require an approach from the perspective of material culture - meaning that the Kanuri might have adopted artifacts which were originally made and used by the Gamergu and are at the same time considered typical Kanuri objects if used by the Kanuri themselves. The verification of this hypothesis

---

[1] D. Löhr and N. Cyffer in the linguistic project and E. Platte and A.I. Tijani in the ethnological project.

was one of the objectives during the last field campaign of Platte, Löhr and Tijani in 1995 and some tentative results are presented here. Our supposition will be analysed ethnologically and linguistically, focusing on one specific aspect - the woman's room. Geographically we concentrate on the Konduga, Mafa and Marte districts of Borno State.

The term *Gamergu,* as used in this context, describes the Kanuri ethnonym for a people who call themselves *Málgwa*.[2] Gamergu is a Central Chadic language within the Afro-Asiatic language phylum[3] and is spoken in Borno State mainly by people living in rural areas along the shores of the river Yedseram. The Gamergu trace their relationship back to other Chadic speaking people.[4] Following CROZIER and BLENCH (1994) there are 19.300 Gamergu and three to four millions of Kanuri living in Nigeria. Kanuri is a Saharan language within the Nilo-Saharan phylum. Oral traditions of either people trace their origin back to the East. Kanuri identity is associated with Islam, whereas Gamergu are still regarded by most of the surrounding peoples as being "pagans".

In this context Ronald Cohen's statement on the complexity of ethnic relations is worth to be cited:

> Study of contemporary people in a complex world has now clearly shifted from ethnic isolated "tribes" if you will, to one in which the interrelations between such groups in rural, urban, and industrial settings within and between nation-states is a key, possibly the key element in their lives. (COHEN 1978:384)

This statement provides a guide-line in discussing cultural phenomena in terms of "modernization" rather than "acculturation", and lingusitic phenomena in terms of "contact" rather than "interferences".

---

[2] Because we already introduced the concept of 'Gamergurization', we decided to use the term 'Gamergu' for the people within this publication.

[3] Linguistically Gamergu is very close to Mandara. Both speech forms are considered as variants of the same language, a fact that BARTH (1862) already states and that was confirmed by recently gathered data.

[4] A tradition reported by Eldrige Mohammadou announces that 'Gamergu' can synonymously be used with Saw/Sawa who were the original settlers along the southwestern shores of the Lake Chad and along River Yedseram. Wandala - the autonym of the Mandara people - is an earlier clan of the Malgwa cluster. Due to traditions collected during our fieldwork, Gamergu deny any relationship with the So who are, according to their conviction, the ancestors of the Kanuri. We wish to thank Prof. Mohammadou for this information.

Traditions of migration of the Gamergu and Kanuri into Borno

Gamergu oral traditions[5] claim that four princes (*Kuwaama, Murama, Galrima* and *Mufioma*) migrated from the east, i.e. Mecca, to the Mandara mountains. One of them married the then female ruler *Mai Tebbunu*[6] and became the king, the *Mai* of Mandara (*Mai Mandarama Matta*) at Marua in present-day Cameroon. Marua was regarded as the seat of political authority. The other princes moved further west and settled in different towns[7]. From one of these settlements, Muna[8], the Gamergu moved northwards, following the waters of the river Yedseram. At Dogumba, a town on the western banks of the Yedseram, twin brothers were born. One stayed at Dogumba, the other went to Jolo. These two towns are now regarded as the centre of the main clans of Gamergu: the *Jolo* and *Dogumba*. From these towns further clans[9] of the Gamergu evolved. However, the oral traditions regarding the first settlers of that area are not clear. Some insist that the Gamergu came when the Kanuri were already in Borno, meaning that small polities like Marte, Ngala, Musune

---

[5] Information received from Mai Adam and Mai Madu of Ngarno and Mai Baram, *Lawan* of Kajeri, both in Mafa District.

[6] A similar tradition is quoted by BARKINDO (1989:79) as the 'Mandara legend'. In this tradition it is stated that Ishga-Kewe was the town and Sukda the female ruler.

[7] In Tebbumi, near Muna, at Mufio, at Nguru and at Lauma. The prince who settled in Lauma later became the Mai of Gawa which was ruled from Muna and extended from Bama to Yerwa, up to Dikwa and Monguno. Other Gamergu towns mentioned are: Bashari, Damba, Muyjine, Mait@ng@ne, B@la Arjyjaye, Sing@na, Az@nabaya, Mafa and Yerwa/Maiduguri. As village units, headed by a Gamergu, three are listed: Kajeri, which consists of 20 villages, Boboshe, which consists of 30 villages and Mainari, which consists of 30 villages. Villages that claim to be Kanuri but were originally Gamergu are mentioned as follows: Kublana, Bulangua, Mijitt@, all under the village-head of Boboshe.

[8] The Ngarno tradition insists that Muna extended from the Kanembu area north of Maiduguri to Tamsun Ngamdu in Mafa District. The Kajeri tradition states that the Gamergu reached from Amarwa to Fan@mashe and up to Mintar; from Mintar to Gulumba down to Muna. Additional information about Muna could only be obtained from HARFORD (1927) who says that Muna was established NNE of Maiduguri and that a large tamarind tree, growing in that area, functioned as land-mark between the Kanuri and Gamergu area. This tamarind is still today considered as 'sacred' and Gamergu are said to congregate under this tree once a year. The driver of any vehicle who originates from this area will not fail to blow the horn of his car to 'greet' the spirits (personal information given by G. Seidensticker-Brikay).

[9] Other clans of the Gamergu mentioned: Gumshewu, Tagd@fewu, Jologums@la, Mawu, Zulewu, Baleawu, Ndayakotsa and Tandu. (Information received from Ya Kaltum and Mai Adam from Ngarno, in August 1995). In HARFORD'S Colonial Konduga Report (1927: 48) the following Gamergu clans are mentioned: Ndatere, Ndumibudde, Mdunaga, Dubula, Mowa and Gumshe.

which were headed by a *Mai*, already existed[10]. MOHAMMADOU (1982: 82) is referring to another tradition which says that the Malgwa lived in the earlier times in the north - between Komadugu Yobe (River Yo) and the shores of Lake Chad - and because of the expansion of the Borno Empire were forced to migrate southwards. This view would be supported by a popular etymology which declares that the word *Gamergú* is related to Kanuri *ngawurú* or *ngawanú*, meaning "the owner of the land", or "the original settlers"[11].

The Kanuri insist as well that their ruling dynasty came from Yemen. They settled east of Lake Chad but had eventually to move to the River Yo area due to the lack of food. When their capital Birni Gazargamo had been destroyed by the Fulani in 1808, the rulers of Borno moved further south. Under the colonial rule they had to migrate again: this time from Kukawa to Maiduguri, the present capital of Borno state. Before the Shehu[12] moved to Maiduguri in 1907, the area of the modern centre of the Kanuri was known to be predominantly inhabited by the Gamergu with Muna being one of their centres. [13] Now, ninety years after Kanuri predominance was established in Maiduguri, one can hardly find anybody there who identifies himself as Gamergu[14], speaks the language with his kinsmen or maintains a culture different from that of his Kanuri neighbour.

Our special interest will focus on the culture of Gamergu and Kanuri women in rural areas, thus enabling us to attain a comparative analysis and to arrive at a conclusive statement about the assimilation of the Gamergu as well as aspects of adaptation and delimitation based on culture and language.

---

[10] Mai Airimi's land was quoted as an example for a Gamergu settlement. Mai Airimi is the *Mai* of Alau, now living in Gwange ward of Maiduguri.

[11] Cf. HARFORD (1927:33) who also states that the Gamergu were the earliest to arrive in the area around Konduga District. He continues that they were gradually driven to the fringe of the district by the Kanuri and that they now only dwell "in the former units of Jolo and Dogumba in Gawa, Awaleri in Kabuiri, Urga in Mairamri, and three towns on the eastern boundary of Aganadoa."

[12] The title for the Borno rulers after the change from the Sayfawa to the El-Kanemi dynasty in the 19th century. The only political title, said to be a Gamergu title, is *'Tubbune'* which has its equivalent in the Kanuri title *b@lama* "ward head".

[13] For a distribution of ethnic groups in 19th century Borno see BARTH (1857) and NACHTIGAL (1879-1889).

[14] This statement results from a survey, regarding settlement history and ethnic distribution in Maiduguri, conducted together with Waziri Ahmed Gazali in 1993. The question "Where did they disappear to?" has been touched briefly in "Forschung Frankfurt", where Platte focused on aspects of their change of identity rather than on their culture.

Gamergu and Kanuri woman's room

Like the Kanuri, Gamergu women have their individual rooms which are part of a larger compound, inhabited by other family members[15]. Each compound has a single entrance and is fenced with cut down thorny trees. The rooms are situated at some distance from one another with a large space in the centre of the compound. Spaces between the rooms are used for keeping granaries and firewood. Almost every room has a shelter construction at the front used for resting and some domestic activities. The room (G.: *brâ mǔkse*)[16] is a round construction, the walls of which consist of mats and mud which is bedaubed on the outside. This is said to be a new style. The roof frame is made of wood, with grass and cornstalks attached and fixed with two ropes at the height of the wall. Entering the room there is a large granary (G.: *ukuvrě*) on the right-hand side made of unburned clay and placed on a wooden structure. Beside that a wooden four-poster bed (G.: *ǔgd@ra*) with a canopy (G.: *katakǎra*) is placed. Only Gamergu women who have married recently use a modern bed instead, the metal "umbrella bed" (G.: *ǔgd@ra íra)*. Almost opposite to the entrance the eye is caught by an arrangement of decorated pots (G.: *gayǎnga)*, decorated calabashes of different sizes, wooden bowls (G.: *kwatǎme, bǔgǔro*) and baskets (G.: *z@ga, zokwǎ*). To the left of the entrance lies the grinding stone (G.: *uvurǎ*) which is mounted on a wooden construction and enables the woman to work in a more comfortable, standing position. Adjacent to it the permanent fire place (G.: *alcǎ*) built of mud is situated; it has a small opening for firewood. The largest space on the left side is reserved for the animals (G.: *katanǎwe*). At night during the dry season and also at daytime during the rainy season, some goats and cows are tethered there. The animal yard is fenced with wooden pegs to separate the area from other parts.

The Kanuri woman's room (K.: *njîm kǎmǔbe*) is rectangular, at least in the eastern region of Borno. Walls and the roof are made of mud, but a good amount of wood is used for the roof construction, too. There are two main differences between the Gamergu and the Kanuri room:

- the fireplace of the Kanuri woman occupies a separate room (K.: *kannurǎm*) and has a mobile stove (K.: *fǔwo*), so that cooking can be done either in or outside the room, depending on the weather conditions.

- the second difference is that animals are not allowed into the Kanuri woman's room; they are tethered outside at night and during the rainy season

---

[15] The term "room" is understood as a space of privacy for the women, where men are mainly excluded (see ARDENER 1981). In the architectural typology the term "house" would be more appropriate, meaning a dwelling where the walls are separated from the roof.

[16] 'G' stands for Gamergu, 'K' for Kanuri. Only high and contour tones are marked, low tones remain unmarked in this publication.

they either remain untethered in the open space or they are kept in a separate room.

In the olden days a mud bed (K.: *d̃ỹ̃l katti*) was built in the Kanuri woman's room which in the meantime has been replaced by a mattress or a mat, which is covered with carpets depending on the financial situation of the couple. The Kanuri also make use of the umbrella bed (K.: *d̃ỹ̃l kũra*), even more often than the Gamergu. It is placed in addition to a regular bed for sleeping. The centre wall of the room is occupied by the arrangement of decorated pots (K.: *fuwur̃m*), wooden bowls (K.: *bũwũr*), baskets (K.: *z̃a, zow̃*) and calabashes (K.: *k̃mo, d̃mb̃*), being replaced more and more by enamel dishes (K.: *t̃sa*) and china ware. In the past, this display (K.: *z̃ye*) was arranged on a mud shelf (K.: *d̃ng̃ram*) which is now substituted by a wooden shelf and the latest "fashion" is a room-divider which goes together with a dressing mirror and a decorated fancy bed in "milk-colour".

Marriage among the Gamergu and Kanuri

Most of the objects which are exhibited and used in a Gamergu and Kanuri woman's room are wedding presents given to the bride. The room is built by the groom and his friends; the mother of the bride provides the dishes and most of the room decoration. An innovation in both cultures is the metal "umbrella bed" including all the necessary accessories which is brought by the father of the bride. "Brought by the father" or "mother" respectively is the simplification of a complex social network which consists of male and female relatives as well as friends who contribute by giving out her daughter. Every bride and moreover every mother remembers the origin of individual objects even many years after the wedding has taken place. For the Kanuri these wedding gifts given to the bride are regarded as the last occasion when they can "do something" for their daughter. This is the moment when the girl is equipped with property on which she has to live for the next years and, if unlucky, for the rest of her life. This wealth will be spent if she becomes ill, divorced or whenever she is in need of money.

Like in many societies, marriage is a complex event in the course of which the exchange of property, the announcement of agreements, and the performance of certain rituals establish a new kinship relation. Our knowledge about a traditional Gamergu marriage is still scarce[17], while a lot more is known about Kanuri marriage[18]. We therefore can only give a synopsis of Gamergu marriage traditions to show similarities and differences between

---

[17] J.D. HARFORD's few notes on Gamergu marriage (1927) is the only publication known to the authors. Additional information we received from Ya Cinta, an elderly potter lady from Ngawramari, and Ya Kaltum from Ngarno.

[18] For a detailed description of Kanuri marriage rites see eg. GAZALI and PLATTE (forthcoming).

Kanuri and Gamergu customs. Ya Cinta, a Gamergu lady, described a marriage as follows:

> The father of the groom-to-be will go to the parents of the bride-to-be to say that they want her hand in marriage. The groom-to-be will then come and sleep in the house of the bride; the parents will ask him if he wants their daughter. He will then say "Yes, I like her". Then the groom and his parents will present some presents (wealth, animals), including clothes, kola-nuts, soap, mats, cream, jewellery, and many other things will be given to the bride. In one year or two they will then get her married. That is when they bring mats, wrappers, blouses in plenty and then the marriage is concluded. In some cases, were the groom is not wealthy enough, it may take up to two to three years from the day of announcing the intent to the day of marriage. In the olden days you will spent up to 30 Maria Theresia Dollars. [...] The groom's mother washes her son's hands while the brides mother washes those of her daughter. When they finished washing, they will put some food onto their hands and then pour it away. They will then put henna onto the hands. After the henna [was put on], the groom's father will place an axe into his son's hands while the mother of the bride will slip a silver ring onto her daughter's finger. After this procedure, people will then come, one after the other, to present money to bride and groom. After donations have been collected they will disperse.

The official night of groom and bride before the marriage is conducted by giving bride-wealth (K.: *sadâwu*) and offering prayers at the *Fatiha*[19] which is rather different from the Kanuri custom. For example an axe is placed into the hand of the bridegroom. This is interpreted as a symbol of stability of the marriage. Not only HARFORD (1927: 23) but also Muslim Kanuri considered the first part of the description in particular as "there is no marriage at all" in the Gamergu culture. The following statement of a Kanuri village head who has been ruling Gamergu people for over thirty years illustrates the affinity between religion and marriage customs and the official pressure which forced Gamergu to adopt the Kanuri marriage customs:

> They [the Gamergu] repented during my time, they started praying and conducting their marriage according to the feelings of Islam. Formerly, there was nothing like that. Formerly, they just took away a woman and she became a wife - like a dog or a thief. They just carried away anybody's wife. One could go and claim back his wife. There were no prayers, no paper marriage. That was about 34 years ago and they repented in the last 21 years. We wrote a letter to the Shehu and informed him. They rallied around me and agreed to conduct their marriage like the Muslim and they gave up the spear-dance when one of them died. What word do you call a person who takes a spear to light Allah? Formerly we rejected them but now they have repented. Even now among them there are less than 50 purely conducted marriages out of thousands of them. When a person performs ablution and reads the opening part of the Qur'an, he is considered a Muslim. They have not yet entered Qur'an completely. They did all this because they were afraid of the authorities. They left their roots (but) neither became part of the Kanuri nor (did they) embrace the Kanuri

---

[19] In descriptions of a Kanuri wedding it is not unusual, too, that the *Fatiha* - the most important part of a Muslim wedding - is not mentioned.

culture.[...] Now we have accepted their repentance. The Shehu has agreed. If somebody agrees to repent it is alright, otherwise he can remain like that. That is how they stay. Whoever agreed to become a Muslim is welcome, even if he is a Shuwa. We judge him by that and the person who refuses to practise it is not part of us.

Comparative analysis of room and marriage among Gamergu and Kanuri

One main difference concerning the woman's room is the shape of the construction: it is round in the Gamergu society whereas the one of the Kanuri, at least in the eastern region of Borno, is rectangular. Further differences are two sections which are included in the Gamergu woman's room - the fireplace and the yard for the animals - but which occupy a separate room and space in Kanuri culture. Moreover, a wooden bed and a grinding stone on a wooden construction cannot be found in present-day Kanuri culture.

Two sections should be pointed out as being similar. These are the unburnt granary as well as the decorated dishes which are still the same in an old woman's room in the rural areas. The tradition of basket plaiting is unknown among the Gamergu which explains the identical Kanuri terminology and the design of these objects in both cultures, and which can be regarded as an innovation from Kanuri into Gamergu culture. The black, wooden bowls are identical and the calabashes are similar. Pots which have been shown to us as being typical Gamergu are found all over Maiduguri where they are claimed to be Kanuri pots[20]. Like in another cultural context it is also difficult to make clear statements about who dominated whose material culture. Even in the marriage system, where both groups insist that the Muslim custom of a Kanuri marriage nowadays prevails, there are certain aspects which are regarded as "typical" Kanuri but are likewise considered "traditional" Gamergu. These are for instance:

- *kalapt@2*: ritual exchange of food between groom and bride, which is not performed any longer in many Kanuri families.
- *ka2la2 ng@nat@2*: the blessing of the couple with okra or baobab leave sauce. *kalapt@2* and *ka2lu2 ng@n@2* are the only Kanuri marriage rites termed as "initiation" (K.: *kala2wa*). In many recent marriages only *ka2lu2 ng@nat@2* is performed in that context.

Other aspects could be added, like the *go2to2*, one of the hairstyles regarded to be of Kanuri origin, yet being now the most prominent hairstyle among the Gamergu women.

We can summarize that in rural areas a distinguishable material culture and language of the Gamergu and Kanuri is still maintained; but aspects of the

---

[20] This variation of Kanuri pottery is part of one style out of seven distinctive stylistic areas, found in Borno according to PLATTE's analysis of 'Kanuri pottery traditions'.

marriage system are undergoing fundamental changes. This is mainly due to the fact that Gamergu have embraced Islam with the greatest impact - as far as the authors can state at the present stage of research - on the marriage traditions. Accordingly changes in Kanuri culture can be observed. Adaptation and delimitation are part of that process of cultural and identity change which could be stated in both cultures. It would be a simplification to summarize these processes under the cover-term "assimilation". It is defined as a "process of affiliation from one ethnic group to another"[21] and neglects the fact that also the so-called "dominant" group is undergoing cultural changes.

Linguistic analysis of the semantic field "woman's room"

Along with ethnological studies also linguistic research on Kanuri and Gamergu was conducted. The material presented here is an excerpt from wordlists of some 1600 words of the basic and cultural vocabulary of the above-mentioned languages[22]. Of these wordlists, about 60 words belong to the semantic field "woman's room", and consist of some of the lexemes for furniture, pots, baskets, hairstyles, and marriage terms.

In addition to our focus on Gamergu and Kanuri contact phenomena, we chose to include some of our data on Kotoko, a Central Chadic language which up to now has hardly been studied, thus allowing to supply and support our hypothesis with more comparative material. Gamergu and Kotoko, both situated at the periphery of the Kanuri region, do not have a common border, i.e. we can expect words that are common only to Kanuri and Gamergu as well as glosses shared by Kanuri and Kotoko exclusively.

Our data examined some phonological processes which occurred within Kanuri and Gamergu and which indicate contact phenomena between the two languages. It is only with the combination of linguistic and ethnological evidence and the co-operation of the two disciplines that we can become sufficiently aware of former and recent events and processes that affected both languages and peoples. The intertwined history of many different ethnic groups in the Borno region, having closely lived together for centuries and shared the same environment will be investigated within a linguistic framework by applying historical and anthropological methods.

Again, it is the authors' hypothesis that not only the Kanuri - as the dominant group - are the providers of those words we carelessly call "loan words", and thus implying Kanuri to be the donor language for Gamergu. The Gamergu themselves, having been the autochthonous population of the Borno

---

[21] Cf. HARTFIELD/ HILLMANN (1982).

[22] The data was collected during various field stays in Gamergu villages since 1994 and will be presented by LÖHR as Ph.D. on "interferences between Chadic and Saharan languages" (working title). TIJANI is also preparing a Ph.D. on "Gamergu material culture".

region before the arrival of the Kanuri/Kanembu from the eastern side of the Lake Chad, used their own cultural terms, therefore we can assume that any linguistic influence must have been reciprocal.

Considering the present ethno-linguistic and political situation in Borno, one tends to assume that most words shared by various languages are Kanuri loan words. Through identification of phonological processes of the respective languages we try to detect the direction of borrowing and different ways of influence which Kanuri exercises on these languages and vice versa.

For the comparison of common phonological features of the Kanuri language and features predominantly occurring in Central Chadic languages, an insight into the phonology of these languages is imperative[23].

Examples

The first example[24] (34) shows the lexemes for "wooden bowl". The reflexes are in Kanuri: *bɪ̀wɪ̀r*, in Gamergu: *bɪ̀gɪ̀ro*, and in Kotoko: *bɪ̀gɪ̀ro*. These three words represent a common root which underwent different phonological processes. By reconstructing a language, using the historical-comparative method, we should assume an older, underlying form **B-G-R*[25]. This form reflects three consonants and therefore resembles the pattern *bɪ̀gɪ̀ro* that we find in Gamergu and Kotoko. From a Kanuri-centric linguistic point of view the process of weakening the voiced velar plosive /g/ to a semi-vowel /w/ took place. Within the Kanuri phonology this trait is a very common synchronic process (see CYFFER 1981). We can state that Kanuri, Gamergu and Kotoko use - apart from the final vowel - identical forms.

This example verifies ethnological evidence. As the production of wooden bowls is not a typical craft of the Kanuri, why should the Gamergu borrow this term from the Kanuri? Furthermore, the Kotoko form is identical with that of the Gamergu, thus supporting the above-mentioned assumption that Kanuri is not *a priori* the donor language of loan words.

The next examples refer to weakening processes: in the course of our analysis we were able to establish regular sound correspondences of the languages, e.g. of Gamergu /g/ to Kanuri /g/[26]. The sound correspondence of Gamergu /k/ to Kanuri /g/, that means the contrast of voiced and voiceless consonants is frequent, too. Examples (16) and (28) represent the latter:

---

[23] For information about Kanuri phonology see BULAKARIMA (1991), for Mandara see EGUCHI (1969) and MIRT (1970/71), and for a Kotoko phonemic chart see BOUNY (1977).

[24] Numbers given in the following presentation of examples (of some of the most obvious phonological processes) refer to those used in the glossary.

[25] Because of their instability vowels are by far more difficult to reconstruct, therefore we excluded them from our tentative analysis.

[26] In the Kanuri phonology we find the allophonic realization of /k/ and /g/ as [w], depending on the environment (cf. CYFFER 1981).

Gamergu: *dankàram* "mud shelf" and Kanuri: *dàngàram*; Gamergu: *fukeràm* "specially decorated pot" and Kanuri: *fuwuràm, fuguràm*.

Here we have to consider the possibility of *-ràm* being the Kanuri locative instrumental suffix and therefore the Gamergu words being loan words from Kanuri. The borrowing might have taken place earlier when the Kanuri form was something like *fukuram*, resembling thus common processes that we observed in Kanuri during the last 150 years.

Another process is the apparent deplosivation or weakening (fricativization) of /b/ to /w/ in Kanuri which is shown in our example (29), representing an "earthen pot for storing drinking water", Kanuri: *gùwom*, Gamergu: *gùbom*[27].

In the Gamergu sound system, and also common in many other Central Chadic languages, we find a phoneme /kw/; Kanuri which does not have this phoneme, reflects it as [w][28]. That corresponds with a deletion of /k/ in the environment of vowels, a frequent occurrence in Kanuri. Example (43) "bottle", in Gamergu: *kwàlba* is reflected as *kàlwà* in Kanuri and *kwòlbo* in Kotoko. This word is spread over the whole area (cf. Hausa: *kwàlbàa*) and may be regarded as an example for recent adoption processes occurring simultaneously in different languages.

A similar opposition we find with the lexeme (42) for "cap", Kanuri: *zàwà*, Gamergu: *zàgwa*. The Kotoko form *tsòkpa* does not reflect consonant weakening or voicing and reveals more correspondences to Gamergu. Most probably the Kanuri form "lost" the /g/ intervocally which is - as said before - a predominant feature in the Yerwa dialect. The occurence of sounds which are uncommon in Kanuri but usual in Chadic languages leads to the assumption of a non-Kanuri origin of this lexeme.

Number 22 shows an example of deletion; the lexeme for a "round plaited basket", Kanuri: *zàa*, Gamergu: *z@ga*, Kotoko: *zàga*. Here we seem to have an underlying common form. Apparently the deletion of an intervocalic velar consonant took place, an - already mentioned - typical feature in Kanuri phonology (see BULAKARIMA 1991). The correspondences with Kotoko *zàga* seem to strengthen the hypothesis of a Chadic origin of this word. Why should two different languages develop an intervocalic /g/ simultaneously but independently?

Here the direction of borrowing - viz. from a Chadic language into Kanuri - seems to be clear. However, the linguistic conclusion contradicts ethnological data, as we found out that usually Gamergu do not weave baskets.

---

[27] Cf. footnote 28. The consonant /b/, too, is weakened to [w] in Kanuri depending on the environment. The correspondance is therefore Gamergu /b/ to Kanuri /b/, the latter being subject to allophonic changes.

[28] This is probably also evident in the toponym "Dikwa" which is articulated in Kanuri as [Diwá].

Consequently a diachronic approach towards the Kanuri language might be helpful. If we compare the linguistic data of Kanuri which the traveller H. Barth collected in the 1850s with recently gathered data, we find a number of equivalents and older, more "complete" forms[29]. During the last 150 years Kanuri forms underwent regular phonological changes, which now, at a first glance, do not seem to be identical, yet with linguistic expertise they are recognisable as cognates. Recent studies (see LÖHR 1995) show that the Gamergu language is by far more conservative than Kanuri. Thus we cannot rule out that both, Gamergu and Kotoko, borrowed the older form $^{*}zag\grave{a}$ from Kanuri which - in Kanuri - had changed to $za\grave{a}$. The older, more complete forms of Kanuri have been retained in other comparable Chadic languages.

Summary

The glosses given above are examples of some phonological processes which occurred in the three languages under study. Some of these processes show either the time or the direction of borrowing. Regarding the semantic field, Kanuri and Gamergu have almost half of the lexemes in common; Kanuri and Kotoko only share about 15 lexemes. Gamergu and Kotoko each share a small number of a common lexicon with the Kanuri language exclusively. Exceptions are those words that have spread over the whole area, are due to Islamic influence or those which derive from a common Chadic stock.

Our study shows how the languages have influenced each other. Previous research has drawn attention to the high percentage of "common words" in Gamergu and Kanuri. In order to trace the direction of borrowing further linguistic proof of ethnological findings is imperative.

We would like to describe recent processes as "modernization" regarding ethnology and "language contact" regarding linguistics rather than asserting a one-way Kanuri influence on adjacent languages. Unquestionably Kanuri has strongly influenced Gamergu which consequently led to a so-called "Kanurization" of the latter and their "disappearance" from the area they had dominated only 120 years ago. Despite the recent Gamergu acceptance of the Kanuri language and identity, we should keep in mind that in the olden days there have been processes of language contacts - the more so as we can safely assume that the Gamergu then played a more important role than we are prepared to assign to them today.

---

[29] For more examples see BARTH (1857) eg. *"basket"*: *zàkwa*.

Glossary

Objects and segments of the Kanuri, Gamergu and Kotoko woman's room

	Kanuri	Gamergu	Kotoko	Gloss
1	njîm	bré	fuÎ	room, round shaped house
2	shără	kasharăki	fuÎz@ lăgwa	rectangular house, room
3	njîm kămube	brâ mukse	fuÎz@ g@r@m	woman's room
4	njîm k@larăm	brâ jíle	fuÎz@ g@rongo	head of household's room
5	zairorăm	brâ dăwăle	g@mnăru	bachelor's room
6	kannurăm	brâ ge dăfa	măg@r	kitchen
7	ngawudí	iga brê	guÎlau	bathroom, toilet
Sections of the room				
8	(not in Kanuri woman's room)	katanăwe	(not in Kotoko woman's room)	part of the room where animals are kept
9	fuwo/ fuko	alcă	m@g@/măg@	cooking place
10	kâu nyet@	uvură	kau s@k@n/kâu nyet@	grinding stone
11	díyél	ugd@ra	(kăg@)	wooden bed with baldachin
12	díyél kura	ugd@ra	(no modern type)	umbrella bed, made of metal
13	díyl kattî	(not used by Gamergu)		mud bed, platform
14		katakăra	(not used)	baldachin
15	zăye	kalTănga/gayănga	msăle	objects for room decoration
16	dăngăram	dankăram	msăle	mud shelf for keeping pots
17	băzam	ukuvrě	buga/seběye	earthen granary inside woman's room

62

	Kanuri	Gamergu	Kotoko	Gloss
			Calabashes	
18	k@mo gana2	f@2ka/fu2ka	ë2lo/ë@la2ho	small decorated calabash
19	d@mba2	da2g@le	d@mba2/mb@liy@2	large undecorated calabash, as container for grain
20	jiwí	kud@rá	g@mb@l/ba2ri	calabash gourd for keeping water
21	zunguru2	v@líva	zunguru2	calabash used for dyeing hands
			Baskets	
22	z2a	z@2ga	z2ga	round basket
23	zow2	zokwa2	ka2la2m/z2kwa	basket made of palm leaves
24	k@ndâi	k@ndâi	k@ndâi/k@mbíyo	small plaited basket
25	f@2lai	f@2lai	k@la2äe/t2bo	lid, plaited plate, cover
26	garang	g@rang	kala2m/ululu	big, loosely woven basket
27	wûll2		ululu	big basket made of twigs
			Pots	
28	fuwurám, fugurám	fukera2m		big, decorated pot to store cloth and grains, part of arrangement
29	gu2wom	gúbom	äu2gwe	earthenware pot for storing water
30	ng2ya	k2ya/w2gaiya	kara2wu	pot with wide neck
31	k2lo ka2lu2be	ng2 ka2lube/shíya	@sk2 b@li (sic!)	pot for preparing soup
32	k2lo b@2ribe/k2lo de2tabe	shíya/ngá dáfa	@sk2/k2lwuse/tso	pot for preparation of food, grain
33	k2lo njîram/njê njîram	gaya2wa	low2	pot for carrying water
			Miscellaneous	
34	bu2wu2r	bu2gu2ro/k@tam/ kwata2me	bu2gu2ro	black wooden bowl
35	kûr	z@2ra	s@2ríyo/tsíryo	wooden mortar
36	t2sa	t2sa	t2sa	enamel dish

	Kanuri	Gamergu	Kotoko	Gloss
37	bîr	bîr	bir	cushion, pillow
38	dílam	dílam	mb@liy@m@	cup made from calabash gourd
39	b@ji	bu@ce	bísi	mat
40	ku@t@ram	ku@t@ram	ku@t@ram	dressing mirror
41	bork@	b@rkwa	b@rko	blanket
42	z@w@	z@gwa	s@gb@/ts@kpa	cap
43	k@lw@	kw@lba	kw@lbo	bottle
	Marriage terms			
44	nyiyâ	níka	níka	marriage, Fatiah-day
45	misk@rú	@kfue	nä@skom@g@	bridal feast
46	k@lu@ ng@nat@	k@lu@ ng@nat@	(they don't do it)	blessing the couple with okra sauce
47	kal@wa		(unknown)	initiation
48	sad@wu/sadág@	sad@wu	s@d@k	wedding gifts, bridewealth
49	luw@li	luw@li	luw@la	representative of the bride
50	kusu@su	kusu@su	kusu@su	bridegroom's elder brother
51	shang@lti	shing@lti	f@wor	hairstyle for married women
52	g@t@	g@t@	kushína	hairstyle for old women
53	k@layakk@	k@lok@lo	k@layask@	hairstyle for unmarried girls
54	fijeríya	figeríya	fugeríye	hairstyle for married women
55	loru@sa	loru@sa	mts@baî	bride/-groom
56	amid@	amid@	kyerkyer@	young married woman, not up to 20 years
57	gumsu@	mu@kse	kamsu@	elderly woman

Only high tones and falling tones are marked, loan words are not indicated.

References

a) Publications

ARDENER, S. (ed.) (1981): Women and space. Ground rules and social maps. London

BARKINDO, B.M. (1989): The Sultanate of Mandara to 1902. Studien zur Kulturkunde, Bd. 91. Stuttgart

BARTH, H. (1857): Travels and discoveries in Central Africa. London

BARTH, H. (1862): Collection of vocabularies of Central-African languages. Neudruck: London (1971)

BOUNY, P. (1977): Inventaire phonetique d'un parler Kotoko: le Mandague de Mara. In: Etudes phonologiques tchadiennes. Ed. by J.P. Caprile. p. 59-78. Paris

BULAKARIMA, U. (1991): Studies in Kanuri Dialectology: Phonology and Dialectal Distribution in Mowar. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Maiduguri

COHEN, R. (1978): Ethnicity: Problem and focus in Anthropology. In: Annual Review of Anthropology 1978, vol.7: 379-403

COHEN, R. (1967): The Kanuri of Bornu. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology. New York

CROZIER, D.H./BLENCH, R. (eds.) (1994): An Index of Nigerian Languages. Dallas

CYFFER, N. (1981): Consonant variation in Kanuri (Maiduguri dialect). In: Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von A. Vorbichler. Teil 1. Ed. by I. Hofmann. p. 1-29. Wien

CYFFER, N./JUNGRAITHMAYR, H./PLATTE, E./VOGELS, R. (1994): Auf den Spuren vergangener Kulturen. Dynamik ethnischer und sprachlicher Prozesse im Mega-Tschad-Raum. In: Forschungen Frankfurt, Heft 4: 26-35

EGUCHI, P. (1969): Memoranda on some languages of the Mandara mountains in the northern Cameroons. In: Kyoto University African Studies, vol. 4: 133-157

GAZALI, W./PLATTE, E. (forthcoming): Marriage Prestation and Ceremonies among the Kanuri of Borno, Nigeria

HARTFIELD, G./HILLMANN, K.-H. (1982): Wörterbuch der Soziologie. Stuttgart

LÖHR, D. (1995): Kanuri-Lehnwörter im geographischen Wortschatz des Gamergu. In: Mensch und Natur in Westafrika. Eine interdisziplinäre Festschrift für Günter Nagel. Ed. by K. Brunk and U. Greinert-Byer. p. 243-250. Frankfurt

MIRT, H. (197/71): Zur Morphologie des Verbalkomplexes im Mandara. Afrika und Übersee 54:1-76

MOHAMMADOU, E. (1982): Le Royaume du Wandala ou Mandara au XIXe siecle. African Languages and Ethnography, Bd. XIV. Kyoto

NACHTIGAL, G. (1879-89): Sahara and Sudan. 3 vols. Berlin

WENTE-LUKAS, R. (1985): Handbook of ethnic units in Nigeria. Studien zur Kulturkunde, Bd. 74. Stuttgart

b) Archival material

HARFORD, J.D. (1927): Special Report on Konduga District, Bornu Emirate Division. Bornu Province SNP17K5487