

IS THERE A FURU LANGUAGE GROUP? AN INVESTIGATION ON THE CAMEROON-NIGERIA BORDER

Roland Breton
CREA, Yaoundé

In the Furu-Awa Subdivision of the North-West Province of Cameroon, where the population is predominantly Jukun speaking, three languages have been found between 1984 and 1986, spoken by old people of the formerly predominant inhabitants called the Furu. Their origin is not known and the affiliation of their languages does not seem to be Jukunoid; two of them, Bikya and Bishuo, are probably Beboïd, the third and most important, Busuu, seems to have no clear link with any surrounding group. Bikya had only one speaker left, Bishuo two, and Busuu ten.

A Furu-Awa, arrondissement de la province du nord-ouest du Cameroun, où la population parle d'une manière prédominante le jukun, on a trouvé trois langues entre 1984 et 1986, que parle seulement très peu de personnes du groupe autochtone auparavant prédominant, appelé furu. On ne connaît pas leur origine et leur langues ne semblent pas être affiliées à la langue jukun; mais deux d'entre elles, le bikya et le bishuo, sont selon toute apparence béboïdes, tandis que la troisième, la plus importante le busuu, ne semble pas être nettement affiliée à aucun autre groupe voisin. Il n'y avait qu'un locuteur de la langue bikya, deux de la langue bishuo et dix de la langue busuu.

0. INTRODUCTION

When the *Preliminary Survey of the Languages of Cameroon* (Dieu and Renaud 1983) was undertaken in 1983/1985, two small zones were still *terrae incognitae* to linguists, and thus left blank, as "areas requiring further investigation". In the following years the ALCAM (*Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun*) team sent successive missions to these regions, both of which are located along the Nigerian border and separated from the rest of Cameroon by thick forests. In Akwaya Subdivision these missions confirmed the existence of a cluster of small Tivoid languages, akin to the other languages of this group found on the other side of the border.

But, in Furu-Awa Subdivision (then a District), five languages were discovered which have never been reported. They are spoken by only small groups of people. Two of them, Akum and Beezen, spoken in one village each, were definitely Jukunoid as the rest of the languages of the region on both sides of the border. But the three other speech forms, Busuu, Bishuo, and Bikya, were spoken by only a few old people belonging to the former ruling families of four villages whose names are preceded by the word "Furu". For the last few generations, the remaining part of the Furu population have been linguistically Jukun speakers. The language shift was evident, but the origin of the Furu was unknown, as was the linguistic affiliation of their languages. The ALCAM team investigated what could be heard and said on the spot and then proceeded to its usual analysis based on the Q.E.L. method (120 word list), including phonological study and comparison with other languages through computer processing of this lexicostatistic data as defined in *Structures and méthodes*. For the Furu-Awa languages this task was done by the late Michel Dieu, who was the initiator and proponent of the method, and who previously applied it to other language classification problems of Cameroon and of the other countries of the ALAC (*Atlas de l'Afrique Centrale*) programme, i.e., Central African Republic, Zaïre, Congo, Burundi and Rwanda, covered by the *Inventaires Préliminaires* series. It was with the Furu languages that Michel Dieu started to elaborate a new morphosyntactic method which would complement the lexicostatistic analysis and which could be especially fruitful for these languages situated within the contact area between Bantu and non-Bantu areas.

However, the death of Michel Dieu in 1992 interrupted the work. Nevertheless I want to dedicate this short study to him, and make clear that all linguistic conclusions are his, and all the following illustrations (matrix of similarity rate, classification tree and net of similarity rate), though drawn by me, are only based on his own calculations

and comparisons. He has thoroughly approved both the text and the accompanying illustrations.

Let me add also that no other study has yet made any reference to the Furu languages, and that the first linguistic map of the region mentioning them was published in the *Administrative Atlas of the National Languages of Cameroon*, p. 131: Menchum Division (Breton and Fohtung 1991).

The three missions transported by helicopter to Furu-Awa in December 1984, June 1985, and December 1986, have finally permitted the completion of the ALCAM linguistic inventory of the last unknown area of Cameroon. Thanks to these missions, one can now for the first time:

1 draw a very precise topographic *map* of the human settlements in the Subdivision;

2 make an *ethnological table* of the people who live there; and

3 prepare a complete *linguistic inventory* consistent with the standards of ALCAM.

It is the presentation of this threefold task that will be undertaken here.

1. GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION OF THE FURU-AWA SUBDIVISION

The Furu-Awa Subdivision, created as a District in 1982 and promoted to a Subdivision in 1991, corresponds to the northern extremity of the Menchum Division, going down in a wedge shape into Nigeria (Taraba State) to the boundary of the former 'Northern Cameroon'. With an area of around 1,400 square kilometers, it extends for about sixty kilometers from west to east and about fifty from north to south. Its population of 4,000 inhabitants at the time of the census of 1976, must presently be above 6,000.

This Subdivision is defined geographically as including all the part of the Menchum Division (chieftown Wum) situated to the north of the River Katsina-Ala, which joins the Benue in Nigeria. Thus its boundaries are fixed: to the south by the Katsina-Ala, to the east by the boundary of the Fundong Subdivision and the Donga-Mantung Division (chieftown Nkambe) and to the north and the west by the Nigerian border. It is a sparsely populated region (average four inhabitants per square kilometer), and at least half of which is completely uninhabited, which means that the population in the inhabited areas would only attain a density of around ten inhabitants per square kilometer.

The unpopulated areas are made up of,
—the Forest Reserve said to be located in Fungom (Fungom is located, in fact, well to the south of the Subdivision towards the ring road);
—a reserve situated on both sides of the Katsina-Ala River which runs obliquely into the Subdivision, dividing it into a northern part, which is more populated and which extends in a wedge shape into Nigeria, and an eastern part which is also almost uninhabited; and
—a reserve which distinctly separates this inhabited northern part of the Subdivision from the rest of Cameroon.

The first motorable road only reached Kpwep in 1985 and until then, the district was only linked to the rest of Cameroon by footpaths through the forest. Even now one can only go from one village to another on foot or by helicopter. Our mission was the first to land in Furu-Awa by helicopter.

This region was previously little explored by scientists and is still only covered to a small extent by local maps. The existing topographic maps (sheets to the scale of one to 200,000 (Paris 1971) of Nkambe and, to a lesser extent, of Akwaya) give a very precise idea of the relief and of the hydrography but, as far as the population is concerned, is completely deficient. It has:

—villages placed several kilometers from their real location;

—a very approximate, erroneous, incomplete list of place names;

- an imprecise and incomplete sketch of the roads;
- no correspondence between the administrative hierarchy of the chiefdoms and the urban centers represented and named; and
- the representation of the population by an abundance of dots in areas that are in fact empty, and hardly any dots in the inhabited areas.

The reprint of the Nkambe map (1983, Yaoundé) is not much better. It reproduces almost all the previous errors. Several minor corrections have been made, the principal one consisting of enlarging the characters of the word Furu-Awa, accompanying it with the symbol DT (district headquarters), but still in the wrong place, more than ten kilometers to the north of its real location. The hydrography has become illegible and the relief has become obliterated in certain places. In addition to not representing the land accurately, serious typographical errors are added.

The above reasons made our mission necessary and our task complicated because it no longer simply consisted of stating the ethnic and linguistic characteristics of a given people, but of doing research into the existence and location of these settlements before being able to distinguish them. Such a task has only been possible in the area itself, after obtaining permission from the local administrative authority, the Divisional Officer, having called together all the village chiefs or their representatives; and by a careful flight over the region including stops for verification of the information obtained. This permits us to present here the first maps of the population of this subdivision and the first list of its peoples.

2. PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

The Furu-Awa Subdivision extends to the northwest extremity of the Grassfields. Here, the border of the volcanic plateau slowly descends towards Nigeria where the Katsina-Ala flows into the Benue. It is a region of high altitude, with summits currently more than 1,000 meters, but with many steep cliffs and valleys whose bottoms are often of an altitude of between 200 and 400 meters. Furu-Awa, at 300 meters, is dominated by Mount Busung which reaches 1,148 meters, thus representing a difference of 850 meters between the foot and the summit of the mountain. Generally, the rivers flow along the lines of faults that cross almost at right angles to the direction they would otherwise flow naturally, east to west or north to south, and which therefore often have a very striking course. Given the gradual lowering of this relief towards the north and the west, the grasslands typical of the Grassfields is replaced by a very dense mountain forest, giving place on the lower slopes to wooded savanna. This gradual change explains the different human settlements in the three parts of the district:

- to the east, Sudanese savanna of an altitude that is scarcely inhabited, through which semi-nomadic cattle-breeders wander;
- in the center, uninhabited dense forest; and
- to the northwest, wooded ravines opening into Nigeria with uninhabited land between the valleys.

Having attracted the entry of the latest people to arrive, there is a relative abundance of villages in the part of the Subdivision that points towards Nigeria. Many of these villages have, during the course of recent history, changed from being a settlement in an easily defended high position to a more convenient settlement at the bottom of a small valley and on the banks of the river. It is this very northern extremity of the Subdivision that has been the chief target of the ALCAM missions because of its relatively dense, varied, and initially unknown population.

3. POPULATION

The 6,000 inhabitants of the Furu-Awa Subdivision are divided into six main *ethnic groups*, if one defines as an ethnic group any group having their own language and being

united by a feeling of belonging and identity. This might give an exaggerated idea of the smallness of African ethnic groups if one did not take into consideration that in half the cases of fragments of ethnic groups they are more fully represented outside the district. These ethnic groups are settled in villages, established at various times, and administratively grouped into a hierarchy of second- or third-class chiefdoms or quarters. In general, each village is very homogeneous as far as the ethnic groups are concerned and migratory movements have only a limited effect on their internal stability based on the clear predominance of the founding ethnic group.

These six ethnic groups are indicated by names that are generally different from the name of their language (glossonym or dialectonym). They are:

1 the *Furu*, who speak *Jukun*, but who previously spoke three different now almost extinct languages. They number around 1,700 people;

2 the *Ati* who speak *Kutep* : 1,400;

3 the *Yukuben* who speak the *Uuhum-Gigi* language: 1,000;

4 the *Anyar* who speak the *Akum* language: 600;

5 the *Beezen* who speak the *Beezen* language: 400.

These five ethnic groups speak languages classified as *Jukunoid*, i.e., neither Bantu nor Bantoid, and at least three of which (*Jukun*, *Kutep*, and *Uuhum-Gigi*) are more widely represented in Nigeria.

The sixth group belongs to Cameroon, both because of its geographical location and because its language belongs to the *Beboid* subgroup of the Bantu languages. It includes:

6 the *Bunaki*, who speak the *Naki* language: 1,200 in the Subdivision, plus 1,800 outside of it on the other bank of the Katsina.

The geographical location and the ethnolinguistic situation of these ethnic groups is defined in the following sections.

3.1 FURU

The *Furu* are an ethnic group living in Cameroon who have for two generations gradually adopted *Jukun*, a language of Nigeria. They live in five villages commonly called by a compound name incorporating the term 'Furu', although this is contested by certain purists of *Furu-Awa* and *Furubana* who want to reserve this term for these two villages which alone benefit from the administrative recognition as chiefdoms. The origin of the generic term *Furu* is still largely unestablished. It could mean 'the people of ...', like the Bantu prefix *ba-*, but it is not known in which language. On the other hand, in *Jukun*, it seems to be a nickname coming from the term indicating porridge for children (in English 'pap'), and therefore attributed by the speakers of *Jukun* from the outside to the simple populations of that region (who only ate porridge? or whose language reminded one of the lisping of children eating porridge?). Whatever the origin and primary meaning, the term *Furu* has now been fully adopted and laid claim to by the people who call themselves the *Furu* ('Furu people') and who are recognized as and called such by their neighbors.

The *Furu* say that they had originally been a grouping of three peoples each having its own language and its independent chiefdom. They were fundamentally allied by matrimonial relations, peace agreements, and the mutual recognition of their chiefs. These were:

—the *Awa* from *Furu-Awa* and (Furu-)Angwa speaking *Busuu*;

—the *Biyam* from *Ntjieka*, (Furu-)Turuwa, and (Furu-)Sambari speaking *Bishuo*; and

—the *Bikya* from *Furubana* speaking *Bikya*.

Their neighbors, but not relatives, were *Lubu* people who also had their own language. As for the *Ati* who speak *Kutep* and the *Yukuben* who speak *Uuhum-Gigi*, they did not originally live in the region and came later from Nigeria.

The culturally decisive historical event for the Furu was the First World War, when the subjects of the German 'Kamerun' were held in captivity for two years in British Nigeria between Takum and Wukari, in Jukun country, 30 or 100 kilometers from their homeland. Although certain people were able to escape that deportation, the uprooted majority underwent linguistic acculturation to the Jukun language. From that moment the population became bilingual, speaking Jukun besides their mother tongues. Jukun is, moreover, much more widespread and standardized. It is used in written form by the Protestant churches and spread by the Nigerian media. Also, at the time of the deportation and since, Jukun has not ceased to see its use extended amongst the Furu. Only the old and especially those of the families of the hereditary chiefdoms have continued to indicate a certain attachment to the ancestral languages. The young have become more numerous with every generation using only Jukun, the language of their neighbors, the market, the church, the radio, etc. This almost general disaffection for the ancestral languages ensures that they are now only cultural relics that our research missions have discovered and in actual fact brought to light: the most widely spoken has no more than seven speakers and the other two one each. But for lack of other important social indicators, those three *residual* languages are of the greatest interest as they are not related to any other known neighboring language and therefore are the only elements that can give a key to the origin of the Furu.

The Furu are sometimes called Chamba by certain neighbors or by administrations eager to obtain a collective name for the people who are living there but have little inclination to check its meaning. The Furu vehemently reject this assimilation as totally improper. They know the Chamba historically because of their reputation as conquering horsemen, good fighting men without mercy; but it seems that the Chamba have never penetrated into the land of the Furu who only related to the Jukun. Moreover, the languages of the Furu do not show any relationship with those of the Chamba: Samba-Daka, spoken in the Nigerian Adamawa, and Samba-Leeko, spoken primarily in Cameroon in the Alantica Mountains, and, to a limited extent, in Nigeria. However, the Furu do reveal cultural features that ally them to the people who came from the north. Without being Muslims they have numerous Islamic forenames, head-dresses with neither brim nor peak, and their marriage customs, like their musical instruments, show that they are closer to more northern peoples, influenced by Islam.

Whatever their distant origin, the Furu are certainly the earliest inhabitants of the region. The other peoples, whether their languages are Jukunoid or Beboïd, settled in the north of the Subdivision only within living memory, that is, less than a century ago. Moreover, certain of their neighbors, the Yukuben, still call them 'mountain dwellers' (Kilangengo), a name that is particularly revealing of their early settlement. As much remains to be investigated regarding the Furu, and not without difficulty, many indications can still be found thanks to their languages and their customs regarding the intruders and their relations with the Furu.

Furu-Awa, with 700 inhabitants¹ was chosen as the headquarters of the new Subdivision, built two kilometers from the village in the neighboring valley. It was already the chief urban center of the region, the location of a market, and situated a short distance from the Nigerian border where the river Tumbu crosses it. The chiefdom was certainly also the most important in the region and, notably, in the whole of the Furu area. The meaning of the name seems to be either 'the people of the Awa', Awa being the hero after whom they are named, or 'the Furu (descended) from Awa', or 'the Furu (said to be) Awa'.

The Awa, whose chiefdom also includes the Nangwa Quarter (300 inhabitants) situated about ten kilometers to the west, have a certain honorary pre-eminence and numerical superiority over the other Furu. They say just as much that they are relatives

¹The numbers of inhabitants given here refer to 1985 and are only an average estimation obtained by multiplying the number of tax-payers that year by eight. (The average number of the members of a family?)

of the people of Nido and Daga in Nigeria, relatively close villages—five hours away on foot—the last of which must not be confused with the name of one of the principal languages of the Chamba: Samba-Daka. The chief of the Awa is traditionally taken from the three families that succeeded to the chiefdom: the Bufam, the Bupo, and the Muntab. It is from amongst those families that we found the last Busuu speakers: ten in 1985 amongst whom were the chief of Furu Awa and a woman, who had both died by 1986, as well as seven men of 36 to 65 years, and a 36 year old woman, the last speaker of Busuu in Nangwa. The use of Busuu had been practically restricted for a long time to the meetings of the elders of the three chief families of the district. The majority of the population has learnt only Jukun and speaks it exclusively. Even the toponymy has become Jukun because, with the exception of the word 'Furu', the words denoting a river ('Zang') or a mountain ('Kuna'), are borrowed from Jukun: Zang Sama (the River of the Carrots) that flows through the chief town of the Subdivision, Zang Nangwa and Zang Bushuo in the tributary valleys, and Kuna Busung (Mount Busung, 1,148 meters), Kuna Lere (856 meters), and Kuna Hu (1,121 meters), overlooking Furu-Awa, (Furu-) Nangwa and (Furu-)Turuwa, respectively. The only names that appear to have remained in Busuu are the names of Mount Busung, of the river of Furu-Awa, the Tumbu, and of its sacred source: Kimbo.

Furubana (150 inhabitants) is the only headquarters of the Furu chiefdoms except Furu-Awa to be recognized administratively and be included in the list of chieftaincies (first-, second- or third-class). Its name means in Jukun '(the) Furu (of the) Rock', since the first location of the village was the summit of a granite 'sugar-loaf', accessible only with difficulty. Later, the village moved from the mountain shelf to the other side of the small valley. The language of Furubana is Bikya which is now spoken correctly only by Dana, a woman over 70 years old, who escaped the deportation to Nigeria in her youth and only learnt Jukun after the prisoners returned. The group also bore the name of Bikya and the military chiefs there are traditionally recruited from a single family, the Gaunyas, from whom Dana is descended. Many of the descendants of the Bikya have preferred to settle in the valley of Zang Bishuo in the north including the present chief and Dana.

(Furu-)Sambari (300 inhabitants) and (Furu-)Turuwa (200 inhabitants) in the valley of Zang Bishuo are administratively quarters of the chiefdom of Furubana. Sambari is populated by many people who have originated from that village high up on the mountain.

But the oldest inhabitants of the Furu-Sambari and Furu-Turuwa are the descendants of the third ethnic group, the Biyam. They speak the language Bishuo, which is now only known correctly by Irissa, a man who is over 60, and therefore born after the First World War. The river that flows from Furu-Turuwa to Furu-Sambari is indeed the River Bishuo, and the Biyam people traditionally had their own chiefdom, whose chief was taken alternatively from one of two families, the Badekwa or the Biyanti. Their village, Ntjieka, situated on one of the shelves of Mount Ifu, towers above the valley. It is only subsequently that the quarters of Furu-Turuwa and Furu-Sambari were added administratively to Furubana. The Biyam deplore this fact which implies a non-recognition of their individuality as an ethnic group, which they demand just as much as the right to have the name 'Furu-' for their two villages.

3.2 ATI (AND LUBU)

The term 'Ati' refers to the speakers of the Kutep language, classified as Jukunoid. They are only found in Cameroon in the Furu-Awa Subdivision. They are considered to be immigrants who came in the twentieth century from Nigeria where they occupy more than fifteen villages around Likam and Lissam. In Cameroon, they have been settled into two villages:

—*Baji* (300 inhabitants), which seems to have been built on a mountain pass about ten kilometers to the southwest of Furu-Awa, is the only second-class chiefdom of the Subdivision beside Furu-Awa and Furubana.

—*Lubu* (1,100 inhabitants), a third-class chiefdom whose area includes all the northern part of the Subdivision where the Ati joined a local population that they have overwhelmed both numerically and demographically.

This local population abandoned its own language two generations ago in favor of Jukun, with the exception of the Furu. Only one family survives: the Danjuma from whom comes the chief of the village: Tersiki; but neither the latter nor his father has ever spoken the ancestral language. He must go back in time to his grandfather to recall a person who spoke the language whose name has now been forgotten and which can, therefore, only be referred to as Lubu. The native Lubu still consisted of seven families when Tersiki was born about sixty years ago. They considered themselves to be brothers to the Furu whom they could marry. On the other hand, if they view the whole of the five villages that they call truly 'Furu', they have never claimed to be related to them, and the Furu no longer include them in their group, which means that it is impossible to say whether *Lubu was related to the languages of the Furu or not.

3.3 YUKUBEN

The term 'Yukuben' denotes the speakers of the language Uuhum-Gigi, which is classified as Jukunoid. As with the Ati, the Yukuben are only found in Cameroon in the Furu-Awa Subdivision, where they are considered to be recent immigrants from the neighboring parts of Nigeria, where they had occupied around twenty villages centered on Lissa (or Bariki) and Sabongida.

In the Furu-Awa Subdivision they possess three third-class chiefdoms along the western border of the Subdivision:

—Luto (200 inhabitants) near Furu-Sambari;

—Biendo 1 (200 inhabitants) in the Zang-Nangwa valley; and

—Biendo 2 (150 inhabitants) in the next valley further north, to which belongs the Akwa quarter (400 inhabitants), with a more scattered population similar to the neighboring Lubu.

3.4 ANYAR

The Anyar only occupy one chiefdom (third-class), that of Akum (with 600 inhabitants) on the right-hand bank of the Katsina-Ala before it flows into Nigeria. They say that they have three villages in Nigeria: Manga, just across the border, Ekban, and Konkum. The chiefdom of Akum, whose ancient name was Mufong, has five quarters, four along the Katsina: Kondju, Three-Corner, Okwak, and Ejong, the latter being near the border; and Shibong in the valley of the river Akum, which is abandoned like those of Tchekoa and Tchekpab further north in the valley that is perpendicular to that of Bitok. The language of the Anyar is called Akum. It is related to Uuhum-Gigi and therefore Jukunoid.

3.5 BEEZEN

The Beezen are the inhabitants of the third-class chiefdom called Kpwep (or Kwaf) by the people of Isu and the authorities, but which they themselves call Beezen (400 inhabitants), and which they have asked the authorities to rename as such. Their language is also called Beezen (Beezen). It is just as close to Uuhum-Gigi as it is to Kutep and is, therefore, Jukunoid. The Beezen seem to have no other settlement than this single village, situated on the left bank of the Katsina-Ala, upstream from the river Akum, and formerly located on the mass of mountains overhanging the bend of the river on the right bank.

3.6 BUNAKI

The Bunaki make up the ethnic group speaking the language (of the Beboïd subbranch of the Bantu branch) Naki, meaning 'all of us'. They live, as the ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983) indicates, on both sides of the Forest Reserve of Fungom. To the northwest they live in the third-class chiefdom of Nse, or Nser (with 300 inhabitants), the language of which is Nsaa and whose inhabitants are the Bunsaa. To the east they live along all the edges of that forest with, from north to south, the third-class chiefdoms of Lebo (with 200 inhabitants) and of Bukpang 2 (with 700 inhabitants). This area is called 'Mashi Overside', including the district of Patali (and not Batari) towards Lebo. However, their historical center is the third-class chiefdom on the other side of the Katsina-Ala, and thus outside of the Furu-Awa Subdivision: Mashi (or Marshi or Manshi), Bukpang 1 (600 inhabitants) and Mekaf (700 inhabitants). This means that there are about 3,000 Bunaki in Cameroon, of whom 1,200 are in the Furu-Awa Subdivision and that they have known a historic spread from the south to the north. The farthest point of their expansion moreover is in Nigeria: Belogo (200 inhabitants) or Tosso 2, on the left bank of the Gamana to the east of Furu-Awa.

4. LINGUISTIC SITUATION OF THE SUBDIVISION

The Furu-Awa Subdivision, like the rest of Cameroon, presents a linguistic situation at several levels. At the lowest level, there are about ten mother tongues which are spoken over very widespread areas, and placed side by side in tiny groups, corresponding to one or several villages, some of which having died out. Populations of different areas relate by using a local language as the *language of wider communication* (LWC). This introduced a general bilingualism and is replacing the residual languages. At the highest level there are two official languages: English, spoken by the local educated elite, and French spoken by certain civil servants. It is therefore appropriate to draw up a very complex table for a population of around 6,000 inhabitants, distributed throughout twelve chiefdoms, plus about half a dozen 'quarters'.

4.1 RESIDUAL LANGUAGES: A FURU GROUP?

The three Furu languages are disappearing, and Lubu is completely extinct and has not even handed down its name. The three Furu languages are:

—*Busuu* spoken by the Awa of Furu-Awa and Furu-Nangwa, which had only eleven speakers in 1985 and nine in 1986²;

—*Bishuo* spoken by the Biyam of Furu-Turuwa and Furu-Sambari, which has only one native speaker plus his son to whom he has partially taught the language³; and

—*Bikya* of Furubana, which only one woman speaks completely and only a few people speak partially.⁴

As far as vocabulary is concerned, these three languages have only slight similarities to the neighboring Jukunoid languages: in general, they have only 10% of their vocabulary in common. However, Bikya and Akum share 14%. Bishuo and Bikya have 11% common vocabulary.

On the other hand, two of them have greater lexical similarities with the Beboïd languages. Bikya has 24% lexical similarity with the neighboring Nsaa, as well as with Nooni (Nõoni), the most distant east Beboïd language spoken near Kumbo; Bishuo has 16% and 17% lexical similarities with the same languages respectively; but not Busuu,

²Ten last speakers of Busuu: *Bufam family*: Mr. Jam KAIGAMA, Chief of Furu Awa, 1922–1986; Mr. Kashibo KAIGAMA, his brother, 1941–; Mr. Metate PURI, 1948–; *Bupo family*: Mrs. Na SATU, 1926–1986; Mr. Kasara AGBANG, 1950–; Mrs. Maimuna ALATA, 1950– (living in Nangwa);

Muntab family: Mr. Yamsa KAJIN, 1921–; Mr. Zabji NTEP, 1939–; Mr. Andu DOGO, 1941–; to whom must be added: Mr. Gwe BAIRO, 1931–, having been settled into Biyam culture.

³Last person to speak Bishuo: Mr. Irissa NTJIEKA, born around 1920, to whom must be added his son: Mr. Peter ALOM, whom he brought up in the language and who went to school.

⁴Last person to speak Bikya: Mrs. Dana AGAYANDO, born before 1910, of the Gaunya family.

which has only 8% and 7% similarities respectively, which permits one to say that only Bikya maintains significant links with Beboid languages, whilst Bishuo hardly does and Busuu not at all; and that these languages are no more similar to the Jukunoid languages.

The sociolinguistic survey confirms the isolation of these languages. No one understood the Furu and mutual comprehension remained very low between the Awa and the Biyam and almost nonexistent between them and the Bikya. Only an advanced morphological analysis would be able to show whether this is a group of languages having common features, and to what extent these languages can be linked or not to a Benue-Congo subfamily: Jukunoid, Bantoid, etc.

For the moment it is only possible to suggest that Bikya might be Beboid, and that Bishuo and Busuu might be Jukunoid provided that the neighboring languages, now reputed to be Jukunoid, do not have more lexical similarity between themselves than these two Furu languages have with them and have between themselves.

As for the *Lubu, one can only presume that it was already distant from the Furu languages, which were themselves very different from each other.

4.2 LIVING MOTHER TONGUES

The six ethnic groups of the Subdivision speak as their mother tongue six languages that are well-defined linguistically and geographically, but are little known. The languages to which they are related still remain to be specified: five are said to be Jukunoid and one is Beboid. They are:

4.2.1 *Jukun (1,700 speakers?)*

Jukun, called Njikun locally, has been adopted as the mother tongue of all the Furu and the Lubu, whilst becoming the LWC of all the northern part of the Furu-Awa Subdivision. The question is to know which Jukun it is since, following the work of Shimizu (1980), there is a tendency to describe as Jukun a whole group of different dialects if not of languages, and Grimes (1992) distinguishes at least four Jukun languages.

It should be remembered that the whole group of Jukunoid has now been linked to the tenth branch of the Benue-Congo subfamily of languages, named Platoid (Gerhardt 1984:359-76) which divides into the subbranches Plateau and Benue; it is this latter subbranch that groups together the Tarokoid and Jukunoid languages. Among the Jukunoid languages people agree to separate off the Yukuben-Kutep group, situated in the southwest, comprising these two languages only and contrasting them with the 'Central Jukunoid' languages, further to the north and east. The area of the *Yukuben* language, the most southern, is essentially delineated by the rivers Katsina Ala and Gagama. The *Kutep* language area is included between the Gagama and Donga, and extends as far as Takum.

Within the central Jukunoid area there is agreement to distinguish the two languages of the southwest, Kpan and Icen, which are closely related both linguistically and geographically, from what is now commonly called the 'Jukun-Mbembe-Wurbo' languages which are more widely spoken, more complex and more scattered. The area in which *Icen* is spoken extends from the north of the Gagama to the two banks of the Donga. The area of *Kpan*, at the same time more divided and with the people speaking the language more distant from each other, is found in small areas inside the area where *Icen* is spoken. Centered on Kumbo, the area where *Kpan* is spoken extends from Takum, Tosso and Bissaula in the south, to Donga in the north, all of which are places where *Icen* is also spoken.

The Jukun-Mbembe-Wurbo group of languages consists of three subgroups joined together, represented by the three names, the latter being more distant from the first two.

The subgroup 'Mbembe', in the extreme south, straddling the Cameroon/Nigeria border, already lends itself to a little difference of opinion. Whilst Shimizu distinguished two Mbembe languages: Ashuku and Kporo, Grimes (1992) considers them as two dialects of a single language, called 'Mbembe Tigon', to distinguish it from 'Mbembe

Cross River', belonging to the Cross River branch of the Benue-Congo, and located in Cross River State. Mbembe Tigon is spoken on both sides of the Donga, where it marks the Nigeria/Cameroon border. Thus it includes the region of Ahuku in Nigeria as well as the Ako Subdivision in Cameroon. It also borders the Tivoid languages Bitare or Njwande in the east and the Mambiloid languages of Ndoola or Ndoro to the north.

Within the 'Jukun' subgroup which is closely related to Mbembe, there is agreement that two groups can be distinguished: one to the southeast which may be called Jukun (the 'Jukun language cluster' in *Ethnologue*), including:

—*Jibu*, with 'Koine Jibu', spread throughout the region at the time of the Jukun political expansion of the nineteenth century, particularly amongst the small, allied groups of the southwest: Mbembe, Icen, Kpan, Kuteb, and Yukuben, but also amongst the Samba to the northeast. The original area of Jibu was clearly further to the northeast, having as its border the bend of the Taraba river stretching from Beli to Serti.

—and Wase, spoken particularly along the Benue, but formerly well beyond to the far northwest of the Jukun expansion, at the foot of the Jos Plateau where Wase is spoken. This language is now preferably called *Jukun Wurkum* (*Ethnologue*).

The second Jukun group, in a broader sense, is more often called Kororofa, from the name of the ancient capital of the Jukun kingdom: therefore the 'Kororofa language cluster'. It includes:

—to the west, Wapan with the dialects Abiusi and Wukari. It is also identified as *Jukun Wukari*, spoken in the triangular area to the north of Wukari which includes the left banks of the Donga and the Benue; and

—further to the east, Kona or *Jukun Kona*, from the name of the village of Kona between the Taraba and Jalingo.

This makes a total of four Jukun languages: Jibu, Jukun Wurkum, Jukun Wukari, and Jukun Kona. As for the more divergent and remote 'Wurbo' subgroup, it extends to the north of Jalingo on both banks of the Benue; and every author distinguishes three neighboring languages from southwest to northeast: Jiru, Chomo (or *Como Karim*), and Bandawa-Minda (or *Shoo-Minda-Nyem*).

These dozen Jukunoid languages were reputed to be spoken by 700,000 people around 1960, or about 2% of the population of Nigeria. They were chiefly spoken in the greater part of the south of the Gongola State (2,600,000 inhabitants in 1963), which was eventually divided into two: Adamawa, whose capital was Yola to the northeast, and Taraba, whose capital was Jalingo to the southwest. These states have, according to the undisputed census of 1991, 2,124,000 and 1,481,000 inhabitants, respectively. In the Adamawa State, the Samba, Fulfulde, and Chadic languages are predominant, whereas in Taraba State, it is the Jukunoid languages that are predominant.

The question of knowing what form of Jukun the Furu brought back from their deportation to Nigeria depends on the geographical and ethnic surroundings in which they were located and on the linguistic forms of language that predominated there. Jukun proper had been spread by Koine Jibu, widely spoken around Takum. However, after the time of the Jukun expansion, it was the Wapan language of Wukari which increasingly played the role of lingua franca in the Jukun area by supplanting Koine Jibu, whilst the Furu rather claim the Jukun 'of Takum and Donga' as their language. The expression 'Jukun Takum' is reserved (in *Ethnologue*) for a form of Kpan used as LWC, widely spread from Takum to Donga, Kumbo and even Kente, close to Wukari. It would, therefore, be a pseudo-Jukun, the fifth language of that name, but in reality a form of Kpan used as a LWC, which the Furu would have introduced on their return as a native language in their original home lands. The 'Jukun of Furu-Awa', or Njikun, would therefore be only a variety of Kpan, that is to say more precisely, of 'Jukun Takum'.

4.2.2 Kuteb (1,400 speakers).

Kuteb is a written language, spoken in Nigeria by at least 26,000 people (according to *Ethnologue* 1974.) The Ati, who speak Kuteb, founded the village of Baji in the south of Furu-Awa and occupied the territory of *Lubu in the north where they have completely submerged the original inhabitants. The Ati of Lubu are generally bilingual, largely using Jukun as a LWC, but those of Baji are less so, being more isolated.

4.2.3 Uuhum-Gigi (1,000 speakers).

Uuhum-Gigi, the language of the Yukuben, also has its center on the other side of the border, where it spread in different directions into about twenty villages, of which the chief one, Lissa, also has people who speak the language. In Cameroon the Yukuben make up the Chiefdoms of Luto and Biendo 1 and 2. They are largely bilingual in Jukun, but, because their language had not yet been written down, they expressed their desire to do what was necessary to establish a language committee to develop their language.

4.2.4 Akum (600 speakers)

Akum, the language of the Anyar, is limited in Cameroon to the chiefdom of Akum, and extends to several neighboring villages of Nigeria. The Anyar seem less bilingual in Jukun than the Yukuben.

4.2.5 Beezen (400 speakers)

Beezen is only spoken in one chiefdom, called Beezen by the inhabitants, and Kpwep by the neighbors and the administration. Like the Anyar, the Beezen are less bilingual in Jukun than the northern groups of the Subdivision.

4.2.6 A southern Jukunoid group?

The Jukunoid languages of Furu-Awa are only linked to Jukun by very low rates of lexical similarity, having at most 5% of roots in common, that is not more than between Jukun and Busuu of Furu or Jukun and Beboid Naki. The only significant rates of similarity, reaching 40%, link Uuhum to Akum and to Beezen and the latter to Kuteb; and, to a lesser extent, Akum to Beezen (27%), Akum to Kuteb (20%), and Kuteb to Uuhum (18%). Thus there would certainly be, as far as these languages are concerned, a southern Jukunoid group, clearly distinct from Jukun, especially since we have only taken into account the local form of Jukun spoken by the Furu, i.e., 'Njikun', and not the 'literary' Jukun, said to be 'of Takun and Donga'.

4.2.7 Naki (1,200 speakers in the Subdivision).

Naki, the only Beboid language of the Furu-Awa Subdivision, is spoken in the chiefdoms of Nse to the north of the Forest Reserve, and in those of Lebo and Bukpang 2 to the east. Jukun is used as a LWC in Nse, although the people are not generally bilingual. It is also used as a LWC in Lebo, but very little in Bukpang 2. This language brings us into the sphere of an entirely different linguistic and geographical group of languages, that of the Beboid group of the Bantu branch, related to the 'Grassfield' Bantu languages.

4.3 LANGUAGES OF WIDER COMMUNIATION AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Jukun is the LWC of the Subdivision. As the dominant mother tongue for several generations amongst the Furu, it is very widely spread as a LWC to the north and west of the Furu area: amongst the Ati and the Yukuben to such an extent that one can talk of *generalized bilingualism*. In the south of the Furu area, Jukun is still used as a LWC, but there is no more than a partial bilingualism amongst the Ati of Baji, the Bunaki of Nse and Lebo, the Beezen, and the Anyar; whereas, in the southernmost part of the Subdivision, the Bunaki of Bukpang 2 hardly use it at all. It is evident that the wider use of Jukun is having an influence because of the small size of the ethnic groups of the Subdivision and the proximity to Nigeria. The strength of economic relations with the neighboring towns in Nigeria is doubled because the social links between these

fragments of ethnic groups on both sides of the border are maintained, as well as by the influence of the media of Taraba State which use the Jukun language.

Pidgin English is very widespread at the level of commercial relations, and the use of standard *English* is being extended with public education and with the presence of Cameroonian administrative officers from outside the Subdivision. As for the official French-English bilingualism, it is spreading through the elite of the Subdivision pursuing an education outside the area.

4.4 DYNAMICS OF THE LANGUAGES IN FURU-AWA

From the developments taking place, one can conclude that there are the following main trends:

The *residual* languages Busuu, Bishuo, and Bikya, will inevitably disappear as *Lubu already has, yet it is still possible to study them.

The *local ethnic* languages can be strengthened in so far as two are already standardized, have their own literature, and are written down: Jukun spoken by the Furu and Kuteb spoken by the Ati. As far as a third one is concerned, Uuhum-Gigi spoken by the Yukuben, a request for such a development has been made. For the three others, Akum, Beezen, and Naki, to be developed would be more difficult because they are much less widespread. Only their relative isolation protects them from a submersion by bilingualism.

Jukun, the language of *wider communication*, can only progress, at least in the northern part of the Subdivision with the increase of inter-village relationships, and in the smallest groups can only gain the place that it already has in those of medium size.

The extension of the use of the *official* languages, English and French, inevitably follows the progress of national integration, development, and the spread of education throughout the country.

5. RESULTS AND OBJECTIVES OF LINGUISTIC AND GEOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH IN FURU-AWA

Two years of ALCAM work in Furu-Awa, via three field trips and the initial data analysis, permit the following conclusions:

a) The existence of three residual Furu languages of which no mention had been made before has been brought to light. The analysis of the list of lexical items normally elicited (questionnaire d'enquête linguistique) doesn't permit us to place these languages within the established classification. According to the comparisons made, two of them, *Busuu* and *Bishuo*, could be Jukunoid, and one, *Bikya*, Beboïd. But, given the low rates of similarity noted, comparisons with other groups outside of Cameroon, including morphological analysis, could be necessary.

b) The existence of two languages only spoken in one village each: *Akum* and *Beezen*, has been demonstrated and their relationship to the neighboring languages classified as Jukunoid has been established.

c) The presence in Cameroon, and in neighboring Nigeria, of the closely related Jukunoid languages Jukun, Kuteb, and Uuhum-Gigi, permits us to demonstrate the existence of a *Southern group* of Jukunoid languages, lexically very distant from Jukun proper. They include at least Kuteb, Uuhum-Gigi, Akum, and Beezen, but not the two Furu languages, hypothetically Jukunoid, which belong to another group, perhaps related to the Beboïd languages.

d) The existence of a language *Lubu*, now extinct but presumed to have existed. In the absence of any linguistic material remaining it is not possible to give a classification.

e) The role of *Jukun* (of Takum and Donga) as a LWC in the north of the Subdivision has been found to be a greatly unifying sociolinguistic reality.

f) A detailed and complete ethnolinguistic map of the Subdivision is now available.

On the basis of these findings, the tasks remaining for linguistic research can be defined as follows:

—To complete the analysis of the three Furu languages before they disappear completely, a task that should take several months or years, and to reply to the questions concerning their classification. Such a linguistic analysis would benefit from being coupled with a general anthropological survey (ethnological, historical, and geographic) of the *Furu*, the *Lubu*, and their relations with their neighbors.

—To help the Yukuben to develop their language, *Uuhum-Gigi*, if possible with linguists who can work in Nigeria on the same language, sometimes referred to by other names (*Lissa*, etc.)

—To establish to what extent the written material existing in Nigeria in *Jukun* and in *Kuteb* can be used or adapted in Cameroon for education, or serve as the basis for further study and for publications serving the needs of the local people.

—To pursue the study of the small ethnic languages—*Naki*, *Beezen* and *Akum* of the Subdivision—with a double aim in view:

1) basic research into the elements of Cameroonian cultural heritage that are in the process of rapid erosion and complete disappearance, but which are essential for a geographic, historic and ethnological knowledge of the people; and

2) the participation in the educational development of these people by making it possible for someone to place at their disposal works in their languages, whether they be adapted from those existing in Nigeria (*Jukun* and *Kuteb*), or prepared at their request (in *Uuhum-Gigi*).

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APPENDICES

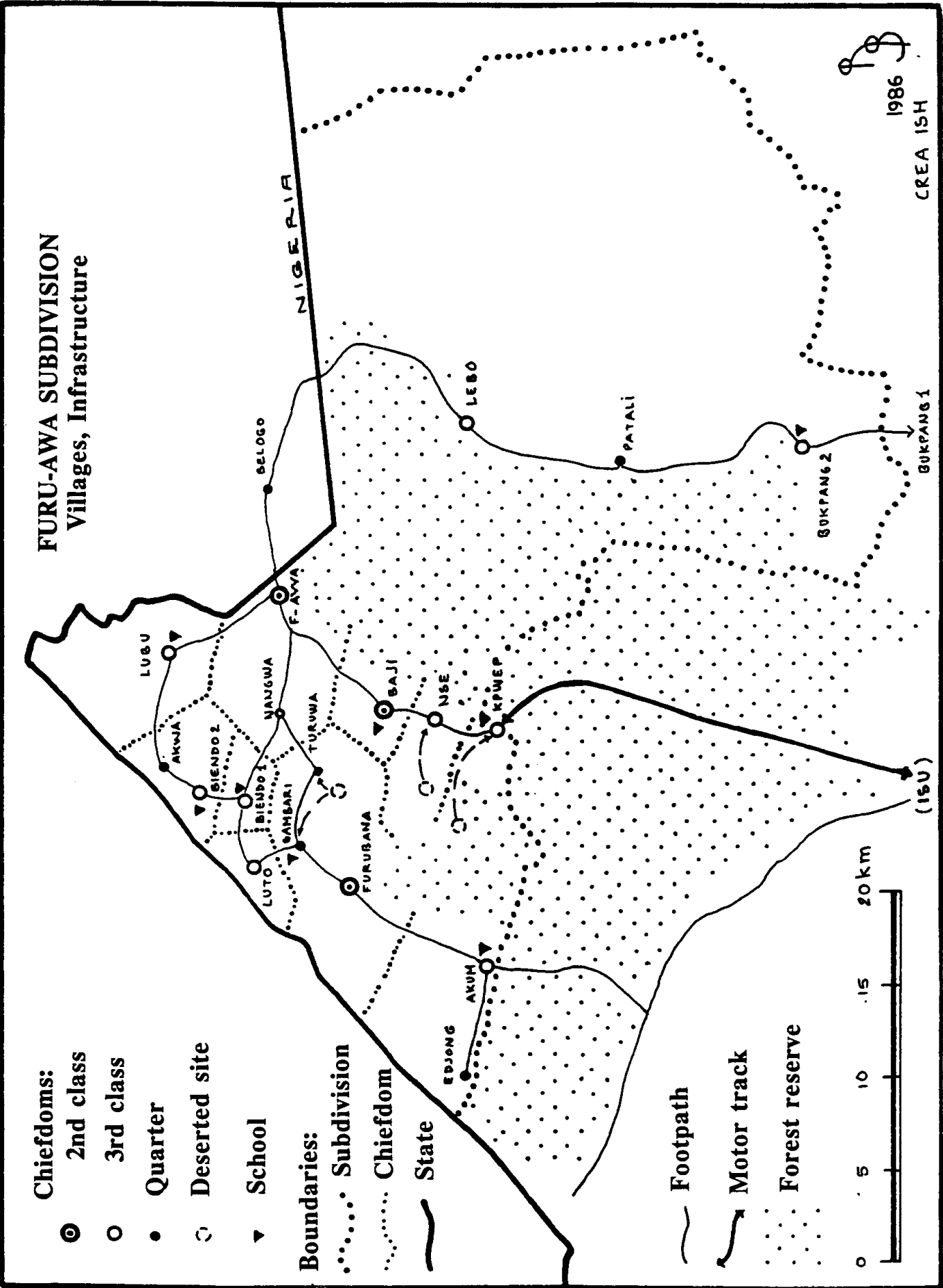
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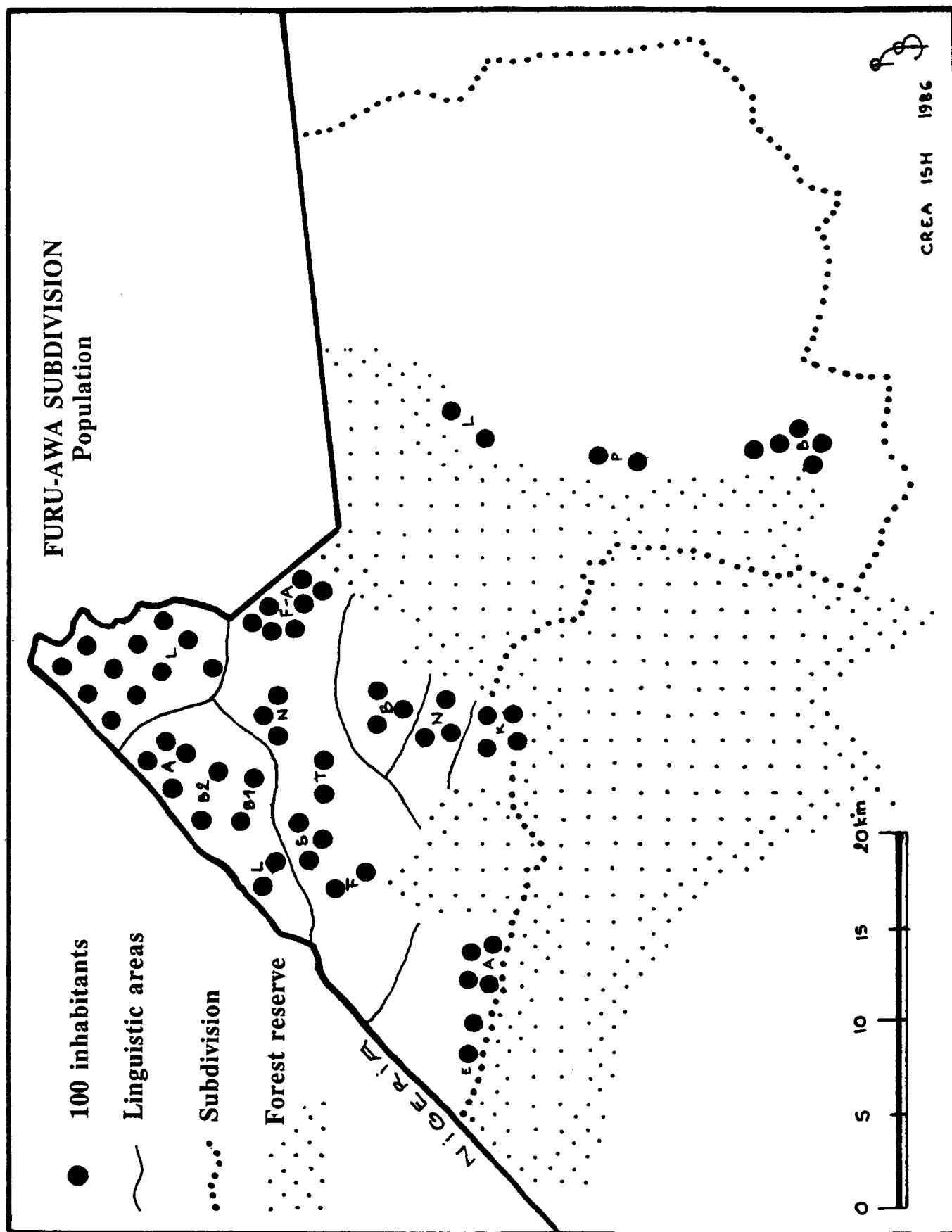
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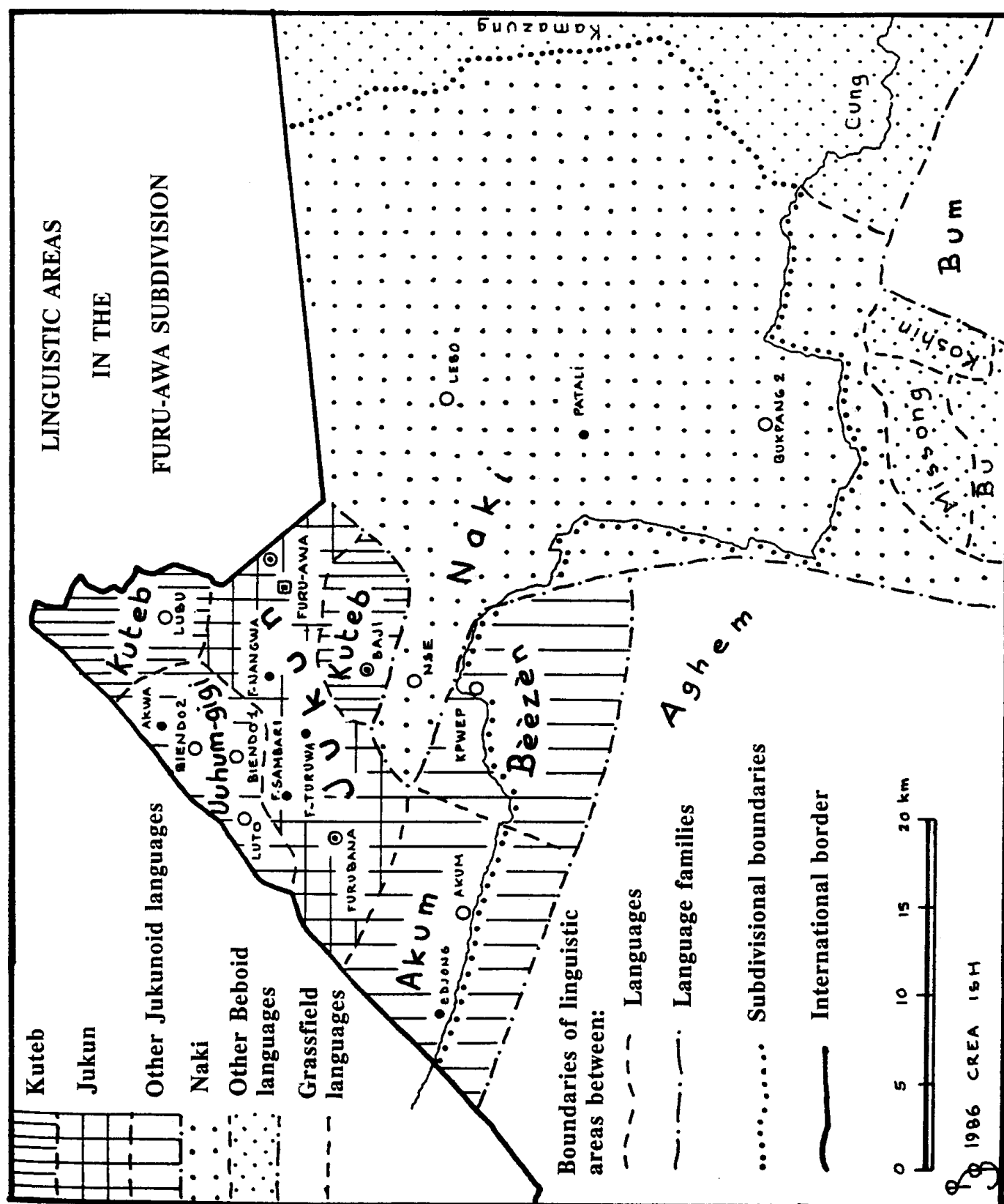
- 110 Furu-Awa Subdivision: topography
- 111 Furu-Awa Subdivision: villages, infrastructure
- 112 Furu-Awa Subdivision: population
- 113 Linguistic areas of the Furu-Awa Subdivision
- 114 Some errors on the Nkambe map (1:200,000)

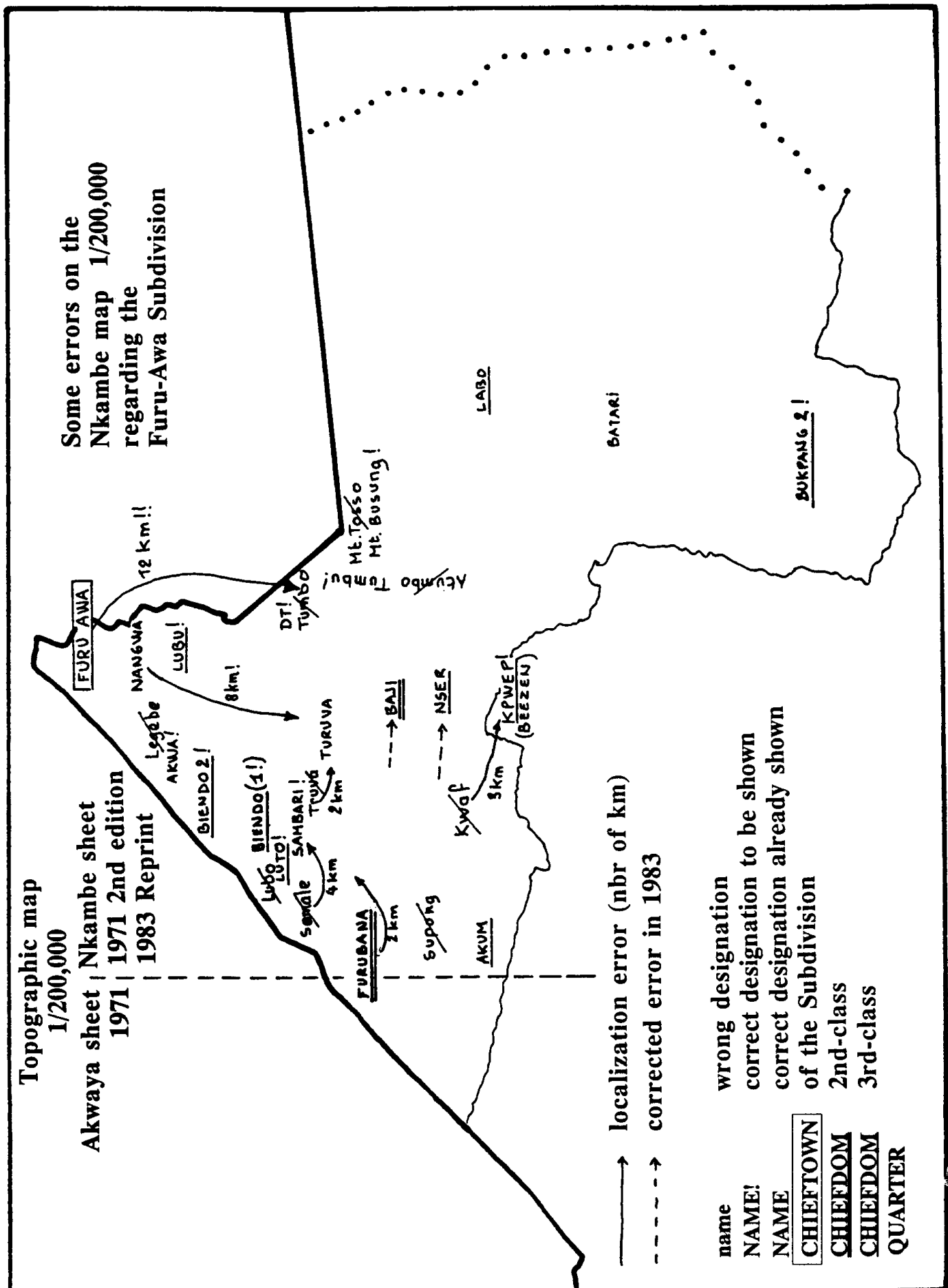
TABLES

- 115 The Furu-Awa Subdivision: languages, villages and population
- 116 Levels of lexical similarity: matrix
- 117 Levels of lexical similarity: tree
- 118 Levels of lexical similarity: networks

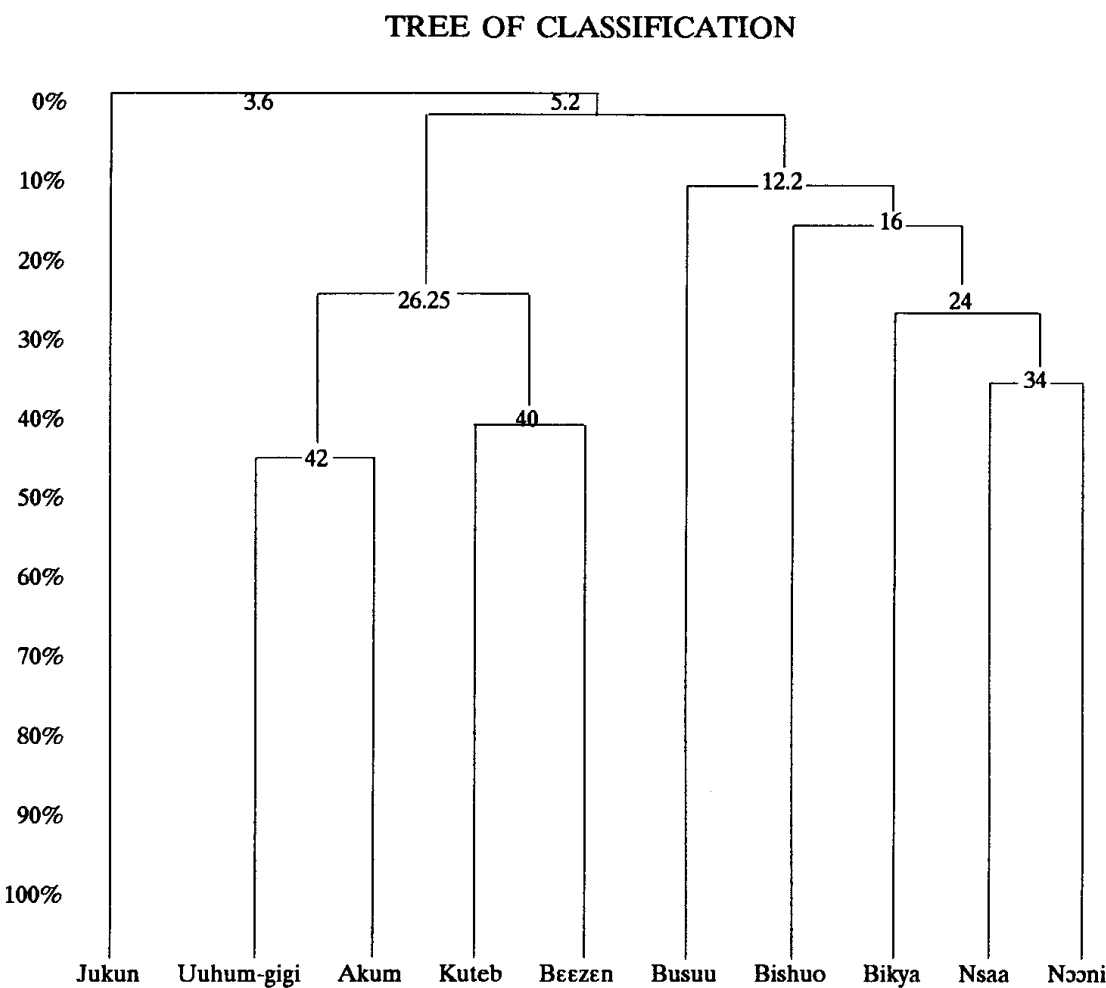








FURU-AWA SUBDIVISION Languages - Villages - Population									
Dominant language (Ethnic group)	Villages		Population				Residual languages		
	2ND/3rd Chiefdoms	Quarters	1970	1976 village	1985			Speakers (1986)	
					taxpayers	taxpayers x 8 = village			
Jukun (FURU)	FURU AWA	Nangwa	1288	746	89	700	bùsùù	8	
				34	300	“	1		
	FURU BANA	Sambari Turuwa	1237	481	19	150	bikya	1	
				38	300	bishùo	1		
				24		“	0		
Total: Jukun area			2525	1227		1650		11	
Kuteb (ATI)	BAJI		583	323	34	300			
	Lubu			543	140	1100	*lubu	0	
Total: Kuteb area				866	174	1400			
Uuhum-gigi (YUKUBEN)	Luto	Akwa	501	91	24	200			
	Biendo 1				23	200			
	Biendo 2				19	150			
					50	400			
Total: Uuhum area				592	116	950			
Akum (ANYAR)	Akum			651	76	600			
Beezen	Kpwep			279	47	400			
Total Jukunoid areas				3615	123	5000			
Naki (BUNAKI)	Nse			114	39	300			
	Bupang 2				72	700			
	Lebo				400	24	200		
Total: Naki area (Beboid)				514	135	1200			
Total: Furu-Awa Subdivision				4219		6200		11	



NETWORKS OF
SIMILARITY RATES
OVER 15%

