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COMMENTS ON NADEN (JWAL 12) BY W.A.A. WILSON

Tony Naden's amplification of my 1971 paper is most welcome.

Particularly striking is his observation that the most conservative class concord systems operate in the centrally situated members of the group, while the peripheral ones have the most reduced systems. Mõõrè, notably, whose 2.5 million speakers make it some ten times larger than the next in extent, has effectively kept only one sg. and one pl. pronoun, usable with nouns of any class. (It incidentally uses a 'polite plural', whereby a singular person is addressed or referred to by a 2nd or 3rd pl. pronoun when courtesy requires.) The details on Frafra, which is now seen to have relegated one-to-one class concord to a disambiguating rôle, are noteworthy.

The situation of Mõõrè-Dagbani (or W.O/V) would seem to contrast with that of Benue-Congo. Nowhere in W.O/V is the collapse of class concord ascribable to the phonetic reduction of noun affixes to obscurity, as has happened to the 'Semi-Bantu' languages of the Nigeria/Cameroon border areas (the western end of the 'Bantu borderline') which Guthrie rejected from Bantu on typological grounds. A comment from a Benue-Congo specialist would be most instructive here.

The presence, in the geographical centre of Mõõrè-Dagbani, of the Grusi language Kasem, with its very conservative class concord, is itself curious, and one does indeed wonder whether it has influenced the retention of the concord by its immediate neighbours to the south.

Kasem is notable, incidentally, for another phenomenon with a wide areal spread. Its classic ten-vowel two-set cross height vowel harmony makes it a very conservative member of a belt of VH languages of various groups and sub-groups extending west, then south to the coast, on either side of the western border of Ghana, and including Dagaari, Birifor, and Lobiri, to say nothing of Volta-Comoé (cf. Stewart, 1971).

Ref. Stewart, J.M: *Niger-Congo: Kwa* in Current Trends in Linguistics vol. 7, 1971, pp. 179-212.