

# DO THE GHANA-TOGO MOUNTAIN LANGUAGES CONSTITUTE A GENETIC GROUP?

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The Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages consist of some 14+ languages scattered across Ghana, Togo and Benin. Originally considered to be *Restsprachen*, some sort of residual speech, they are now considered highly significant for the reconstruction of the Benue-Kwa languages, because most of them have functioning nominal affix systems, which can be related to those of Benue-Congo languages. However, the evidence that they constitute a genetic grouping remains sketchy and extensive interaction with Gur and Guan languages has implications for the analysis of their concord system. The paper compiles a series of common lexical items based mostly on unpublished datasets and sets out to establish whether these constitute evidence for a genetic group. It furthermore explores the relevance of the nominal affixes for the broader reconstruction of Niger-Congo.

Les langues montagnardes Ghana-Togo comptent plus de quatorze parlers, éparpillés à travers le Ghana, le Togo et le Benin. A l'origine, considéré comme des *Restsprachen*, des parlers résiduels, aujourd'hui ils sont de hautes significances pour la reconstruction des langues Bénoué-Kwa. La plupart ont des systèmes d'affixation nominale liés aux des parlers Bénoué-Congo. Néanmoins, des preuves qu'ils sont un groupement génétique sont assez faibles, et des interactions intensives avec des langues Gur et Guan auront des implications pour l'analyse des systèmes d'agrément. La communication rédige des séries de mots communes, fondées sur des bases de données encore non-éditées, pour établir si ces lexèmes constituent des preuves d'un classement génétique. En plus, il discute la signification des affixes nominales pour la reconstruction du Niger-Congo.

## 0. INTRODUCTION

The languages named *Togorestsprachen* by Westermann (1932, 1954) after Struck, were previously known by the translated name 'Togo Remnant' languages and are now usually called the Ghana-Togo Mountain Languages (GTM) or Central (or Mountain) Togo (CT) languages. They gained early attention from African language scholars because of their functioning systems of noun-affixes and associated concord that show a singular/plural morphology apparently cognate across Niger-Congo. The noun-classes seemed to link them to Bantu (e.g. Johnston 1919-1922) and indeed Assirelli (1950) refers to them as *langues Bantouïdes*. Bertho (1952) seems to have been the first author to set out a comparative wordlist of these languages (which he calls *sous-groupe Adélé-Avatimé*) and to distinguish them from Guan (*Gondja*) and Gur (*Voltaïque*). Greenberg (1963) placed them in Kwa, a position supported by Stewart across a number of publications. Heine (1968a), in the only study of the group as a whole, treats the GTM languages as a unit, although dividing them into two distinct branches, *ka-* and *na-* Togo, based on the word for 'meat'. These two subgroups have led a somewhat nomadic life within Kwa, being sometimes separated and sometimes kept together. However, since Heine, little evidence has been offered in print to justify these classifications.

GTM languages appeared to be marked out by their nominal morphology when compared to the southern Ga, Ewe and Akan groups. However, functioning noun-affix systems are not actually as rare as earlier scholars supposed, given their close proximity to the Guan and Gur languages, both of which have functioning noun-classes. Indeed, some GTM languages, notably Avatime and Kebu, have both prefixes and suffixes, a characteristic they share with non-GTM languages such as Dilo and Akaselem. In the light of this, Jacques Rongier (1997) offered a major challenge to the

GTM hypothesis by arguing that those languages with suffixing morphology would be better reclassified as Gur.<sup>1</sup> This is not as surprising as it sounds; one language, Dilo (formerly Ntrubo) has made the jump from Kwa to Gur following the expansion of available information (Jones 1987). A language like Bogorɔ̃ (formerly Challa) is treated as Gurunsi, but has significant prefixing noun morphology, perhaps through contact with ‘Kwa’ languages such as Adele and Guan (Kleinewillinghöfer 2000). Bertho (1952) on purely lexical grounds, classified Akebu as Gur and Ikpana (=Logba) as Guan. Egblewogbe (1992) also questions the criteria for distinguishing Central Togo from neighbouring Guan languages and includes comparative wordlists to illustrate his point.<sup>2</sup> Establishing a convincing classification is made additionally problematic by the extent of loans from both Ewe and the Guan languages, both also Kwa (see Appendix to Heine 1968a).

The decades since Heine have seen a significant expansion of data available on most languages in the group and a re-evaluation of the established classificatory hypotheses is in order. A major contributor to this is Jacques Rongier (1989, 1994, 1995a) who has produced at least some lexical material on all the GTM languages in Togo and Benin and in two cases, Ikpɔsɔ and Igo, substantial dictionaries.<sup>3</sup> In Ghana, the Volta Region Multi Project (VRMP) has produced more up-to-date studies of the phonology of GTM languages as well as grammar sketches and at least some lexical data (e.g. Ring 2002, 2003). Among the papers of the late John Stewart were some extensive comparative wordlists of Ghanaian GTM languages.<sup>4</sup> In addition, more comparative materials have become available on neighbouring languages (e.g. Stewart 1973 on Potou, and Capo 1991 on Gbe). As a consequence, it seems appropriate to attempt a more-up-to-date classification of GTM languages and in particular to address outstanding issues as to the unity and membership of the group and its relation to Kwa as a whole. It should be made clear at the outset that the evidence is primarily lexical; accounts of the phonology and morphology of the GTM languages are not as yet sufficiently detailed to approach their classification using other parameters, although this is certainly the next step. The paper<sup>5</sup> reviews recent progress and summarises the results to date.

<sup>1</sup> Bernd Heine in his presentation to the 2008 meeting in Ho noted that Oswin Kohler also suggested a Gur affiliation for GTM languages. The following abbreviations are used throughout the paper: CT = Central Togo; GTML = Ghana-Togo Mountain Languages; I = any high front vowel  
S = any voiceless alveolar fricative; U = any high back vowel; V = any vowel

\* = regular reconstruction; # = quasi-reconstruction

<sup>2</sup> Although trying to incorporate languages into ‘Guan’ also had political overtones at the period (Mary-Esther Kropp-Dakubu p.c.).

<sup>3</sup> Regrettably, this material remains unpublished and my access is through the author and Kay Williamson (†) who has arranged for the xeroxing of numerous documents.

<sup>4</sup> Scans of these wordlists (whose authorship is unknown) were prepared at the University of Leiden and are available on the author’s website, as a variety of other GTM language materials. URL: <http://www.rogerblench.info/Language%20data/Niger-Congo/GTML%20Website/GTMLopeningpage.htm>

<sup>5</sup> A preliminary version of this paper was first presented on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 2001 at the 32<sup>nd</sup> ACAL, in Berkeley. It was to be published in the proceedings, but these have never appeared. A second version was presented in Ho on the 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2006, at the GTM Workshop and I am grateful to the organisers for funding to attend this. Thanks to Felix Ameka, Coleen Anderson, Rod Casali, Mary-Esther Kropp Dakubu, Kofi Dorvlo, Matthew Harley, Andy Ring, Jacques Rongier, Russell Schuh, Anne Storch, Kay Williamson (†) and to the archives and library staff at GILLBT, Tamale, Ghana for making unpublished or difficult of access material available. Members of the VRMP present at the GTM Workshop were able to fill in wordlists for their languages to expand the dataset on cultural lexicons. Mary-Esther Kropp Dakubu kindly went through the paper and made valuable comments all of which I have incorporated.

## 1. EXISTING HYPOTHESES ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF GTM LANGUAGES

Johnston (1919, 1922:187-194) may have been the first to place the GTM languages (South-West Togoland languages in his terminology) squarely within the noun-class paradigms of Niger-Congo (=Semi-Bantu). He quotes data from Lefana, Sɛlɛɛ, Avatime and Nyangbo-Tafi.<sup>6</sup> Diedrich Westermann, who was responsible for some of the early sketches of these languages, treated them as an ensemble in his overviews of West African languages (e.g. Westermann 1927, 1935). In Westermann & Bryan (1952:96-101) the GTM languages are treated as one of the 'Isolated Language Groups' outside Kwa, but no internal classification is advanced and the authors are agnostic about the affiliations of these languages. Late in his career, Westermann (1954) published a short overview specifically focusing on the group he named *Togorestvölker*. The idea that these montane populations were some sort of remnant was reflected in ethnohistorical publications of the period (e.g. Höftmann 1968) and is probably related to an anthropological conception of *Montagnards paléonigritiques* promoted by Froelich (1968) who considered the peoples of the Mandaras in Cameroun, the inhabitants of the Atakora in Benin and the GTM peoples to be relics of an older way of life only found in isolated regions following the expansion of plains peoples. Needless to say, this idea has no validity, either ethnographically or linguistically; the different way of life of mountain peoples is dictated by the constraints of their environment, but there is nothing notably archaic about it.

What literature exists has historically assigned the GTM languages to the Kwa branch of Niger-Congo. However, Kwa itself is a somewhat problematic concept, bundling up a wide swathe of languages between Gun in SW Nigeria and Ega in western Côte d'Ivoire. The concept goes back to Krause (1895) but it probably owes its modern form to Greenberg (1963) although Greenberg also included Kru, Western Benue-Congo and Ijoid, branches of Niger-Congo now known to be very distinct. The modern concept of Kwa probably was first articulated by Bennett and Sterk (1977) in their 'Western South Central Niger-Congo', an unwieldy name later collapsed into the Kwa of Stewart (1989). Stewart (1989:221) decided against Heine's division, putting together 'Avatime-Nyangbo', Kposo and Kebu-Animere in 'Left Bank' along with Gbe, while the remainder were treated as independent branches of Potou a very large grouping that includes Twi and numerous other languages. Later, however, Stewart returned to Heine's Na/Ka division in a Kwa 'tree' published in Williamson & Blench (2000:29).

Earlier opinion favoured a Gur affiliation and Heine (1968a:295) cites the opinions of Johannes Lukas and Oswin Köhler in support of this idea. Rongier (1997) questioned the very existence of a GTML group, reviewing languages for which he had personally collected data, and on this basis assigned some GTM languages to Gur. Rongier's argument was more morphological than lexical and it is true that neighbouring 'Gur' languages, notably Dilo and Cala, show very similar nominal affix alternations to some GTM languages. This probably says as much about the absence of any really well-founded arguments for the unity of larger Niger-Congo branches such as Kwa and Gur as it does about their affiliation.

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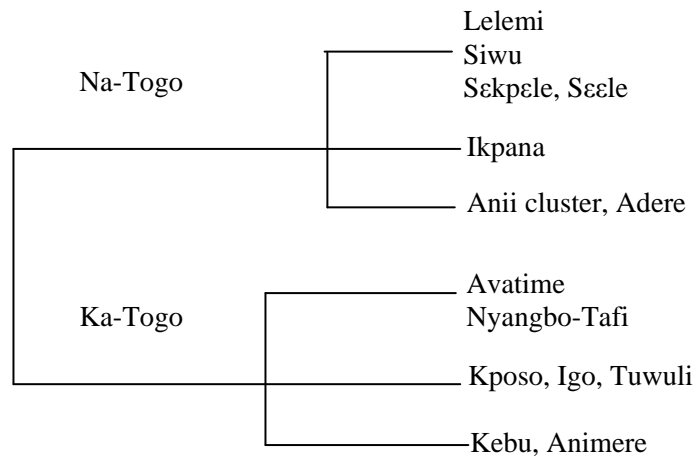
<sup>6</sup> Apparently between publishing the wordlists in Volume I (1919) and the preparation of Volume II, Johnston received comprehensive lists from a Captain Mansfield. These lists were never published in their entirety, but the additional data Johnston extracted from them is summarised in Volume II (pp. 187-194). See also his fn. 2.

## 2. WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THE GTM LANGUAGES FORM A GROUP?

### 2.1. THE UNITY OF GTM LANGUAGES

The first attempt to demonstrate that the GTM languages form a genetic group is Heine (1968a). Heine's argument was based largely on the lexicon, as he personally collected 200-word wordlists for many of the languages in question, and put forward a phonological sketch for each lect. Figure 1 shows Heine's (1968a) classification, substituting modern language names;

Figure 1. Heine's (1968a) classification using modern names



Heine points to a number of common lexical items shared by most languages in the group. The problem is these are usually also shared with many other Kwa or even Niger-Congo languages, hence they do not constitute proof for the distinctiveness of GTM languages. Comparisons with the two principal sources for Niger-Congo reconstructed roots are the proto-Western Sudanic of Westermann (1927) and the proto-Western Nigrific of Mukarovsky (1976-1977). Some examples from Heine's datasets that are also well-attested outside are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Proposed common glosses for GTM languages in Heine

Protoform	Gloss	p. No.	External cognates
*ba	come	212	Westermann (1927: 209), PWS <b>bía, bá</b> . Also Chadic and Nilo-Saharan
*o-bí/ba-	small child	214	Westermann (1927: 209), PWS <b>-bi-</b>
*m-bí	excrement	215	Westermann (1927: 209), PWS <b>(m)-bi(n)-</b>
*kúí	to die	225	Westermann (1927: 237), PWS <b>kú, kúá, kúi</b>
*li-kúpá	bone	225	Westermann (1927: 237), PWS <b>-kú, -kúp-, -kúá</b>
*kúwa	dry	226	Westermann (1927: 240), PWS <b>kùà, kùàl-</b>
*lĩ	to eat	232	Westermann (1927: 250-51), PWS <b>lì, lià</b>
*ka-mâ /ku-	back	234	Westermann (1927: 254), PWS <b>-mà-</b>
*múma	to laugh	236	Westermann (1927: 258), PWS <b>mua- (mu-)</b>
*-inâ	four	236	Westermann (1927: 263, 265), PWS <b>-nan-</b>

*nu	to hear	238	Westermann (1927: 270), PWS <b>nú-</b>
*ku-nyóa	smoke	240	Mukarovsky (1976/77: 410), PWS <b>-ɲwáki</b>
*-ita	three	245	Mukarovsky (1976/77: 543), PWS <b>-tháthu</b>
*ku-túe /a-	ear	249	Mukarovsky (1976/77: 556), PWS <b>-thúi, -thú-</b>
*yúu	be full	224	Westermann (1927: 224), PWS <b>gi, giu</b>

Establishing whether the glosses with fewer attestations listed by Heine might be evidence for the distinctiveness of GTM languages would be a lengthy task. However, an example from my own dataset can be checked against standard sources such as Hérault (1983) and Westermann (1927). Table 2. shows the word for ‘six’ which may be either an innovation for GTM languages or a distinctive regional survival.

Table 2. ‘six’ in GTM languages

Language	Attestation
Adele Upper	<b>kóórò</b>
Adele Lower	<b>kòòrò</b>
Anii	<b>ìkólàm</b>
Gilebulnya	<b>̀nkúli</b>
Gikolunja	<b>̀ikùlùŋ</b>
Giseme	<b>̀ikòlòm</b>
Ikpana	<b>̀igló</b>
Lelemi	<b>̀èkú</b>
Lefana	<b>̀èkú</b>
Siwu	<b>̀ikúò</b>
Sekpele	<b>̀̀nkwæ</b>
Selee	<b>̀ò-kóó</b>
Avatime	<b>̀ògòlò</b>
Nyangbo	<b>̀hòlò</b>
Tafi	<b>̀fòlò</b>
Ikpɔsɔ	<b>̀èwɔ</b>
Ikpɔsɔ Uwi	<b>̀èwɔ</b>
Wuli	<b>̀kévù</b>
Igo	<b>̀gò</b>
Kebu	<b>̀kuraŋ</b>
Animere	<b>̀a-kóró</b>
Ewe	<b>̀àdè</b>

Other Kwa languages usually have quite different words, although Mbatto, a small language north of Abidjan, does have **òkoā** for ‘six’. This might be coincidence, although GTM languages do share some other lexical items with languages in this area (cf. Table 4 below).

## 2.2 THE INTERNAL CLASSIFICATION OF GTM LANGUAGES

Heine's key internal isogloss was a distinction between **-na** and **-ka**, roots for 'meat'. His data is organised according to this dichotomy and it has subsequently been repeated in many publications. Table 3 shows the terms for 'meat' in the GTM languages, transcribed according to the most reliable recent sources, updating Heine's original dataset. A horizontal line across the table marks Heine's distinction between NA and KA languages.

Table 3. Terms for 'meat' in GTM languages

Language	s.	pl.
Adele Upper	<b>gìnà</b>	
Adele Lower	<b>gì-nàn</b>	<b>bì-nàn</b>
Anii	<b>ntáŋkò</b>	<b>atáŋkò</b>
Gilembulnya	<b>gì-námà</b>	<b>ì-námà</b>
Giseme	<b>ntànkpà</b>	<b>àtànkpà</b>
Ikpana	<b>ìnó</b>	
Lefana	<b>lé-ná</b>	
Siwu	<b>si-na</b>	<b>mi-na</b>
Sekpele	<b>sí-nè</b>	<b>bí-nè</b>
Selee	<b>si-nà</b>	
Avatime	<b>kĩdzè</b>	<b>bĩdzawè</b>
Nyangbo	<b>kejǎ</b>	<b>bojǎ</b>
Tafi	<b>kì-jà</b>	<b>àjà</b>
Ikposo	<b>éya</b>	—
Ikposo Uwi	<b>íya</b>	
Wuli	<b>sè-kéná?</b>	
Igo	<b>ikà</b>	<b>àkà</b>
Kebu	<b>gà-kê</b>	<b>ù-kà-kpê</b>
Animere	<b>kíkà?</b>	

It seems unlikely that Avatime, Nyangbo-Tafi and Ikposo are cognate with the other KA languages, while the Wuli form looks like a composite of the two. Both **#-na** and **#-ka** are widespread for 'meat, animal' in Niger-Congo. Westermann (1927: 269 & 228) gives **-niàm-**, **-nàm-** and **-ka-** as *Tier, Fleisch*.

In some ways, the word for 'water' is more interesting (Table 4). The **\*-tu** root is attested in every **-NA** group language, and apparently absent in the KA languages. It is not a common Niger-Congo root, although it does occur in some western Kwa languages such as Ebrie, Mbatto and even the remote Ega (Hérault 1983:64).

Table 4. ‘water’ in GTM languages

Language	s.	pl.
Adele Upper	<b>bùtù</b>	—
Adele Lower	<b>bùtù</b>	
Anii	<b>bu-tó</b>	<b>a-tó</b>
Gilembulnya	<b>bù-tfà</b>	<b>à-tfà</b>
Gikolunja	<b>bù-túwó</b>	<b>à-túwó</b>
Giseme	<b>bùtó</b>	<b>àtó</b>
Ikpana	<b>ndú</b>	
Lelemi	<b>ntu</b>	
Lefana	<b>nùtù</b>	
Siwu	<b>ñ-dù</b>	
Sekpele	<b>ntù</b>	
Sɛlɛɛ	<b>ntù</b>	
Avatime	<b>kùnɔ</b>	<b>bɛnɔwà</b>
Nyangbo	<b>bulí</b>	
Tafi	<b>bùni</b>	<b>bèni</b>
Ikpɔsɔ	<b>ìwí</b>	
Ikpɔsɔ Uwi	<b>ivi</b>	
Wuli	<b>muí</b>	
Igo	<b>ɔ̀sì</b>	<b>b̀sì</b>
Kebu	<b>mɛ̀wɔ̀</b>	
Animere	<b>ɔ̀ni?</b>	

The KA languages have a wide range of forms that do not easily suggest any lexical unity.

The word for ‘to give’ (Table 5) may represent the closest ‘fit’ with the NA/KA distinction. All the NA languages have tV- which only appears once in the KA group.

Table 5. ‘to give’ in GTM languages

Language	
Adele Upper	<b>tè, tà</b>
Adele Lower	<b>tà, tè</b>
Anii	<b>ʃé</b>
Ikpana	<b>tà</b>
Lefana	<b>te</b>
Siwu	<b>tá, fɔ</b>
Sekpele	<b>tɔ</b>
Sɛlɛɛ	<b>tà</b>

Avatime		<b>kī</b>
Nyangbo		<b>kó</b>
Tafi		<b>kɔ</b>
Ikpɔsɔ	<b>ká, kú</b> (imperative)	
Ikpɔsɔ Uwi		<b>kǎ</b>
Wuli	<b>kpà, té</b> (gift), <b>mà</b> (give to)	
Igo		<b>kɔ</b>
Kebu		<b>kɔ</b>
Animere		<b>fá ke</b>

Neither **tV-** nor **kV-** are innovations in the GTM languages. Westermann (1927: 244, 283) identified widespread cognates of **#k(u)a** and **#ta** and included them as Western Sudanic roots. Interestingly, the most common ‘Kwa’ root for ‘to give’ appears to be **p/fV-** which occurs sporadically in GTM languages, but is widespread in Cote d’Ivoire Kwa (Hérault 1983:62) and also surfaces again in Bantoid and Bantu.

Table 6 shows the word for ‘animal’ in GTM languages, which can be compared with Heine (1968a:266). Heine identifies a root **\*o-boké** for the NA languages and **\*o-kǎ** for the KA languages. Indeed the forms for the KA languages are clearly etymologically related to **#-ka** for ‘meat’ Table 3.

Table 6. ‘animal’ in GTM languages

Language	s.	pl.
Adele Upper	<b>è-nàn</b>	<b>bà-nàn</b>
Adele Lower	<b>è-nàn</b>	<b>bè-nàn</b>
Anii	<b>àbòrí</b>	<b>ìbòrí</b>
Giseme	<b>àbwé</b>	<b>èbwé</b>
Ikpana	<b>abwé</b>	<b>mbòwò</b>
Lefana	<b>e-buo</b>	<b>be-buo</b>
Siwu	<b>bǒy</b>	<b>mà-bǒy</b>
Sekpele	<b>úbùkí</b>	
Sɛlɛɛ	<b>bóké</b>	<b>bà-bóké</b>
Avatime	<b>ɔgā</b>	<b>bāgā</b>
Nyangbo	<b>agǎ</b>	<b>bagǎ</b>
Tafi	<b>a-ga</b>	<b>baa-ga</b>
Ikpɔsɔ	<b>úye</b>	<b>éye</b>
Ikpɔsɔ Uwi	<b>íyoviû</b>	
Wuli	<b>ɔ-yáè</b>	<b>bá-yáè</b>
Igo	<b>ùwá</b>	<b>bùwá</b>
Kebu	<b>kèéyô</b>	<b>à-kèéyô</b>
Animere	<b>du-bumaka</b>	

As with ‘water’ the NA languages do appear to point to a reconstructible proto-form, although this root is attested elsewhere in Kwa, for example Abbron **àbòà**, Eotile **èbúwò**. It seems harder to suggest a proto-form for the KA languages, although clearly Avatime and Nyangbo-Tafi are linked together.

The following tables present other glosses given as evidence for the NA/KA division. Table 7 shows the words for ‘oil, fat’ in GTM languages.



Table 6. ‘oil, fat’ in GTM languages

Language	s.	pl.
Adele Lower	bù-nò	
Anii	bì-ŋi	à-ŋi
Ikpana	ɔnfiɛ	
Lelemi	nno	
Siwu	nnoi	
Sekpele (Sekwa dialect)	ñnwěbí, aǰwǎ	
Seleɛ	nɔyi	
Avatime	kù-mũɔ	bà-mũwà
Nyangbo	bɔbɔ	
Tafi	bù-bɔ	bàà-bɔ
Ikpɔsɔ	ámô	
Ikpɔsɔ Uwi	ámó, zòmi	
Wuli	kùgwâ	
Igo	bubo	
Kebu	awɔmpɔ	
Animere	abaŋ	

The NA languages retain the older root #noi, which, although not identified by Westermann, is widely attested in Kwa (Hérault 1983:98), Plateau (Berom nɔ́y), Ubangian (Gbaya nɔ́), Adamawa (Zing Mumuye nun) and Dogon (Walo nù). Heine (1968a:267) tries to link all the KA forms to a single reconstruction \*m-búna, but the evidence for this is weak. There appear to be at least two roots, #-bɔ and #mwɔ. The #mwɔ root appears to be a retention of an older root, identified by Westermann (1927:257) as #mi, although synchronic forms often have a back vowel and nasalisation (e.g. Ga mû, Ngbaka mó). The #-bɔ root may also be old, as it has remote cognates in Kordofanian, such as Kaalak (u-bo), North Atlantic Baga Mboteni mbɔ́, and may well be cognate with such Kwa forms as Ga fɔ́ ‘animal fat’.

Table 8 shows the words for ‘bird’ in GTM languages. Heine (1968a:267) reconstructs \*o-tsia for the NA languages and \*o-pulá for the KA languages.

Table 7. ‘bird’ in GTM languages

Language	s.	pl.
Adele Upper	èsìsrá	bèsìsrá
Anii	gusaa	isaa
Ikpana	adzì	ndzìwɔ
Lefana	à-asè	bà-asè
Siwu	kà-ròjây	kù-ròjây
Sekpele	ðklɔ́bé	
Seleɛ	kànsíyé	bakànsíyé

Avatime	<b>kādzòwīa</b>	<b>kùdzòwīa</b>
Nyangbo	<b>kahwé</b>	<b>bòhwé</b>
Tafi	<b>ka-ɜwè</b>	<b>bɜ-ɜwè</b>
Ikpòsò	<b>íwó</b>	<b>áwó</b>
Ikpòsò Uwi	<b>ívl̩</b>	
Wuli	<b>kà-vlàbì</b>	<b>kò-vlàbì</b>
Igo	<b>ilíbi</b>	<b>belíbi, bulíbi</b>
Kebu	<b>furiyɔ</b>	
Animere	<b>fùrúbí</b>	<b>àfùrúbí</b>

In this case, Heine's proto forms seem unduly optimistic. The #(t)Sya root is clearly attested in the Avatime/ Nyangbo-Tafi languages, while Siwu and Sekpele seem to have unrelated forms. It seems difficult to extract \*o-pulá from the KA languages. Kwa languages in Cote d'Ivoire have a wide variety of lexemes, although at least one, Eotile (**èsf̩**) appears to be cognate with the \*o-tsia root. The majority of Kwa terms reflect the Niger-Congo root for 'bird', something like #nUn- (-nùn- in Mukarovksy (1976 No. 165).

Table 9 shows the words for 'hill, mountain'. Heine (1968a:267) reconstructs \*ku-boní for the NA languages and \*-tũ for the KA languages.

Table 8. 'hill, mountain' in GTM languages

Language	hill		mountain	
	s.	pl.	s.	pl.
Adele Upper	<b>di-dénbí</b>	<b>à-dénbí</b>	<b>òdón</b>	<b>ìdón</b>
Adele Lower			<b>òdón</b>	<b>ìdón</b>
Anii			<b>gubúnù</b>	<b>abúnù</b>
Gilembulnya	<b>go-bona</b>	<b>a-bona</b>		
Ikpana	<b>ukpó</b>	<b>ekpó</b>		
Lefana	<b>kò-bī</b>	<b>à-bī</b>		
Siwu	<b>kù-be</b>	<b>à-be</b>	<b>kù-be</b>	<b>à-be</b>
Sekpele			<b>kótìnì</b>	
Sɛlɛɛ			<b>kobòkòtè</b>	<b>abòkòtè</b>

Avatime	<b>li-tò</b>	<b>è-tò</b>	<b>litòlè</b>	<b>ētòlà</b>
Nyangbo	<b>butú</b>	<b>betú</b>		
Tafi			<b>bùtú</b>	<b>bèètú</b>
Ikpɔsɔ	<b>ùkpó</b>	—	<b>íjɔ́, ító</b>	
Ikpɔsɔ Uwi	<b>íyímú</b>		<b>ítô</b>	
Wuli			<b>ś-tś</b>	<b>tɔtɔ</b>
Igo	<b>idó</b>	<b>edó</b>	<b>oɔo</b>	<b>boɔo</b>
Kebu			<b>dutuvirɣ</b>	
Animere	<b>tǔ</b>	<b>àtǔ</b>	<b>tǔ</b>	<b>àtǔ</b>

The table lines up words glossed separately as ‘hill’ and ‘mountain’ in order not to miss potential cognates. In this case, unusually, the KA languages cohere with the #-**tU** root found throughout. Its presence in Adele (and perhaps Sekpele) implies that it cannot be an innovation defining the group. Although there is clearly a lexeme of the form #-**bIn-** in some NA languages it would be problematic to consider that they formed a reconstructible set. However, the #-**tU** root is widespread in Niger-Congo (Wolof **tund**, Ijoid **túdu**, Proto-Gbaya **\*tś**, Proto-Bantu **\*tòndà**) and even in Nilo-Saharan (Teda **tu**, Songhay **tondi**).

### 2.3 DOES THE NA/KA DIVISION STAND UP?

The data tables and the commentary show that the lexical boundaries proposed by Heine are nowhere perfect and perhaps appear more convincing when lined up as proposed starred forms with non-cognate forms omitted. Nonetheless, there are one or two common lexemes that match the NA group in particular #-**tV** ‘to give’ and #-**tU** for ‘water’. Against this, these are all retentions, and are attested elsewhere in Kwa and Niger-Congo. There are also plenty of ‘contrary’ items where the cognate roots seem to form quite different patterns across the GTM languages. Take, for example, the word for ‘blood’ (Table 10):

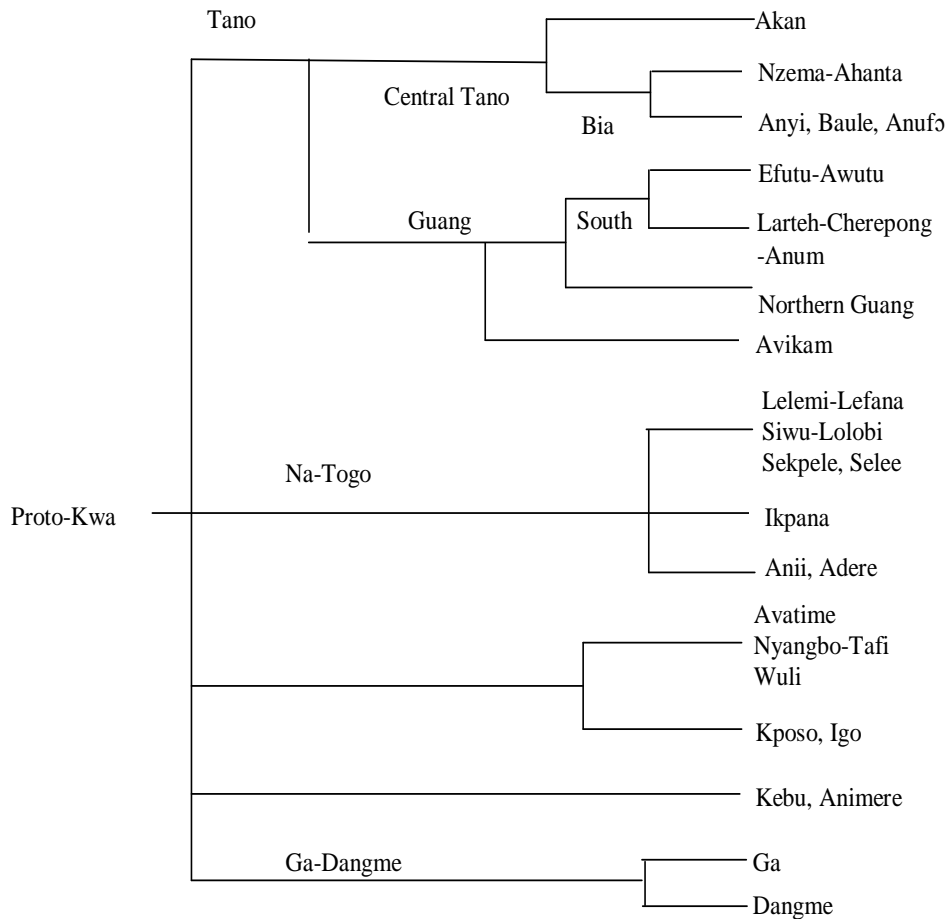
Table 9. ‘blood’ in GTM languages

Language	s.	pl.
Adele Lower	<b>̀nkàlán</b>	
Anii	<b>akónò</b>	
Gilembulnya	<b>akona</b>	
Giseme	<b>̀akpàná</b>	
Ikpana	<b>ɔ̀sù</b>	
Lelemi	<b>̀bòja</b>	
Lefana	<b>̀bùjà</b>	
Siwu	<b>̀mà</b>	<b>̀mà</b>
Sekpele	<b>kótò</b>	
Sɛlɛ	<b>ntò</b>	
Avatime	<b>ɔ̀sɛsi</b>	
Nyangbo	<b>ɔ̀sù</b>	
Tafi	<b>ɔ̀sù</b>	



languages included within Kwa as co-ordinate branches. Figure 3 integrates the new version of the GTM ‘tree’ into this larger family tree of Kwa (with Potou and some of the westernmost isolate languages omitted).

Figure 3. Classification of the eastern Kwa languages



Adapted from Williamson & Blench (2000)

This situation remains highly unsatisfactory and part of the motivation behind this paper is to establish a more satisfactory classification of the GTM languages and provide evidence for their relationship with other ‘Kwa’ languages

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The present paper presents some preliminary findings from a long-term project to revise the reconstruction and classification of the Ghana-Togo Mountain Languages. Although apparently a well-established group, the GTM language subgroup bears features of a typological classification –i.e. languages with noun-class affixes in a region otherwise dominated by languages with residual morphology. Heine’s work has had the effect of making GTMLs seem more coherent than they really are, because

many of his cognate sets reflect no more than established Niger-Congo roots widespread throughout the region. Once tables of comparable semantic items are set up, the internal diversity of the group becomes apparent. Nonetheless, a few lexical items seem to support the local specificity of the GTMLs and in part a division between the NA group and the remainder, which do not form a coherent set.

The problem is partly simply a weak understanding of the broader context of Kwa languages. Arguments for the unity of Kwa and its coherence within Niger-Congo are yet to be made and limited comparative materials on the Kwa languages east of Côte d'Ivoire and the neighbouring Gur languages, make any conclusion tentative. Ideally such arguments would also include phonology, morphology and syntax, but the data is still too patchy to produce any conclusive result on that basis. The significant expansion of work on the GTMLs from the 1990s and the increasing participation of speakers should make possible a more comprehensive argument in the coming years.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

CT	Central Togo
GTML	Ghana-Togo Mountain Languages
I	any high front vowel
S	any voiceless alveolar fricative
U	any high back vowel
V	any vowel
*	regular reconstruction
#	quasi-reconstruction

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