

A BRIEF NOTE ON CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF 'WEST CHADIC' LANGUAGES

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In his "A brief note on the Maha language" in *JWAL*, II, 1, 1965, p. 57, Paul Newman states the following:

"Maha, like the other members of the Bolewa cluster and like all West Chadic languages, has separate masculine and feminine pronouns in the 2nd and 3rd person singular and one 1st person plural pronoun, there being no distinction between 'we' inclusive and 'we' exclusive. On the other hand, Maha is the only West Chadic language which has lateral fricative phonemes characteristic of the Bura-Tera ('East Chadic') group of languages."

The general and definitive statements included in this passage require some comment.

1. It cannot be said in such an absolute and exclusive way that "all West Chadic languages" have separate masculine and feminine pronouns in the 2nd and 3rd person sing. and only one 1st pers. pl. pronoun. Actually, most of the Angas group languages including Chip, Montol, Gerka and Angas itself show sex/gender differentiation only in the 2nd person singular.¹ As to the 1st pers. pl. pronoun the Ron languages (Fyer, Bokkos, Daffo, Sha and Kulere) of the Southern Plateau exhibit - in addition to the separate pronouns in 2nd and 3rd pers. sing. - inclusive and exclusive forms and beside these even a 1st pers. dual. Cp. the following set of subject pronouns in Kulere:²

sing.	1st	ni ³	dual.	1st	ngi
	2nd			1st	
	m.	ya		incl.	ngya
	f.	ki		excl.	ni ³
	3rd			2nd	ku
	m.	shi		3rd	su/si
	f.	tu/ti			

2. It is not correct to state that "Maha is the only West Chadic language which has lateral fricative phonemes". Warja and Pa'a (Afa)⁴ for instance have them too; e.g. *dl* in *daadla* 'eight' (Warja) and *tl* in *tluni* 'they', *tl* in *vaatl'i* 'five' (Warja); Pa'a *vaatl'u* 'five'. Thus it would have been more cautious to say: ". . . is the only KNOWN West Chadic language . . .".

¹ Though historically speaking it may have existed in the 3rd person as well, as certain traces in Angas betray. Sura, actually, has it. See my Sura and Angas publications in *AFRIKA UND CHADSEN*, 47 (1964) and 48 (1964/65).

² For our purpose here tone marking is not required and has therefore been omitted. The data on the Ron languages I have collected in 1962 and 1964 in Jos and Parkshin, Plateau Province. In the meantime the analysis has been completed and the manuscript entitled 'Die Ron-Sprachen . . . und ihre Stellung innerhalb des Tschadobanarischen' is being prepared for press.

³ Distinguished by tone only.

⁴ See H. Jungraithmayr, 'Specimens of the Pa'a and Warja languages', in *AFRIKA UND CHADSEN*, 50 (in press).

3. As to the term "East Chadic" I wonder why P. Newman applies such a term to languages like Bura and 'Tera³ that are spoken approximately in the right centre of the whole area covered by languages of the so-called Chad family. What other term then does he propose for the Central group (Kotoko etc.; Greenberg's groups 2, 7, 8) and for the - as to my opinion rightly so called - Eastern group (Greenberg's group 9) comprising Mubi, Jegu etc.?

³ Is the 'Bura-Tera group' of P. Newman identical with what Greenberg calls the 'Bura-Margi group' (3)?