

**Jungraithmayr, Herrmann, and Karsten Peust. 2023.**  
***La langue kwang et ses dialectes (République du Tchad):***  
***Précis de grammaire-textes-lexique.*** Abhandlungen für die  
 Kunde des Morgenlandes 133. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.  
 192 pp. ISBN 978-34-473-9491-8.

Kwang is a Chadic language (East Chadic A3; ISO [kvi]; Glottolog [kwan1285]), spoken in Chad, South of the town of Bousso on the Chari by around 17,000 speakers. The closest genetically related language is Kera (ISO [ker]; Glottolog [kera1255]; spoken in Chad and Cameroon by around 50,000 speakers (Ebert 1975).

In this study, Herrmann Jungraithmayr and Carsten Peust (J&P) publish the field notes on Kwang and its dialects collected by the former during three visits to Laï and Mobu in 1972, 1973 and 1976. This is the first large-scale study to follow the only three linguistic publications on Kwang previously available: a list of around 150 words published by Lukas (1937: 96 ff.), a Master's thesis on the verbal system (Lenssen 1984) and a comparative article on Kwang and Kera (Ebert 1987), the latter two being based on the data published here by J&P. Despite its relative brevity (192 pages), this publication by one of the most eminent specialists in Chadic languages,<sup>1</sup> on a language that has been very poorly documented, is of great significance for all Chadicists.

The volume, written in French<sup>2</sup> for easy access by Cameroonians and other French-speaking African linguists, includes: an introduction to the Kwang people, their language, its place as a Chadic and Afro-Asiatic language, and its relationship with neighbouring languages, especially Kera; a grammatical sketch; a collection of texts and proverbs; a French-Kwang lexicon and a Kwang-French lexical index listing 669 items.

<sup>1</sup> P. Newman's bibliography (Newman 2022) lists more than 150 publications by H. Jungraithmayr, the first dating from 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Quite a few typos have escaped the proof reader (e.g. p. 32, 'schèmes tonaux' [sic] should be 'schèmes tonals') but the result is quite remarkable.



The data distinguishes between three dialects, Mobu (M, South), Cagin (C) and Ngam (N) (North-West) with some additions from a fourth: Alwa (North-East). The volume documents mainly the Mobu dialect, but most sections of the grammatical sketch finish with a comparison with the Ngam and Cagin dialects, and sometimes with Kera (e.g. p. 73).

The grammatical sketch covers essentially morphology (pp. 38–93), with a short section on phonology (pp. 17–37), and a few notes on syntax (pp. 95–97).

Kwang has 22 consonants with a series of 3 implosives (**ɓ**, **ɗ**, **ɟ**), and a contrast between /r/ (trilled) and /r/ (tapped). It has 7 vowels, doubled by the length feature. Note the contrast between the vowels /a, i/ and /ə/, e.g. *kádár* ‘month’ (sg.) vs. *kadar* ‘month’ (plur. ), despite some instability within the same series, an instability that the authors do not explain: *kàmàŋ* vs. *kàmīŋ* ‘sky’; *gááráŋ* vs. *gááréŋ* ‘hyena’. Some variation is documented between the Northern and Southern dialects. The contrast between voiced and voiceless obstruants is neutralised word-internally, in favour of voiced sonorants in the South (M), and voiceless ones in the North (C + N), e.g. ‘string’ M *sèèbî*; N *séēpi*.

Kwang distinguishes 3 tonal levels (High, Low, Medium), which in a quick glance at the Kwang-French index, can be shown to combine to form contour tones: *bàkáàdí* ‘doctor’, *wàŋnèr* ‘mongoose’, *báāŋ* ‘there isn’t’, *kùū* ‘mouth’, *dòdòdò* ‘beer’. Tone assignment varies contextually within each dialect, as documented by the authors in the variations due to the attachment of suffixes to various lexical tone classes. A very interesting variation is documented between Northern (N + C) and Southern (M) dialects, resulting in a sort of tonal flip-flop<sup>3</sup>, e.g. in tonal verb classes (p.72).

	Class 1, ‘grill’	Class 2, ‘cry’
Southern (Flat prosody)	High: <i>wágé</i>	Mid: <i>wāgē</i>
Northern (Rising prosody)	Low-Mid: <i>wākē</i>	Mid-High: <i>wāké</i>

The morphology of Kwang is quite typical of Chadic languages, with grammatical gender and plurality organised around a 3-term opposition between Masculine/Feminine/Plural in nouns (‘buffalo’: masc. *kībndé*, fem. *túbndó*, plur. *kábnán*), adjectives (‘hot’: masc. *sàbè*, fem. *sàbà*, plur. *ká-sàbáàn*) and pronouns (cf. p. 38). The expression of plurality in nouns is complex, and can involve prefixation, suffixation, apophony, apotony, singulative suffixes and suppletion. (pp. 44–48)

In the pronominal system, gender is marked in the 2nd and 3rd persons singular. The 1st person plural distinguishes between inclusive and exclusive reference. Pronouns are divided into three functional series: independent (*absolu*) and 2 depend-

<sup>3</sup> See Caron (2013) for an illustration of the same phenomenon in Geji and Pelu.

ent series (*préfixes sujet* and *suffixes*). The so-called *suffixes* function as direct objects of verbs and prepositions, indirect objects and possessive pronouns.<sup>4</sup>

The expression of alienable possession uses a genitive link (GL, *nota genitivi*) **káná** (masc.), **nó** (fem.), **kádé** (plur.), with the order [Head + GL + Modifier]. The GL agrees in gender and number with the head: **kámáñ kán málá** ‘son of (MASC) chief’; **máñ né/nó málá** ‘daughter of (FEM) chief’; **káñ kád málá** ‘fish of (PLUR) chief’. The dependent pronouns attach to the GL to form the paradigms of alienable possessive pronouns (p. 57): **tár ná = n** ‘my house’ (lit. ‘house of [MASC] = me’); **tár nà = m** ‘your house’ (lit. ‘house of [MASC] = you [FEM.SING]’); **kùd káná = n** ‘my skin’ (lit. ‘skin of [FEM] = me’); **kùd kànà = m** ‘your skin’ (lit. ‘skin of [FEM] = you [FEM.SING]’).

The GL does not appear in the expression of inalienable possession. A 3rd person dependent pronoun attaches directly to the head noun, and the modifier noun is moved to the left: Modifier + Head = Pronoun, **gááráñ nómd = ú** ‘the wife of Hyena’ (lit. ‘Hyena wife = 3FEM.SING’). Inalienable possessive pronouns attach directly to a specific form (*base possessive*) of the modified inalienable noun: **bàd = àm** ‘your father’ (father = 2 SING.MASC). Possessive bases of inalienable nouns are different from their quotation form and are divided into five classes according to their tonal behaviour.

Kwang verbs form two tone classes, one with High and the other with Mid tones. Some verbs (e.g. ‘eat’, ‘drink’) take a cognate object (*infinitif complémentaire*). Finally, Kwang possesses derived pluractional verbs, formed with either an extra /d/ inserted after the last consonant (e.g. **sé** ‘drink’ > **sádé**; **láágé** ‘hunt’ > **láágádé**) or by devoicing the first consonant of the verb (**dārē** ‘carry’ > **tārē**; **bájé** ‘wash’ > **pájé**).

J&P describe the TAM system of Kwang as a fundamentally aspectual system based on a contrast between perfective and imperfective aspects, each of them divided into tenses (*temps*). The perfective is divided into four perfects (*parfait*) and the imperfective comprises the imperfect (*imparfait*), the present-future, and three progressive ‘tenses’. Then Kwang has five moods (*formes modales*): subjunctive, imperative, two hortatives and a vetitive (or negative imperative). J&P mention (p. 93) the existence of intransitive copy pronouns and two extensions: ventive and allative.

The morphology and tonology of the interaction of TAMs and verb classes in Kwang and its dialects are extensively explored but no example of these is given in context. As is the case for the following section on syntax (a mere 3 pages for predication, relative temporal and conditional clauses, with no section on negation), the reader is referred to the collection of 13 small texts and 19 proverbs to find examples and understand the rationale behind the referential values of the

<sup>4</sup> Since ‘suffixed’ pronouns attach indifferently to verbs, nouns, prepositions and the genitive link, dependent pronouns had better be described as clitics.

TAMs. Generally speaking, the terminology used by the authors does not follow the current conventions of linguistic description. Their attachment to latin terminology (*nota genitivi*, *nomen regens*, *nomen rectum*) is just an example. As they stand, the labels they use to name the TAMs are quite puzzling in themselves as they confuse tense and aspect, and within aspect, use lexical aspect labels (*perfectif/imperfectif*, typical of e.g. Russian aspect) to identify the TAMs. For example, it is difficult to understand what the authors mean p. 75 by:

Le parfait 1 est le temps perfectif par excellence. Il peut à la fois exprimer un passé narratif et un état achevé au présent.


The book is mainly focused on identifying morphemes, their tones and variations, relying systematically on the quotation forms as a starting point for their interpretation. For the TAM referential value, J&P seem to have relied on the translations into French given by the speakers, and their use of the terminology of traditional French grammar (cf. p. 82, the section on the *imparfait*). For the morphology and tonology, each morpheme is shown to react individually to its immediate context, but no general rule, no unifying principle is emerging from the description. As a result, it is difficult for the reader to get a global view of the way the language functions.

The readers will be thankful for the detailed and quite exhaustive description of the morphology of Kwang, however frustrated they may be by the lack of proper inter-linear glossing. Indeed, they will not get much help from the examples or the texts themselves, as each morpheme is just translated into French. In the glossing of the texts for example, the four ‘perfects’ are all translated by a French simple past without tagging the TAM. One would expect a more detailed inter-linear tagging, as is now expected of such descriptions, using e.g. the Leipzig glossing rules (Bickel, Comrie and Haspelmath 2008).

As it is, the book will be of interest for Chadicists as it gives access to extensive, precious field notes, meticulously transcribed and commented, on a little documented language of Chad. The most readily accessible part of the book is its vocabulary (669 items with their dialect variants and comparison with Kera). I hope the readers will not be discouraged by its imperfections and will be able to make use of those precious field notes, now almost 50 years old, to make their own analysis, and give Kwang all the recognition it deserves.

## References

- Bickel, Balthasar, Bernard Comrie, and Martin Haspelmath. 2008. 'The Leipzig Glossing Rules. Conventions for Interlinear Morpheme-by-Morpheme Glosses'. <http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>.
- Caron, Bernard. 2013. 'Tonal Inversion in Geji and Pelu'. In *Topics in Chadic Linguistics VII: Papers from the 6th Biennial International Colloquium on the Chadic Languages, Villejuif, September 22–23, 2011*, edited by Henry Tourneux, 77–85. Chadic Linguistics / Linguistique Tchadique / Tschadistik 8. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Ebert, Karen. 1975–1979. *Sprache und Tradition der Kera (Tschad): T. 1. Texte. T. 2. Lexikon / Lexique. T. 3. Grammatik*. 3 vols. Marburger Studien zur Afrika- und Asienkunde: Serie A, Afrika 6, 8, 15. Berlin: Reimer.
- Ebert, Karen H. 1987. 'A First Comparison of Kera and Kwang'. In *Langues tchadiques et langues non tchadiques en contact en Afrique Centrale*, edited by Herrmann Jungraithmayr, 61–70. LACITO Documents: Afrique 10. Paris: SELAF.
- Lenssen, Tilman. 1984. *Studien zum Verb im Kwang (Tschad): Phonologie und Morphologie*. Africana Marburgensia. Sonderheft 7. Marburg an der Lahn: Afrikanistische Abteilung, Philipps-Universität Marburg.
- Lukas, Johannes. 1937. *Zentralsudanische Studien*. Vol. 45. Hamburg: Friederichsen, de Gruyter.
- Newman, Paul. 2022. *Comprehensive Bibliography of Chadic and Hausa Linguistics*. 5th ed. Bloomington: IUScholarWorks. <https://doi.org/10.5967/5Q3G-T220>.

Bernard Caron  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6955-8227>

LLACAN Langage langues et cultures d'Afrique, UMR8135 CNRS INALCO EPHE, France | [bernard.l.caron@gmail.com](mailto:bernard.l.caron@gmail.com)