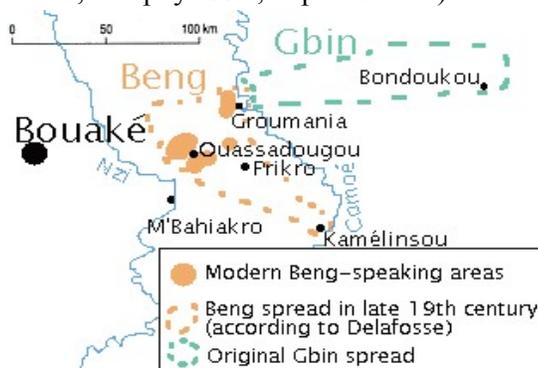


Modern Beng and the Linguistic Materials of Tauxier and Delafosse

0. Overview

Like many other idioms of Côte-d'Ivoire, Beng language was first described by Maurice Delafosse (1904). Twenty years later Louis Tauxier studied the area of Bondoukou more deeply; among other things, he published an extensive list of Beng words and phrases (1921 : pp. 658-683).

Since Delafosse and through the 1980-es, Beng was known under the names *N'Gain*, *Gan*, and the combination of the two *N'Gan*; sometimes *-né*, reflecting probably the plural marker *ne* of some Beng dialects (see below), was added to refer to the Beng people. New data were published in recent decades where the language is called with its native name *Beng* (Paesler 1989; Paesler 1992; Gottlieb, Murphy 1994; Paperno 2005).



Map: The area of Beng and of a closely related language Gbin, now extinct.

In fact, not only the name changed. Works of Paesler, of Gottlieb and Murphy, and of me, represent a different dialect than those described by Tauxier and Delafosse, a dialect spoken in the prefecture of M'Bahiakro, in the area centered around the village of Ouassadouougou. This area is divided into two socio-geographic units, “Forest” and “Savanna”, each of the two has (or used to have) its own “king”. The literature (e.g. Paesler 1992) even speaks of two dialects, dialect of the forest and dialect of the savanna, but this distinction has never been justified by linguistic data. All the idioms of the area of Ouassadouougou are mutually understandable; the only certain isogloss I know of does not strictly divide the two regions: the subject pronoun of 3rd person singular has the form /e/ in parlanges of some “savanna” villages, e.g. Totodougou, and /o/ in some “forest” villages, but also in the parlance of Ouassadouougou, which is generally attributed to the “savanna” zone. Unfortunately, I do not possess more precise information about dialectal distribution of these pronoun forms. In any event, I am not going to distinguish here the idioms of Ouassadouougou area. Since there is no uniform term for this dialect, I will write « Modern Ouassadouougou Beng », abbreviating it as *MOB*.¹

Now that *MOB* is relatively well studied, we are in the position to interpret the data Tauxier and Delafosse had published in their relation to *MOB* facts. It turns out that the parlanges described by Delafosse and Tauxier are quite different from *MOB*. Delafosse documented the variety of Beng spoken in the 1890-s in the village of Kamélinsou near the Comoé river (see the map); I was unable to find such a settlement on modern maps. L. Tauxier left a rather extensive record of what the data that he gathered “dans le village gan de Pattakoro, situé sur la route de Bouaké à Bondoukou, entre Kongodian et Groumania,” and also later from “des Gans des villages environnants [de Groumania]” (Tauxier 1921: 372). It follows that data from more than

¹ This is intended as a purely geographical label (Ouassadouougou is the center of the area) distinguishing this variety of Beng from other dialects. It does not imply any political overtones.

one Beng dialect could make a way into Tauxier's book, and it is impossible to reliably separate them without external evidence on modern varieties of these dialects, which have never been published. Presumably, though, most of Tauxier's data rely on the idiom of the neighbourhood of Groumania (he qualifies his records from Pattakoro as “notes succinctes”). If this is correct, Tauxier's data may represent an idiom of modern Lendoukro or Bénidougou, villages situated in the proximity of Groumania, west from the Comoé river (see the map above), where Beng is still spoken. To the best of my knowledge, there is no scholarship of these parlances, and Tauxier's notes remain the only source. I will make reference to the idioms documented by Delafosse and Tauxier by abbreviations BK (Beng of Kamélinou) and BG (Beng of Groumania neighbourhood), correspondingly.

1. Delafosse: Beng of Kamélinou

Delafosse was the first to publish any Beng data; his records, however, are very scarce. They consist of a list on numerals from one through ten provided to him by Dr. Maclaud, “qui l'a recueillie sur place durant son voyage de 1893-1894” (Delafosse 1904: 149). The list is not very informative, other than that it reliably identifies the idiom as being very close to MOB. Two peculiarities, however, deserve a comment. First, the parlance of Kamélinou maintained the form /ya/ for 'trois' in *ya* 'trois' and *so-ya* 'huit' (< '5 + 3'), as opposed to /wa/, /ŋa/ in MOB *ŋā-ŋ̄*, BG *n'gan* [ŋa] 'trois', MOB *só-wà*, BG *sowoua* [sɔ-wa] 'huit,' cf. the numeral '3' in related languages: Gouro *yaá*, Gban *yã*, Mwan *yāgā*.

Second, BK added the formative *-N* in the numerals *syĩ* [sie-ŋ] 'quatre' and *sõ* [sɔ-ŋ] 'cinq,' like in MOB (*síéŋ*, *sóŋ*), cf. *syé* [sie], *so* [sɔ] in a closely related language Gbin (Delafosse 1904: 149), which had never added such a suffix. The formative *-N*, however, has not expanded to the numerals *pla* 'deux' and *ya* 'trois', cf. MOB *plā-ŋ̄*, *ŋā-ŋ̄*.

BK	BG	MOB	Gbin (Delafosse)	
do [do]	dô [do]	dō	do	'1'
pla [pla]	para [pala]	plāŋ̄	paa	'2'
ya [ya]	n'gan [ŋa]	ŋāŋ̄	ŋga, ña	'3'
syĩ [sieŋ]	syé [sie]	síéŋ	sye	'4'
sõ [sɔŋ]	sôn [sɔŋ]	sóŋ	sōo	'5'
so-do [sɔdo]	so-do [sɔdo]	sódō	sōrũ-do	'6'
so-pla [sɔpla]	so-fala [sɔfala] ²	sóplā	sosowa	'7'
so-ya [sɔya]	sowoua [sɔwa]	sówà, kēŋēsíéŋ	kyenze	'8'
sisi [sisi]	sisi [sisi]	sísí	sisi	'9'
ebu [ebu]	bou [bu]	bū, èbū	bu	'10'

Table 1. Numerals from 1 through 10 in Beng dialects and Gbin

² [f] in this numeral is probably the result of lenition of intervocalic /p/; there are no other examples that would support such a phonological process in BG.

2. Tauxier: Beng of Groumania neighbourhood

Tauxier performed a far more profound study of Beng, publishing a list of around 800 words. Here is no place for an extended commentary to his data, but I will highlight some features of BG that distinguish it from other Beng dialects.

2.1. Phonological peculiarities of BG

There are minimal phonological differences that can be established. First, the syncope of a vowel before /l/ had hardly ever happened in BG, so that etymological CVLV feet are consistently transcribed with two vowels. Examples include BG *pala* 'deux', cf. BK *pla*, MOB *plāj̄*, BG *iri* 'arbre', cf. MOB *yrí*, BG *sara* 'tabac à priser', cf. MOB *sra* 'poudre de tabac'; BG *zini* [zili] 'maïs', cf. MOB *zriṅ̄*, BG *diawafila* 'oignon', cf. MOB *jàflá*, BG *balanda* [balana] 'banane', cf. MOB *bláná*; NG *poro-iri* 'baobab', cf. MOB *plǎ yrí*, BG *méné* [mɛ̄ɛ] 'poulet', cf. MOB *mlě*; BG *kélenzô* 'buffle', cf. MOB *kléj̄ zǒ* 'boeuf de la brousse'; BG *béré* 'biche-cochon', cf. MOB *bĕ* 'sorte de biche' ('duiker' in biological classification), and many more.

Another characteristic trait of BG is the systematic prenasalization of /z/³, as exemplified by words like BG *n'zô* 'boeuf', cf. MOB *zǒ*; *n'zo* 'arbre (à fou)', cf. MOB *zô* 'espèce d'arbre'; BG *n'zie* 'fromager', cf. MOB *ziē*; BG *n'zamm* [ⁿzan] 'rônier', cf. MOB *zàj̄*, BG *n'zi* 'poisson', cf. MOB *ziṅ̄*, BG *n'zanalignn* 'jeune fille', cf. MOB *zānàṅ̄ lēj̄*, BG *n'zomana* [ⁿzamaṅ̄] 'savon', cf. MOB *zāmlâ*, BG *n'zan* [ⁿzan] 'marigot', cf. MOB *záj̄*, BG *n'zéré* 'sentier', cf. MOB *zrē* 'route'; BG *n'zié* 'funérailles', cf. MOB *ziē*, BG *n'zéli* 'puissant, vainqueur', cf. MOB *zēlí* 'vainqueur'; BG *n'zoro* 'se laver', MOB *zrö*; BG *yigbézouya* [yigbeⁿzuya] 'ouest', cf. MOB *yigbié zūyà*⁴. However, some words in Tauxier's list do not show prenasalization; these are BG *zini* 'maïs', cf. MOB *zriṅ̄*, BG *zonzon* 'moustique', cf. MOB *zǒzǒ*, BG *zoumounou* 'fourmi magnan', cf. MOB *zūmlūj̄*, BG *azara* 'jeter', cf. MOB *à zrā* 'le jeter'; BG *azon* 'piler', cf. MOB *à zǒ* 'le piler'; BG *azou* 'lancer', cf. MOB *à zū* 'le lancer'; BG *zazalè* 'disputer (se)', cf. MOB *zázalé*. Interestingly, the same morpheme [zu] appears in prenasalized form in [yigbeⁿzu-ya] 'ouest', and in the original form in [a-zu] 'lancer.' The absence of prenasalization of /z/ in some words may reflect dialectal differences (e.g. between Pattakoro and villages next to Groumania), as well as irregularity of prenasalization or mere transcription errors. But in case of verbs (set aside *zazalè* 'se disputer') the distribution may be non-random: it is probable that in case of transitive verbs *azon* 'piler', *azara* 'jeter', and *azou* 'lancer', the presence of the 3rd person singular pronoun *a-* blocked prenasalization. Perhaps some sort of phonological break is a condition for prenasalization, and the pronoun forms a prosodic unit with the verb without such a break.

Final nasal sonant /N/ tended to reduce in BG, often escaping from fixation, cf. varying transcription of *leṅ* 'enfant' in BG *n'zô-lè* 'veau', *banngo-lè* 'cheval, poulain', *babalé* // *babalegnn*

³ There are occasional instances of prenasalization of other voiced consonants in Tauxier's data: BG *n'déré* 'grimper', cf. MOB *drēj̄*, BG *n'déinggn* 'colline, montagne', cf. MOB *dèj̄*, BG *n'dioté* 'argent', cf. MOB *jétè*; BG *m'bésé*, *bésé* 'matchette', cf. MOB *bèsé*, BG *m'bié* 'sel', cf. MOB *biē*.

⁴ The expression for 'west' has a clear synchronic etymology in Beng, dividing into *yigbié* 'sun' + *zū* 'trow' + locative suffix *-ya*, providing the literal meaning of 'the place where the sun is thrown', as opposed to *yigbié bōyà* 'east' = *yigbié* 'sun' + *bō* 'come' + *yà*, 'the place from which the sun comes'

'mouton, agneau,' *ouolé* // *ouoleignn* 'doigt' (lit. 'hand's child'), *ninn, né* 'enfant' (MOB *ɲ léj* [néj] 'mon enfant'), or variation in BG *dowoué, dowouégnn* 'gombo'. This variation also may or may not reflect real dialectal differences.

Vowels before the final /N/ tended to change their quality, usually heightening or developing a heightening diphthong; these effects persisted even when the final /N/ was reduced, e.g. in BG *n'zaon, n'zamm* 'rônier,' *n'zaombéi* 'fruit du rônier' (MOB *zàj bēj*), *ouolé, ouoleignn* 'doigt' (MOB *wɔléj*); BG *bahoum* 'épaule' (MOB *bàj*); BG *beignn* 'menton' (MOB *gbèj*); BG *youn* 'visage' (MOB *yōj*); BG *lignn, li* 'femme' (MOB *lēj*); *n'zoulé* 'grande soeur' (MOB *zúlēj*); BG *pégnn* // *pain* 'mortier' (MOB *pēj*), BG *sarapoum* 'tabatière,' cf. MOB *sra kpōj* 'calebasse à tabac,' BG *pèlou* 'voler (dans l'air)' (MOB *pèlōj*). Like the reduction of /N/, the diphthongization/heightening of the vowel was not regular, cf. absence of diphthongization in BG *lignn'gala* 'pagne de gemme,' MOB *lēj glāj*, BG *galanké* 'tisser,' MOB *glāj cī* (?) 'créer la pagne'; BG *zini* 'maïs,' cf. MOB *zrīj*, BG *irikôm* 'écorce,' MOB *yrí kój*, BG *irinni* 'racine,' MOB *yrí nīj*, BG *béhan* 'chèvre,' MOB *béyàj*, BG *béha-sia* 'bouc,' MOB *béyàj síá*, BG *sōmm* [soŋ] 'animal sauvage,' MOB *sōj*, etc.

1.2. Morphological peculiarities of BG

Few morphological characteristics differentiate the Beng dialect described by Tauxier from MOB; I will first make some remarks about personal pronouns that are in some respects more archaic than in MOB. BG maintained at least traces of inclusivity distinction in 1st person plural⁵, as testified by alternate BG translations *kasisi* and *asisi* for the French 'nous' (cf. Mwan 1st person plural inclusive pronoun *kòó*, exclusive *ó*, the nature of the final element *sisi* is unclear). 3rd person plural form in BG preserves the original initial /w/⁶, compare BG *Ouomisipo?* 'Comment t'appelles-tu?' and BG *ouonion go parana* 'leur chien' with their MOB counterparts:

BG	Ouo	mi	si	po?
MOB	ɲò	mī	sì	pó?
gloss	3PL	2SG	call	what
'What is your name?' (lit. 'What do they call thee?')				
BG	Ouo	nion go [ɲaŋɔ < ɲaŋ + wɔ]		parana
MOB	ɲò	ɲāj	ɲò ⁷	kplāj-ná
gloss	3PL	EMPH	3PL	flea-possessor
'their dog' (lit. 'their possessor of fleas').				

BG is also relatively conservative in introducing the numeral formative *-N* only in *sōn* [soŋ] '5'; see discussion of BK and examples above; however, the the absense of fixation of *-N* in numerals '2' till '5' is ambiguous due to the reduction of *-N* in BG (see above).

⁵ MOB, unlike all other South Mande languages, uses a uniform 1st person plural pronoun *aj* regardless of clusivity.

⁶ Compare 3rd person plural pronouns in three related languages: Mwan *wóō*, Gouro *wò*, Gban *ó* (with loss of /w/).

⁷ In MOB like in GB the second (non-subject) pronoun accompanies (doubles) the noun phrase expressed by the emphatic pronominal form in *-ɲaŋ*.

One morphological innovation of BK is the plural marker. The original marker *ny* is only preserved after the final /N/, while after a vowel a new plural marker *ɲe* is used:

BG	MOB	meaning	BG plural form
Stems ending in a vowel			
Pilana.	kpláǵ ná	Chien	pilanangué = /pilana + ɲe/
soro.	sóó	musulman	soronngué = /sɔɔ + ɲe/
méné	mlē	serpent	ménenngué = /mɛlɛ + ɲe/
méné	mlě	poulet	ménenngué = /mɛlɛ + ɲe/
iri	yri	arbre	irigué = /yili + ɲe/
Agni.		Agni	Agnigné = /aɲi + ɲe/
Baoulé		Baoulé	Baoulenngué, baoulégné = /baule + ɲe/
Soron.	sóó	Dyoula	Sorongué = /sɔɔ + ɲe/
Stems ending in -N			
n'zi.	zǵ	poisson	n'zinoungué = / ⁿ ziɲ + nɲ + ɲe/
G'Beïgnn	bèǵ	Gan	G'Beïgnnou // gbénou = /beɲ + nɲ/

2. Conclusion

We established several isoglosses that relate the well-studied Modern Ouassadoungou Beng to dialects documented in earliest literature. The dialect of Kamélinso is characterized by an archaism (the form of numeral '3'), and shares two innovations with MOB, syncope and wider spread of *-N* in numerals. The dialect of Groumania neighbourhood has several archaic features such as the absence of syncope, moderate use of *-N* in numerals, and the structure of the pronominal system. Tauxier's data also allow to establish some innovations unique to BG, both phonological and grammatical. MOB in turn shows more structural innovations, which corresponds to its relatively central geographical place.

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