

New research on Tivoid and its place within Bantoid

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Tivoid: background I

- The Tivoid languages represent one of the least-known and most poorly characterised of the larger Bantoid groups.
- Indeed no argument for the unity of this group has ever been presented in print and for some putative Tivoid languages there appears to be no published information.
- Meek (1931) may well be the earliest author to record languages other than Tiv itself; he provides vocabularies of Bitare, Abõ and Batu.
- Greenberg (1963) included Tiv, Bitare and Batu, languages now considered to be Tivoid, as three of the seven co-ordinate branches of Bantu but did not argue for any special relationship between them.
- Williamson (1971:276) lists Tiv, Ceve, Balegete, Bitare, Abõ and Batu as part of the Tiv-Batu group, which she places within ‘non-Bantu Bantoid’ alongside Mambila-Wute [i.e. Mambiloid].

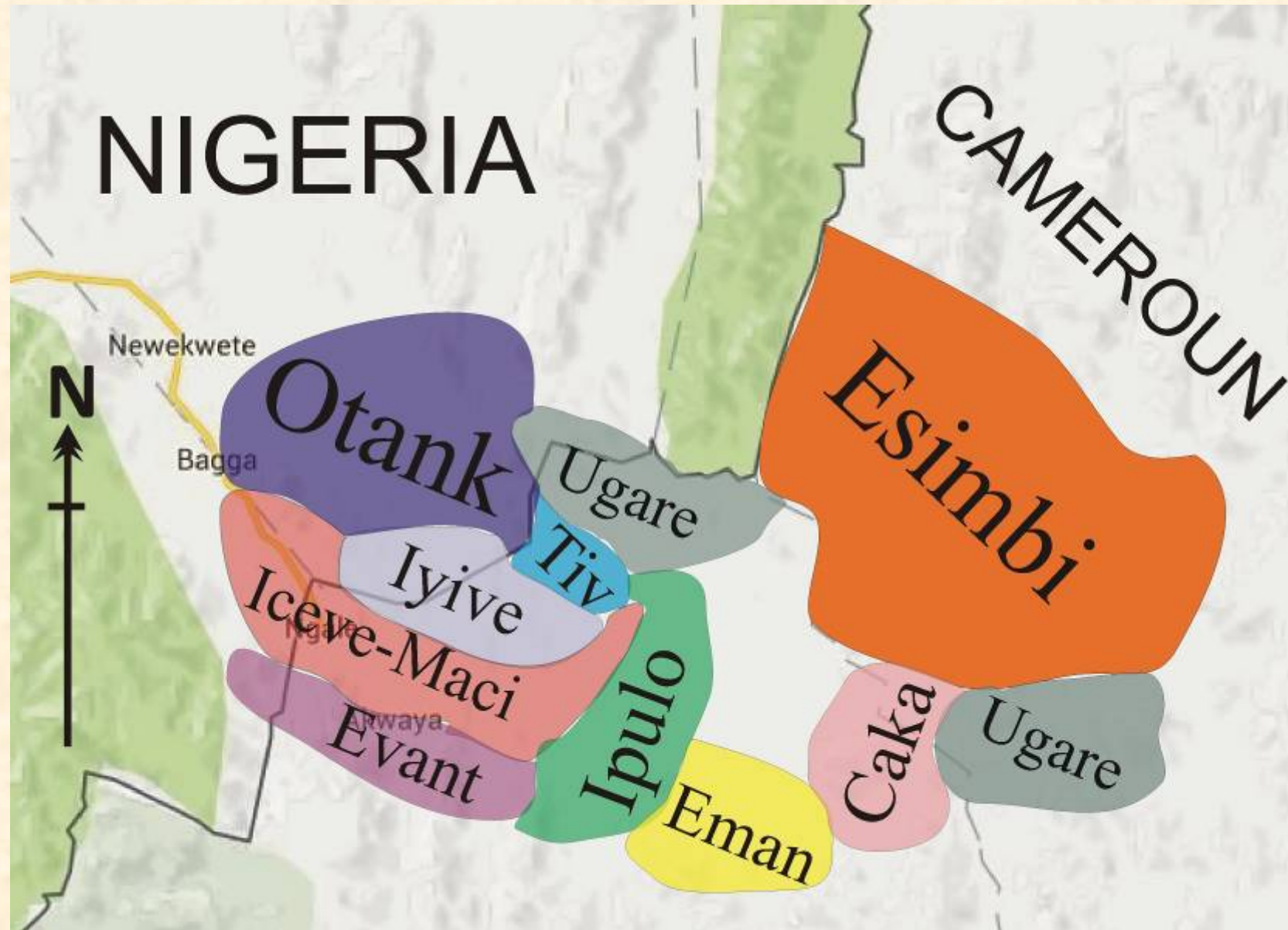
Tivoid: background II

- The recognition that there is a complex group of languages related to Tiv may first appear in Dieu & Renaud (1983) reprised in Watters & Leroy (1989).
- Piron (1997) recognises a Tivoid group although she only sampled a very small number of languages.
- The situation is thus largely the same data being recycled from one author to another with no real advances in analysis.
- The paper makes use of new field data collected both in Nigeria and Cameroun to try and establish;
 - a. Which languages fit together in a Tivoid group
 - b. Whether Esimbi is part of that group, which currently seems unlikely
 - c. Whether the group as a whole is characterised by the double affixing typical of Tiv and some of the other languages
 - d. And how Tivoid relates to Bantoid in a broader perspective

Where are the Tivoid languages?

- Tivoid is partly little known because its languages are spoken in a very remote area
- Except for Tiv itself and Esimbi, all the others only have a few thousand speakers
- The expansion of Tiv is relatively recent, perhaps only 17-18th century
- Tivoid is also divided geographically between the northern languages, spoken west of the Mambila Plateau, and the southern group spoken in the northern Grassfields of Cameroun and adjacent Nigeria
- The languages in the region between north and south are Jukunoid and Grassfields (Isu etc.) and these are probably subsequent expansions which broke the link between the two groups
- The maps show Northern and Southern Tivoid separately and Tiv itself

South Tivoid languages



Tiv



North Tivoid languages



Which languages are Tivoid?

- The set of languages included under Tivoid has not been stable from one publication to another
- The languages Balo, Manta and Osatu were previously assigned to Tivoid but the evidence for this is unreliable and these are now classified with West Momo, now rebaptised SW Grassfields.
- Buru (known only from a short wordlist by Robert Koops) is listed as Tivoid
- Esimbi (relatively well documented) is also usually listed as Tivoid
- There are doubts about both of these
- The Ambo language is listed as Tivoid but I can find no data on this language
- In the light of this, there appear to be around 14 Tivoid languages, excluding Esimbi

Which languages are Tivoid?

The Tivoid languages

Name	Country	Population	Sources
Abõ	Nigeria	1000	Koops ms.
Ambo	Nigeria	1000	?
Batu	Nigeria	25,000	Koops ms.
Bitare [=Njwande]	Nigeria/ Cameroon	6000	Koops ms.
Caka [=Asaka]	Cameroon	5000	ALCAM
Eman	Cameroon	800	ALCAM
Esimbi	Cameroon	20,000	Koenig, Coleman & Coleman (2007)
Evant	Cameroon /Nigeria	1000	ALCAM
Iceve-Maci	Nigeria	5000	ALCAM
Ipulo	Cameroon	2500	ALCAM
Iyive	Nigeria/Cameroon	2000	ALCAM
Kamino	Nigeria	1000	Koops ms.
Ugarə (=Mesaka)	Cameroon	14,000	Cassetta & Cassetta (1994a,b,c)
Otank (=Otanga)	Nigeria	3000	ALCAM
Tiv	Nigeria	2,212,000	Abraham (1940b)

Is Buru Tivoid?

- Buru is known only from about 400 words collected by Robert Koops in the 1970s.
- It has numerous Niger-Congo and Bantoid roots with comparisons throughout the region
- Plus some striking idiosyncratic forms for some common words
- The noun class alternations are unusual;

∅-	ba-
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- The system has clearly undergone major collapse, since many words have frozen nasal and other prefixes

à-	ā
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- Unusual phoneme /θ/, similar to Jukunoid and very unusual sequences, e.g. t θ ēn ‘to split’

e-	a-, ba-
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- Not much more to say without more data

gi-	bi-, e-
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ŋ-	a-
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Is Esimbi Tivoid?

- Esimbi is the most well-known language outside Tiv which is classified as Tivoid. Whether Esimbi is Tivoid can be seriously doubted.
- If so, it is extremely marginal as it has a large number of lexical items not shared with the rest of the group. Table 10 shows lexical items where Esimbi is exceptional for Tivoid, i.e. where no cognate appears to occur among the other Tivoid languages. There are 55 out of a total list of 120 words, i.e. 46%.
- Even those which are shared are often Niger-Congo roots which might be due to a common heritage.

Is Esimbi Tivoid II?

- The table shows a sample of the common lexical items not shared with other Tivoid

Gloss	Esimbi
head	kè-rəŋgə /mè-
tooth	ki-zini /o-
nose	o-húndu /ɔ-
breast	ke-yímbi /ε-
claw nail	ke-zi /ε-
buttock	ɔ-tə wu εsuŋgu a-tə yə ~
belly	ke-cifí /me-
intestines / insides	hahindεyɔʒ [S]
skin	è-gùghù pl. é-gughù

The phonology of Tivoid: vowels

- For Tivoid languages, modern phonologies of any sort exist for only five languages, Tiv, Iyive, Iceve, Esimbi and Ugarə. Even the material on Tiv does not really meet modern standards.
- Ugarə has an eight-vowel system not atypical for the region;

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	ɨ	u
Close-Mid	e		o
Open-Mid	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

The phonology of Tivoid: vowels

- Typically Tivoid languages do not show contrastive vowel length; Esimbi is an exception
- No Tivoid language appears to have underlying nasal vowels
- Tivoid languages do not generally show ATR vowel harmony synchronically, but phonotactic restrictions suggest this was formerly present.

The phonology of Tivoid: consonants

■ A typical consonant system is;

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			k g	kp gb	
Fricative		f v	s z	[ʃ] [ʒ]		y		h
Affricate					[tʃ] dʒ			
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ		
Trill			[r]					
Approximant					y		w	
Lateral			l					

Tivoid noun morphology

- Tiv is one of the small number of Niger-Congo languages to have both prefixes and suffixes.
- A subset of South Tivoid shows the same pattern, but this cannot be reconstructed for Tivoid as a whole
- This includes Tiv, Evant, Utang, Oliti, Iyive, Iceve. No trace of this pattern outside
- Similar morphology may occur in other Grassfields languages such as Bum and Bamunka, although these have yet to be fully described (Hamm p.c.).
- Otherwise these occur among Gur and proximate languages in the Togo-Ghana borderland (Avatime, Bassari and Bogong are examples).

Tivoid noun morphology: Iyive

- Numerous other processes are at work simultaneously, including noun-stem vowel alternation, prefix-alternation, etc.
- The outcome, for a language like Iyive is hyper-complex. Iyive makes its plurals (number marking) by;
- Prefix alternation
- Prefix addition in the plural
- Tonal alternation
- Prefix/suffix copying (i.e. the same prefix also appears as a suffix)
- Suffix deletion
- Morphophonemic consonant alternation
- It is quite striking that Iyive appears sometimes to have singulatives, as if the plural is the unmarked form, reminding you of Nilo-Saharan
- The following table gives some examples;

Tivoid noun morphology: Iyive

- The table illustrates some of the diversity of plural marking in Iyive, omitting more obvious cases of prefix alternation

Gloss	sg.	pl.
bamboo	kóválók	ávál
batteries	áká	kíkák
bell	kímómúnùkú	vímómúv
big lizard	ìtànó	átân
child	wán	vánáv
cloth	ìkwónḁ	ùkù
dust (in the air)	ìhùḁú	éhuḁḁ
face	kířík	vířív
fishing net	étúfú	vèvèl
horn	kákwołòkó	úkwôl
hair (of head)	ítřé	ítřé

Tivoid verb morphology

- Tivoid also shows a complex of tonal alternations in the verb stem to mark tense/aspect, as in Iceve;

	Toneless root	High-tone root
Imperative	<i>kùlá wait!</i>	<i>kúlà sew!</i>
Past	<i>âkùlá he waited</i>	<i>âkúlá he sewed</i>
Perfect	<i>âkùlà he has waited</i>	<i>âkúlà he has sewed</i>
Future	<i>ákùlà he will wait</i>	<i>á⁺kúlà he will sew</i>
Present	<i>ákùlá he is waiting</i>	<i>á⁺kúlá he is sewing</i>
Subjunctive	<i>ákùlá let him wait!</i>	<i>ákúlá let him sew</i>
Infinitive	<i>ókùlá to wait</i>	<i>ókúlá to sew</i>
Gerund	<i>èkùlàⁿà waiting</i>	<i>èkùlàⁿà sewing</i>

Tivoid verb morphology

- Tivoid shows verb stem-vowel alternations to mark tense/aspect, as in Tiv;

present

tèmà

nyímè

sèngè

past

tùmà

nyúmè

sòngu

Gloss

sit

refuse

slaughter

The syntax of Tivoid

- Tivoid (as far as we know) is S V (DAT) O. Example from Tiv;

Wán lá à-kpé
Child DEF it-died
The child died.

Wán lá à-yá àyàbà
Child DEF it-eat plantain
The child ate plantain.

Wán lá à-ná tùò àyàbà
Child DEF it-give chief plantain
The child gave the chief plantain.

The internal classification of Tivoid

- Tivoid can be divided clearly into the Southern and Northern subgroups, marked by the geographical separation.
- The data is too weak to classify Northern Tivoid, but the Southern group seems to split into two groups marked A and B. Only Ugare is hard to fit into this scheme.

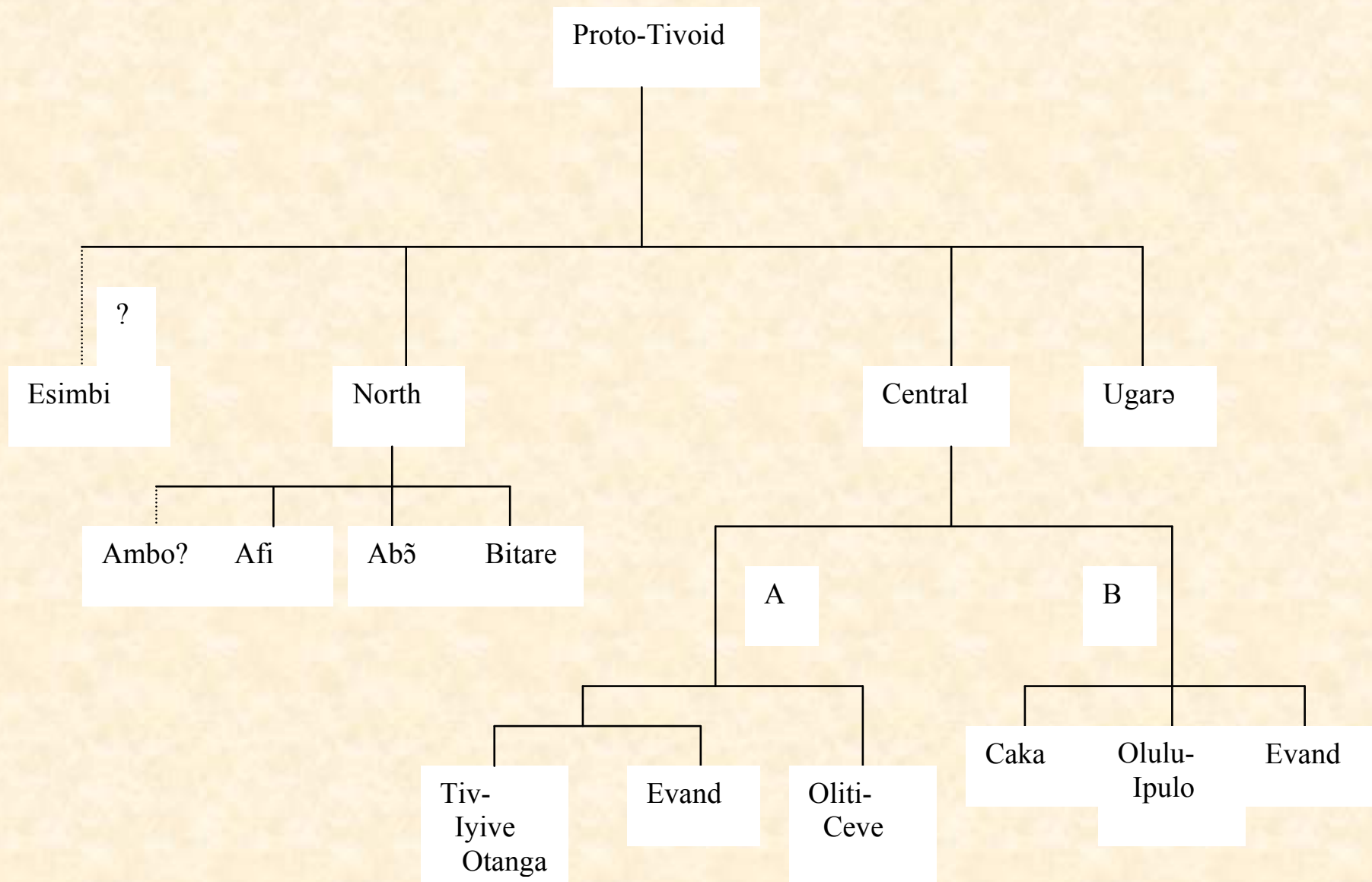
The internal classification of Tivoid

- The table gives an example of Central Tivoid A showing that all the languages are quite close to one another

Common lexical items in Central Tivoid A

Gloss	Tiv	Iyive	Oliti	Baceve	Otanga	Evand
ash	ituem	mútwém	mutumu	mətɔmo	mutɔm	mɔtumelam
fall	agba	gbà	mɔgba	agba	agba	gba
firewood	ikɔŋ	íkwoń	ekwun	ɔkwɔnoh	ekɔn	ekɔm
man (male)	nɔm sɔr	ùnɔmbɔ́sɔ́	onəmbəse	ɔnumbɔso	nɔmbɔs	ɔnɔməs
navel	tumbax	ìŋɔ̃mb	otimba	ɔtembay	otimbay	atɔmbwa
smoke	ɲim	míjím	mɛɲimi	miyimi	mijim	mɔɲim
tail	tɔa	útsà	oca	ɔca	oca	ɔca
walk	azindi	dzɛ̀ndí	mojindi	azende	adzint	zint
war (fight)	ityav	vítáv	vetav	ɛtavɛ	etav	vetav
woman	kwase	ùkás	okye	okɛy	ɔkwas	ɔkas

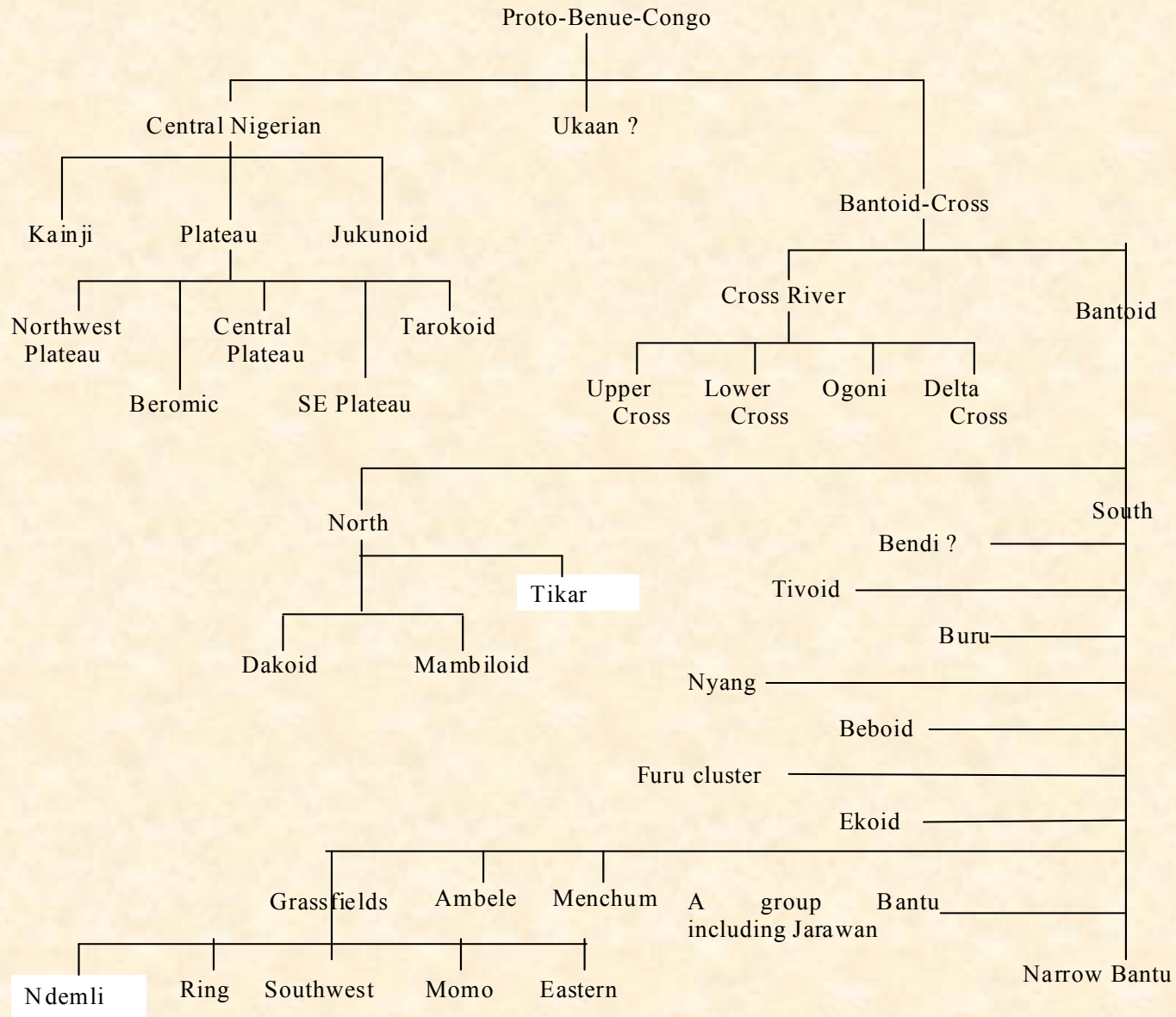
Internal structure of Tivoid



The external classification of Tivoid

- Tivoid remains so poorly known that a reconstruction is not yet possible, and further data might change our understanding of the group
- Assuming Buru and Esimbi are to be excluded, Tivoid is still clearly much further from proto-Bantu than better-known groups such as Ekoid, Grassfields etc.
- It is certainly to be included in South Bantoid, so I have placed it high on the tree, close to Bendi and Buru
- But this probably also highlights how little we know of Bantoid

Where does Tivoid fit in?



THANKS

- To the Kay Williamson Educational Foundation which sponsored the fieldwork in Nigeria and Cameroun
- Thanks to the survey team, SIL Nigeria Jos, for access to field recordings
- Thanks to Robert Hedinger (then in Bamenda) for access to unpublished Tivoid materials

