

**Review of "A Grammatical Outline of
Gùrdùṅ/Gùrùntùm", by Andrew Haruna**

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Haruna, A. 2003. *A Grammatical Outline of Gùrdùṅ / Gùrùntùm* (Westafrikanische Studien. Frankfurter Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte 25. Köln: R. Köppe.

With his *Grammatical outline of Gùrdùṅ*, Andrew Haruna (A.H.) has published the first grammar of a South-Bauchi Chadic West-B language. This type of work, concerning a minority language spoken in Bauchi State (Northern Nigeria) and dominated by Hausa, is highly welcome and should be emulated. Despite serious shortcomings, A. H.'s work is worth commending. It provides a good quantity of data, consistently transcribed and reasonably well analysed.

The author's aims is to provide a description of the essential aspects of *Gùrdùṅ* (G.), focussing on the description of the verbal and nominal systems in the present-day form of the language.

The main chapters are : « Introduction » (a brief summary of the successive external and internal classifications of Chadic languages (3 p.), followed by a historical, dialectal and sociolinguistic presentation of G. (9 p.) ; « Phonology », a 9 p. update of (Jaggar, 1988) ; « The Noun », including modifiers, pronouns and deictics, derivation and composition (33 p.) ; « The Verb » with a study of verb classes, modification processes and conjugation (28 p.) ; Adverbs (4 p.) ; Prepositions (5 p.) ; Conjunctions (9 p.) and The Sentence, including a description of word order, verbal and nonverbal sentences, question formation, conditional sentences and clauses (19 p.).

The bulk of the work is essentially a sound morphological description of G., but becomes disappointing in its treatment of syntax. If the analyses are not fundamentally faulty, they are marred by annoying presentation problems. The reader regrets the general absence of punctuation and interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing of the G. examples, and the lack of morphological index. When literal translation or glossing is provided, it is not always consistent : the morpheme *gè* (usually called 'genitive link' in Chadic linguistics) is translated differently in 3.3.3, p. 36 (*màa gè asi*, 'water with bitterness') and 3.3.7, p. 39 (*làurùn gè timi*, 'gown of goodness') for no apparent reason. Same with the morpheme *yà* glossed either 'is' or 'has' depending on the English translation of the example.

Typos are quite numerous, I will mention just a few. Some abbreviations are missing from the table p. VIII (e.g. SBA, SBL, VTP). In the consonant chart, p. 18, the phonetic and spelling notations of the alveolar palatals are inverted, and should be *nj* [ndʒ] and *j* [dʒ]. In the paragraph on consonant devoicing, p. 19, « word-medially » should be replaced with « word-final ». In § 8.2, p. 125, the formula « *NP prep NP* » should be « *NP yà prep NP* ». The abbreviation « det. » used p. 33 may just be a typo for « def. ». In § 4.1.1, p. 69, the last pattern in the table should be « CVV Lo VTP », not « CVV VTP ». In § 4.5, p. 77 ff. the intermediate forms in the table are unattested, and as such should be either starred (e.g. **shià*, **pyaà*) or hyphenated (e.g. *shi-à*, *pi-à*, etc.). The 1st word of the 3rd line, p. 78 should be *gowà*, not *owà*. The word « phrases », in the last line of p. 79, should be replaced with « sentences ». The last word of table 11, p. 96, *wumi* may be a mistake for *wùmì* ; if not, the difference with all the other *wùmì/à* in the table should be explained.

In the phonology, A.H. lists three diphthongs (*ai*, *au*, and *əu*), but in the text, words manifest other diphthongs which need further explanation : *v^wuà* (p. 132), *wòloì* (p. 101), *kyàusoà* (p. 100). Either the phonological analysis is wrong or the transcription is. If A.H. maintains his transcription, the accent should be on the first letter of the diphthong : *ùà*, *òà*.

The perfect aspect suffix *-a* is said to be VP-final p. 86, but clause-final in the summary p. 97. The latter is probably correct, judging by the example at the bottom of p. 87 where *-a* is suffixed clause-finally¹.

Sometimes, awkward, unprecise formulations prevent the reader from understanding what A.H. means. I will quote two of them :

The term 'noun phrase (NP)' designates any category with a NP – noun (N),
qualifier/modifier (mod.) definite article (def.) or demonstrative (dem.) (p. 33)

¹ Incidentally, the adverbial *dizì*, 'a moment ago' when suffixed with *-à* should give *dizà*, not *dizà* as in the example.

Sentences in this group because of their structure do not take aspect (i.e. the distinction between 'perfective' and 'imperfective') or tense, nor do they, other than the predicator –yà vary for noun phrases (NP) or simply the juxtaposition –i with subject pronoun (Pro). (p. 122)

Generally, the author seems to have a genuine problem with terminology. For example, his use of « adjectival phrase » (p. 54) to designate nominal phrases with apparent adjectival heads is at least unfelicitous.

Confusion arises from the inconsistent hierarchy used in the arrangement of the book as reflected in the table of contents. Three examples will suffice, but this holds true for the whole book.

§ 3.3.2 is named Derived Nouns, but contains only a definition. The reader then assumes that the following chapters will study the different types of derived nouns. However the first class of nouns following in 3.3.3, the « adjectival nouns », are just a subclass, and not nouns derived from another category. The true derived nouns (Nouns of State, Verbal Nouns, Nouns of Agent) should appear **under** 3.3.2. Failing that, confusion arises when the author describes what he names modified, compound and genitival nouns, *etc.* which are put on the same level as derived nouns.

The same problem is visible in the treatment of prepositions (§ 6) where 6.2.3 *gàŋ*, 'about, concerning' and 6.2.15 *nəu* 'in order to' are classified under 6.2 « locational prepositions ». Likewise, non-polysemic prepositions get the same treatment as mere meanings and uses of some other prepositions.

The same type of confusion appears in § 8.9 named « Conditional Sentences and Clauses ». 8.9.1 deals with « Conditional Sentences » (with a reference to the « antecedent » (*sic*) clause) ; 8.9.2 (Conditional Clause) seems to repeat 8.9.1. Finally, the reader is totally confused when he reaches the final chapters of the book, 8.9.3 and 8.9.4, named respectively « Conjunction Clause » and « Relative Clause », appearing under 8.9 « Conditional Sentences and Clauses ».

However, the book presents a clear picture of a Chadic South-Bauchi language and provides invaluable information for comparative and typological research. As always, the reader would like to get even more information. Let's take adjectives as an example. What is their syntax ? We are given the morphology of plural formation of the adjectives, but how does it operate in the sentence ? A. H. writes the *zi* plural morpheme as an independent word. Is pluralization a feature of the NP including the adjective or of the adjective itself ? Is the morpheme repeated on the noun ? How do adjectives perform their predicative function ? Examples can be found in the book, but not under the chapter « Adjectives ». Another type of information missing concerns statistics : how many 'true' adjectives (or adjectival nouns) does G. possess ? The same information would be needed concerning verb classes. Which type is predominant? Mono-, di- or tri-consonantal verbs ?

Concerning the pronominal system, G. manifests a very interesting property : gender is only marked in the 2nd person singular, with e.g. the opposition between 2sm Independent Pronoun *kau* and 2sf *kaŋ*, but not in the 3rd person where *kadi* is used to refer to both male and female. As a consequence, there is no reason to keep separate entries for 3sm and 3sf in the pronoun paradigms. Only one for 3s is necessary. Likewise, the category « impersonal » does not exist in G. conjugation, since Hausa *an*, 'one' is systematically translated with 3p pronouns. Similarly, there is no need for an « indirect object pronouns » paradigm in G., as there is only one paradigm functioning as direct and indirect object. G. should not be forced to look like Hausa.

Finally, I would like to add a few words concerning nonverbal sentences. In G. the morpheme *a*, 'it is' seems to have many different syntactic uses, one of which concerns topic and/or focus constructions. Since A.H. did not study this area of syntax in his book, it is difficult to say anything precise on the matter. However, from the various instances of *a* in the book, one gets the impression that he has missed an interesting point. I will take the sentence *A kadi rɛnai.* (p. 55) where the independent pronoun *kadi* is analysed as a 3s independent pronoun subject of a nonverbal sentence, with the translation 'He is the king.', which leaves the initial 'a' unexplained. However, the literal translation 'It is him the king.' belies this analysis. *a kadi* seems to be, using A.H.'s terminology, an equational

construction without a (syntactic) subject, and *rèenai* is an antitopic developing the understood (semantic) subject of the clause.

As a conclusion, I will say that A.H.'s book leaves the reader frustrated, with many questions unanswered. However, the data carefully transcribed, the basically sound analyses concerning the phonology and the morphology (specially the analysis of conjugation and verb classes) will make the book very useful as a description of a member of a group of languages hitherto neglected. One hopes A.H. will continue his work on Gùrdùṅ and will soon produce a dictionary and collection of texts with interlinear glossing.

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