

der which follows the Chadic characteristics (i.e. a distinction present only in the singular), but the rules of its assignment might be different. Gender distinction is productive in pronouns (in the second and third person of the singular), in demonstratives, in relative markers, but not in copulas. In verbal morphology, some features are interesting for their relevance for comparative works, e.g. the perfect marker *-kò* which is suffixed to the verbal stem is important for historical investigations focusing on the development of TAM systems in Chadic. Also the markers which function as verbal extensions are open for further interpretations in comparative analyses of other Chadic and non-Chadic languages.

The chapter on syntax covers different types of clauses (verbless, complement, relative, and interrogative clauses), but also includes patterns referring to semantic relations within the clausal frame. Providing examples from Bure, the chapter shows how semantic types of arguments (giving, affecting, speaking, thinking, and liking) differentiate language structure properties. This section is not supported by theoretic interpretations, but it provides source material for such studies from a more general linguistic perspective.

The final chapter consists of two texts provided with word-by-word morphological coding and interlinear English translation with the Hausa version at the end. The recorded speech in Bure is a piece of unique linguistic material which provides a source for further linguistic investigation and comparative analysis. A list of references complements the descriptive parts of the publication.

An important part of the book comes in the form of the appendices. The first appendix presents a set of colored pictures that create a photographic portrait of the Bure and present their traditional way of life. The second appendix consists of Bure-English-Hausa vocabulary, along with two glossaries – English-Bure and Hausa-Bure. Using the three languages for lexicographic purposes is a strategy motivated by the sociolinguistic situation in the area. Special attention to lexicographic entries related to local flora is devoted by providing illustrations to the listed terms. With this material, the names of plants that have been the subject of studies on Hausa language data

for decades (Blench 2003) have now received a new comparative perspective.

The whole book is supplemented by maps, tables and figures that make the presentation more compact but at the same time clear and easy to follow.

A Grammatical Sketch of Bure is a significant contribution to the description of Chadic languages from both the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects. It brings new insights to the current investigation on Bole-Tangale languages and West Chadic from a broader perspective. First of all, the description of Bure provides new data for areal studies. Bure has many features of a contact language that are relevant for studies on the stages of language development and language reconstruction. As for other aspects, this approach to the presentation of language is connected with the specific function of linguistic descriptions of endangered languages which tend to the use of the knowledge of languages for social good. This work is an attempt at language revitalization and provides support for initiatives which aim to protect small cultures living in contact with dominant cultures.

Nina Pawlak

Marjolijn Aalders Grool, *Verbal Art of the Fon (Benin)*, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2013, 252 pp.; *Vodun Stories of the Fon (Benin)*, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2014, 725 pp.

This book is a result of about two and a half years of the Author's stay in Benin. She came to this country in February 1975 and started to learn Fongbe in the summer of that year, which enabled her to commence a thorough research on the indigenous verbal art. The main objectives of the research was getting understanding of the techniques and skills of the performers of the Fon literary genre known as *hwénúxó*. Between April and June 1976 she recorded on audiocassettes the performances of 37 texts in Fongbe, and during her stay in Benin she completed the transcription and a first translation into French. In the years following the fieldwork, the Authoress checked the transcription and the French translation of the stories. However, she had to work for a living, which forced her to store the

tapes and the manuscripts in a metal case. So only in 2004 she restarted her work and digitized the analogue recordings.

The corpus of 37 texts of Fongbe verbal art was collected in three rural areas: Ayou, Abomey-Calavi and Abomey. The size of the corpus is about 57.000 words and it comprises 12.000 utterances. As far as the performers are concerned, six women told twenty stories, seven men told fifteen stories, and a young boy and girl each told a story. All of them were keen on improvisation in story-telling.

Before embarking upon the structuring of the discourse in *hwénúxó* Marjolijn Grool described the cultural and religious background of the stories. The essential part of the book is composed of five parts (20 chapters). The first part provides information on story-telling session, its background and recording. Its first chapter gives an overview of a number of publications referring to the former Kingdom of Dahomey, those dealing with Fongbe grammar and Fon verbal art. Chapter 2 describes the project of the recording of the corpus in the rural areas, whereas chapter 3 presents the event of the performance as well as some aspects of the performance. Of special interest is the discussion on the principle of duality in the royal administration of the Dahomey kingdom. One can also notice a severe critique of the M. and F. Herskovits' works which „have many lapses” (p. 26).

The second part deals with elements, topics and genre of the collected corpus. Its chapter 7 discusses characteristics of the *hwénúxó* stories. All of them are set in the surroundings that are familiar to the performers and the audience. They have three main topics: power, conflict and taboos. The stories end with the loss of power by the culprit, who is sent into exile or into death. The Authoress noticed twenty three songs inserted in 19 stories of the corpus and she divided it into two major sub-genres: the dramatic *hwénúxó* being a narrative about the fate of human life, and the comic *yéxó* – a narrative that tells trickster stories.

The third part contains an analysis of the structuring of the discourse. It describes the pauses by which the performers segment the narrative discourse into utterances and silence. Extensive pauses serve to highlight rhetorical phenomena. The peak of the story is

followed by a long pause. Chapter 10 emphasises the multifunctional use of the definite marker *ô* which marks the transition to a new paragraph in the story or indicates the central participant in the story.

The fourth part constitutes a survey of the stylistic devices that the performers use in the narrative. They are grammatical choices and the use of the emotionally marked words. The stylistic devices of the songs are also discussed: code switching, alliteration, assonance, contractions and elisions, use of loan-words.

The fifth part contains an analysis of the creative process by which the performer tells the story. It is observed that the practice of putting identical features and elements in different stories occurs far beyond the Fon area in Benin. The West African corpora show that the performers insert analogous elements in similar stories, but also in different ones. It becomes evident that in West African story-telling there is no ideal version of a story: there is no ideal story-line, but rather improvised versions.

The book is provided with an impressive list of references and three appendixes: I: The performers and the performances, II. The day to thresh the millet (Story from Abomey 4), and III. Graphical representation Abomey 4.

Vodun stories of the Fon are edited in the Fongbe version with an English translation. The edition is preceded by an extensive introduction which is partially re-edition of the former book. It has been enriched by remarks about the transcription and the translation, but impoverished by structuring the discourse, style in Fongbe verbal art, and performance, framework and story board. The stories have been arranged in three groups according to the place of their origin: The Ayou Stories (8 pieces); The Abomey-Calavi Stories (19 pieces) and The Abomey Stories (10 pieces). Technically, the Fongbe texts are placed on the folios verso, and the English translation on the opposite recto page. This makes it easy to compare both versions of the stories. Such an arrangement seems to be the reason for which the explanations in foot notes seem to be rather scarce and makes the reader to look for information in the descriptive part of both books.

Summing up, it is pertinent to say that both publications, so long awaited, deserve the attention of all those who are interested in the verbal art. Not only in Benin and Africa, but all over the world.

Stanisław Piłaszewicz

Assibi Amidu, *Objects and Complements in Kiswahili Clauses - A Study of their Mechanisms and Patterns*. Köln, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2013, 677 pp.

The book was published as part of series *Grammatical Analyses of African Languages* edited by Wilhelm J.G. Möhlig and Bernd Heine. The Author, renowned for his long interest in Swahili morphology and syntax, once again as expected, raises a point of adequacy of traditional grammatical descriptions to Swahili and Bantu languages in general. The book further advances our knowledge on the subject of transitivity in Swahili, that has been thoroughly discussed in the author's book published already in 2001. This time it centres on the nature of objects and/or complements in Swahili predication-sentences or clauses.

This sizeable book is composed of nine chapters divided further into sections, followed by a bibliography and an index. It comprises Author's thoughts and insights on the interpretations of Swahili language structures as presented in various grammars and dictionaries ever published, and their adequacy for modern linguistic analysis within the framework of empirical grammar.

The first chapter on „transitivity, cognateness and introductory notes“ discusses the nature of transitivity and presents different views adopted in language descriptions. The author challenges the Hopper and Thompson continuum hypothesis and refers to his earlier findings of dual transitivity of predicate verbs in Swahili. His research reveals that verbs cannot be classified as having either transitive or intransitive character, as the same verb may generate both transitive and intransitive patterns. In other words, this bitransitivity means that predicate verbs may project both transitive and intransitive syntax in discourse. He also challenges traditional descriptions of Swahili grammar and points out the unfortunate character of the translational approach that results in inadequate descriptions of the

language. To support the thesis he gives examples of the status of locative nouns in Swahili or the so called 'phrasal verbs' and their treatment in various grammars. The author clearly states that he attempts to present a study on Swahili syntax that is far from adopting descriptions tailored for Indo-European languages.

Chapter two discusses the nature of syntactic constituents in predication sentences or clauses. The author presents six principles of grammar and predication sentence syntax that constitute the framework for proper interpretation of syntactic relations. These are transitivity system, complement system, relativity system, subordinate-main clause dependency, statistically central versus peripheral prototypes, and transitivity function of predicates and their predication sentences. Then the discussion turns towards difficulties in the description of the object or complement in Swahili. The neglect of extended predicates in clause structure analysis and its relevance for the understanding of Swahili syntactic categories is emphasized. The Author focuses his criticism on Ashton's grammar of Swahili published in the 1940's which provides interpretations not suitable anymore for modern description of the language.

In the next chapter – „transitives described as intransitives“ – some more inadequacies of Swahili descriptions are highlighted. The discussion focuses on object NPs that are usually presented as adjuncts or nominal constructions in traditional grammars, already mentioned in the previous chapter. In this attitude, an object is understood simply as a complement of a predicate, and this interpretation is clearly justified in the discussion. The chapter is divided into sections that gradually deal with subordinate versus main clause relationships linked by relativization, idiomatic verbal phrases or phrasal verbs or V + NP complexes, and objecthood from a historic and synchronic perspectives.

Chapter four looks at subject and object transpositions in predication sentences. The author's viewpoint contradicts the application of English topic subject hypothesis to Bantu languages. The notion of symmetric and asymmetric transposition is introduced. The subject and object transposition and the status of AGENT in passive and