

Introduction to the Kanuri Language

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1. Introduction. Kanuri and Kanembu are sister languages which actually represent dialect extremes of the same language. The speakers of Kanuri are the people, of the same name, who are concentrated in Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria. This is a description of the Kanuri language as it is spoken in Yerwa, the traditional Kanuri name for what is today known outside of the Kanuri world as Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, Nigeria.

Kanuri and Kanembu are spoken by the peoples of the same names who are today concentrated in the area to the west, north, and east of Lake Chad in central Africa. Although for the major part of their history they were linked in various ways as one linguistic unit in a common political entity, today they occupy parts of four different African nations. In a great variety of dialect forms, Kanuri and Kanembu are today spoken by substantial numbers of people in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and by a smaller group in the Cameroon. They are concentrated in Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria, in eastern Niger from Zinder eastwards to the shores of Lake Chad, and in the Kanem, Lake, and Chari-Baguirmi Prefectures of the Republic of Chad.

2. Classification: Greenberg's classification (1966:130) of Kanuri as a member of the Saharan branch of the Nilo-Saharan family of African language has been widely accepted. He presents the Saharan languages as the second branch of his six branch Nilo-Saharan family in the following groupings: 2. Saharan: (a) Kanuri, Kanembu; (b) Teda, Daza; (c) Zaghawa, Berti. Greenberg (1971:423) slightly altered and simplified the Saharan sub-branch in a later publication, simply listing the major language of each grouping as follows: 2. Saharan: Kanuri, Teda, Zaghawa, Berti. Thus the term *Kanuri*, may be used to refer to the Yerwa dialect of the Kanuri and Kanembu languages, or, for classification purposes, to refer generally to the basic linguistic unit *Kanuri*, of the Saharan sub-branch, thus encompassing all of the dialects of the mutually intelligible

languages *Kanuri* and *Kanembu*. Since Greenberg's work, Saharanists have proposed that Kanuri (and Kanembu) and Tubu constitute *Western Saharan*, whereas Zaghawa and Berti constitute *Eastern Saharan*, within the Saharan branch.

3. Related languages and Dialects: Kanembu, Tubu (Teda/Dazaga), Zaghawa, Berti

The following quote from Lukas (1937) presents his view of the Kanuri dialect situation at that time, and reveals its complexity. Clearly, the commonly used terms Kanuri and Kanembu represent a fluid distinction when linguistic criteria are applied.

In the Wuja and Kaga districts live the Kagama, who speak almost the same language as the Kanuri, and who are considered to-day a section of the Kanuri. East of Yerwa the Fadawu in the Dikwa division, and the Ngumatiwu in Marte, speak a different dialect, differing especially as to tones. The dialect of the Ngazar in the Gujva district differs less than the Fadawu dialect, and the Lare in Dapshi speak a dialect similar to Gujva. But the dialect of the Kwayam, living mainly in Nganzai, and the Mavar (Mobber) in the Mavar district, vary very considerably; their dialects are not understood by the Kanuri, nor are they called Kanuri. The Manga dialect spoken in Nguru and Mazenna is a little more easily understood than that of the two last-named tribes, but they are not considered Kanuri either. Between Magomuri and Gaidam live the Karda.

The Kanembu, living in Kanem, east and north of Lake Chad, and in a narrow girdle on the western side of the lake, form a group by themselves. The dialects of these western groups,, namely the Sugurti, Kuwuri, and Temageri, do not differ very much from Kanuri; but those spoken in Kanem are very different from it and are not understood in Yerwa. The Kanembu do not belong to the Kanuri. Their language is

called Kanembukanembu. The dialects spoken by the eastern Kanembu divide into two groups:

(a) the Karkawu group spoken by the inhabitants of the south-east side of the Lake and the islands (called karaa, i.e. Kanuri karaga *bush*) off it.

(b) the Kanembu group, having three centres, Mao, Mando, and Nguri. The Mao dialect must be separated from the other two, for it is Kanuri; Mando and Nguri differ from each other, but nevertheless both groups understand each other.¹

The dialect picture as represented by Lukas, and by Tucker and Bryan (1966), reveals several different dialect clusters around specific languages or language varieties in the Kanuri branch of Western Saharan. Today, based on linguistic evidence, Kanuri and Kanembu constitute a dialect continuum running through a dialect cluster, with Kanuri and Kanembu as distinct points perhaps at the extremes of the continuum, but not as discrete and separate entities. The two are linked along the continuum through a series of morpho-phonological processes and rules.

The Kanuri-Kanembu dialect continuum is spoken today in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad. The major dialects are listed here by country, with the traditional Kanuri/Kanembu labels.

Niger:

Kanuri: Bilma, Dagara, Fachi, Jetko, Manga, Mobar

Kanembu: Kuburi, Sugurti, Tumari

Nigeria:

Kanuri: Fadawu, Jetko, Karda, Kwayam, Manga, Mobar, Ngumatiwu, Yerwa

Kanembu: Kuburi, Sugurti

¹Lukas, 1937:ix-x.

Chad:

Kanembu: Kogono, Kuburi Kura,

Based on a recent comparative analysis of the verbal systems, it appears that the Kanuri dialects of northern Nigeria and eastern Niger represent a cohesive, larger dialect grouping, and that the Kanembu dialects of the western shores of Lake Chad represent a second dialect grouping, with the Kanembu dialects of the area north and east of Lake Chad constituting a third grouping. There are certainly exceptions to this, as Lukas himself pointed out.

4. Number of speakers: The speakers of *Kanuri* today far outnumber the speakers of *Kanembu*. It is likely that there are two to three million speakers of Kanuri in Nigeria alone, though reliable figures are not available. Considering the Kanuri-Kanembu dialect cluster as one language, then the total population is approximately 4 million speakers. As the Borno empire grew from the fifteenth century onwards, it conquered and incorporated a variety of formerly independent ethno-linguistic entities. It is likely that the political and religious exigencies of the time obligated such groups to assimilate culturally and linguistically as quickly as possible. Even today in Borno State, Nigeria, one observes ethnic groups with no genetic linguistic relationship to the Kanuri, who are bilingual speakers of Kanuri and their own e.g. Chadic language, and who cosmetically and dresswise are identical to the Kanuri. This interpretation of the history of the Kanuri language is corroborated by linguistic evidence which indicates that there is considerably more dialect variation in Kanuri than in Kanembu, plus internal evidence that Kanuri has been much more affected by contact with other unrelated languages than has Kanembu.

5. Origin and history: Historians have used the term *Kanem* to refer to the vast empire which dominated the central Sudan region from about 1000 A.D. until its collapse during the fourteenth century (Cohen, 1976:12-19). The empire was concentrated in the Sahel region north of Lake Chad, and the historical term has been preserved today to refer to that region; it is also the official name of the large prefecture in present-day Chad which occupies a portion of the realm of

the Kanem Empire. The term *Kanembu* is derived from *Kanem* through the application of the plural form +wu or +bu of the agentive suffix +ma, and thus means literally *people of Kanem, owners of Kanem*. Also in historical treatments, the term *Bornu* (today stripped of its 'colonial' spelling and pronunciation and changed to *Borno* to reflect its actual pronunciation in the Kanuri language) is used to refer to the region southwest of Lake Chad, and to the offshoot of the failing Kanem empire which was founded there during the fourteenth or the fifteenth century A.D. (Cohen, 1967:15). The members of the royal family, as well as other elements of the failing Kanem empire which left it and founded the Borno empire are commonly referred to as the *Kanuri*. If Tucker and Bryan (1956:47) are correct, this name was originally applied to the conquering people from Kanem. The commonly espoused etymology of the term *Kanuri* is that it is morphologically a place name, formed through the application of the suffix +ri, a morpheme used to derive nouns of place when applied to a noun referring to the occupant of that place. Thus it is possible that Kanúri is derived from kanem+ri, which might literally translate as *the place of Kanem*. It might have originally been used by the invaders from the north to refer to the area which they had conquered in Borno. Thus historically speaking, the Kanembu language was once much more widely spoken than Kanuri, as the language of the Kanem empire, while Kanuri, as Greenberg (1971:425) states, is basically the language of its successor state, Borno. Today, in referring to the history of both the Kanembu and the Kanuri peoples, historians talk of the history of the Kanem-Borno Empire.

6. Basic phonology.

6.1. Inventory of consonants:

The underlying consonant phonemes of Yerwa Kanuri are presented here according to manner and place of articulation. The allophonic variants of the basic phonemes are presented in parentheses. Both the phonemes and their

allophones are presented here as they are written according to the Standard Kanuri Orthography (hereafter SKO).²

<i>place:</i>	<i>bilabial</i>	<i>labial-</i>	<i>alveolar</i>	<i>palatal</i>	<i>velar</i>	<i>laryngeal</i>
<i>manner:</i>		<i>dental</i>				<i>/glottal</i>
<i>plosives:</i>	(p)		t		k	[ʔ]
	b		d		g	
<i>prenasalized:</i>	mb		nd		ng	
<i>affricates:</i>				c		
				j		
<i>fricatives:</i>	(f) [F]	f	s	sh	g	h
	(w) [B]		z			
<i>nasals:</i>	m		n	ny	ng	
<i>liquids:</i>			r	l		
			l			
<i>semi-vowels:</i>	w			y		

b) inventory of vowels:

	<i>front</i>	<i>central</i>	<i>back</i>
<i>high</i>	i		u
		I	
<i>mid</i>	e		o
		a	
<i>low</i>		a	

²Tone is not indicated in the SKO. For the purposes of this introduction, we have included only the high tone (marked by the acute accent) marks and some falling tones marked by the circumflex. Syllables without tone markings are low tones.

Although the consonant p is not normally considered a phoneme, it is nevertheless included as a letter of the Kanuri alphabet in the SKO. It occurs as an allophone of b when b is followed by a voiceless plosive. Thus though b is the underlying root-final consonant for the class 2 verb *náb+ sit down*, it is never written as such since it never occurs in the language followed by a voiced plosive. Therefore the verbal noun is *náptê* < **náb+tê*, and the 3S imperfect form is *nápcin* < **náb+shin*. The consonant p may also occur phonetically as an allophone of f, though this variation is not reflected in the SKO, except in the case of certain of the ideophones. The f:p alternation may vary freely when in word-initial position, thus for example *fók* or *pók* for the ideophone used to intensify the adjective *búl white*.

The voiceless bilabial fricative occurs as an allophone of f, and in apparent free variation with f, on all open vowel-final syllables which begin with f. This occurs most predictably in syllables characterized by non-central vowels. It is also an allophone of b when b occurs intervocalically. In the SKO, this weakened b is written as a w. In similar environments an underlying f is weakened to a voiced or voiceless bilabial fricative. This weakening also occurs when underlying f occurs between a liquid consonant and a vowel. Again, in the SKO this becomes a w.

The palatal consonants occur both as phonemes and also as allophones. For example the status of the palatal fricative phoneme written as the digraph sh, might be questioned since it normally occurs initially either in borrowed words or preceding the high front vowel i, and thus may be seen as an allophone of s. The Yerwa dialect is unique in this respect since there is a strong tendency to palatalize all consonants in the environment of a high front vowel. Thus, **ki*, **si*, and **ni* rarely if ever occur. Words with initial underlying *ki+* like *kimê red*, always have an alternative palatalized form beginning with the palatal consonant c, and thus both pronunciations *kimê* and *cimê* are attested. The palatal nasal written as the digraph ny, is not a phoneme of the language since its occurrence is always conditioned by the occurrence of a following high front

vowel. Similarly, the occurrence of the retroflex liquid consonant derived from l (included in the consonant schema as a palatal consonant), is always predictable, again on the basis of the high front vowel environment. Here also, the Yerwa dialect is unique since the retroflex consonant does not occur in other dialects, either phonemically or allophonically. The only cases where this consonant is not predictable are those involving borrowed words, and these are written as r according to the SKO.

Underlying velar obstruent phonemes k and g have a variety of phonetic realizations - like the bilabial series, they are subject to weakening in intervocalic environments, or in the environment of a liquid consonant. Their allophones are always conditioned by the quality of the vowels adjacent to them, and for the most part are reflected in the spelling conventions of the SKO.

As Lukas (1937:2) states, the velar g is a voiced velar plosive, fully pronounced as such when it occurs initially, or when preceded by a nasal n. In all other occurrences its pronunciation is predictable on the basis of the phonological environment. When any of the possible variants underlying g is pronounced with any trace of a velar constriction, then the g is retained in the SKO. This may occur when g follows a liquid consonant or precedes a central vowel. The pronunciation of such words varies greatly from speaker to speaker, and from dialect to dialect. When a front vowel follows the underlying g the velar constriction is much less noticeable, but still the orthographic g is retained, the underlying g is not pronounced with noticeable velar constriction, there is the impression that either the preceding liquid consonant is doubled or that the following vowel has been essentially lengthened. Thus many of the following examples will be observed as pronounced in three different ways.

<i>liquid + g</i>	wálgáta	<i>they returned</i>	bálgə	<i>speech defect</i>
	kárye	<i>state, region</i>	kalgî	<i>thorn</i>
<i>g + back vowel</i>	kərwûn	<i>medicine</i>	búrwo	<i>complaint, cry for help</i>

	kúlwú	<i>gown, robe</i>	kərwúli	<i>lion</i>
<i>intervocalic g</i>	karégə	<i>heart</i>	cágə	<i>sinew, gristle</i>
	kágəl	<i>anvil</i>	kərígə	<i>war</i>
	kasúwu	<i>market</i>	mowonjin	<i>it is possible</i>
	<u>l</u> áá	<i>some, a certain</i>	ka <u>á</u> la	<i>advice</i>
		<i>one</i>		
	zəgâi	<i>s/he follows</i>	suwórin	<i>s/he asks</i>

6.2. Basic phonological processes

In the above description of consonant sounds, important phonological processes have also been described. The reader should consult b) above for a description of the intervocalic weakening of grave consonants (bilabials and velars) in intervocalic and post-liquid consonant environments, and for the palatalization of certain consonants when followed by a high front vowel. Consonant assimilation is also a widespread process in the language, as typified in some of the following examples. Clearly assimilation can be either progressive or regressive.

búskin	->	búkkin ->	búkin	<i>I eat</i>
yaské	->	yakké		<i>three</i>
námnékin	->	nâmngin		<i>I sit down</i>
fallénmin	->	fallémin		<i>you change</i>

Indeed, these processes represent the basic phonological rules of the language.

6.3. Basic morphology

Here are described the structure and form of words in the language, with examples.

Noun morphology

Kanuri has no gender, either lexical or grammatical, and thus no nominal classifier system. Number is added to nouns through suffixation. The plural of

the noun is formed through changing its tone and applying the high tone plural suffix always written as -wa (SKO). This suffix actually assimilates to a final consonant in pronunciation as shown phonetically here.

babûr	<i>motorcycle</i>	baburwá	[babərrá]	<i>motorcycles</i>
féro	<i>girl</i>	ferowá	[feroá]	<i>girls</i>

In the noun phrases, number is added only to the head noun and there is no redundant agreement marking on qualifiers of the noun. All modifiers, including the relative clause, follow the head noun. When plural numbers are used, the addition of the plural suffix is not necessary.

feró sháwa		<i>beautiful girl</i>		fefrowá sháwa		<i>beautiful girls</i>
feró indí	or	<i>two girls</i>		ferowá indi		<i>two girls</i>

The articles include a definite article (anaphora marker) +dǎ, which is suffixed to both singular and plural nouns, and four demonstratives: Ädá *this*, tØd∞ *that*, ányi *these*, and túnyi *those*.

The independent pronouns are six in number, and do not distinguish gender in any person. The affixed forms of the pronouns which are applied agglutinatively to the verb form are presented in the section on the morphemes contained in the verb form below.

1S	wú	<i>I</i>	1P	andí	<i>we</i>
2S	nyí	<i>you</i>	2P	nandí	<i>you (pl)</i>
3S	shí	<i>s/he</i>	3P	sandí	<i>they</i>

The elaborate case-marking system is described below in the discussion of the case-marking of major constituents.

6.3. Verb morphology

<i>root</i>	<i>subject</i>	<i>tense/aspect</i>	<i>surface</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>person</i>
*bú+	+k+	+òn	búkin	I eat	1S
*bú+	+m+	+òn	búmin	you eat	2S
*bú+	+y+	+òn	búiyen	we eat	1P
*bú+	+w+	+ò	búwi	you (pl) eat	2P
<i>subject</i> (<i>prs num</i>)	<i>Root</i>	<i>Impf.</i>			
*s+ zero	*bú+	+in	záwin	s/he eats	3S
*s+ 'A	*bú+	+in	záwin	they eat	3P

For this class 1 verb, there are at least 3 different morpheme positions in a finite verb form, and in certain cases 4, as in the 3P form above where person and number morphemes are distinct.

There are 9 different tense/aspects of the verb in Kanuri, and in addition, five other moods and non-aspects of the verb. A finite verb form may thus occur in 14 different forms, in each person. In addition to the obligatory morphemes, other inflectional morphemes may be added to indicate extended forms of verbs. Considering the basic form (Å la Lukas, 1937) as I, then the four derived forms are: II applied form, III passive-reflexive form, IV causative form, and V reduplicated form. While not every verb has complete paradigms that are used for every possible extended form, most verbs occur commonly in more than one of the them, and some even in all four. This means for example that for the 1S of any verb there are potentially seventy different forms, one for the basic form and for each of the four derived forms in the fourteen different aspects, etc. of the verb. This figure excludes the possible compound derived forms where more than one of these derivational processes combine in a finite verb form.

The many possible forms of the class 2 verb fÜlã+ *point out, indicate, show* in the 3S are shown here.

<i>aspect, etc.</i>	<i>I point out, indicate</i>	<i>II show to</i>	<i>III be shown</i>	<i>IV have shown</i>	<i>V show repeatedly</i>
<i>imperfect</i>	fələjIn	fələzágin	fələtin	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>neg imperfect</i>	fələjInbâ	fələzéginbâ	fələtinbâ	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>future</i>	fələzŞnŞ	fələjòwŞ	fələtĀtá	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>neg future</i>	fələzannyi	fələjògánnjó	fələtánnjó	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>perfect</i>	fələÜnĀ	fələzégána	fələtána	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>past</i>	fəlewŞnŞ	fələzáwŞ	fələgĀtá	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>noun emph</i>	fələzŞ	fələzáwŞ	fələtŞ/á	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>verb emph</i>	fəlleji	fələzégí	fələtó	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>Neg past</i>	fələzənyí	fələzágányí	fələtányí	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>Subjunct.</i>	fələzê	fələzégâ	fələtê	yita+II	fələ+I
<i>neg subjunct</i>	wánde fələzányí	wánde fələzágányó	wánde fələtányó	wánde yita+II	wánde fələ+I
<i>imperative</i>	= subj	= subj	= subj	= subj	= subj
<i>neg imperat</i>	= neg subj	= neg subj	= neg subj	= neg subj	= neg subj
<i>Conjunctive</i>	fələzá	fələzágá	fələt	yita+II	fələ+I

Of the compound derived forms of the verb, a number are possible with the verb fələ+. For example *II+III fələtəgin be shown to*, and even *II+II+IV yttafələtəgin have oneself shown to*, is also conceivable.

In addition to the verb extensions discussed above, syntactic objects may also be incorporated in the verb form. When these affixed morphemes are applied to the basic *I* form, a direct object is indicated; to the *applied II* form, an indirect

object is indicated. Explicit object morphemes exist for the first and second persons, singular and plural. The comparable third person forms are indicated by no overt morpheme, thus null. The morphemes involved are shown here.

	sing	plur	meaning
1st person	s+	s+a+ -> sa+	me/we, us
2nd person	nz+	nz+a -> nza+	you (sing./plur.)
3rd person	zero	zero	s/he, it, them

In these examples the object morphemes are applied to the *II applied* form.

root	object	II	aspect	verb form	meaning
fələ+	+s+	+gá+	+in	> fələsəyin	s/he shows (it) to me
fələ+	+sa+	+gá+	+in	> fələsáyin	s/he shows (it) to us
fələ+	+nz+	+gá+	+in	fələnzəyin	s/he shows (it) to you
fələ+	+nza+	+gá+	+in	fələnzáyin	s/he shows (it) to you (pl)

The most productive nonfinite verb form is the verbal noun, and it is shared by all of the verbs of the language. Some verbs have only one verbal noun, the majority have two, and a few have as many as three. Here the first two verbs are class 1 verbs, the last two are class 2 verbs.

root	verbal noun/s	meaning
bú+	b∞, kēmbu	eating, food
yá+	yâ, nzâ, kənzâ	drinking
lâ+	letô	going
lã+	létô, lata	touching

The number of possible verbal nouns for a given root is a function first of the verb class to which the verb belongs, and second, of the phonological shape of the verb stem itself. At some point in the history of the language, whether a verb was transitive or intransitive may also have played a role in the number of verbal nouns possible for a given root.

The only other nonfinite verb form is unique to the verbs of class 2. It is a past participle form which is used very often as a modifier in the noun phrase. It is formed through the application of the suffix +kata to the class 2 verb root, as in the following examples.

<i>root</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>past participle</i>	<i>meaning</i>
náp+	<i>sit down</i>	*náp+kata -> nápkata	<i>seated</i>
bo+	<i>lie down</i>	*bo+káta -> bowáta	<i>lying down</i>

The morphological processes which operate in the derivation of words include affixation, tone change, epenthesis, and reduplication. Examples of these processes are presented here:

<i>affixation:</i>	<i>basic word</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>derived word</i>	<i>meaning</i>
<i>prefix kár+</i>	mâi	<i>king</i>	kərmâi	<i>reign</i>
<i>prefix nám+</i>	bâ	<i>there is not</i>	nəmbâ	<i>absence, lack</i>
	bárwu	<i>thief</i>	nəmbárwu	<i>theft, thievery</i>
	kúra	<i>big</i>	nəmkúra	<i>size, bigness</i>
<i>suffix +lǎ</i>	bútu	<i>cheap</i>	butulá	<i>sth. cheap</i>
	dâtə	<i>height</i>	datəlá	<i>lengthwise</i>
<i>suffix +ma/wu</i>	alīin	<i>indigo</i>	alīnma/wú	<i>dye/s</i>
	gərgərə	<i>snack</i>	gəregəremá/wú	<i>snacker/s</i>
<i>suffix +mò</i>	Âisa		Aisamí	<i>son of Aisa</i>
<i>affix kən+ +mí</i>	indí	<i>two</i>	kənindimí	<i>second</i>
<i>suffix +mó</i>	kárdi	<i>pagan</i>	kərdimí	<i>typically pagan</i>
<i>suffix +nó</i>	bák+	<i>beat (root)</i>	bangnó	<i>sth. beaten</i>
	fú+	<i>swell</i>	fɔnɛ	<i>sth. blown up</i>
<i>suffix +ram</i>	mâi	<i>king</i>	máiram	<i>princess</i>

<i>suffix +ram</i>	colló	<i>urine</i>	collorám	<i>urethra</i>
	sáltə, salta	<i>chopping</i>	saltəram	<i>chopperr</i>
<i>suffix +ró/+tó</i>	Afunó	<i>Hausa</i>	Afunorí	<i>Hausa ward</i>
	limân	<i>imam</i>	limantí	<i>imam's residence or ward</i>
<i>tone change:</i>	Kanúri	<i>Kanuri person/people</i>	Kanurí /Kʌnɔ̀ròkʌ nɔ̀ró	<i>Kanuri (lang./ adjective)</i>
	fáto	<i>house</i>	fát	<i>of the household</i>
	bêrbər	<i>dust</i>	bərbərrá	<i>filthy</i>
	datə	<i>standing, stopping</i>	dâtə	<i>height</i>
<i>compounding:</i>	cî	<i>mouth</i>	cikundilí	<i>moustache</i>
	kundíli	<i>hair</i>		
	shîm	<i>eye</i>	shimkəlí	<i>hepatitis</i>
	kəlî	<i>green</i>		
	bonêṁ wané	<i>you lie down & spend the night!</i>	bonəṁwané	<i>day in & day out</i>
<i>epenthesis:</i>	bák+	<i>beat, hit</i>	bágə	<i>stumbling block</i>
	ndə́p+	<i>tie, knot</i>	ndə́wú	<i>knot</i>
<i>reduplication:</i>	fú+	<i>swell</i>	fufú	<i>lung disease</i>
	fu+	<i>blow</i>	fúfu	<i>lungs</i>
	sáp+	<i>collect</i>	sabsawí	<i>collection</i>

d) Other information on morphology:

Basic syntax (describe patterns of formation of sentences and phrases in the language, with examples):

a) Required/preferred order of major constituents, if applicable:

The typological categorization of Kanuri as an SOV language is made in recognition of the basic order of the major constituents in the verbal sentence. SOV represents the most natural and commonly occurring order of the declarative sentence.

S	O	V
Àli	Músa+ga	lefawóno.
*S	V	O
Àli	lefawóno	Músa+ga.
*V	S	O
*Lefawóno	Músa+ga	Àli.

In the following acceptable variant of the above example, notice that the order of the elements preceding the verb has been reversed so that the direct object precedes the subject. It is apparent that in this variant the subject is obligatorily marked by a postposition indicating its role as agent.

O	S	V	Ali greeted Musa/Musa was greeted by Ali.
Músa+ga	Àli+ye	Lefawóno..	
*O	V	S	
*Músa+ga	lefawóno	Àli+ye.	
*V	S	O	
*Lefawóno	Músa+ga	Àli-ye.	

As this example demonstrates and as will be seen elsewhere, there is a great deal of freedom in the language with regard to the order of the elements preceding the sentence-final verb form. However, as clearly shown above, in

most environments nothing may follow the finite verb form. Violations of the SOV order do sometimes occur when the action of the verb is in some way emphasized in the semantic context of the utterance. For example in imperative sentences it is frequently the case that the verb form precedes all other constituents.

The order of the elements preceding the verb, i.e. the subject, the direct and indirect objects, adverbs, etc., is determined by the meaning intended by the speaker. All variations on the typologically predicted orders will be reflected in a change in meaning. For example, the variant form of the above example *Músa Àliye lefawóno*. may also be translated into English by the passive translation *Musa was greeted by Ali*. Oblique adverbial constituents vary in position more freely than any other of the constituents preceding the verb. All of the meaning variations resulting from order changes like those depicted below are not always easily reflected in translation into English.

O	ADV	V	
Shí+ga	kasúwu+lan	cúróko.	<i>I saw him/her in the market.</i>
ADV	O	V	
Kasúwu+lan	shí+ga	cúróko.	<i>I saw him/her in the market. or In the market I saw him/her.</i>

The most natural position for oblique constituents is that represented in the first form of the above sentence, i.e. (S)-O-ADV-V.

b) Case-marking of the major constituents: As would be expected in a SOV language of this kind, Kanuri has a full set of postpositions which have been referred to in some treatments of Kanuri grammar as case markers or case suffixes (Lukas, 1937:17). A postposition is a monomorphemic word or particle that is placed after a noun or pronoun, to mark it is an oblique constituent

indicating place, direction, source, method, means, etc. The Kanuri postpositions, and other suffixes, because they assimilate phonologically to their preceding head word, are written as part of the word they modify according to the Standard Kanuri Orthography.

agent postposition:	<i>Musa+by</i>	Músa+ye
associative postposition:	<i>money+with/having</i>	kúngǎəna+a
indirect postposition:	<i>Musa+to/for</i>	Músa+ro
locative/means mostposition:	<i>market+at</i>	kasúwu+lan
	<i>knife+with</i>	jánalan
genitive postposition:	<i>Musa+of/'s</i>	Músa+be
directional postposition:	<i>market+via</i>	kasúwu+mbân

The above set of postpositions is used to mark all oblique (adverbial) modifiers of the language, as well as major constituents in certain environments.

The Kanuri postpositions/case markers also function as themarkers of embedded sentences in the language. Thus they function as the subordinating conjunctions or subordinators, and as the complementizers of the language. This represents simply an extension of their role as postpositions occurring after a simple noun phrase, and consistent with that role, they again follow their governing constituent. As subordinators and complementizers the postpositions are preceded by sentences or clauses instead of nouns or pronouns. As is apparent in the following examples, and consistent with the SOV typology of the language, all subordinate clauses and complement sentences normally precede their main predicate or matrix clause. The only subordinators which occur construction-initially are those that have been borrowed.

When he comes back greet him. Íshi+ya shí+ga lefané!

ASSOCIATIVE

He is trying to go to Mecca.

Mákka+ro letá+ro májIn.

INDIRECT

c) Head-initial and head-final nature:

Kanuri is a head-final language.

d) Negation:

Two negative particles from the language appear to have taken on the role of negation of the verb form. The first, *bâ*, is a negative predicate of existence, and is used to negate the imperfect or continuous aspect. The second, *gənyí*, is a negative predicate of identification, and is used to negate the completive aspect, as well as the future.

Shí bâ.

S/He is not there.

Lejînbâ.

S/He is not going.

Àdə kakkê gənyí.

This is not mine.

Nâ áðəro ísənyí..

S/He did not come here (to this place).

e) Other information:

Basic orthography (list the orthographic symbols and their values, what is the historical background of the writing system):

The Standard Kanuri Orthography (SKO) was developed during 1974-75 in Maiduguri by the research staff of Bayero University Kano's Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages, in collaboration with the Kanuri Language Board and local representatives of the Borno State Ministry of Education. The Orthography Committee of the Kanuri Language Board put the finishing touches on an earlier proposed orthography, and the finished product was finally unanimously approved by the Kanuri Language Board for adoption in late 1975.

In general, the overriding principle applied in the development of the SKO was that the orthography should reflect the pronunciation of the Kanuri word in a systematic and predictable way, with as few exceptions as possible. In

addition, wherever possible, an attempt was made to retain the historical cv(c) structure of the Kanuri syllable in the written word. In applying this principle, the already existing Kanuri (Roman) alphabet was used. This was done in order to avoid the educational and the financial costs that would have resulted from the creation of new letters and symbols, the use of diacritics such as tone markings, or the addition of new and unfamiliar vowel and consonant symbols. All of the latter were rejected as possible ways of standardizing the writing of Kanuri.

The alphabet of the SKO is presented above in the section on basic phonology. There the letters and their phonetic value are presented. Examples presented in this description are all written according to the SKO, unless otherwise indicated.

Below is an example of the kind of problem that the SKO had to resolve since marking tone was not retained as part of the SKO;

<i>SKO</i>	<i>meaning</i>
fêr	horse
fêrwa	horses
fêrra	having a horse
fêrwaa	having horses

Borrowed words and loanwords (list some words adopted from other languages, either used frequently or completely or partially naturalized):

Most significant borrowing in Kanuri comes from Arabic; less significant sources are English, Hausa and French.

luwásar	<Arabic	onion	furamaré	<English	primary
sakân	<Arabic	kettle	kíshan	<English	kitchen
líwu	<Arabic	pocket	kofréti	<English	cooperative
godengéna	<Hausa	I thank you	fartamané	<French	<i>purse</i>
reké	<Hausa	sugar cane			

Common words:

man:	kwâ, kwángâ	long:	kurúwu
person:	kâm	small:	ganá
woman:	kámu	yes:	aâ
water:	njli	no:	á'a
sun:	kángâl	good:	ngéla
three:	yaskê	bird:	ngúdo
fish:	búnyi	dog:	kári
big:	kúra	tree:	káska

Example sentences

Àlò baremá. *is a farmer.*

Àlò bÂrâmÄ gányó. *Ali is not a farmer.*

Módu-a Kasiim-a kasúwuro leyáda. *Modu & Kashim went to the market.*

Kitáwu ádê, shíma kakkadəwá Hówum Lamâr Kúngóna Bəlín Faltágábe
Tartiptéma lâpsa báksénasodábe kəntilomínzá wo.

*This book, it is it which is the first one of them which the Commission for overseeing
the money system created for changing over to the new currency.*

Ämmá búltu dâ+dé bâro surûnyí..*But the hyena did not see that there was no meat.*

The Range of Use and the functions of the Kanuri Language

Prior to colonialism, when the Kanuri and Kanembu-speaking peoples were united in the Kanem-Borno Empire, they represented a powerful and significant cultural, political and economic force. Even today we see the impact of this significance, in that many of the Chadic, non-Muslim groups who were historically situated on the southern fringes of the Kanem-Borno Empire, still resemble the Kanuri in their dress, hair styles, and even facial markings. Many ethnic groups were in this way assimilated into the empire. With the advent of colonialism and the decline of the empire, there occurred a bifurcation of these peoples, at least politically, and today we find them divided among four

different countries. The people have been able to maintain strong socio-cultural, economic, marital and traditional links in spite of the modern borders, but nevertheless, they now constitute a relatively small political minority in each of the four nations in which they find themselves, some in anglophone and others in francophone Africa. Even though different colonial traditions have resulted in greater borrowing of English in some dialects, and French in other dialects, the result has not affected the uninterrupted and enduring mutual intelligibility of the various forms of the language.

As a political minority group in Niger, Chad, Nigeria, and Cameroon, the role and potential for the Kanuri language to serve as a second or third language of wider communication has been restricted. Further, ecological factors like the long history of drought in the Sahel, and the impact on eastern Niger and the entire Lake Chad basin, have resulted in less than ideal conditions for population growth, and an increased importance of the language and culture. In a very significant part of the Kanuri world, especially in Niger and Nigeria, the growing importance and spread of the Hausa language have further contributed to these trends.

Nevertheless, in both of these countries, the language has been recognized as one of the major languages in each entity, and has been chosen for use as the medium of instruction in primary schools of the Kanuri-speaking areas. While these efforts have been hampered by insufficient material resources and in some cases lack of political will, they nevertheless reflect the importance of the people and their language.

Given the ever-increasing importance of the Hausa language in Niger and Nigeria, and throughout West Africa, smaller language groups like the Kanuri are seriously threatened. In spite of the historical and geographical importance of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, and the Kanuri and Kanembu-speaking peoples, the fact that they are divided into so many countries today results in their minority status in each situation. These factors combine with the bleak ecological and economic outlook in the region and the result is a situation where these

languages are not spreading, and indeed may be losing speakers as well as geographical territory. Nevertheless, the strength of historical ties in a sense transcends modern political boundaries, as stated earlier, so that there is a great deal of hope for a future in a more optimal geopolitical context.

Preserving, protecting and promoting Kanuri and Kanembu.

In the 1970s, when Kanuri was named as one of the 12 national languages of Nigeria selected for use in the proposed Universal Free Primary education system, there was a great deal of enthusiastic effort exerted to preserve, protect and promote the language. The mid-1970s saw a plethora of efforts directed at standardizing the language and developing materials for the education system. This period saw the establishment of the Kanuri Language Board (1974), which worked closely with researchers from Bayero University Kano's (then Abdullahi Bayero College) Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages. The Kanuri Language Board was selected by the Local Authority and worked closely with the Shehu of Borno in carrying out its work. The then Waziri of Borno was the chairman of the committee for developing the SKO. These efforts resulted in the *Standard Kanuri Orthography*, and a great many publications. A few years later when the Northeastern College of Arts and Sciences was transformed into the University of Maiduguri, the researchers were hired by the new university to set up a certificate program for the training of Kanuri teachers for the education system. This program survives today within the Department of Nigerian Languages & Linguistics where it is today possible to obtain a doctorate degree in Kanuri language studies. These efforts continue to enhance the status of Kanuri in Nigeria, in spite of the reigning political or economic problems. The language has not been similarly honored in the sister francophone countries of Niger and Chad.

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