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**Names and their Usage
Amongst the Buwal**

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Primary Report

The Buwal are a people of several thousand who live in the department of Mayo-Tsanaga, Extreme North Province of Cameroon. The language of Buwal is classified as Central Chadic. The system of names and their usage amongst the Buwal forms an important part of their language and culture.

After having lived in the Buwal region for a short time it became apparent that there existed a complex system of names. We discussed this subject with various Buwal people including our language helper, DELI Benjamin, who helped us to discover the various categories of names. He also compiled the list of clan names. After this we surveyed 32 people of differing genders and age groups in several different neighbourhoods within the language area, asking people for their names in the various categories.

What follows is a list of the categories of names found amongst the Buwal. There are traditionally five different names that a person receives at birth.

(1) Birth Name

All Buwal are identified at birth by a name, which conforms to a list according to gender but primarily to order of birth. This list goes up to the tenth born. If a woman has more than ten children the names are repeated.

(2) Honorific Birth Name

There is another list of names corresponding to the order of birth, which could be called 'honorific birth names'. These names may be used by parents as terms of endearment or encouragement to their children.

(3) Small Praise Name

This name is given to the child by his parents or grandparents. The small praise name is passed down through the generations and comes from a deceased ancestor. Family and friends use this name as a respectful greeting.

(4a) Name of Misfortune

This name is also given to the child at birth and reflects the family circumstances into which the child was born, or a negative thought in the mind of the parents. At times it can be thought of as a cry of the heart, even a prayer to God.

(4b) Name of Rejoicing

Similar to the 'Name of Misfortune', but the name reflects happiness rather than sorrow.

(5) Youth Praise Name

This name is also given to a child at birth. The term 'youth' implies health and vigour. This is a honourable name, which is used sparingly and like the 'Small Praise Name' is passed down through the generations.

Clan Names

Another important category of names is the clan names. Every person is born into a particular clan. Each clan has a name, and in addition each clan has two praise names, one for addressing males and one for females. Often people will greet one another using their clan praise name ('Big Praise Name') to show respect for that person.

Ceremonial Names

Every two years the Gaola festival takes place. This is like a right of passage for older men into certain Buwal traditions. On completing the ceremony a man has the right to adopt a Gaola name. Others will then use this name to give the man honour and respect.

Official Names

Given the situation of automatic birth names, the same names occur frequently. Therefore people are often distinguished by using the name of the father after their first name. These names often appear on official documents.

Names of Circumstance

A person can acquire another name (like a nickname) according to circumstance such as where he was born or an unusual character trait.

Foreign Names

These days more and more people are taking on Christian names and Islamic names depending on their religion. Christian names are often taken at baptism although some parents are now giving them to their babies.

Birth Order Names, a Feature of Neighboring Languages

The giving of birth order names appears to be an areal phenomenon with some of the neighbouring languages between Garoua and Mokolo having a similar system to Buwal. It would be an interesting study to make a comparison of this system of naming between the different language groups in this area.

Names and their Usage Amongst the Buwal

Introduction

The Buwal are a people numbering several thousand, whose homeland is situated in the Mandara Mountains of Northern Cameroon, specifically in the department of Mayo Tsanaga, Extreme North region.

The village of Buwal spreads around various hills in several neighbourhood divisions, but the Buwal see themselves as one village. The village's official name is Gadala, the name given to it by outsiders.

While the Buwal have much interaction with neighbouring peoples such as the Gavar, Mafa, Mboudoum, Mofu, and others, they closely identify themselves by their homeland and their language, Buwal, which is classed as a central Chadic language. Their system of names and their usage forms part of Buwal language and culture.

Each Buwal man and woman has several names. At birth (or soon after) they will usually have five, some chosen by their parents and some automatic, according to their birth order. As well as this, as members of a clan they will have clan names. A man can also take a ceremonial name after having performed a certain ceremony, but this tradition is becoming less frequent. It is also common these days to also have a Christian (French) or Muslim (Fulfulde) name. And it is always possible to gather a nickname as well. The different categories of names and how each is used are set out in this paper.

Other literature

We believe there is no other literature written about the Buwal language.

To our knowledge there is little literature concerning names in any of the neighbouring languages. One exception is a book which is very relevant to this paper, written by Dr. Albert Douffissa, Les Noms Chez les Diy na Kada: Identité, Histoire et Philosophie d'un Peuple. The Kada people are more commonly known as the Guider, or Guidar, but this is the name given to them by outsiders. Dr. Douffissa is himself a Kada man. The Kada homeland is about 50 km to the south of the Buwal, and they have obvious links in their system of names to that of the Buwal, as will be demonstrated in this paper.

The Mina language (also known as Besleri) has a grammar, written by Frayzyngier, but this is yet to be published. Their homeland is situated roughly between the Buwal and the Kada.

Methodology

After living in the Buwal region for a short time, it was clear to us that people had more than one name. Some names, such as those used for first born or second born, were obviously more common than others, and were common among neighbouring languages. We discussed this with our language helper, who helped us to categorise the different types of names.

After this, we surveyed 32 people in several different neighbourhoods of the Buwal region. We aimed to get a mixture of male and female, old, middle aged, and young. We asked people for their names according to the all the categories and wrote them down. The categories we asked for were: birth name, honorific birth name, name of misfortune, youth name, praise name, father's name, clan name, clan praise name, ceremonial name, and their Christian or Muslim name. We also asked each person these two questions, which name do people use of you most frequently in your neighbourhood, and do you have any other names?

Other information in this paper was gleaned from discussing the subject of names with various Buwal people. Much help was given to us by our main language helper, DELI Benjamin, who was also responsible for compiling the list of clan names. This list is common knowledge to the Buwal but, as the Buwal are until recently an oral culture, it is possible that no one had previously gone to the trouble of writing them down. In this report names have been written using IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) as Buwal does not yet have an established orthography.

Names given at birth

ḡam lambo
= birth name

All Buwal are immediately identified at birth by a name, which conforms to a list referring to sex but primarily referring to order of birth. The list below shows the names of children proceeding from the mother (not the father, who may have several wives and many more than ten children).

| Birth order | Boys birth names | Girls birth names |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | gondʒɛ | kəzɑŋ |
| 2 | zrai | masamba |
| 3 | dɛɛ | godam |
| 4 | konai | konai |
| 5 | kodʒɛ | kodʒɛ |
| 6 | kotadai | kotadai |
| 7 | dawai | dawai |
| 8 | koda | koda |
| 9 | kojaŋ | kojaŋ |
| 10 | kotsaba | kotsaba |

Of course, it may happen that one woman can give birth to more than ten children. In these cases the names must repeat.

ma bak
= second (after the first series of ten)

| | | |
|----|---------------|----------------|
| 11 | gondʒɛ ma bak | kəzɑŋ ma bak |
| 12 | zrai ma bak | masamba ma bak |
| 13 | dɛɛ ma bak | godam ma bak |

hamam lambo

= honorific birth name

There is another list of names corresponding to the order of birth, which could be called ‘honorific birth names’. This list is known to all Buwal but is less commonly used. These names may be used by parents as terms of endearment or encouragement to their children. Sometimes it may happen that this more endearing birth name is used so much in a family that it takes the place of the regular birth name.

| | masculine | hamam lambo | feminine | hamam lambo |
|----|---------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1 | gondʒɛ | Ø / <i>gondʒɛ naka</i> | kəzɑŋ | <i>mainda / kova</i> |
| 2 | zrai | <i>zamba</i> | masamba | <i>kosma</i> |
| 3 | dɛle | <i>tambaja</i> | godam | <i>tendɛŋ</i> |
| 4 | konai | <i>vandai, vando</i> | konai | <i>(ma) vatsa</i> |
| 5 | kodʒɛ | <i>mɛdʒɛ</i> | kodʒɛ | <i>mɛdʒɛ</i> |
| 6 | kotadai | <i>tada</i> | kotadai | <i>tada / kolma</i> |
| 7 | dawai | <i>dokona</i> | dawai | <i>dokona</i> |
| 8 | koda | <i>damba</i> | koda | <i>damba</i> |
| 9 | kojaŋ | <i>gole</i> | kojaŋ | <i>gole</i> |
| 10 | kotsoba | <i>matabuwa</i> | kotsoba | <i>matabuwa</i> |
| 11 | gondʒɛ ma bak | Ø / <i>gondʒɛ naka</i> | kəzɑŋ ma bak | <i>kovoŋa</i> |
| 12 | zrai ma bak | <i>zamba</i> | masamba ma bak | <i>kosma</i> |
| 13 | dɛle ma bak | <i>tambaja</i> | godam ma bak | <i>tendaŋ</i> |

haman mɛvɛʒɛk

= small praise name

Another name given to a child by his parents (or possibly grandparents) is the ‘small praise name’. These small praise names are passed down the generations. It is an honourable name, perhaps the praise name of a heroic person, a grandparent or great grandparent within the clan, but always someone who is already deceased. Their original meanings are largely forgotten by the current generation as they have been passed down the generations for so long.

Here are some examples of small praise names,

Masculine:

gavarai, gula, bɛtʃɛ, gaʒok, gozɑŋ, tʃɛrɛ, ʃamai, gala, gamva, gondɛŋ, gɛzɛ, haʒa

Feminine:

maŋgojaŋ, krʒɛ, mɛndʒɛkɛ, wɛtʃɛ, bzdai, dɛwɛtʃɛ, lɛŋgɛ, mɛʃkɛ, sabanavai, ndzogoja, ndzabai

Your small praise name may not be as well known to the community as your birth order name or your clan name, but friends and family will use it respectfully to greet you and to honour you.

If someone greets you using your praise name, in return you must greet him or her with similar respect using his or her equivalent praise name. If for some reason you don't know what it is, then politely ask them, what is your small praise name? (Big praise names are names for the clan as a whole and shall be discussed later).

ɣam dawar

= **name of misfortune**

Another name given to a child at birth is the 'name of misfortune'. This name has a particular meaning, which reflects the family circumstances into which the child was born, or a negative thought in the mind of the parents. It is thought of as an emotive name, like a cry from the heart, even a prayer to God. When this name is used of the child later on, it will remind the family of the circumstances that they were going through at the time of the child's birth.

It is sometimes possible for this name to become the name the most used and recognized for a person by his neighbors or fellow Buwal.

Here are some examples:

mado vaje

= who has loved him?

buwal vo

= is he really Buwal? (Is he an outcast?)

hayak

= earth, as in, he will go back to the earth.

wan vanai

= how many days, as in, how many days will he live?

halʒene

= another girl (exasperation at having many girls born into the family)

dʒedere

= born behind the house (while mother was going to the toilet), or rejected and thrown in the rubbish. This word is borrowed from Fulfulde. In Buwal you could say it differently.

matsaza

= soon to die (other children born didn't live long)

bas buwal

= the laughter of Buwal (object of ridicule)

gamaza

= expelled or sent away (either the mother before the baby was born or the whole family after the baby was born)

It may not be possible to ask the person concerned for clarification for the reason why that name was given, for they themselves were too young to remember the circumstances surrounding their names. You may have to ask their parents.

ḡam sasam

= **name of rejoicing**

There are to be found some examples of parents who chose to give their child a name of happiness rather than a name of misfortune, but they are the minority. This name has the same emotive quality or usage as the name of misfortune.

Here is one example of a name of happiness

mbuvai, mambovqje

= who has brought him into the world (an expression of praise for God having brought him into the world, perhaps after a long time of barrenness)

Most adults can remember their own name of misfortune or rejoicing but occasionally not if it is not the name that is used of the person very often.

haman darloḡ/dalai

= **youth praise name (for boys/girls)**

The youth name is one more name that is traditionally given to a child at birth. The term 'youth' implies health and vigor. Though it is called the youth name, it is given and most likely used by the parents to refer to the child long before he reaches the age of youth¹.

some examples (masculine):

zivele, ḡgarefle, ndarma, zetele, ndefele, ndafmo, fetele, dḡkle

some examples (feminine):

ndzedele, fedeke, ḡgelmatṣa, dedefele, pedewer,

The youth name is an honourable name, even more so than the honorific birth name or the small praise name. As it is such an honourable name, it is used sparingly. It may be used for example, by a parent when a child has done something really special, such as winning a contest at school, or by a grandparent if a child brought some vegetables from the fields and gave them to the grandmother, saving her the trouble of going to the fields.

Another example is that of a young women who is being sought by a man for marriage. If she addresses him using this name, his most honoured of all names, this shows him that she is agreeing to marry him. In this case, she must have gone to some trouble to discover this name because it is not used very often and not common knowledge. Perhaps through other people she has discreetly discovered the name from the family.

These names are passed down within the clans. As with the small praise names, the original meanings of youth names are largely forgotten by the current generation as they have been passed down the generations for so long.

¹ The age of youth refers to the age where people are fit and strong. Roughly this correlates with the age of child bearing. Therefore 'youth' may begin at early puberty and go well into middle age. After that someone is referred to as 'amsara' (elderly person). A quite old man may still like to be called a 'youth' if he has a young enough wife and still intends on fathering children. Yet another old man (65+) who fathers a child may prefer the term 'amsara' as more fitting. For younger people, the term 'youth' is subdivided into two categories: 'young youth' are those who are unmarried or below the normal age of marriage, and 'mature youth' are those married or above the expected age for marriage. Nevertheless, the age of youth is not an issue for the youth name, since a person can have this 'youth' name all of their life.

The use of the youth names seems to be diminishing. Perhaps more people are not passing on youth names to children as the use of Christian names is becoming more frequent.

In summary, at birth or soon after, a child will have five names, two which are automatic for the order of the child proceeding from the mother, a small praise name, an emotive name, and a youth name. The family will use all of these names to varying degrees, but birth order names are the most commonly used and heard.

Clan Names

haman madakal

= **big praise name**

Every person is born into a particular clan. Each clan has a name, and in addition, each clan has two praise names. One is used for addressing males and one for addressing females. For some clans these are the same or similar.

Often people will address one another using their clan praise name, or 'big praise name', especially in greetings. This gives honour to the person or perhaps to the clan, as there is, of course, a certain amount of pride attached to being a member of a particular family or clan.

As with small praise names, if someone greets you using your big (clan) praise name, in return you should greet them using their equivalent praise name.

| Clan | Male big praise names | Female big praise names | Locality² |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| aŋkeʃel amʃe | mazai | dʒawa mazai | Gadala C. |
| aŋkeʃel barkasan | mazai barkasan | dʒawa barkasan | Mangari. |
| ndelem madagamzam, lotox | madagamzam | devlex madagamzam | Mangari |
| ndelem kavainzam, | madagamzam kavainzam | devlex madagamzam | Gadala C. |
| barkataf | baitambeŋ | dʒawa baitambeŋ | Gadala C. |
| maʔai | maʔai | maʔai | Watamba |
| masar beʒeʃ | masar beʒeʃ | masar beʒeʃ | Watamba |
| ndelem keveʒeʃ, ndelem madawan | baikeveʒeʃ | devlex baikeveʒeʃ | Bariki |
| bifɛn ndere | bifɛn ndere | helinʃin ndere | Magawai |
| bifɛn watamba | bifɛn watamba | helinʃin | Watamba |
| masakovok watamba | masakovok | helinʃin | Watamba |
| bivram dewetere | bivram | talmandʒa | Dewetere |

² This list of localities refers to the centre of the clan or where the largest population of that clan lives. Gadala C. refers to Gadala Centre, which is the neighbourhood now near the chief's house and the largest primary school. This neighbourhood is otherwise known as Metengereme. The name 'Gadala' alone usually refers to the whole of the Buwal region.

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| vadam kavamzam | bimava kezelek | dzawa bimava kezelek | Gadala C. |
| vadam magawai | bimava | dzawa bimaava magawai | Magawai |
| hodabai amfe | hodabai mata amfe | dzawa hodabai mazai | Magawai |
| bigodal | bigodal | mbaža | Gadala C. |
| bigodal | bigodal | mbaža | Louguere kuita |
| bidazan logoda | bidazan logoda | dosa bidagan logodo | Mangari |
| madawelbe watamba | madawelbe mazai | helinjin watamba | Watamba |
| bidama | bidama logo | helinjin | Gadala C. and Mangari |
| magamgavon kezelek | bimazama kezelek tntn | dzawa bimazama kezelek | Gadala C. |
| dzamai | dzamai dao | goža | koubadzi, bežere |
| tsaklak | tsaklak | dzawa tsaklak | Magawai |
| eņkefel donafai | mazai donafai | dzawa donafai | Gadala C. |
| logo | logobai mohoro | damlogo | Gadala C. |
| aņkefel mazakad | mazai mazakad | dzawa mazai mazakad | Mangari |
| mazai mazakad | mazai mazakad | dzawa mazai mazakad | Magawai |
| halai | halai | halai | Watamba |
| mafad habai | mafad habai | dzawa mafad habai | Bariki |

Ceremonial Names

The Gaola festival occurs once every two years³. There are festivities involving the whole community. At this time a man (never a woman) may have the opportunity to participate in the special Gaola ceremony, which is like an initiation or rite of passage into certain Buwal traditions. Therefore, a man would need to participate only once in this ceremony.

On completing the ceremony, the man has the right to adopt a Gaola name. He will have chosen this name for himself, or perhaps friends or family will have proposed the name for him. Others will then use this name to give the man honour and respect as someone who has completed the ceremony. His youth name would no longer be necessary since he has this more honourable name, although he would not have rejected his youth name or any of his other names.

Some examples of Gaola names are⁴:

gamata bai
= expelled from power

³ In alternate years, Buwal people may participate (in a limited manner) in the neighbouring Gavar festival, which is held in the intervening year. The Gavar people are seen as being closely related in history to the Buwal.

⁴ The word bai can mean 'power', but it is also the word for 'chief'.

perata bai
= withheld from power

ndzata bai
= still in the position of power

dowara bai veme
= want to be near power? (rhetorical question implying he does not want to be chief)

dzav bai
= associated with power

zenha bai
= retake the power

Gaola names all seem to be associated with claims on chiefdom.

A man has the right to participate in the Gaola festival only if the elders of his clan deem him worthy. Firstly, he can only participate if he is the oldest brother (that is, clan brother, what in English we would understand as perhaps cousin) yet to have undertaken the ceremony. That is, he must respect his birth order and cannot usurp the position of his older brother. Therefore the average age for undertaking this ceremony (and adopting the name) would be at least in the forties, although it could happen much older or sometimes younger.

However, it is possible that an older brother can make way for the younger brother to participate in the Gaola ceremony if the younger brother feels the older is being tardive. The older brother may accept a payment, usually just a small nominal fee, which signifies that he has allowed the younger to advance before him.

Also, if a man has committed some kind of misdemeanour, he would not be able to participate in the Gaola ceremony without first completing the appropriate sacrifices.

Men will always complete the Gaola ceremony with a partner. The two men will help each other during the ceremony. You cannot complete the ceremony alone as this is considered dangerous. So during the time of the festival, the two men will be seen proudly doing everything together.

The Gaola ceremony and the taking on of the Gaola name are becoming less frequent as more and more men have become Christian. Many Christians associate some aspects of the festival as being too closely linked to pagan practices. They would see their baptismal name as signifying that they have already entered into a sacred practice. Therefore, you will not find a person with a Gaola name and also a Christian name.

Official names

Given the situation that the automatic birth names, that is, the same ten names throughout Buwal, are the names most frequently used and recognised, this will mean that there are a lot of people who will have the same name. For example, in any gathering or any neighbourhood, there may be multiple men with the names:

gondʒɛ, zrai, dɛɛ, ... etc.

Therefore, people are often distinguished by using the name of the father after their first name. For example,

gondʒɛ zrai,
(gondzi, the son of zra⁵)

zrai dɛɛ
(zra, the son of deli)

dawai konai
(dawai, the son of konai)

zrai zrai
(zra, the son of zra)

As surnames do not exist in Buwal as they do in the western countries, the fathers' names, such as above, also fulfil that role of second names or surnames for things like school certificates, driver's licenses and Cameroon identity cards.

Also, people are often distinguished by the use of their French names. For example,

konai françois

dawai theophile

kojang paul

For older people, these French names are not found on their identity cards. However, as more people are giving Christian names to their children at birth, French names are becoming more likely to be found on identity cards.

Names of circumstance

A person can acquire another name, either at a young age if there are some unusual circumstances regarding their birth, or at any time if they undergo an unusual circumstance, or if they display an unusual character trait. Here are some examples:

zamay

= name of the market town, implying the child was born on the road to market.

kodamowo

= eighth born, born in Mowo

xohajak

= undergrowth, as in, born in the undergrowth while the mother was going for a walk.

⁵ 'Zra' has become an accepted orthograph in schools for this name, and in turn the diphthong is sometimes disappearing from pronunciation.

These three examples above may seem a little like the birth names of misfortune but they differ in that they are less formal. The names of misfortune form a recognised set of names. But these names are made up in a moment, in response to certain circumstances.

Here are some others not associated with birth:

nasara

= white man (a word borrowed from Fulfulde), given because he had exceptionally dark skin.

benex

= he is not growing (or in English, 'Shorty')

A name of circumstance could otherwise be called a 'nickname'. However, sometimes the name is used so often that many people remember what it is and it becomes their main name.

Foreign names

These days, more and more Buwal people are taking on names coming from the influences of Christianity and Islam. These names would be in addition to the five birth names mentioned above, but for many people, this name may become the name that is most commonly used of them, especially within the church.

For Christians, many choose for themselves a Christian name at the moment of their baptism. This is often into their teenage years. For children born into strong Christian families, their parents may already have a Christian name chosen for them at birth. Their Christian name would appear on their baptism certificate but probably not on their identity card (this is changing, see above).

These Christian names may be selected from Bible characters, or even more often the name is selected from the French calendar of saints. The following names are typical:

For men: Francois, Benjamin, Paul, Jacques, David, Zacharie, Ezekiel, Bernard, Ismael, Pierre, Michel

For women: Martine, Marie, Therese, Rachel, Esther

Also, names from the Bible with Fulfulde spellings (the language in which the Bible is often read), such as: Beyamin, Pol, Jakuba, Jakubu, Ismailu, Piyer, Rahilu, Asta

Muslims form a minority amongst the Buwal. However, these traditionally Muslim names can be found, especially in the Muslim quarter (but occasionally amongst Christians too).

Ibrahim, Buuba, Amadou, Hamadou (or Haman, meaning first born), Moussa

Muslims seem to place more importance on their Muslim names than do Christians, in the sense that even parents or close family members may often use the Muslim name of someone within the household, whereas in Christian families in similar circumstances the birth name would be used.

Birth order names, a feature of neighboring languages

On examining the tables below, many similarities can be found between the birth names of the different languages of the region.

| Buwal names | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Male | | | female | |
| | ɟam lambo | hamam lambo | ɟam lambo | hamam lambo |
| 1 | gondʒɛ | Ø / <i>gondʒɛ naka</i> | kəzɑŋ | <i>mainda / kova</i> |
| 2 | zrai | <i>zarmba</i> | masamba | <i>kosma</i> |
| 3 | dɛle | <i>tambaja</i> | godam | <i>tendaŋ</i> |
| 4 | konai | <i>vandai, vando</i> | konai | <i>(ma) vatsa</i> |
| 5 | kodʒɛ | <i>mɛdʒɛ</i> | kodʒɛ | <i>mɛdʒɛ</i> |
| 6 | kotadai | <i>tada</i> | kotadai | <i>tada / kolma</i> |
| 7 | dawai | <i>dokona</i> | dawai | <i>dokona</i> |
| 8 | koda | <i>damba</i> | koda | <i>damba</i> |
| 9 | kojaŋ | <i>gole</i> | kojaŋ | <i>gole</i> |
| 10 | kotsaba | <i>matabuwa</i> | kotsaba | <i>matabuwa</i> |
| 11 | gondʒɛ ma bak | Ø / <i>gondʒɛ naka</i> | kəzɑŋ ma bak | <i>kovoha</i> |
| 12 | zrai ma bak | <i>zarmba</i> | masamba ma bak | <i>kosma</i> |
| 13 | dɛle ma bak | <i>tambaja</i> | godam ma bak | <i>tendaŋ</i> |

| | Mboudoum names | | Kada names | |
|----|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| | male | female | male | female |
| 1 | gondʒi | kavu | tizi | kəza |
| 2 | kosma | kosma | zərmba | miste |
| 3 | godam / deli | godam | tamba | toŋgu |
| 4 | konai | konai | vondu | naji |
| 5 | mɛdi | mɛdi | madə | madəkə |
| 6 | zalai | zalai | toɖu | toɖəkə |
| 7 | dawai | dawai | dawai | dawaikə |
| 8 | koda | koda | damba | dambəkə |
| 9 | kojaŋ | kojaŋ | tərəm̄ba | tərəmbankə |
| 10 | tsubu | tsubu | baima | baimankə |
| 11 | | | majaɖu / jaɖu | majaɖu / jaɖu |
| 12 | | | zərmba mɛɖijgaba | miste mɛɖijgaba |

For example, the lists of birth order names for the Buwal and the Boudoum are similar for most birth order positions. The names for the second and fifth born for the Boudoum share a resemblance to the haman lambo for the Buwal. Only the name for sixth born is notably different. The Buwal and the Boudoum communities are close neighbours, while speaking different but related languages.

The Kada people are further away from the Buwal in distance and, likewise there are more differences in comparing their lists of birth names. Interestingly, the birth names of the Kada bear more resemblance to the honorific names (haman lambo) of the Buwal than to their simple birth names. The Kada live approximately 50 km from the Buwal, with other language groups such as the Hina and the Daba in between.

I have heard from local people that the system of giving names according to birth order (with these names themselves bearing some resemblance) exists within many of the nearby languages. However, it is not a characteristic of Chadic languages in general, nor does it exist within the whole of the Mandara Mountains. It is limited to a specific region, including languages situated to the South of Mokolo and to the North of Garoua. I am told that it is a characteristic of the Buwal, as well as the Gavar, Boudoum, Hina, Bana, Kada (Guidar), Kapsiki, and others, including some on the other side of the border in Nigeria.

The phenomena also exists within the southern parts of the Mofu (which borders the Buwal and Boudoum), but not all of Mofu⁶. This is interesting as the Mofu language is considered to be more distantly related linguistically than some of these other languages.

Conclusion

The Buwal people employ a rich system of name giving, which is somewhat unique. Each category of name serves a specific function. These functions include; affirming the place of the person in the family and community (birth order names and clan names), respect and encouragement (praise names), expression of emotion (names of misfortune, rejoicing), religious identification (Christian, Muslim and Gaola names) and humour (names of circumstance). Whilst some of these names such the youth praise name are beginning to disappear along with other traditions, overall the system of naming outlined above is still strongly followed within the Buwal language area.

It is not only the Buwal language that utilises such a system but also many of the surrounding language groups found between Garoua and Mokolo. Yet it appears to be a phenomena limited to the particular area. It would be interesting to undertake a study comparing the birth names for all the languages in the area to determine the extent of this phenomenon. Such an investigation may also give some more insights into the relationship between these peoples, their languages, and their history.

Bibliography

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⁶ To clarify, Mofu here refers to the Mofu-Gudur language, also known as Mofu-South, as distinct from another language called Mofu-North. When I say the southern parts of Mofu, I am referring to areas within the southern part of Mofu-Gudur.