

Bantu Migratory Routes into Kenya and Tanzania: Implications on Luyia Dialect Classification

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Presentation Highlights

- Introduction
- Luyia dialect classification puzzle
- Migratory routes
- Implications on the classification
- Luyia classification: The nuts and bolts

Introduction: Bantu groups in Kenya - slide 1

- Western group- Abaluyia, Abagusii, Abakuria, and the Suba “Luo”.
- Central group - Embu, Meru, Mbeere, and the Kamba
- Mijikenda, Pokomo, Swahili, Taita, and Taveta (Wanyonyi 2023)

Introduction of the Luyia - slide 2

- The Luyia form the largest population among the Bantu of Western Kenya.
- Entangled as a group: the Luyia people identify themselves as the Luyia group, found in Western Kenya (& along the Kenya-Uganda boarder)
- Viewed as distinct: Luyia dialects: Logooli, Idaxo, Isuxa, Tiriki, Kisa, Bukusu, Kabras, Saamia, Wanga, Xaayo, Marachi, Nyala A, Nyala B, Tsotso, Tura, Tachoni, Nyore, Marama, Gisu and Maasaba.
- Mutually intelligible
- Shared phonological, morphological, lexical features

The Luyia resident area- Western Kenya

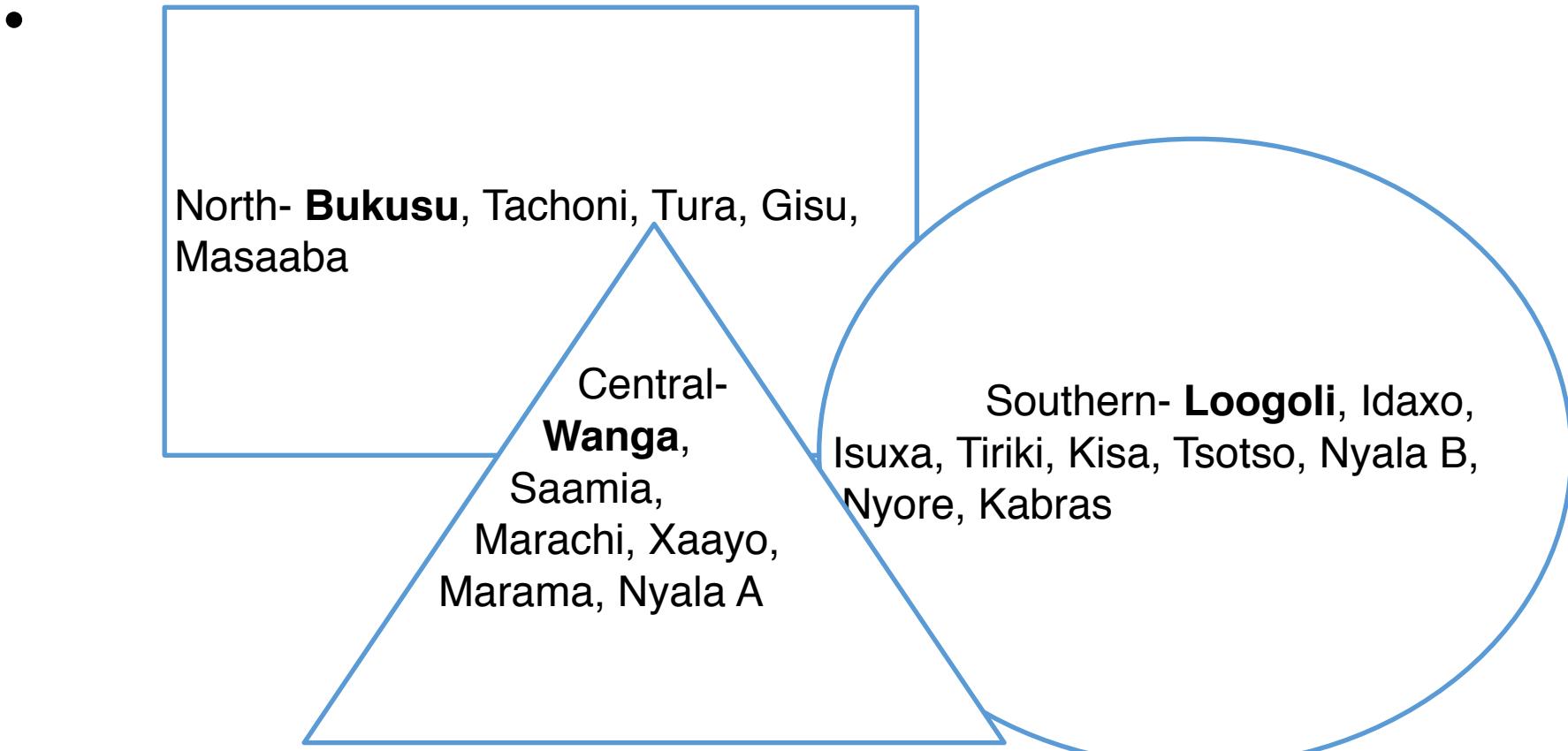
The dialect boundaries coincide the geographical boundaries



Luyia genetic relations

- Three approaches
- 1. Guthrie (1967), who uses a set of criteria not purely linguistic and divides the Bantu area into 15 zones.
- 2. Lexicostatistical analysis. Nurse and Philippson (1980) combined Guthrie's E30 (Luyia) and E41 (Logooli) forming a larger group.
- 3. Characterizes the whole group on the basis of a small number of sound correspondences and some shared inflectional morphology (Angogo 1980, Bennett 1973, and Mould 1981).

Luyia grouping



Linguistic similarity: Similar words/meaning

- Words with the same meaning (see data serial numbers):

	English	Proto-Bantu	Luyia dialects
1	all	*-yoc	-osi
2	backbone	*-gongo-	kumu/olu/omu—kongo
3	bone	*kpa	si/esi-kumba
4	buy	*gud-	kula

Luyia- 'space'

Cleared area around the home.

Function

- ❖ Space for drying food.



Linguistic differences

- Lexicon/Semantics
- Phonological - sound differences, tone,
- Morphological - tense, aspects systems
- Syntactic
- Cultural/values

The classification puzzle

- Dialect divisions within Luyia and especially over the concept of north versus south Luyia. These dialects are separated by certain phonological processes which elsewhere divide major Bantu language sub-groups from their neighbors. Should the overall varieties grouped as Luyia be so classified, or should they be classified differently?
- Cultural- values

What was the driving force of the Luyia movement?

- Overpopulation, scarcity of game, the spirit of adventure, the mosquito and tsetse fly menace, and the hostility of new immigrants, especially the Teso and the Luo.
- Migration process was gradual and sometimes characterized by village to village filtering down & at times back again.
- Dynastic complexes, that is, domestic disputes, population dynamics.

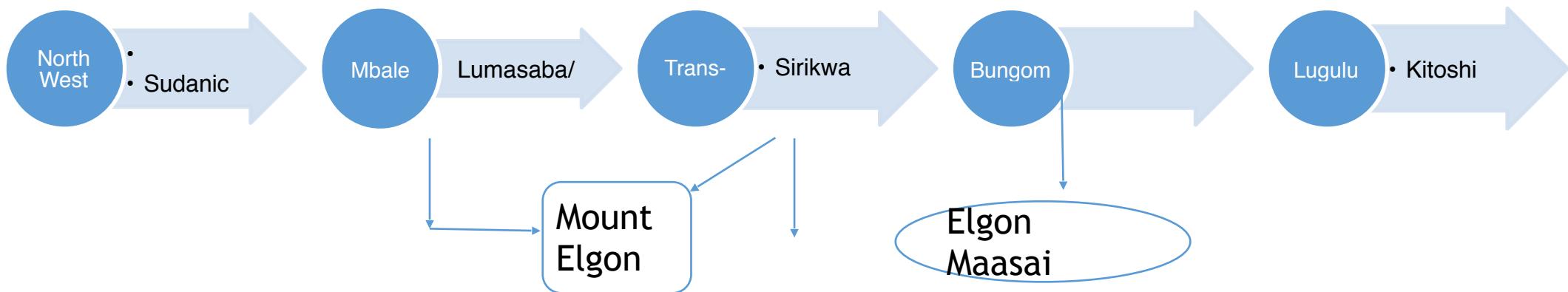
The two migration routes

- The dialect boundaries coincide the geographical boundaries



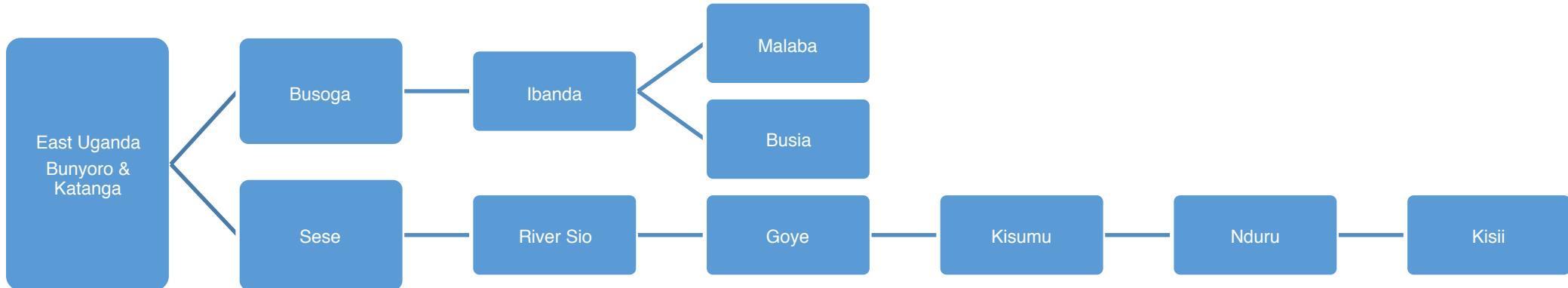
Migration routes – slide 1

- The routes suggest a contact scenario with implications on language complexities through influence- Adoptions & Assimilations



Migration routes – slide 2

- Movements were not linear, and destinations were unknown. Abaluhya sub-groups moved into Western Kenya from Eastern Uganda earliest possible lake region settlers, (Gusii- **Abagusii**, **Abakuria** and **Abasuba**)



Luyia identity prior to or at the time of the initial migration

Was there any form of identity of the Luyia prior to or at the time of the initial migration?

- Yes
- Historically; The iron technology (Iron smelting + iron based agriculture) Were 1967, Ochieng' 1974, Bradley 1995, Ogot 1967
- Believe in common ancestry (same origin + same dispersal point) Ndeda 2020, Were 1967 (land related group consciousness)
- Linguistically; common vocabulary (Common words for domestic crops and agricultural tools) Were 1967, Akama 2017, Maxon 1989,
- Oral traditions as sources (purity preservation/assimilation/ accommodation) Wekesa 2000, Were 1968

Implications on classification- slide 1

Which of the Luyia dialects owe their identity to the linguistic origin? - ancestry from Bantu

- Maragoli
- Kabras
- Tsotso
- Saamia
- Wanga
- Source: (Wanyonyi 2023)

Implications on classification- slide 2.1

- Some Luyia dialects have been borrowed/assimilated from other luyia dialects: CONTACT SITUATION (debates on the Tura a clan of the Bukusu? in a 138 word list

PB*-kba	‘chest’	BUK si-fuβa	TUR esi-rifu from (Wanga, Xaayo, Marachi- /-rifu/
PB *-teet	‘chop off’)	BUK teeta	TUR xenga from (.....,
PB *-dba	‘deep water’	BUK lu-siβa	TUR o-lu-tende from.....(????
PB * -tu	‘ear’ head: -rwe/-twe/-twi/	BUK li-ru	TUR e-si-rwe (that which is on the
PB*-gi	‘egg’	BUK li-ki	TUR li-βuyu from (Wanga, Xaayo, Marach- /li-βuyu/

Implications on classification- slide 2.2

- Tachoni a Bukusu clan? Tone related (put up a political fight for rep & subsequent language listing from census data)

Example;

BUK Enju ye kamapati yosi eyichanga! ‘An iron roofed house can also burn.’

Tachoni will sing it saying ‘Inju ya mapati yosi iyichanga.’

Talk about clans -BASONGE!

- Tachoni- Abasonge
- BUKUSU- Basonge
- Saamia- Abasonge
- Kabras - Abasonje
- **Luo - Usonga
- TIRIKI - a collection of clans (Eliud said it)

Implications on classification- slide 2.3

- The Nyala SPLIT: Nyala A & B(after the split Nyala B moved from Central to South).
- What was the form of Nyala before the split?
- Any similarities across the Southern dialects, YES! yet interesting. Same across dialects for most words, but when Loogoli slightly deviates from the rest, Nyala B aligns with Logooli.

Implications on classification- slide 3

- Luyia dialect (S) CONTACT with other languages? e.g Luo, Kalenjin?
Linguistic evidence? Other evidence?

PB *-*gina* ‘stone’ source - slope (Bantu - Proto-Lakes)

Isukha (+ other southern dialects) - *lichina* (used to clean feet)

Tachoni- *likina* (used to clean feet)

Bukusu- *lißina* (stone cave)

PB *-*tale* ‘lion’ BUK - *talangi*

PB *-*kaapu* ‘cattle’ BUK - *xaafu*

PB *-*belele* ‘sheep’ BUK - *melela* ‘sound of a goat’ [Malawi across Southern Zambia]

Implications on classification- slide 4

Luyia dialects with a mixed ancestry of the Bantu and the Nilotic group—
Kalenjin

- Tachoni
- Bukusu
- Tiriki
- Marama
- Nyala A
- Nyala B
- Marachi
- Kisa
- Nyole (Wanyonyi 2023)

Implications on classification- slide 5

- Some Luyia groups during migration arrived in some lands where there were no occupants, while others had occupants who were Bantu groups or non-Bantu groups, e.g Kalenjins in Mt. Elgon (Bungoma comes from the Sabaot called Bongomek, my village- **Chelekei/ Cheplaskei...**)
- The TIRIKI age sets naming like those of the TERIK

The classification nuts and bolts-slide 1

- Need to expand the methodological options so we respond to the Luyia community people's needs (classification → standard orthography,,, to avoid rejection of published materials for use in schools)
- How? Why? Under what circumstances..?
- What people believe
- What people think
- What people really believe, think or do
- The context of all the above

The classification nuts and bolts-slide 2

- Qualitative: systematic inquiry that theoretically and methodologically focusses on complex relations between:
- Personal and social meanings
- Individual and cultural practices (each dialect group has dialect specific clans, but there are clans that cut across dialects)
- The context (environment)

Conclusion

- Luyia, based on the migration routes reveals complex contact interactions. Need for an *ACCEPTED study on the origin and migration that employs more sources beyond the linguistic reconstruction!
- ** I am carefully using the word ‘accepted’, by WHO? Linguists, Historians, archeologists, areal geographers, and the community as well.

References - slide 1

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References - slide 2

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Orioooooooooooo

Thank you!