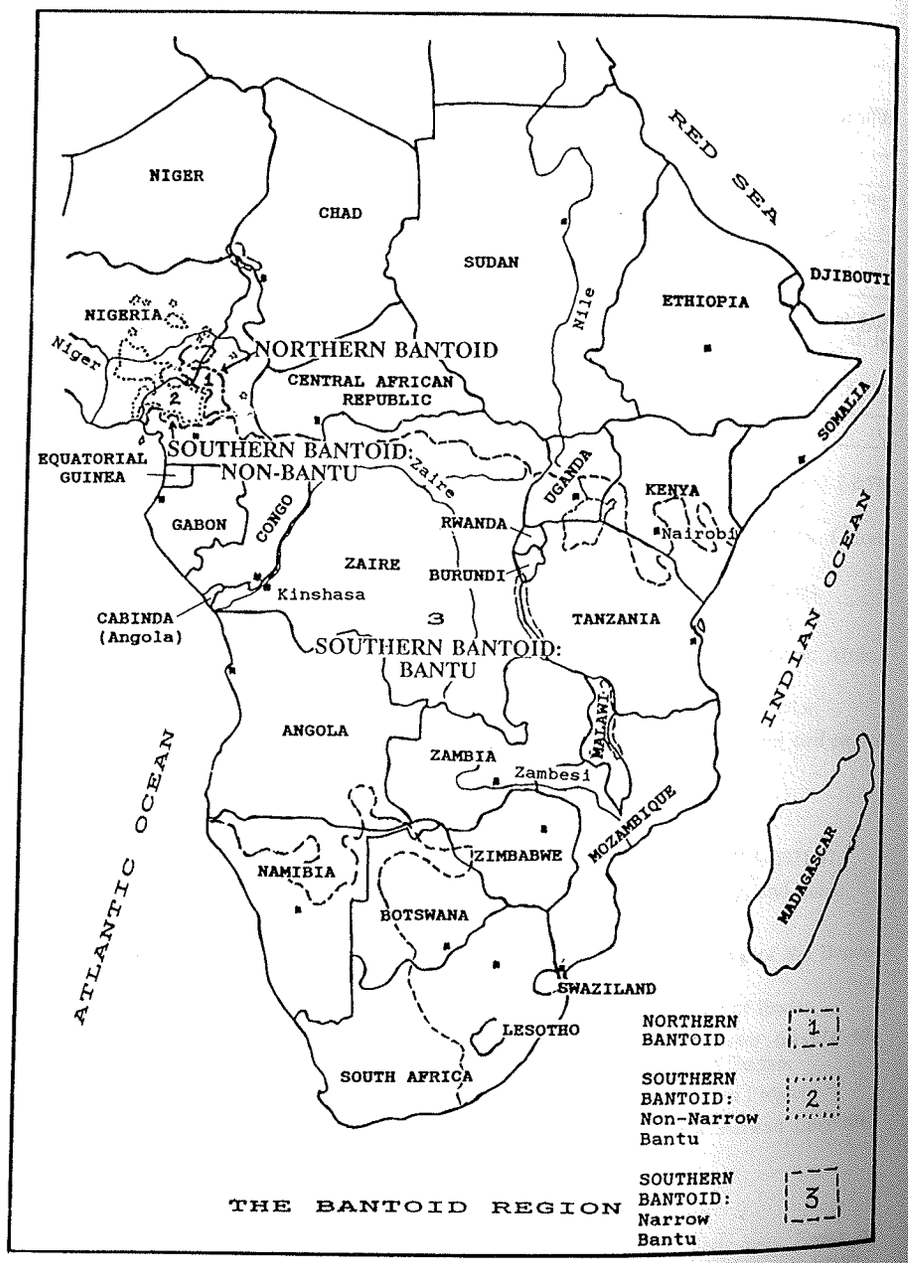

PLATE 19 Bantoid languages

19 Bantoid Overview

John R. Watters

The term 'Bantoid' is used here as a cover term for the following groups of languages and language isolates: Mambiloid, Fam, Tiba, Dakoid, Tivoid, Ekoid, Mbe, Jarawan, Mamfe, Ring, Momo, Menchum, Mbam-Nkam, Misaje, Essimbi, Tikar, Beboid, and Bantu. These groups represent over 500 different languages. Externally, Bantoid is one of 12 branches of Benue-Congo, itself a branch of the Niger-Congo language family.

In this volume[1], the Bantoid languages are divided internally into the Northern and Southern branches. This classification follows from various classifications proposed in the past few years and most recently developed by Blench and Williamson (1987). Northern Bantoid, according to them, consists of Mambiloid, Fam, Tiba, and Dakoid. Southern Bantoid includes all of the remaining Bantoid groups, including Narrow Bantu. However, for expository reasons the detailed presentation of these branches is given in three rather than two chapters: Northern Bantoid, Southern Bantoid (minus Narrow Bantu), and Narrow Bantu. Throughout this chapter and the following three chapters, the term 'Southern Bantoid' refers to all Southern Bantoid languages minus the Narrow Bantu languages. Any reference to the Narrow Bantu languages will use the term 'Bantu'. However, it should be kept in mind that genetically Narrow Bantu is actually one subgroup among many within Southern Bantoid.

The term 'Bantoid' has not always been used in a genetic sense. Krause, in 1895 (Möhlig 1983:40), first introduced the term for languages that displayed certain relationships in vocabulary to Bantu, but that grammatically represented a pre-Bantu stage both typologically and historically. Guthrie (1948) used the term for languages that had noun class systems reminiscent of those found in Bantu languages, but whose noun

[1] I want to thank Charles and Dee Perisots for writing summaries of certain articles used in this study. Thanks also go to Tom Hinnebusch, Larry Hyman, and Jacqueline Leroy for comments on earlier drafts and for suggesting certain additional readings. Finally, I would like to thank Thilo Schadeberg for the use of the library resources at Leiden.

prefixes, concordial elements, and vocabularies did not show any regular relationship to Bantu languages.

Greenberg (1963) was the first to use the term in a strictly genetic sense when he used it for a branch of the Benue-Congo subfamily of Niger-Congo. The term 'Bantoid' in this volume follows this genetic sense.

19.1 EARLY SCHOLARSHIP

Bantoid languages include some of the first African languages ever to be studied systematically while some are still awaiting a first serious study. Bantu languages have been the object of the earliest and most extensive studies to date, while Northern and Southern Bantoid languages have only recently become the object of linguistic inquiry and many remain poorly known.

Cole (1971) provides a detailed history of early Bantoid scholarship as well as related bibliographical references. More recent works are discussed in the chapters on Northern Bantoid, Southern Bantoid, and Bantu which follow.

19.2 CLASSIFICATION

Williamson (Benue-Congo Overview (BCO)) has touched on the separate unity of Bantoid in relation to the other Benue-Congo languages, so more attention is given here to its internal classification. However, a couple of points should be made concerning evidence for the unity of the group.

Primary evidence for its unity comes from lexical comparisons. Greenberg (1963), using his mass comparison method, grouped them together on the basis of shared resemblances. Later, Bennett and Sterk (1977) grouped the Bantoid languages together on the basis of lexicostatistic counts. With regard to this latter work, Schadeberg (1986) presents the Nearest Neighbor, Furthest Neighbor, and Branch Average trees developed by converting Bennett and Sterk's percentages. The Furthest Neighbor and Branch Average trees clearly group the Bantu languages with Tiv, Mambila, and Jarawan as a subgroup.

In addition to lexical evidence, there appears to be at least two phonological innovations that characterize the group, namely, the weakening of both ***p** and ***gw** to **y**, **w**, or Ø. Williamson presents evidence for this in her BCO chapter.

Regarding Bantoid's internal classification, a major question in the past has been whether the Northern and Southern Bantoid languages actually share a common genetic origin with the Bantu languages, or whether the similarities between them are due instead to borrowing. A second question, for those who have accepted the common genetic origin of all Bantoid languages, concerns the actual subgroups of Bantoid languages, and how these subgroups relate in terms of a genetic tree to the parent language.

19.2.1 BANTU AND THE OTHER BANTOID LANGUAGES

In order to put these questions in their larger historical context and understand better the details concerning the earliest claims about the internal classification and genetic relations of the Bantoid languages, see Cole (1971). However, a short review would be appropriate.

The Bantu languages of southern Africa were the first to receive extensive attention, and by the early 1800s it became clear that they formed a homogenous, genetically related group of languages. By contrast, there was little awareness of the Northern and Southern Bantoid languages.

Not until Bleek (1855) hypothesized that the Bantu languages and the languages of West Africa were members of the same family (Hair 1965:51), did the other Bantoid languages enter the picture. They formed part of the continuum between Bantu and West Africa.

Johnston (1919/22) continued this line of thought, but by then the climate of opinion had changed. Thus, while people like Schön, Christaller, and Goldie (Niger-Congo Overview, hereafter NCO) accepted Bleek's thesis, people like Müller, Cust, and Meinhof treated the Bantu languages as a separate linguistic group, genetically unrelated to other African languages.

This Bantu-centrism continued with Guthrie, although he also clearly wrestled with the status of the non-Bantu languages of the Bantoid group. In 1948 he distinguished between the Bantu and West Sudanic languages, calling the West Sudanic group that had Bantu-like noun class systems 'Bantoid'. He established a set of four criteria for determining whether a language was Bantu or not (1948:11-12), but only one of these was unambiguously genetic--that of cognate vocabulary. The other criteria were typological in nature.

In 1962 Guthrie explained the 'Bantuisms' of the Southern Bantoid languages on the basis of a theory that speakers of Bantu languages had been absorbed into the communities of these Bantoid speakers. But in 1971 he included some of these same languages in his *Comparative Bantu*, although not within any of the accepted Bantu zones.

At the same time others began to reassert the opinion that the Bantu languages were part of a larger language family. Westermann (1949) explicitly spoke of a common origin for Bantu and the West African languages (his West Sudanic). Then Greenberg claimed that Bantu was genetically related to the West African languages, including other Bantoid languages. In fact, he proposed that Bantu was a subgroup of the Bantoid subgroup of Benue-Congo--a radical departure from earlier claims. At present, the broad arrangement of languages proposed by Greenberg is generally accepted. Thus, Bantu languages are seen as having an especially close relationship to the other Bantoid languages within the overall Niger-Congo family. The answer, therefore, to the first question is that Bantu languages do share a common genetic origin with the other Bantoid languages.

19.2.2 THE INTERNAL CLASSIFICATION OF BANTOID

Until 1963 Bantoid as such was not seen as an authentic group of languages needing internal classification. Until then, the only classificatory studies of Bantoid languages dealt strictly with the Bantu languages that, from the time of Bleek's (1862) classification on through to those of Doke (1945) and Guthrie (1948), ignored the other Bantoid languages.

About a decade after Greenberg (1963), studies began to appear that had implications for the wider Bantoid group, particularly Henrici (1973), Heine (1973) and Coupez, Evrard, and Vansina (1975). All of these were genetically oriented, unlike earlier typological ones. They were also based on lexicostatistical methods to the exclusion of methods involving phonetic and grammatical changes, or lexical innovation. The Bantu chapter (ch. 22) further discusses these Bantu classifications.

Of interest in these studies are the implications for grouping the other Bantoid languages with Bantu. They demonstrate that, contrary to Guthrie's basically symmetrical referential family tree, the Bantu genetic family tree is asymmetrical, with the greatest complexity and distance in relationship patterns showing up in the northwest Bantu area. That the most distant (highest) branches in the asymmetrical tree are in the northwest area, next to the other Bantoid areas, means there is a natural way for these languages to relate to Bantu.

Despite these developments, the question as to the actual internal genetic classification of the Bantoid languages as a whole has not yet received a satisfactory answer. Various hypotheses have been suggested. The first, Greenberg (1963), proposed the limited hypothesis given in figure 19.1:

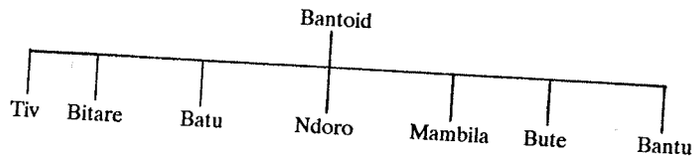

FIGURE 19.1 Greenberg's 1963 hypothesis

Greenberg made two significant points. Firstly, he suggested that Bantu was a coordinate branch within Bantoid. Secondly, he assumed that 'Bantu' referred to more than just Guthrie's (1948, 1967/71) Bantu languages (sometimes referred to as 'Narrow Bantu'). Instead, it included those languages bordering on the northwest frontier of the Bantu area and not explicitly mentioned in the list of Bantoid languages (see Greenberg 1963:37). Thus, Ekoid Bantu and Grassfields Bantu, part of Southern Bantoid in this study, would be included within Greenberg's Bantu. Later studies by Crabb (1965), Voorhoeve (1971), and Hyman (1972) further supported the inclusion of these languages in a wider Bantu zone.

The one significant problem with Greenberg's proposal concerned the lack of grouping of the six languages listed as coordinate with Bantu. It is unlikely that listing these languages as coordinate branches with the Bantu group of languages represented a serious hypothesis to be taken literally.

Williamson (1971) provided the next significant hypothesis as shown in figure 19.2. Firstly, note that Williamson proposed a general two-way split between 'Non-Bantu' and 'Wide Bantu'. She proposed the non-Bantu grouping on the presence of noun suffixes as opposed to noun prefixes found elsewhere in Bantoid. She also noted (1971:264) the transitional nature of Tiv, which has both prefixes and suffixes. But in her listing of languages (1971:276), she included Tiv as part of the non-Bantu group.

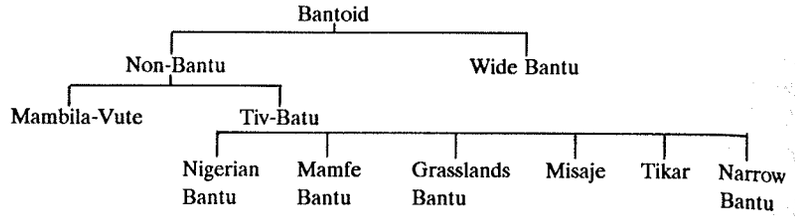

FIGURE 19.2 Williamson's 1971 hypothesis

Secondly, in the case of non-Bantu, she proposed two subgroups, Mambila-Vute and Tiv-Batu.

Thirdly, she distinguished between 'Wide Bantu' and 'Narrow Bantu', with 'Narrow Bantu' being equivalent to Guthrie's Bantu. She reported that the inclusion of more than just Guthrie's Bantu within Wide Bantu was based on a set of criteria developed by Crabb and Greenberg. The criteria claimed that any language displaying a bilabial nasal or its trace in the noun prefix of three classes, classes that in other Bantoid languages (and also other Benue-Congo branches) show only vowel prefixes, should be considered a Bantu language.

She further noted that the simplest hypothesis concerning Wide Bantu was to accept Narrow Bantu (i.e., Guthrie's Bantu) as a homogenous unit, serving as a coordinate subgroup to five other subgroups. She remarked that the subgroups were all highly tentative. Some of them, such as Nigerian Bantu and Mamfe Bantu, were strictly geographical in nature.

Williamson's two-fold subdivision of Bantoid languages was later accepted by Greenberg (1974). He referred to the distinction as that between Bantoid I (non-Bantu) and Bantoid II (Bantu), along with the following subgroups:

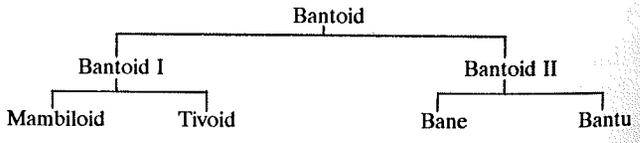

FIGURE 19.3 Greenberg's 1974 hypothesis

For Bantoid II, Greenberg differed from Williamson, suggesting a two-way split between the Bane (all of Williamson's groups apart from Narrow Bantu) and Bantu languages (i.e., Narrow Bantu). He based this

conclusion on a set of what he considered to be Bane and Bantu innovations. Meeussen (1974), in reply, argued that the innovations discussed by Greenberg were not conclusive, and preferred to maintain tentatively something along Williamson's multiple coordinate branches hypothesis until more was known. In all of these proposals, Narrow Bantu continued to be accepted as a homogenous genetic unit.

Voorhoeve (1980) picked up on Greenberg's suggestion of a Bane-Bantu split within Bantoid II. He examined the hypothesis by looking at shared innovations in both the lexicon and the grammar. The results were contradictory in that the lexical innovations led to one subgrouping while the noun class information led to another. He also raised major questions as to the use of the nasal prefix criteria for defining wide Bantu (Bantoid II). The reason for this was the fundamental split found in Grassfields Bantu between the Mbam-Nkam languages, which have the nasals, and the Ring, Momo, and Menchum languages which do not. Lexically Grassfields Bantu is a clear subgroup in relation to other Bantoid languages, while in terms of nasals it seems to divide between membership in Wide Bantu and non-Bantu Bantoid.[2]

At the time Greenberg (1974) and Meeussen (1974) were debating Bane and Bantu and assuming the unity of Narrow Bantu, others were questioning the nature of Narrow Bantu's unity. Henrici (1973) did a lexicostatistic study of a set of Bantu languages and arrived at an asymmetrical tree for Narrow Bantu that challenged Guthrie's symmetrical one (see ch. 22).

In a more fundamental departure, Heine (1973) did a lexicostatistic study that raised doubts as to the true homogeneity of Narrow Bantu. His hypothesis is spelled out in figure 19.4:

[2] Erhard Voeltz (per. com.) suggests that despite Voorhoeve's conclusions, the best criteria available for grouping languages within wider Bantu are the Crabb-Greenberg nasal prefix criteria. On the basis of these criteria all of the Bantoid languages other than Mambiloid and Tivoid would definitely be Bantu, with the exception of the Western Grassfields languages (Ring, Momo, Menchum). On the basis of the nasal prefix criteria these languages should be excluded, but on the basis of lexical cognates they should subgroup with Eastern Grassfields, which has the nasal prefixes and is therefore Bantu. However, Leroy and Voorhoeve (1982) have pointed out that the original Crabb-Greenberg criteria were meant to determine what should be included in Bantu and not what should be excluded.

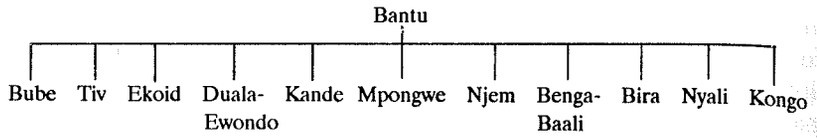

FIGURE 19.4 Heine's 1973 hypothesis

First, Heine agreed with Henrici that the diversity in subgrouping increased as one moved northwest in the Bantu region. Kongo grouped together the large central Bantu area, while the other ten branches coordinate with Kongo involved languages in the northwest area of Bantu plus two language groups outside the Narrow Bantu group, namely Tiv and Ekoid. Second, Heine was the first to suggest explicitly that Narrow Bantu was not a homogenous unit, since Bube, a Narrow Bantu language, was the branch farthest to the left and, consequently, more distanced linguistically from Bantu than either of the non-Narrow Bantu languages, Tiv and Ekoid. Finally, the fact that Heine listed eleven subgroups as coordinate branches indicated the continuing problem of knowing how these various subgroups related to each other within Bantoid.

Bennett and Sterk (1977) differed from these earlier hypotheses:

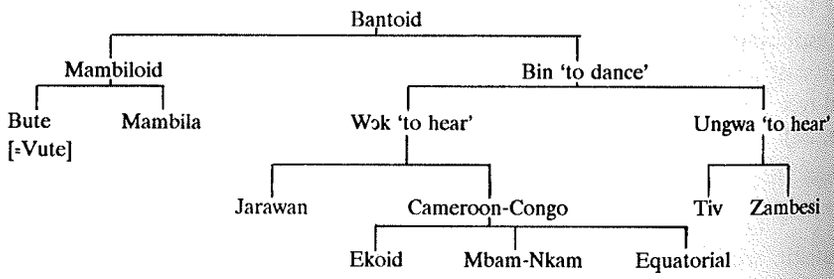

FIGURE 19.5 Bennett and Sterk's 1977 hypothesis

They followed Williamson (1971) and Greenberg (1974) in dividing Bantoid into two branches: Mambiloid and Bin. However, they shifted the Tiv languages from being included with Bute and Mambila to being included with the central Narrow Bantu languages, a radical departure from earlier proposals. They also divided Narrow Bantu into two separate subgroups, namely 'Wɔk' and 'Ungwa'. Thus, they recognized a distinction between a central Bantu or Kongo Bantu group (Ungwa) and a non-central Bantu group (Wɔk).

They established their subgroups on the basis of shared innovations (actually, Bennett and Sterk refer to them as 'isoglosses' which could be taken as a historically neutral term). Thus, Mambiloid was distinct from the remainder of Bantoid because it did not share the roots ***bín** 'to dance' and ***kádì** 'wife' with the rest of Bantoid. However, as Williamson notes (BCO), ***bín** has a distribution that suggests it should be reconstructed for Benue-Congo. With regard to the innovations proposed to distinguish the Wɔk and Ungwa groups, Bennett and Sterk propose the following:

***wɔk**	***ungwa**	'hear'
***-ɔ̀ŋ**	***ɲúélé**	'hair'
***-baŋ**	(no agreement elsewhere)	'red'

As Williamson notes (BCO), a cognate of ***ungwa** is found outside the Bantoid group, so it cannot serve as a true innovation. ***-ɔ̀ŋ** appears as a possible semantic shift from what Mukarovsky (1976/77) lists as forms for 'head' in certain Western Gur and Senufo languages, and it may define at least a set of languages within the Wɔk group, if not the whole Wɔk group. However, the form ***-baŋ** 'red' is more problematic. It is found in Aghem (Hyman 1979) of the Grassfields languages, but not in Beboid (Hyman 1981) or Ekoid (Crabb 1965). In fact, the Ekoid form appears to derive from the root reconstructed by Mukarovsky (1976/77) for 'be ripe'. Thus, not only is there no agreement within the Ungwa group for the root for 'red', but there also appears to be little agreement within the Wɔk group either. We must conclude, therefore, that the subgroups for Bantoid as proposed by Bennett and Sterk are not established.

About the same time, at the Conference on Bantu Expansion in 1977, Heine (1980) noted that it had become clear from presentations by Voorhoeve (1980), Schadeberg (1980), and Gerhardt (1980) that the traditional notion of a homogenous Bantu would have to be further altered. Specifically Zones A.40[3] and A.60 would have to be excluded, and probably also Zones A.30, A.80, A.90, D.20, and D.30. Kongo Bantu weathered the new developments (Heine 1973) and was established with some certainty as a unit. Thus, the late 1970s concluded with the demise of a homogenous Bantu group within Bantoid, but with little else resolved as to internal classification.

[3] The 'Zones' referred to here are basically those of Guthrie (1948, 1967/71), who divided Bantu into fifteen zones: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, K, L, M, N, P, R, and S. Later, Zone J was added to these fifteen.

In the early 1980s, two additional studies, based entirely on lexicostatistical methods, were published. Bastin, Coupez, and de Halleux (1983) suggested the subgrouping in figure 19.6. Note that the names in square brackets in that figure do not appear in Bastin, Coupez, and de Halleux, but are my labels, provided for comparative purposes.

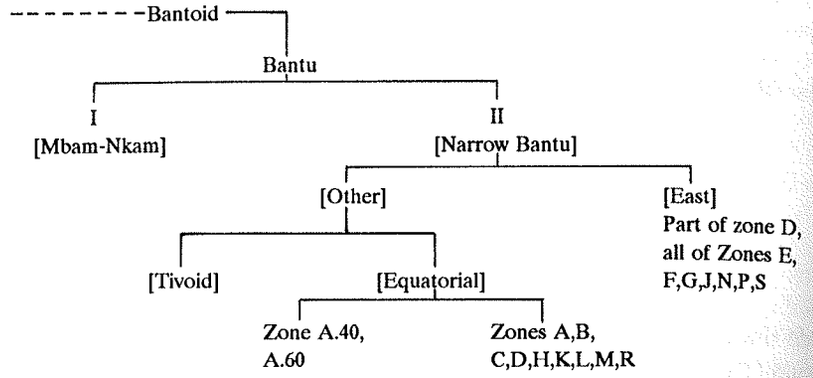

FIGURE 19.6 Bastin, Coupez, and de Halleux's 1983 hypothesis

Firstly, note that little of Wide Bantu and none of Mambiloid were included in this study. Of the Wide Bantu groups included, Tiv was placed within Narrow Bantu, subgrouping with an 'Equatorial' branch, while Mbam-Nkam was outside Narrow Bantu. Secondly, note that here Tiv subgroups with Bantu Zones A, B, C, D, H, L, M, and R, almost the opposite conclusion of Bennett and Sterk, who placed it with Zones E, F, G, H, K, L, M, N, P, R, S, and part of D. Thirdly, the 'East' subgroup is a definite unit on its own. Finally, Zone A.40 and Zone A.60 languages are separate from the rest of Zone A. The greatest weakness of this study is that it was limited to only 92 lexical items, so the possibility of uncovering significant phonological correspondences that could be used to establish subgroups is extremely limited. Of course, this restriction is due in great measure to the paucity of word lists available on 500 or more languages within Bantoid.

The other recent study was carried out under the 'Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun' (ALCAM) project (Dieu and Renaud 1983). It included a proposed classification of subgroups for the Southern Bantoid (their 'Bantu') languages of Cameroon. However, its present conclusions are based largely on impressions rather than any rigorous lexicostatistical count. The hypothesis is shown in figure 19.7.

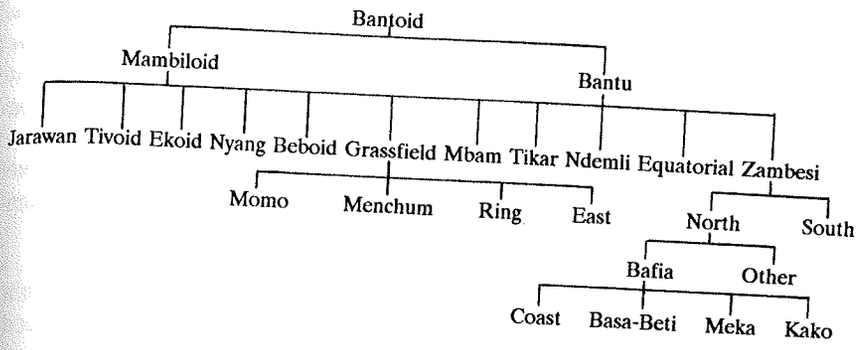

FIGURE 19.7 ALCAM 1984 hypothesis

The salient points in this proposal include: 1) maintaining Mambiloid as a subgroup coordinate with Bantu, 2) the placing of Tivoid within the Bantu languages, but not within the Narrow Bantu subgroups, 3) the grouping of certain A.40 and A.60 languages together as Mbam and their separation from the rest of Narrow Bantu as a branch coordinate with other Southern Bantoid subgroups, 4) the division of the rest of Narrow Bantu into the Equatorial and Zambesi groups, and 5) the division between A.50 (Bafia) languages and those of A.10 (Coast), A.40 and A.70 (Basa-Beti), A.80 (Meka), and A.90 (Kako). The subgroupings of the Equatorial-South and Zambesi branches were not specified. Thus, Zone A was divided into several subgroups at various levels, and their Bantu itself consisted of eleven coordinate branches, indicating the continuing problem of determining how these various subgroups relate to each other genetically. Finally, note the disagreement as to whether Menchum should be included as a subgroup of Grassfields or separated and made a parallel branch to it (Jacqueline Leroy pers. com.).

All the above proposals assume a unilinear monogenetic process of language change and depend heavily on lexicostatistics or the identification of common innovations, or both. However, Möhlig (1979, 1981) has argued that a strict application of the unilinear monogenetic model can only prejudice classificatory research and its results in favor of such an approach, obscuring or altogether ignoring the important historical developments of areal spreading, independent but identical innovation or loss, and drift. He proposes instead a stratificational model that uses dialectological principles and in which phenomena like these can be used to define certain strata within Bantu linguistic history. He is skeptical of ever reconstructing anything like a proto-Bantu language. Further discussion of this point of view is left for the chapter on Bantu.

To conclude, our current knowledge about the Bantoid languages still does not allow us to propose a detailed, valid hypothesis of their internal genetic classification. Continued research is needed in both monogenetic and stratificational approaches. Both need reliable data on the hundreds of languages that would form the data base for such historical reconstruction. However, from the various works discussed above, one could put forward the general hypothesis in figure 19.8 as representing the relative genetic development of Bantoid.

'Northern' and 'East' appear as fairly clearly defined units within Bantoid. However, in between these two extremes, various points need further clarification: 1) whether Tivoid is a subgroup within Northern or Southern Bantoid; 2) what the actual subgroups of Non-Narrow Bantu are, and what their internal classification is with regard to each other; 3) what the various subgroups of Zone A are and what their place is within Non-Narrow and Narrow Bantu; and 4) what the subgroups of the various Narrow Bantu units are, especially Zones B through D.

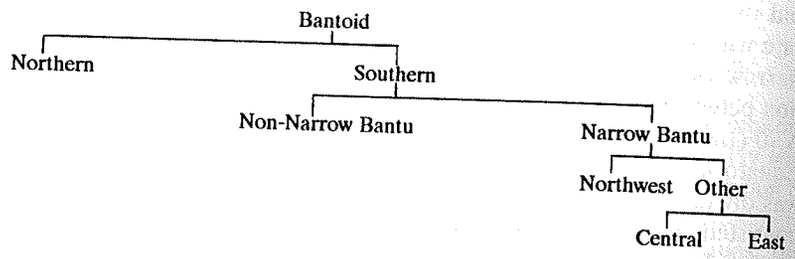

FIGURE 19.8 Summary hypothesis

Of course, a significant question remains concerning how far lexicostatistic studies can actually take us in determining the subgroups of Bantoid and their relative genetic relationships. It is increasingly apparent that in order to establish convincingly the subgroupings of the Bantoid languages, we will have to move beyond lexicostatistics. Such studies can give us an initial hypothesis of where to look for subgroups, but eventually the important phonological, morphological and lexical innovations shared by each subgroup will have to be established. One way to do this is to start at the lowest levels, where relationships are clearest, and work up the genetic tree.

One study still in process (Blench and Williamson 1987) is attempting to establish subgroups primarily on the basis of lexical innovations. Their general hypothesis is given in figure 19.9. Further details of this hypothesis are given in the chapters on Northern Bantoid and

Southern Bantoid, but two points should be made here. First, the initial two-way split in Bantoid has been maintained on the basis of two lexical innovations: ***bom** 'mouth', which defines the Northern Bantoid branch and ***-kadi** 'woman', which defines Southern Bantoid, including Bantu. Secondly, based on these innovations Tivoid clearly belongs in Southern Bantoid with the Wide Bantu languages, not with Mambiloid in Northern Bantoid.

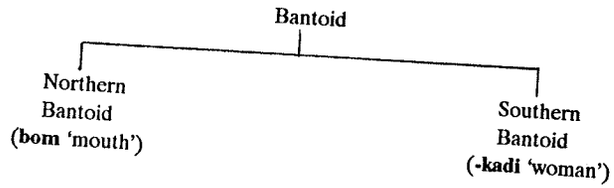

FIGURE 19.9 Blench and Williamson's 1987 hypothesis

19.3 PHONOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

For an inventory of the possible consonants and vowels found in Bantoid, refer to the chapters on Northern Bantoid, Southern Bantoid, and Bantu. Here we will discuss proto-Bantoid consonants, vowels, and tone.

Meeussen (1967) suggests the following proto-Bantu consonants:

p	t	c	k
b	d	j	g
m	n	(ɲ)	ŋ

These reconstructions generally match those of Meinhof (1899) and Guthrie (1967/71). However, no one has yet proposed a reconstruction of proto-Bantoid consonants; in fact, much of the discussion in the past assumed that proto-Bantoid consonants are equivalent to those of proto-Bantu.

Recent studies have raised serious doubts about this assumption, since in northwest Bantu and other Bantoid languages there are frequently two reflexes for the various proto-Bantu consonants. Guthrie (1967/71,2:30ff.) recognized this but tried to explain the two reflexes as variants conditioned by putative vowel length differences. However, van Leynseele and Stewart (1980), on the basis of consonant harmony in Tunen and the correspondences with other northwest Bantu languages, have argued that evidence points instead to a pervasive fortis/lenis dis-

tinction in the consonant system of the ancestor to proto-Bantu. Such a distinction would be a natural outcome of the fortis/lenis distinction reconstructed for Volta-Congo (Stewart 1973). Comparative studies, such as Hedinger (1987) and my own unpublished notes on proto-Ekoid, also suggest a larger consonant inventory at the level of proto-Bantoid than that suggested by the various reconstructions for proto-Bantu. Note that much of the evidence for a proto-Bantoid consonant inventory larger than that for proto-Bantu comes from languages traditionally included within Bantu. This raises a serious question, namely: for what set of languages does the putative proto-Bantu consonant system serve as a reconstruction?

Meeussen (1967) and Guthrie (1967/71) reconstruct the following set of vowels for proto-Bantu:

i u
e o
ɛ ɔ
a

No comparable set has been proposed for proto-Bantoid.

In the current situation, there are some northwest Bantu languages that have expanded the proto-Bantu inventory of seven vowels to as many as eleven, e.g., Kɔɔzime (Beavon 1983) and Bafia (Guarisma 1980). In the Southern Bantoid languages and some northwest Bantu languages there are also central vowels, back unrounded vowels, and front rounded vowels. Vowel harmony systems are also found throughout the Southern Bantoid group. In certain cases the harmony only involves the stem vowels, while in others it involves prefix vowels also, such as with Esimibi (Stallcup 1980) and Ejagham (Watters 1981). Northwest Bantu languages such as Gunu (Robinson 1984) and Tunen (Stewart and van Leynseele 1979) exhibit harmony systems similar to those further west, such as in the Kwa languages.

Two general points should be made about these facts. First, the languages with large vowel inventories or with few common vowels (e.g. front rounded or back unrounded) appear to have gained the additional or unusual vowels through recent innovations. Secondly, the harmony systems found in northwest Bantu languages suggest that the proto-Bantu reconstructed vowel system is insufficient for proto-Bantoid. The proto-Bantoid vowel system may have been a nine vowel system with two harmony sets, not unlike those found in West African languages and reconstructed for proto-Volta-Congo (Stewart 1976). This is what Stewart and van Leynseele (1979) conclude for the ancestor of proto-Bantu, if not for proto-Bantu itself.

Many Bantoid languages have only two tones: high and low, which Greenberg (1948) reconstructed for proto-Bantu. However, Swahili does not have tone. Other languages have two plus downstep (Ejagham), while a number of Grassfields languages have three or four tone levels. In Western Bamileke (Dschang) one finds downstepped high following both low and high tones, and also downstepped low tones. It was in relation to Grassfields languages that Voorhoeve suggested the notion of 'floating tones'. Some of the languages have terraced tone levels while others have discrete tone levels (see Welmers 1973:81ff). In addition, a major distinction has been made between the Northern Bantoid and Southern Bantoid languages that have strict tonal systems and many of the central Bantu languages said to have 'pitch-accent' systems.

The Bantoid languages in general, and the Northern and Southern Bantoid languages in particular, have been a treasure field for the development of the recent theory of autosegmental phonology. Leben (1973) used the Ejagham dialect Etung (Ekoid Bantu) as described by Edmondson and Bendor-Samuel (1966) and the Tiv language (McCawley 1970) to reject (partially) the linear phonological model of Chomsky and Halle (1968). He was followed by Goldsmith (1976) who also referred to Etung in his development of an autosegmental theory of phonology. More recently, Pulleyblank (1983) has used Tiv, Dschang (Grassfields), and Tonga (a Bantu language) to show how tone might be handled within a lexical phonological theory.

19.4 MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Bantoid languages by and large have multiple noun classes. Twenty classes are generally reconstructed, but the number found in any given language varies widely. In Northern Bantoid languages like Mambila and Vute there are none, while in Southern Bantoid virtually all of the languages have some classes, apart from Yamba of Mbam-Nkam. In Bantu languages there is again variation between having no noun classes and having up to nineteen[4] (see Alexandre 1981:356).

[4]Noun classes in Bantu are conventionally referred to by number from a system established by Bleek (1862) and Meinhof (1906), a system which still serves us today with only minor modifications. This numbering system benefits comparative studies within Bantu and Bantoid.

The verbal morphology of Bantu is complex, consisting of various prefixes, including the object pronominal prefix, and a variety of suffixes generally considered to be derivational. Again, the most elaborate systems are found in Bantu languages, while the languages in Zone A of Bantu, and especially the other languages of Southern Bantoid, see a reduction in the type of prefixes and the presence of verbal suffixes. The most widespread inflectional suffixes appear to be the imperfective **-ag**, which is found throughout the Bantoid region (and probably extends beyond Bantoid), and the perfective **(-ir)-e**.

In the area of derivational suffixes, there appears to be a passivization/serialization line along the southern and eastern edges of the Bamileke plateau in Cameroon. Languages to the south and east of this line (Bantu Zone A languages) generally have a passive verb form but no (significant) verbal serialization. Languages to the north and west of this line (Southern and Northern Bantoid) do not have passive verb forms, but many have verb serialization or consecutivization. Also, the stative or contactive derivational suffix **-àm** of Bantu appears in the Southern Bantoid language Ejagham as the suffix on the infinitival verb form and certain negative verb forms[5], while the contactive in the Ring and Beboid languages is **-mə**. However, the most resilient suffix appears to be the causative **-is-i/es-i-** which, though often non-productive, has residual forms in many of the Bantu Zone A and Southern Bantoid languages. The applied suffix **-ir-/-er-** is generally absent outside the Bantu languages.

It is common to find multiple tenses for both past and future in Bantoid languages. However, certain languages like Ekoid and Mamfe Bantu do not have any formal tense system. Instead, only mood and aspect are marked. A common phenomenon throughout Bantoid is the difference between the relative and main verb forms. The former occur in relative clauses and often with interrogative words, while the latter occur in main, non-interrogative clauses. These forms often generalize as a distinction between 'focus' and 'non-focus' (see Hyman and Watters 1984).

19.5 SYNTACTIC CHARACTERISTICS

The Bantoid languages are primarily SVOX languages with all of their corresponding characteristic traits (Heine 1976). The only exception

[5]In fact, this stative suffix **-am** actually seems to occur outside Bantoid proper, being found on a gerundial form in the Edoid languages of the Kwa family (Elugbe 1984).

known to date is Tunen, which has a basic SOVX order (Dugast 1971). In addition, in Bantu languages the object affix (or clitic) precedes the verb.

Various other languages display variant word orders such as subject postposing and object preposing, e.g., the Ring languages of Grassfields Bantu. Such marked orders often serve specific pragmatic functions such as to mark focus or topic within the given language. Bantoid languages also use tone and specific grammatical morphemes, such as **ni/no/na**, to mark focus.

Perhaps the most salient feature of Bantoid syntax is the widespread concord system in which various word classes must agree with the noun. These concording words may occur within the noun phrase, within the same clause, or even anaphorically at the discourse level. As suggested by Leroy and Voorhoeve (1982), features of these noun classes can possibly provide the basis for significant subgrouping of the Bantoid languages in the future. Some areas at issue include the distribution of classes 6 and 6a, nasalization of the prefixes for classes 1 and 3, locative classes, noun suffixes, tone neutralization in demonstratives, and so on.

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20 Northern Bantoid

Robert Hedinger

20.0 INTRODUCTION

Northern Bantoid, as recently defined elsewhere by Blench and Williamson (1987), includes 15 languages among which are Mambila, Vute, and Samba Daka. Mambila and Vute are part of a group referred to by the cover terms Mambila-Vute, Mambiloid, and Non-Bantu Bantoid. Samba Daka has previously been considered an Adamawa language but is now one language of a new group within Northern Bantoid called Dakoid.[1]

Northern Bantoid languages are spoken in Central Eastern Nigeria and in the Adamaoua and Central Provinces of Cameroon (see map). Mambila is spoken by an estimated 65,000 people, and Vute by up to 20,000. The Dakoid languages are spoken by probably well over 100,000 speakers.[2]

20.1 EARLY SCHOLARSHIP

The earliest known works on Northern Bantoid languages consist of a vocabulary list for Vute (Koelle 1854).

Vute seems to have been the first Northern Bantoid language to have undergone lexicographical and descriptive studies, resulting in publications by Hofmeister (1918/19, 1919). Over fifty years of silence followed until Guarisma published on Vute phonology (1972), lexicon

[1]I would like to thank Stephen C. Anderson, Mona Perrin, and Rhonda Thwing for reading through this chapter and making valuable comments and additions, as well as Dennis Winston for supplying additional bibliographical references.

[2]Perrin estimates there are about 15,000 Mambila speakers in Cameroon and 40-60,000 in Nigeria. The figure for Dakoid is based on figures given in Hansford, Bendor-Samuel, and Stanford (1976).