

A NOTE ON AKAN-CENTRED LINGUISTIC ACCULTURATION

Loanwords from the Akan (Twi-Fante) language are found in great abundance in most if not all other southern Ghanaian languages, but loanwords from other southern Ghanaian languages are rare in Akan. This, of course, is related to the fact that Akan is widely used as a lingua franca by speakers of the other southern Ghanaian languages, whereas none of the other southern Ghanaian languages is widely used by the speakers of Akan: it is common for speakers of one language to borrow into their own language items from a second language which they use as a lingua franca. The position of the other southern Ghanaian languages in relation to Akan may be compared with the position of Akan in relation to English: English is widely used as a lingua franca by speakers of Akan, and Akan has borrowed heavily from English.

The extent to which a language is used as a lingua franca is important as evidence of the extent of the prestige of its speakers. It follows that if by the application of techniques of linguistic reconstruction we can establish the donor languages of the past and their respective sets of borrowing languages, then we can draw important conclusions about the relative prestige of the speakers of specific languages at different periods in the past.

In section 2 of 'Akan history: some linguistic evidence'¹ I drew attention to a number of cases in which this line of reasoning appeared to be applicable. The evidence used in these cases, however, was not lexical borrowing but phonological borrowing (i.e. pronunciation borrowing), which produces comparable effects. The mechanism of phonological borrowing from a lingua franca is basically as follows: it is fashionable to use sound Y instead of sound X

1. Ghana Notes and Queries 9 (1966)

in language A; those who use language A only as a second language use sound Y instead of sound X not only when speaking language A but also when speaking their own language. A European example is the German change from the lingual r-sound to the uvular sound in accordance with the fashion prevailing in French at the time; French enjoyed considerable prestige at that time in Germany, where it was important as a second language, and French-speaking Germans, by adopting the French fashion, introduced it into German.

In each case a number of neighbouring languages (or dialects) were listed which had undergone one or more common phonological changes at a time when genetically they were already separate. Such sets of languages (or dialects) I called convergence groups to distinguish them from genetic groups. As both genetic groups and convergence groups result from common phonological innovations occurring throughout the relevant area, I preferred the term convergence group to the more usual term convergence area which seems to imply that genetic groups are not areal. I now propose to use the term acculturation group in preference to convergence group, as the latter logically requires the replacement of the term genetic group with divergence group. The distinction is then between genetic groups which have a common origin and acculturation groups which have, or at least at one time had, a common focus or centre.

Two of the apparent acculturation groups which I listed in my earlier paper are of special interest here as they both appear to be centred on a direct antecedent of present-day Akan: an Akan acculturation group consisting of Akan, Ahanta and Awutu, and a Tano acculturation group consisting of the Tano languages (Akan, Anyi-Bawule, Chokosi, Nzema and Ahanta), Awutu, Chiripon-Larteh-Anum and Ga.

The languages of the suggested Akan acculturation group appear to be genetically classifiable as follows:

Akan			Tano	Volta-Comoe
Ahanta	Nzema-Ahanta	Bia	Tano	Volta-Comoe
Awutu			Guan	Volta-Comoe

They differ from the remaining known languages of the Tano and Guan groups in having a p-sound in place of the kp-sound which at one time almost certainly occurred in all the languages of these two groups, as Table 1 illustrates.

Ahanta and Awutu are both spoken on the coast, immediately to the west and east of Akan respectively. It appears that almost all those who speak Ahanta or Awutu as their first language also speak Akan. Akan has clearly gained many speakers at the expense of these languages, and would appear to have replaced Ahanta altogether in the Akan-speaking area adjoining the Ahanta-speaking area; there the people call themselves Ahanta but speak no Ahanta. Clearly speakers of Ahanta and Awutu have been using Akan for a long time; it is not surprising, therefore, to find evidence to suggest that all three languages belonged to a single acculturation group at the time of the replacement of the kp-sound with the p-sound. Unfortunately we have as yet no knowledge of the date of this replacement except that it must have been later than that of the p-sound with the f-sound and the h-sound, as will be shown later.

The languages of the suggested Tano acculturation group appear to be genetically classifiable as follows:

The Tano languages	Tano	Volta-Comoe
Awutu	Guan	Volta-Comoe
Chiripon-Larteh-Anum	Guan	Volta-Comoe
Ga		Ga-Adangme

They differ from the remaining known languages of the Volta-Comoe and Ga-Adangme groups in having an f-sound or an h-sound in place

of the p-sound which at one time almost certainly occurred in all the languages of these two groups, as Table 2 illustrates.

Except for Chakosi, a language of the Tano genetic group which is known to have resulted from a migratory breakaway from Anyi-Bawule in relatively recent times, all the languages of the suggested Tano acculturation group together occupy a single compact area. Akan is widely used throughout that part of the area which falls within Ghana but not in the Ivory Coast part, where Anyi-Bawule is used instead. The simplest explanation of this situation would appear to be that ancestral Tano was used as a lingua franca throughout the area occupied by the languages ancestral to those of the Tano acculturation group, both at the time when the p-sound was replaced with the f-sound and the h-sound and at the time (most probably later) when ancestral Tano split into Bia and Akan branches; that after this split each of the two branches survived as a lingua franca in its own right; and that the role of ancestral Bia as a lingua franca was eventually inherited by Anyi-Bawule.

The degree of difference found between Akan and the other Tano languages suggest that the ancestral Tano language split up at least ten centuries ago, and it may well have been much earlier. The use of Akan as a lingua franca therefore seems to go back a very long time indeed.

It is clear that the replacement of the kp-sound with the p-sound came later than that of the p-sound with the f-sound and the h-sound, as otherwise the p-sound which replaced the kp-sound would have been replaced in turn by the f-sound and the h-sound. Since the eastern limit of the area in which the kp-sound was replaced is less far-flung than that of the area in which the p-sound was replaced, the question arises whether this indicates a lessening of Akan influence in the east as compared with the earlier Tano influence. It may do, but it would be inadvisable to place much reliance on this without further evidence; a phonological innovation in a lingua franca is not necessarily adopted into all the languages of an area over which it has a particular degree of influence. It is important to note that the boundaries of acculturation groups, unlike those of genetic groups, are often

far from clearcut.

The two successive phonological innovations which suggest the Tano and Akan acculturation groups respectively appear to be the last two of a strictly ordered succession of four:

(a)	h	→	y/w	(ancestral Volta-Comoe)
(b)	f	→	h	(ancestral Tano)
(c)	p	→	f	(ancestral Tano)
(d)	kp	→	p	(ancestral Akan)

It is interesting to note that the replacement of the f-sound with the h-sound in ancestral Tano does not seem to have been followed in any of the non-Tano languages in the vicinity; this suggests that ancestral Tano was not established as a lingua franca until after this phonological innovation had taken place.

It is important to consider the apparent anomaly that the p-sound which was evidently replaced with an f-sound in ancestral Tano and Ga was replaced with an h-sound in ancestral Awutu and Chiripon-Larteh-Anum. The first explanation which suggests itself is that first the p-sound was replaced with an f-sound everywhere, and that subsequently this f-sound was replaced with an h-sound in the two southern Guan languages; however, as these latter languages retain the f-sound of ancestral Volta-Comoe apparently unchanged, this is highly unlikely. It seems more probable that the original change consisted simply in not closing the lips completely for the p-sound and thus producing an f-sound like that of present-day Ewe; the somewhat unstable f-sound could then have been replaced (i) by an f-sound in ancestral Tano, which appears to have had an h-sound but no f-sound at the time, (ii) by an h-sound in the ancestral southern Guan languages, which appear to have had an f-sound but no more than a few instances of any h-sound at the time, and (iii) by an f-sound in ancestral Ga, which appears to have had both an f-sound and an h-sound at the time.

To sum up, it appears that the use of Akan as a lingua franca

goes back to before the split-up of ancestral Tano but not as far back as the split-up of ancestral Volta-Comoe; that when ancestral Tano split up, ancestral Bia and ancestral Akan inherited the western and eastern portions respectively of the ancestral Tano lingua franca area; and that some considerable time after the split, Akan encroached on the Ahanta part of the Bia area, first as a lingua franca and later as a mother tongue.

J.M. Stewart.

<u>Anyi-Bawule</u> (Anyi)	<u>Nzema</u>	<u>Ahanta</u>	<u>Akan</u> (Akuapem)	<u>Awutu</u>	<u>Chiripon-Larteh</u> <u>-Anum (Larteh)</u>	<u>Nkonya</u>	
kprɔ̃	kpoke (kpũĩĩ "table")	poko	à-pów è-pũũũ	è-pô è-pló	kpô à-kpũ	ì-kpũ	knot door
à-kpɛ̃	a-tpĩĩĩ kpulu		à-pĩĩĩ pũrũw	á-pê plo	á-kpĩ kpuru		thousand fall (of leaves)
kpĩĩĩ kpata	kpũĩĩĩ kpoda		pĩĩĩ pàtá	pĩĩĩ pata	kpĩĩĩ kpita	kpata	agree reconcile

Table 1. Examples of the sound correspondence Anyi-Bawule (Bia, Tano) kp = Nzema (Bia, Tano) kp/tp = Ahanta (Bia, Tano) p = Akan (Tano) p = Awutu (Guan) p = Chiripon-Larteh-Anum (Guan) kp = Nkonya (Guan) kp. Note that a blank in the table does not indicate that the item in question does not occur in the language in question, but merely that so far it has not been found to occur. Note also that both in this Table 1 and in Table 2, i, e, a, o, u, ĩ, ẽ, ã, õ, ũ, ĩ, ẽ, ã, õ, ũ, and ĩ, ẽ, ã, õ, ũ, indicate nasality, high tone, mid tone, low tone, low-high tone, high-low tone, low-mid tone, mid-low tone, downstep and dental articulation respectively. As will be seen, the tones of certain of the items quoted are not marked; these tones are not known.

<u>Abure</u>	<u>Akan</u> (<u>Akwapim</u>)	<u>Chiripon-Larteh</u> <u>-Anum (Larteh)</u>	<u>Nkonya</u>	<u>Ga</u>	<u>Adangme</u>	
	fèh	ha	pā	fà	pà	lend
	fòw	hole		fò	pò	get wet
	m-fā	hé		fà	dí-pà	guineaworm
		héní	píná	fí! ó	pá	scar, sore
pùplò	fú!fúú	ó-hwè	ì-pà	fàí	pée	hat
pèmplè		ó-hè	ì-pópwê			new
ò-pùrùmí	fùnyëmá	ò-hýrú	ì-pépê			red
ò-lù-puè	ný-!fú	ò-hú	ò-pùlù			navel
	fó	hwè	nyò-pù			breast
-puè	-fú	(-wù)	í-pó			guilt
pile	fíré		-pú			person
pa	fà					call
						take

Table 2. Examples of the sound correspondence Abure (Ono, Volta-Comoe) p = Akan(Tano, Volta-Comoe) f = Chiripon-Larteh-Anum (Guan, Volta-Comoe) h = Nkonya (Guan, Volta-Comoe) p = Ga (Ga-Adangme) f = Adangme (Ga-Adangme) p. Note that brackets in the table indicate that the item enclosed is irregular with respect to the p = f = h = p = f = p correspondence. For the significance of the blanks and the symbols, see the caption to Table 1.