

LINGUISTIC RESEARCHGA AND ADANGME

I am principally engaged in a historical study of the Ga and Adangme languages - historical in the linguistic sense. The work involves structural comparison of the sound systems and grammatical systems of the two languages, with a view to reconstructing features of phonology and grammar of the "proto" language, i.e. the hypothetical "ancestor" language of which Ga and Adangme are the modern representatives. Also involved is a study of the foreign vocabulary present, both African and European, and its contribution to the structure of the languages.

The tone systems of Ga and Adangme are rather different. In Ga, there is essentially just one distinction based on tone - a syllable has high tone or it does not, e.g. *bū* 'think' but *bu* 'cover'. In Adangme, on the other hand, there are three possibilities - high tone, low tone, and what might be called mid tone, so that at least in some dialects it is possible to get a succession of three tone phonemes, each of which is higher than the preceding, e.g. *ē ko lē we* 'he would not have sung'. One of the more interesting problems, of a kind which has not been very much studied, is how such a divergence might have come about.

The relationship between Ga and Adangme will be more successfully studied if it is defined with reference to their position in a larger family. Their relationship to Twi and Ewe will have to be defined. That this can be done seems certain. For instance, there are a number of items in which Akan /h/ corresponds to Ga-Adangme /f/:

<u>Ga</u>	<u>Adangme</u>	<u>Akan</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>fī</i>	<i>fī</i>	<i>hīa</i>	'to need'
<i>afū</i>	<i>afū</i>	<i>ahu-ru</i>	'bubble'
<i>fɔ</i>	<i>fɔ</i>	<i>ho-ro</i>	'to wash'

There are also words in which Akan /f/ corresponds to Ga-Adangme /f/, e.g.

<u>Ga</u>	<u>Adangme</u>	<u>Akan</u>	<u>English</u>
fuu	fuu	fuu	'plenty'

But words beginning with /f/ in Ga and Adangme are only cognate in Ewe with words that also begin with /f/.

The typical Ga or Adangme syllable consists of a consonant plus a vowel, and so most simple words, including all verb stems, begin with a consonant. However, there are quite a number of nouns, and some adjectives, that begin with a vowel. In Akan, initial vowels in nominals can have a grammatical function, namely to indicate number. In a more distantly related group of languages, the so-called Togo Remnant languages, initial vowels are involved in a system of noun-class concords, comparable to the systems found in the Bantu languages. It is likely, then, that the function-less initial vowels in Ga and Adangme are the last vestiges of a complicated noun-class system. The actual correspondences involved remain to be worked out.

A comparative Ga-Adangme-Ewe vocabulary is being set up, uniform with the vocabularies drawn up by Dr. Stewart for Twi and Guang languages. These vocabularies are being included in the Institute's series of Comparative West African vocabularies.

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