Grassfields innovations: birds and other words

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Comparative Niger-Congo Workshop, Villejuif

Topics

- use of **lexical isoglosses** for classification

  (Bayesian likelihood vs. unique distinctives)

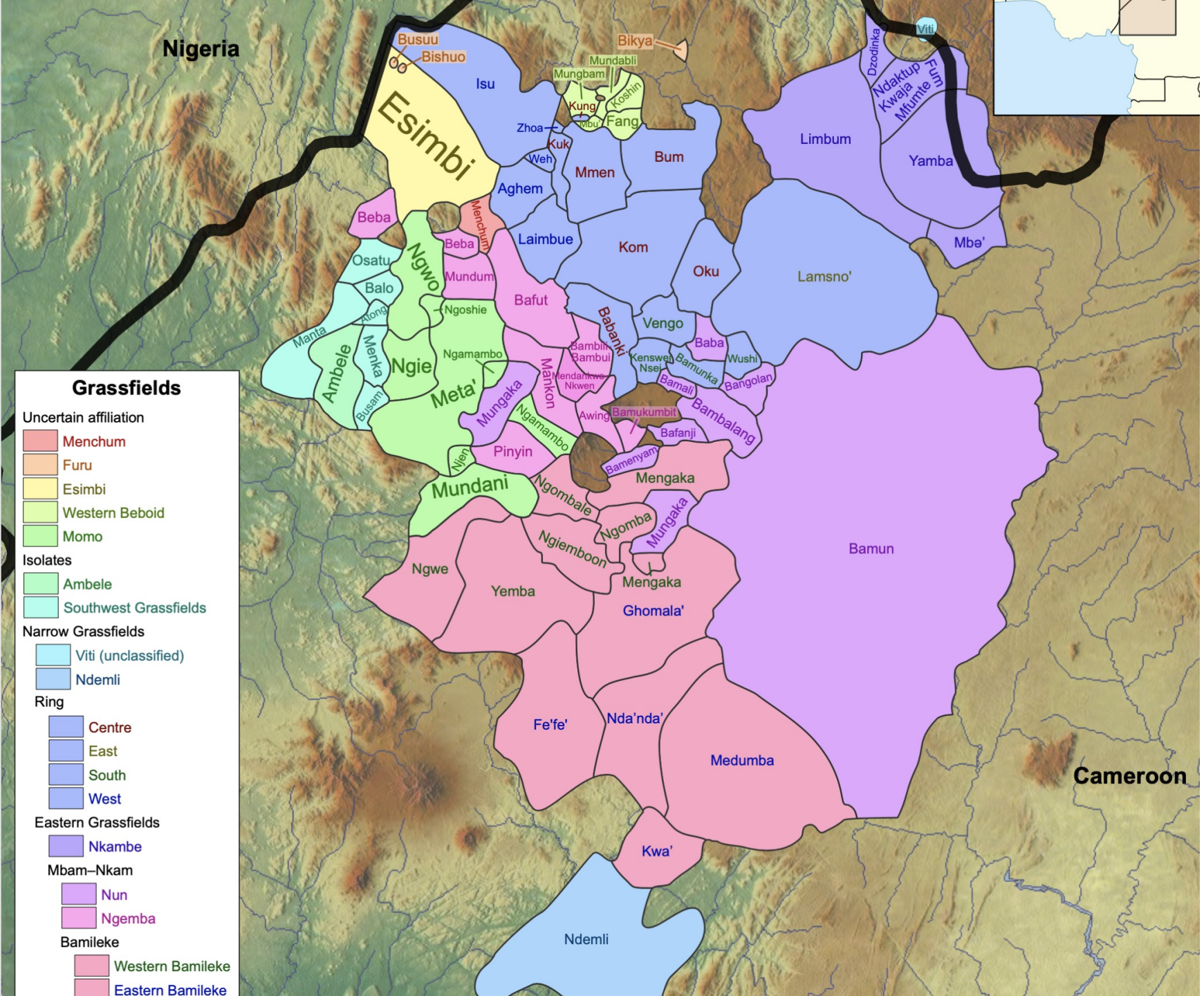
  (importance for reconstructing intermediate stages not just trees)

- distinguishing **types of innovation**:

  (semantic shift inside inherited menu vs. new item on menu)

  (e.g. polysemy shifts vs neologisms)

- **cognacy challenges in short roots**, incorporation of class markers, esp. vowel-initial roots, secondary formations



Grassfields and neighbors

(Wikipedia 2017)

Lexical approaches: "similarity" vs. "innovations"

"The internal unity of GB is clear. Stallcup (1980a:54) claims these languages share a 60 percent **lexical similarity**, while Piron (1995:16) suggests 41 percent." (Watters 2003:227)

"There are at least 7 **lexical innovations**, shared by all Grassfields Bantu subgroups: **-gèkˈ* 'cheek', **-bùmˈ* 'egg', **-fù´* 'leaf, medicine', **-cùl`* 'mouth', **-jók* 'to rub', **-jị̀(eˈ)l* 'sheep', and **-kụà,* 'four'."
(Elias, Leroy and Voorhoeve 1984:32)

NOW >>> 'egg' — four' — 'mouth' — 'eight'

Southern			
*Beboid		na, ne	
*Yemne-Kimbi		ni	
*Ekoid		ni	
*Jarawan		yi-ne?	
*Mamfe		n(w)i	
*Mbam		ni(s)	
Mbe	Mbe	ñî	
Ndemli	Ndemli		itʃìjè
Tikar	Tikar	ɲî	
*Tivoid		ɲi(n)	
*Esimbi		ɲi	
Wide Grassfields	Befang		kᵘà (kʉà)
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Bamileke		kwa/kwo
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Ngemba		kwa/kya
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Nkambe		kwe/kye
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Nun		kwa/kpa
GF: Momo			kwe
GF: Ring			kwi/kye/tsə

‘four’
in ‘Southern Bantoid’

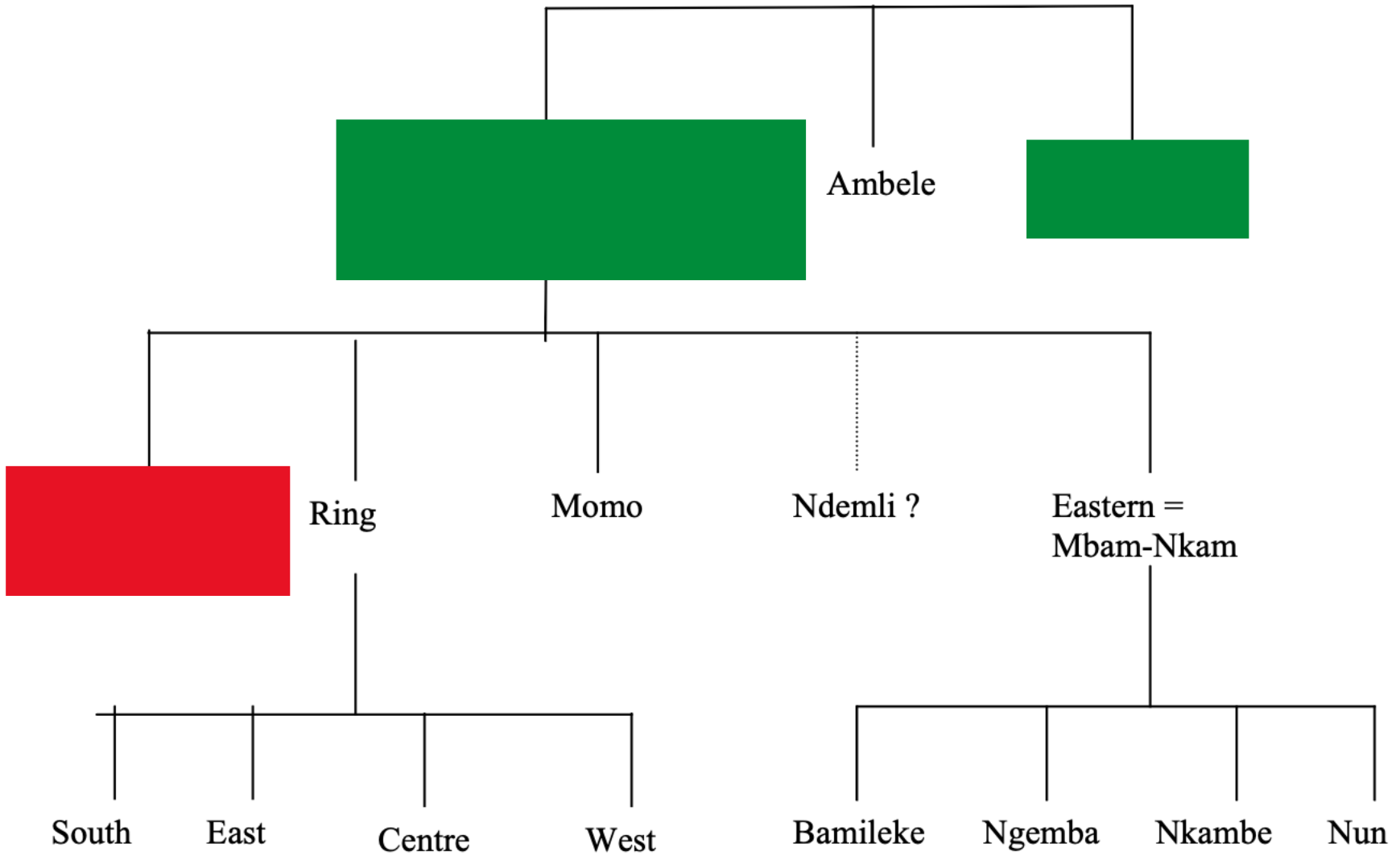
(Pozdniakov 2018: 63)

Southern				
***Bantu**		**nainai(**4 redupl.)/ **nake**		
*Beboid		ɲaŋ (<4?)		
*Yemne-Kimbi		4 redupl.		
*Ekoid		4+4		
*Jarawan				5+3
*Mamfe		4PL		
*Mbam		4 redupl.		
Mbe	Mbe	4 redupl.		
Ndemli	Ndemli		fɔ̀ːmɔ́	
Tikar	Tikar			
*Tivoid		4 redupl.		
*Esimbi		4 redupl.		
Wide Grassfields	Befang		éfómó	
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Bamileke		fum/hum/fo?	
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Ngemba		famə	
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Nkambe		waami	
GF: Mbam-Nkam	Nun		fame	
GF: Momo			fami/foŋ	
GF: Ring			faamə	

‘eight’ in ‘Southern Bantoid’

(Pozdniakov 2018: 59)

Figure 3.Grassfields languages



(Blench 2010:19 based on Watters 2003 but moving down SW Grassfields)

Multiple **Lexical innovations:** Green = Grassfields, so include Menchum but not SW

"The two major questions about the **internal classification** of GB languages concern the number of subdivisions and the criteria for making these divisions. Proposals have varied from two to twelve subdivisions."
(Watters 2003:227)

Lexical phylogeny of **“Southern Bantoid”**

(Hombert & Grollemund 2018 with 96 words from 96 languages)

Stallcup (1980) stated a division of Grassfields based on 9 features including 2 lexical issues:

	Eastern Grassfields (EGr)	*Western Grassfields (WGr)*
1.	innovation of roots for the nouns ‘water’ -*kìə̀* ‘bird’ -*síŋə́*	maintenance of roots for the nouns ‘water’ *-*díbə́* ‘bird’ *-*nɔ̀ní*
2.	maintenance of root for the noun ‘thing’ *-*úmà*	*-*úmà* is lost and has been replaced by other roots

‘water’

the claim:

WGr maintenance **díbə́*
EGr innovation *kìə̀*

the data:

**díbə́* — EGr (Nkambe), Momo, Ring (E,S), Ndemli, Bantu A10-40

kìə — EGr (Bamileke, Nun, Ngemba)

mò ́— Ring (C,W,S), Menchum

the conclusion: ‘’water’ is not a clear isogloss for EGr

‘bird’

the claim:

WGr maintenance **nɔ̀ní*
EGr innovation *síŋə́*

the data:

**nɔ̀ní* — Momo, Ring, Menchum, Ndemli, Bantu A10-40

síŋə́ — EGr (all)

the conclusion: ‘bird’ IS a clear isogloss for EGr

Proto-Bantu ‘bird’ can be reconstructed as *ɔ̀nì with basic classes 9/10

OISEAU

La racine PB *-(j)oní réflète une racine plus ancienne qu'on retrouve en PP *-nwan, PJ *nuŋ et *nin, et en mambila (mbaw) -nūn, en esimbi -nun, en mbe -nén, en kenyang -nɛn, en ékoïde -nɔ́ŋ, en kom -nuɪn et en bantu nord-ouest (duala A24 -nɔn; tunen A44 -nonɨ, nyokon -nun). Toutes les langues mbam-nkam montrent une racine différente -sɨ́ŋ'. Cette racine peut être utilisée pour délimiter le groupe mbam-nkam.

Voorhoeve 1980:73

Niger-Congo cognates

with reflexes of class 9/10 nasals

Gurma (Gur)	nyunyu-ga ‘partridge’
Dagbane (Gur)	nuu-o ‘fowl’
Twi (Kwa)	à-nõmã́ã <*à-non-bá
Igbo (WBC-E.Kwa)	ńnụ̀nụ
Mombo (Dogon)	ìní

with diminutive class prefixes:

Gurenne (Gur)	zònó-a ‘small bird’ — vs. niin-gà ‘bird’
Bariba (Gur)	gun-ó / guno-sú
Nyangba-Tofi (GTM)	ka-žuie /be-žuie

(Mukarovsky 1977)

Diminutives (‘little birdies’) in Bantu

Class 7 (*kɪ-)

Primary

Ndegeleko (P11) **ki-yuni**

Tumbuka (N21) **chi-yuni**

Makonde (P23) **chuni**

Secondary built on cl. 9

Ngoreme (JE401) **eki-ɲoŋi**

Secondary built on diminutive

Class 12 (*ka-)

Nkoya (L62) **ka-yoni**

Lenje (M61) **ka-yuni**

Lega (D25) **kà-zɔ̀nì**

Songola (D24) **kà-nyònḭ̀**

Soli (M62) **ka-keni** < *ka-ka-ʊni

Class 19 (*pi-) common in NW Bantu, adjacent to Grassfields

Nubaca (A621) **fì-nòŋó**

Yasa (A33a) **vi-nyɔní**

Diminutive Cycle

Stage 1: Noun in basic class

Stage 2: Diminutive option

Noun in basic class *and* a primary diminutive (built on root)

(Stage 1 is only real if diminutive classes are restricted,
otherwise Stage 2 is really the beginning)

Stage 3: Class marker incorporation

Noun in basic class *and* a secondary diminutive

(built on incorporation of the basic class marker)

Stage 4: Replacement: (= new stage 1)

The bleached diminutive has become the basic noun form

Western Grassfields

Like most Bantoid languages, WGr no longer has simple cl. 9,

only secondary formations in other classes

with the nasal incorporated (Stage 3)

class 1/2: Njen (Momo) ájūn / bə́jūn

cf. Menkaf (Beboid) ājə́nə́ / bījə́nə́ (1/2)

class 19/13: Ngie (Momo) ùnə̀n´ / ìnə̀n´

cf. Bakundu (Bantu) īnɔ̄ / dōnɔ̄ (19/13)

cf. Koshin (Yembe-Kimbi) kɨ̄juɛ̄ǹ / bɨ̄juɛ̄ǹ (7/8)

in most WGr, ‘bird’ is Class 19 (+ incorporated 9)

Moghamo (Momo)	fɨnə̀n´ / tɨnə̀n´ (19/13)
Weh (W. Ring)	fɨ́nə̄n / tɨ́nə̄n (19/13)
Bamessing (S. Ring)	fə̀nʉ̄ / mə̀nʉ̄ (19/6a)
Oku (C. Ring)	fə̄nɨ́n̄ / mn̄ɨ́n̄ (19/6a)
Babanki (C. Ring)	fə̀ɲín / mə̀ɲín (19/6a)
Aghem (W. Ring)	fə́nwín / ńnwín (19/6a)
Obang (Menchum)	fúnúnə̄ / énúnə̄ (19/6) (pl. also m̀nùnə́ 6a)

and in neighboring groups:

Bebe Jatto (Beboid)	fɨ̄ɲīnī̄ / mūɲīnī̄ (19/18)

with further sound change *fi- > ʃi- in E. Ring

Lamnso’ (E. Ring)	ʃi-nən / mi-nən ‘bird’ (19/6a)
	ʃi-lif / mi-lif ‘heart’ (19/6a)

Eastern Grassfields ‘bird’ – what we expect

Class 19 *pi > fi-, ʃi- in WGr

Class 19 *pi > fi-, hi- in NW Bantu branches closest to E. Grassfields (A40, A60)

fînun (19): Abo (A42), Basaa (A43a), Nyokon (A45)

hìnùŋ (19): Alinga (A441), Nomaande (A46)

fînòŋnó (19): Nubaca (A621)

fìilɨ̀ (19): Rikpa (A53)

ìnòní (19): Tunen (A44), Bonek (A461), Nugunu (A622), Nukalonge (A62a)

So we expect that EGr inherited ‘bird’ class 19 *pi-

BUT Class 19 is lost in much of EGB (except some western and northern)

so words are reassigned to other classes

What we see in EGr: class 1a with tonal irregularity

Bandjoun (Bamileke) sáŋ

Dshang (W. Bamileke) séŋ

Mankon (Ngemba) sɨ́ŋə́ / bɨ̀sɨ́ŋə́ (1a/2)

Ngwe (Ngemba) sə́ŋ / mɛ̀sə́ŋ (1a/6a)

Limbum (Nkambe) sɨ̋ŋ / psɨ̋ŋ (1a/B)

But sometimes the class 1 nominal prefix is added (and incorporated):

Mungaka (Nun) mɨ́ꜝsɨ́ŋ / bɨ́ꜝsɨ́ŋ (1/2)

Bangang (W.Bamileke) méšĩ̀ / mèšĩ́ (1/2)

Pinyin (Ngemba) míˈsɨ́ŋə́ / pèmíˈsɨ́ŋə́ or pèsɨ̀ŋə́ (1/B)

Could we connect EGr to WGr?

Expected

Reassigned from cl. 19 > incorporated	*pi-nuni > *finuni
2-syllable maximal rule > final syll loss	*finuni > *fin(V)
C2 can be adapted	***fin(V) > fiŋ´ ?**
Accretion of new prefixes	

Observed

Prefixless (class 1a) with irregular tones	***síŋ´**

Question: can *f > s ?

Possible paths for **fiŋ´ > *síŋ´**

1) Regular change *fi > si in some EGr varieties ?

PEG *fǴn ‘be black’ (PB *pínd) > Dschang *le-sēŋ*, Bangwa *sásə́*

cf. Lamnso’ (E. Ring) cl. 19 *fi > ʃi-

2) Varying diminutive structure with *fi > s, ʃ before a vowel:

*pi-n-ɔ̀ní (19+9) > WGr *fi-nuni > Aghem *fə́nwín* (19)

*pi-ɔ̀ní (19) > EGr *syuni > Mankon *sɬŋə́* (1a)

This would be parallel to EGr *bi > ts /___ (Elias-Voorhoeve 1980)

For class 19 without cl 9 nasal, cf. Osatu (SWGr) *fi-yiŋɔ*

For diminutive and basic class co-existing, cf. Mbaw (Mambiloid, adjacent to EGr) ‘child’: *šʷɔ́n ~ ŋʷán / bòmʊ́n* (1+/2)

f > s, ʃ variation

*pép ‘blow’ —— Nkambe (EGr) languages

Kwak	fʷə́b
Mfe	fə́b
Limbum	**šwə́b**

*g(w)è ‘leopard’ — Ngemba (EGr) languages

Mankon	à-fùŋə́ / ì-fùŋə́ (7/8) ‘leopard’
Pinyin	ā-**sw**ūnə̄ / pə̄-**sw**ūnə̄ (1?/B)
perhaps	*pi-N-g(w)è — cf. Bamun ŋgʉ̀ə̀ ~ ɣʉ̀n ~ wūn (1 or 5)

P.S. Voorhoeve (1980) on Nyang (another Bantoid language):
“Gender 1/13 is an irregular gender, containing only *sɛ̀-nɛ̀n* / *kɛ̀-nɛ̀n* ‘bird’.”

‘thing’

the claim:

EGr maintains **úmà*

In WGr, **úmà* is lost and has been replaced by other roots

the data from Eastern Grassfields (*kì-úm`/ bì-úm` 7/8)

Bamileke: Fefe *wu̱ / zu̱*, Bangou *žwə́ / žwə́*,

Ngwe *à ˈžúŋ / è ˈbúŋ* or *àzém / èžém* (7/8)

Ngemba: Mankon *àzúmə̀ / ɨdzúmə̀* (7/8)

Nkambe: Dzodinka *wōm / byēm*, Limbum *yú / bú*, Mfumte *və̄ / və́*

Nun: Bamoun *yúm / pàm*

‘thing’ 7/8 — the data from Western Grassfields

with initial F:

West Ring	Aghem	kə́fᵞá (kɨfĭɣá) / ófúa
	Bu	kə́síā
East Ring	Lamnso’	kìfâ / vìfâ
Central Ring	Babanki	kə̀-fɔ́ / ə̀-fɔ́
South Ring	Wushi	kə̀-fúà / bə̀-fúà
Menchum	Obang	á-ʃúə́ / ó-ʃúə́ (7/8)

without F in stem:

South Ring	Vengo	fá / nṵ̂
Momo	Moghamo	áɣɨ̄ / ɨ́ɣɨ̄
	Njen	tsɔ́ŋ / bètsɔ́ŋ
N. Momo	Atong	ʒɔm ‘iron’

the path to Western Grassfields ‘thing’

Beboid	Noni	fī-ɛ̄ɛ̀ / mw-ɛ̄ɛ̀m (19/18)
	Mekaf (Naki)	ʃʸə̀ / ŋʷām
	Misaje	fiè / bìè
Yemne-Kimbi	Koshin	fʲø̄ / bʲø̄

Proto-WGr *pi-ʊ́mà 19 > Pr-Ring *kɪ-piʊ́mà 7 > Wushi kə̀-fʉ́à 7

Both ‘bird’ and ‘thing’ have *preservation* behind their *innovation*.

But sometimes all that’s left of the PGr roots is . . . little more than tone:

‘bird’ PGr *pi-(n)ʊ́ní (19) > PEG *síŋə́

Bamoun *mə́-sí / pə́-sí* (1/4)

‘thing’ PGr *pi-úmà (19) > PWG *fíʊ

Babanki *kə̀-fɔ́ / ə̀-fɔ́* (7/8)

The first step of etymology is recognizing morphemes — but how to recognize **the disappearing root**?

“‘name’ PGr *d́ı-ì-ínà (5) > PEG *lí̧n`

Bamoun	*lí*	cf. Medumba *lɛ́n,* Pinyin *nɨ̀-línə̀* / *mɨ̀-línə̀*
Bambalang	*líˈgí* / *pà-líˈgí*	
Nwa	*lísˇ*	
Bandjoun	*tsoˇ*	cf. Bafoussam *tsə́n*
Bum (Ring)	*īɥə́t*	cf. Kom (Ring) *īɥín´* < *ì-ínà

Conclusions

1) Lexical distinctives can be useful (defining Grassfields), esp. in classifying closely related languages.

2) Cognacy determination can be difficult, esp. with vowel-initial roots in languages that prefix frequently and lose final syllables.

3) Phylogenetically, what is the difference between neologism and some other shift (phonological or semantic)? We need a more refined scale of similarity — and phylogenists are developing it.

4) Between Eastern vs. Western Grassfields: there are few absolutes, mostly scalar differences. In particular, there are no lexical distinctives for WGr.

A l'intérieur des Grassfields le faisceau d'isoglosses de loin le plus important est celui qui sépare le groupe grassfields de l'ouest du groupe mbam-nkam. Ce faisceau est formé des isoglosses suivants :

mbam-nkam	grassfields de l'ouest
1. Présence d'une consonne nasale dans le préfixe des classes 1et 3	Absence de consonne nasale dans ces préfixes.
2. Pas de distinction entre les classes 6 et 6a. Les deux présentent une consonne nasale dans le préfixe nominal et le préfixe d'accord	Distinction entre les classes 6 et 6a. Consonne nasale dans 6a seulement.
3. Présence d'une consonne nasale au préfixe de tous les noms du genre 9/10	Absence de consonne nasale au préfixe de quelques noms (mais pas tous) du genre 9/10 - chien, abeille, serpent et d'autres.
4. Absence des classes 4 et 13 (la classe 19 existe en ngemba seulement)	Les classes 13 et 19 sont très répandues, la classe 4 est attestée dans les sous-groupes ring et widekum.
5. Tous les préfixes nominaux portent un ton bas	Des préfixes nominaux portant un ton haut sont attestés dans tous les sous-groupes.
6. Pas de suffixes nominaux.	Suffixe -tí ou -sí de la classe 10 attesté dans tous les sous-groupes.
7. La classe 6a ou la classe 2 se généralise comme classe pluriel	La classe 13 ou la classe 10 (s'il n'y a pas de 13) se généralise comme classe pluriel.
8. Innovation de racines pour les noms "oiseau" -síŋé et "eau" -kìé	Maintien des racines pour les noms "oiseau" *-nònî et "eau" *-díbé.
9. Maintien de la racine pour le nom "chose" *-úmà	*-úmà s'est perdu et a été remplacé par d'autres racines.

Il n'y a pas d'exception à ce faisceau d'isoglosses. La distinction entre les langues du groupe mbam-nkam et celles du groupe grassfields de l'ouest est claire. L'unité du groupe grassfields de l'ouest

Eastern vs Western isoglosses (Stallcup 1980)

preservations

Grassfields ~~innovations~~:

birds and other ~~words~~

things