connected with the loss of length contrasts in certain environments. One wonders how an ‘a’ is
to be lowered. Could it be ‘o’? One of S’s basic premises is that o lowers to a, but this is
supposedly a Balto-Slavic change. Further checking of the references given here reveals that an
o-stem acc.pl. will pass through the following stages: dârons > dârans > dârâs > dârâs
> dârons > dârans > dârâs > dârâs > dâr. The second dârans in this sequence is derived by an elaborate
analogical process involving definite adjectives. The whole scheme purports to explain some
puzzling instances of case syncretism in Slavic. It would seem that analogy has been at work
here, but hardly in so contrived a manner.

On the whole, S has done an admirable job of marshaling, summarizing, and
criticizing the OP research results of the last thirty years. In his critical comments
and in his own writings, he can perhaps be faulted for excessive speculation, but
Old Prussian is an area that forces speculation. Both books will be indispensable
to Balticists, and very stimulating to any scholar with Indo-European interests.
Old Prussian is one of the few fields where such a detailed critical summary can be
produced in real time. What a boon it would be, both to established scholars and to
neophytes, if every generation could benefit from critical reviews of the substantive
issues in all fields! I congratulate S on hitting upon this method of presentation.
These books are not easy to read, but they are very rewarding and informative; and
the reader will quickly begin to appreciate Schmalstieg’s forthright discussion of the
many controversial questions in Old Prussian.

[Received 12 August 1977.]

Le verbe en gbaya: étude syntaxique et sémantique du syntagme verbal en gbáyá
kara ‘bodôe (République Centrafricaine). By Paulette Roulon. (Bibliothèque
de la SELAF, 51–52.) Paris: Société d’Études Linguistiques et Anthropologiques

Reviewed by William J. Samarin, University of Toronto

We have witnessed in France a recent eruption in field research. Most of it has
been done in former French colonies—much of it, like this one, in Africa; but
South America, the Pacific islands, and even Nepal have been visited by French
investigators. This activity interestingly parallels the era of ‘descriptive linguistics’
in the United States: the effort to write grammars of ‘unwritten languages’ has
been coupled with ethnographic work.

The center for all this activity is the Paris-based Centre National de la Recherche
Scientifique, with its teams of workers, projects, project directors, seminars,
conferences, and research reports. This study by Roulon issues from the activities
of the group labelled ER (presumably Équipe de Recherche) 74, which has been
concerned with central Africa—Chad, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic
(now Empire). Its director from the beginning, as far as I know, has been
Jacqueline Thomas.1 The major publishing outlet for ER 74 is the Société d’Études

1 She is also director of the Laboratoire des Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale (27,
rue Paul Bert, 94200 Ivry, France), which was established in 1976. According to its first research
report, ‘Il a pour objectif l’étude des civilisations de l’oralité par l’approche linguistique et par
l’analyse de la tradition orale. Le principe fondamental garanti de son homogénéité réside dans
la conception de la langue, structure de la société, considérée dans sa fonction essentielle de
communication’ (Rapport d’activité, 1977, p. 8).
Linguistiques et Anthropologiques de France. I know little of its activities, but there is reason to believe that it was founded by Thomas and her team; its first publication appeared in 1967.

ER 74 has developed its own framework for the description of languages, but its essentials are those of André Martinet's neo-Praguean distributionalism. For example, the traits that define grammatical categories include: type of sentence ('énoncé'); position in a given type of sentence; possibilities of substitution, co-existence, and mutual exclusion; possibilities of combinations; and membership in a given type of inventory (33). Thus there are minimal two-term sentences (e.g. 'child + three' = 'There are three children'), three-term expanded sentences, etc.

R applies the methodology without apologies to the description of the verb phrase ('syntagme verbal') in a west-central dialect of Gbay. It is not her purpose to wrestle with any set of problems in general linguistics, or even in African linguistics. After identifying the grammatical categories, she describes verb morphology and verb phrases in separate chapters. She sets up three modes ('réel', 'virtuel', 'impératif'), two aspects ('achevé' and 'inachevé', what I call perfective and imperfective), and several 'formes modales', some appearing in each of the three modes. Of all the possibilities, nineteen exist in Gbay.

This dialect is different enough from the Gbeya language of Bossangoa, described in Samarín 1966, that I must evaluate this description somewhat as an outsider. If R's analysis is correct, the verb system is richer than the one found at Bossangoa. I allow that this may be the case, but I have a feeling that Gbay can be analysed somewhat differently. For example, R describes as 'néo-aspectifs' five verbs of motion, used as marks of verbal aspect when they are followed by another verb (110): e.g. 'He went (and) killed (the dog)' What we have here is something that occurs in Gbeya and in more or less similar form in other west and central African languages. Verb seriation, as it is sometimes called, is in fact a much-studied phenomenon in African linguistics.

Another puzzling part of R's description is the verbal form 'le réel connu', indicating either an action or fact known by all, or a premeditated action—i.e. known by the speaker (87-8). All but one of her examples are translated in the present tense ('Traps catch animals' but 'God created things'). What is curious is that, in Gbeya, most of R's examples would have to be treated as NP's (e.g. 'rope for catching animals'). This might be an instance of a major difference between the two dialects, but this construction is not found at all in the very similar Gbay dialect of Noss 1973. That work suggests that R's analysis is wrong, that she has misconstrued what Noss (p. 72) calls the nominal compound. He would translate R's example as 'the God who acts'. And why is this construction placed in her table among the perfective ('achevé') forms?

I find several other differences between R's analysis and that of Noss, who has spoken the language from childhood and has analysed it after being trained in linguistics. Compare the two descriptions of high tone and low tone imperatives. High tone, says R, 'indique une injonction forte, s'adressant précisément à quelqu'un' (98); according to Noss, it 'carries a meaning of strong emphasis. When very strong emphasis is desired and when the subject is clearly understood, the subject pronoun may be omitted' (39). Low tone, says R, 'indique une injonction qui constate soit une action déjà réalisée, soit une action qui ne peut être contestée (manifestation d'une complicité par exemple) . . . C'est un impératif de concertation' (99); but Noss calls it 'a mild imperative frequently repeated softly when it has not been heard or has been ignored the first time' (39).

Noss correctly sets off the postclitic -i (141), also found in Gbeya. It occurs in R's work with the meaning of insistence in at least one case, but is concealed by her phonological analysis: tone changes on long vowels are always marked, and presumably analysed as unit phonemes. Thus she writes mii '1 + postclitic' as mi (107). This is a clear case of the way that a single methodological or analytical schema can interfere with accurate description. R has adopted
here—as in faithfully marking all the vowels for tone, rather than leaving an unmarked one for either high or low tone—a practice that seems to characterize ER 74’s reports. Note also that there is no motivation for her analysing the same verb stem in different ways: tāi and tāy(ā) ‘place’ (107).

One could cite other questionable analyses or debatable matters raised by R’s description. This is to be expected. What I do not understand is the insularity of this study. It describes an African language with practically no reference at all to other studies of related dialects and languages. It does not even relate itself to the very sophisticated literature in African linguistics that has arisen in the last decade or so. One gets a sad impression of intellectual isolationism.

REFERENCES


[Received 27 June 1977].


Reviewed by F. R. Palmer, University of Reading

To a large extent, the non-Semitic languages of Ethiopia are co-extensive with those that were formerly all called Cushitic, but have more recently been divided into Cushitic and Omotic; several Cushitic languages (in the restricted sense) are spoken in the south and east of Ethiopia (Somali is an obvious example). Other languages in the west are, very tentatively, classed together as Nilo-Saharan. Even today, little is known about most of these languages; hence this book, with contributions from more than twenty different scholars, is very welcome. It has five parts: 1, ‘Background’; 2, ‘Cushitic’; 3, ‘Omotic’; 4, ‘Nilo-Saharan’; and 5, ‘Other topics’.

Most of the chapters in the three central parts are structural sketches of individual languages. Those that are new are extremely useful. The chapter on Beja (Richard A. Hudson), however, has appeared before, with minimal differences; that on Dasenech (Hans-Jürgen Sasse) is an elaboration of an earlier article. There is one oddity among them, the TG-type analysis of Afar (Loren Bliese). It is not simply that the TG framework disguises the typological characteristics that relate the language to others; Bliese’s own presentation is unhelpful. Only the first four PS rules and part of the lexicon are in the familiar TG symbolization. The remaining PS rules (called ‘subcategorization rules’), the T rules, and the P rules are stated in full English sentences with terms such as ‘become’, ‘is found in’, and ‘is derived from’, in place of the symbols. This loses the essential explicitness of the model (which Bender praises in his justification of the chapter, 14), as well as its economy. Not surprisingly, Bliese’s chapter is a very long one; and its length is extended by the decision to take up a whole page with a distinctive-feature matrix of the phonemes. This is wholly uninformative, since anyone could have arrived at a similar