

NJEREP: A POSTCARD FROM THE EDGE*

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Njerep is a language on the edge of extinction. It is no longer spoken on a regular basis, nor is it even known well by any one speaker. There are now, in fact, only five people who remember the language well enough to produce fragments of speech or who remember songs in the language. Our aim in this paper is to document the language to the extent possible. We have collected a wordlist of the language, a number of songs and other bits of text which, fragmentary though they are, permit some insights into the structure of the language, its genetic affiliation and its former importance in the region. Since we view language as a cultural artifact intimately connected to both the culture and the history of its speakers, the paper begins with a brief discussion of Njerep ethnography and history. We then look at evidence for the genetic affiliation of Njerep, and follow this with a description of its structural characteristics. Appendices are included which contain the Njerep wordlist, transcriptions of songs and, finally, genealogical information on the remaining speakers, which gives some insight into the sociological aspect of language contraction.

1. Introduction

Njerep today is not a language of daily use. It is known—or remembered—by a small handful of people in the Mambila village of Somié in Adamawa Province, Cameroon. Of six people who have some scattered knowledge of the language, there is but one elderly man, Mial, who may still be capable of conversing in it to any extent. A seventh elder, who knew the language better than any of the re-

* We wish to express our gratitude to the people of Somié for their exquisite hospitality. We are especially grateful to the late Wajiri Bi, Mial Nicodeme, Bondjie Salamatou, and Wum Margarite for their cooperation and contributions, and to Ciebeh Daniel and Bekimi Jean for their assistance. Work in Cameroon has been undertaken under the auspices of the Ministry of Scientific and Technical Research and with the kind help of Professor V. J. Fanso, Director of the National Archive Service. We have been assisted by the staff of l'Avenir de la Population des Forêts Tropicale, la Société Internationale de Linguistique in Cameroon, and His Excellency Degah Souleymanou, Chief of the Canton of Somié. This work was done with the financial support of ESRC grant R000237450 'Language Death in the Nigeria-Cameroon Borderland' to Connell.

maining speakers, Wajiri Bi, died in late 1998. The survivors, it appears, are not up to the status of “semi-speaker” [Dorian 1973], but are best viewed as “rememberers” [Campbell & Muntzel 1989]. In its terminal stage, the language has been used primarily for greetings, joking, occasionally to share secrets, and its songs sung to recall the past. These functions have apparently died with Bi. While our primary aim in this paper is to present a linguistic description of Njerep, in recognition of the intrinsic connection between language and culture—which becomes all the more apparent when a language is dying—we begin with a brief discussion of the ethnography and history of the Njerep people. We then move on to examine their language: its linguistic affiliations and those aspects of its structure that are determinable from the available linguistic data. This material is presented in its entirety, either in the text of the paper or in the accompanying appendices. In the concluding paragraphs we look briefly at some of the factors that have brought Njerep to the edge of extinction, in an effort to better understand some of the dynamics of language decline and death. The paper is, then, little more than a postcard and gives only a tiny fragment of the language as it was. It is, however, the most complete record of Njerep we are ever likely to have.

2. Ethnography and history

2.1. Fragments of local history. All Mambila on the Tikar Plain came from the Mambila Plateau and the adjoining areas of the Adamawa Plateau. It is within this context that the history of the Njerep, and village of Somié and its surroundings is to be understood. Somié, also known as Ndeba in Ba-Mambila, or Cokmo (sometimes written Tchokmon), is presently located at 6° 28' N, 11° 27' E in the Bankim sub-division of the Province of Adamawa, Cameroon.¹ It lies on the Tikar Plain in the extreme southwest of the Province, near the border with Northwest Province and the Nigerian frontier. The present population is the result of several (at least three, and possibly four) waves of immigration by different groups of Mambila down from the Mambila Plateau onto the Tikar Plain. No clear and detailed picture emerges from the oral history concerning these events, as accounts from different informants are contradictory (see Zeitlyn 1994; Zeitlyn, Mial and Mbe in press).

The four named groups of immigrants are Liap, Ndeba, Njerep and Mvop. It is a matter of controversy whether the Liap or the Ndeba were the first arrivals, though both may have had a hand in pushing the Tikar away from the base of the escarpment and farther into the plain. Little is now known of the Liap other than that they must have come from the area around Chichale mountain near Guessimi, on the Adamawa Plateau. In Somié, some people are still occasionally described as Liap through patrilineal descent. The Liap are said to have hidden from subsequent invaders in caves. Some informants recount a story of Liap performing a dance in a cave which collapsed, trapping or crushing the dancers. Others talk of caves at the River Pongong (near Tor Luo hill) in which Liap pots may be found.

¹ The village has moved three times, most recently in 1964.

Even less is known of the Ndeba, other than that they too came from the Guessimi area, and that they gave their name to the village. They are said to be the people who dug the trenched forts visible in aerial photographs and on the ground at Gumbe and in the forest of Duabang [Zeitlyn 1992]. We could discover no account of any cultural practices to distinguish them from their successors. These early immigrants were conquered or absorbed in their turn by subsequent waves of Mambila invaders.

The second wave of immigrants to the present Somié area (considering both Liap and Ndeba as part of the first) is itself divided into different groups. All accounts agree this wave originated on the Adamawa Plateau, and introduced the Njerep and the Luo. While the linguistic evidence presented below indicates that Njerep and Kasabe (the language of the Luo) were closely related, and these two with a third language, Cambap, elicited accounts differ as to the degree of differentiation between the Njerep and the Luo. The most common version suggests these two groups were one with the Camba (aka Twendi [Connell 1998]), and only differentiated when they left the villages of Sango and Camba (an intermediate stop, already on the Tikar plain) fleeing to the hills at the foot of the Mambila escarpment to escape horsemen. The horsemen in most accounts are Fulbe invaders, though at least one local historian suggests this movement was earlier, and precipitated by the Chamba invasion of a slightly earlier period.² Although descendants of the Njerep and Luo now live on the Tikar plain, they still identify the villages in the mountains which they established, and one local mountain bears the name Tor Luo (*tòr* = ‘hill, mountain’). What is unclear is whether these two differentiated from Camba in the way just described, or at an earlier time, perhaps when leaving the Adamawa Plateau homeland. Perhaps one pointer with some bearing on the question is that the Luo claim to have songs not known to the Njerep. This alone cannot be taken as evidence of a long history of separation, but does point to some cultural differentiation.

Whatever the case, the Njerep and Luo are now separate and appear to have been so since they reached their present locations. Their separate accounts of relations with their neighbours, as discussed below, confirm this, especially since the Njerep (but not Luo) claim to have conquered the Ndeba.

The last wave of Mambila immigrants onto the Tikar Plain were the Mvop who came down the escarpment from Mvor village on the Mambila Plateau, southwest of Dorofi—this site has been documented by Jean Hurault [1979: 22 & Plate VII, 1986: 131 & Plate III]. Oral tradition tells us that a group of children of Tulum, their common ancestor in Mvor, founded the villages of Sonkolong, Somié, and Atta. Much hinges on the reasons for the arrival of the Mvop on the Tikar Plain. In the central part of Somié, it is said to have been a conquest. War started over the giving of dues, such as palm oil and special (“royal”) game, to the Mvop. As is common throughout this area, chieftainship is marked by rights over game such as buffalo: a specified portion of any royal animal killed must be sent to the chief of a

² Mial Nicodeme, citing the published work of Eldridge Mohammadou [1990 & 1991]. There is potential for confusion between the two names ‘Camba’ and ‘Chamba’; both are pronounced the same, [tʃamba], though at present there is no evidence of a connection between the two.

particular group to acknowledge their superior status. In this case, it is claimed, the thigh of a buffalo which had been killed was not sent to the Mvop chief Tulum at Mvor. (We have not yet found an explanation of why the Ndeba should have done this before their conquest by the Mvop.) In Somié, two hamlet headmen name new chiefs and are accorded great respect. One of these is the head of Njerep hamlet, and thus the head of Ndeba. The other is the head of Gumbe hamlet who is of Mvop descent.

According to our informants, Njerep and Ndeba once exchanged buffalo thighs, a mark of reciprocal respect, and it was the breaking of this custom which led to the conquest of Ndeba by Njerep. The breaking of the custom is more a symptom than a cause, but granted the symbolic importance of buffalo in the region, any local ruler who was politically ambitious could use claims to buffalo as part of their political strategy. Hence, a local war could well be triggered by refusal to give a buffalo thigh. Traditions concerning buffalo rights also exemplify local history in the case of the Luo. The Luo, allies of the Mvop, retain buffalo thighs for themselves. They are said to have been granted this right by Tulum, the Mvop ancestor, after Luo healers treated him for spear wounds incurred in a battle with the Tikar. More people today know about the curing than about who Tulum and his followers were fighting—there is considerable uncertainty on this point.

2.2. Summary. Given the uncertainties and complexity of the regional history of the last two centuries, the following seems the best current summary.

The Tikar Plain was inhabited by proto-Tikar speakers.³ It appears that during the 19th century—possibly earlier—speakers of four languages, Cambap, Kasabe, Njerep, and Yeni, left the area around Djéni Mountain (known on current maps of Cameroon as l'Aigue Mboundou). They settled in, or perhaps established, various villages farther west and south, in the foothills and on the Tikar Plain. The most plausible hypothesis is that the Fulani jihad of the 19th century (part of the Sokoto Jihad) was the primary cause of this upheaval, though there is some indication that the movement occurred, or at least began, prior to the jihad, perhaps as a result of the Chamba Leko incursions (as suggested by Mohammadou 1990; Fardon 1988 gives an overview of Chamba history). The Kwanja, too, were pushed southward until some settled on the Tikar Plain where they eventually mixed with the Camba and Yeni. It is again not clear who came first; however, the most probable scenario is that they were all part of a general movement and arrived on the plain at more or less the same time. Meanwhile, the Mambila (Mvop) came down from the Mambila Plateau, and incorporated Ndeba, Njerep, and Liap villages situated at the bottom of the escarpment, but could not expand further into the Plain because of the Tikar who had become bigger and more centralized [Hurault 1988]. Pressure from the Fulbe is cited by local informants to account for these changes. In any event, it appears that the factors that led to these movements also precipitated the decimation of the peoples involved, ultimately resulting in considerable inter-marriage and leaving their viability as linguistic groupings tenuous. Ethnic identity

³The identification of proto-Tikar is itself controversial see Zeitlyn [1996], Mohammadou [1990; 1991], Fowler & Zeitlyn [1996].

has survived somewhat longer, but it too is clearly not as strong as it once was, as the Njerep and Luo now see themselves as Mambila (as do Ndeba and Liap), while the Camba and Yeni now to a large degree see themselves as Kwanja.

3. Linguistic Affiliation

Linguistic data on Njerep comes primarily from two village elders, Wajiri Bi (Bi was the Njerep headman; *wajiri* is a Fulfulde term for ‘headman’) and Mial. Materials gathered include a wordlist, a number of songs or snatches of songs, and sentence fragments. Other songs were also recorded by Bondjie, the Njerep *marenjo*⁴, and Wum, a senior woman in Somié.

3.1. Background. The languages in the general area where Njerep is spoken belong to the Mambiloid group [Blench 1993; Connell 2000]. Mambila is the largest language in this group, with approximately 90,000 speakers, and is also the most internally diverse. It comprises two major dialect clusters (East and West Mambila), each containing a number of dialects. Within each cluster mutual intelligibility exists between some lects, but by no means all. Among the other languages in Mambiloid are Kwanja, Vute, Wawa, Somyev, Tep, Mvanip, and Mbongno. The Grassfields Bantu languages are spoken to the south of Mambiloid, with one of these, Yamba, in relatively recent times having expanded so that its speakers are now also found throughout much of the Mambiloid area. Both Mambiloid and Grassfields are generally accepted as being Bantoid. Fulfulde is widely used in the Mambiloid area as a lingua franca.

3.2. The Affiliation of Njerep. On the basis of the available data, Njerep appears to have been part of a cluster which included Cambap (the language of the Camba, still spoken by approximately 30 people), Kasabe, and Yeni (or Djeni). Both Kasabe and Yeni are now extinct, although we did manage to record a wordlist with Bogon, the last speaker of Kasabe, some several months before his death. Of Yeni, only a song survives to attest its former existence [Connell 1998]. The evidence presented below makes it clear that these languages were closely related to each other and to Mambila generally. They can best be considered part of, or closest to, the East Mambila cluster, but whether they constituted a cluster themselves within that grouping is indeterminant. A fourth language, Langa, which has a few hundred speakers, may also be a part of this grouping. Langa is considered part of East Mambila, more closely akin to Mambila lects located in the eastern region of the Mambila Plateau in Nigeria, such as those spoken at Kara, Titong and Kabri, than it is to Njerep and Cambap. Langa is spoken on the Adamawa Plateau near Djeni Mountain and more or less adjacent to the area in Nigeria where most of the East Mambila lects are located.

⁴ *Marenjo*, or *mayramjo*, is a Fulfulde term roughly translatable by ‘princess’. In this context the *marenjo* is the female counterpart of the headmen—*wajiri*—mentioned above, who name new chiefs.

Table 1 Evidence for the linguistic affiliation of Njerep.

	head	eye	tongue	face
Njerep	<i>fǎli</i>	<i>ŋgíē</i>	<i>líbā</i>	<i>ŋgíē</i>
Kasabe	<i>fǎli</i>	<i>ŋgíi</i>	<i>nīmá</i>	—
Cambap	<i>ŋgē</i>	<i>ŋgērīn</i>	<i>nēmān</i>	<i>mbòm sī-ì</i>
Langa	<i>ŋgēi</i>	<i>ŋgērē</i>	<i>nēmān</i>	<i>mbòm</i>
Gelep	<i>wī:n</i>	<i>ndzǎré</i>	<i>nēmān</i>	<i>mbòm</i>
Karbap	<i>hōn</i>	<i>ndzērē</i>	<i>nēmān</i>	<i>ŋjīmēnī</i>
Ba	<i>fǎ</i>	<i>ndzǎlō</i>	<i>lébā</i>	<i>ndzǎlō</i>
Sundani	<i>ŋgu</i>	<i>ŋērì</i>	<i>nēm</i>	<i>mó:dù</i>
Ndung	<i>ŋgá</i>	<i>ŋīn</i>	<i>némnè</i>	<i>gbèmśi</i>

	person	food	salt	yam
Njerep	<i>nòrò</i>	<i>já</i>	—	—
Kasabe	<i>nòr</i>	<i>já</i>	<i>tómō</i>	—
Cambap	<i>nòr</i>	<i>járáp</i>	<i>tómó</i>	<i>tùà</i>
Langa	<i>nòr</i>	<i>járáp</i>	<i>tómó</i>	<i>tùà</i>
Gelep	<i>nòr</i>	<i>jārāp</i>	<i>tómó</i>	<i>tùà</i>
Karbap	<i>nòr</i>	<i>dzī jā ŋgí</i>	<i>tó:m</i>	<i>tùà</i>
Ba	<i>nwàr</i>	<i>jāp</i>	<i>túóm</i>	<i>tùè</i>
Sundani	<i>wìrà</i>	<i>jénbù</i>	<i>ndómù</i>	<i>mò:bù</i>
Ndung	<i>wòàr</i>	<i>jēn</i>	<i>ndôm</i>	<i>mœ̃</i>

elbow	skin	navel	back	blood
<i>tʃàkūdū</i>	<i>pàndā</i>	<i>kímbī</i>	<i>ŋgódzɛk</i>	<i>hwómí</i>
<i>wúlú mbáuyâ</i>	<i>pàndā</i>	<i>kíbí</i>	<i>kàmè</i>	<i>wómó</i>
<i>ŋgɔ̄nɔ̄ bē-ì</i>	<i>fàndā</i>	<i>kúmbōn</i>	<i>kàma</i>	<i>wámá</i>
<i>kēndū</i>	<i>fàndā</i>	<i>kímbōn</i>	<i>hàmù</i>	<i>wámì</i>
<i>kēndū</i>		<i>kōmbón</i>	<i>kàmù</i>	<i>wám</i>
<i>kēdē</i>	<i>fādā</i>	<i>kēbṓ</i>	<i>ŋgādīgā</i>	<i>wámí</i>
<i>tʃàkōr</i>	<i>par</i>	<i>kíbĩ</i>	<i>ŋgògò</i>	<i>hwóm</i>
<i>ŋgònɔ̄</i>	<i>pàndá</i>	<i>tʃímì</i>	<i>dzòmđínè</i>	<i>fámè</i>
<i>ŋgū`n bī</i>	<i>pà`n jīr</i>	<i>tʃim</i>	<i>kòuyɔ̄</i>	<i>kfēm</i>
calabash	dog	crab	bird	fowl
<i>gbá</i>	<i>būndū</i>	—	<i>gálè</i>	<i>tʃōrō</i>
<i>gbá</i>	<i>būndū</i>	<i>kámbá</i>	<i>nēnū</i>	<i>tʃōndō</i>
<i>gbá</i>	<i>būndū</i>	<i>kámbá</i>	<i>nūnū</i>	<i>tʃōndō</i>
<i>ʃɪɪ</i>	<i>búndú</i>	<i>hámbā</i>	<i>nūnū</i>	<i>tʃōndō</i>
<i>gbá</i>	<i>būndū</i>	<i>kāmbān</i>	<i>nūnū</i>	<i>tʃōndō</i>
<i>gwá</i>	<i>bōdí</i>	<i>kābán</i>	<i>nūnūŋ</i>	<i>tʃōdō</i>
<i>ŋgàp</i>	<i>bōr</i>	<i>kāp</i>	<i>nōn</i>	<i>tʃūār</i>
<i>ndīkpéŋđi</i>	<i>dzì</i>	<i>kámbā</i>	<i>nònɔ̄</i>	<i>tʃúndè</i>
<i>sɔ̄`ɣ</i>	<i>dzì</i>	<i>ká`m</i>	<i>nū`n</i>	<i>tʃĩ`n</i>

Njerep, Kasabe, and Cambap resemble East Mambila more closely than they do their immediate Mambila neighbour. The local variety of Mambila, part of the West Mambila cluster, is known generally as Ba. It is sometimes referred to as Mvop since, as discussed above, the Mvop are now dominant in the area. However, since Ba is the more widely used term, we use it here as the linguistic designation for the language of the Mvop.

Table 1 (preceding page) presents data representative of phonological and lexical correspondences. Data is included from Njerep, Cambap, Kasabe, and Langa, as well as from Ba, two other Mambila lects, Gelep (Titong) and Karbap (Kara), and two neighbouring Kwanja lects, Sundani and Ndung. In examining the comparative series, it should be recalled that both Njerep and Kasabe were presumably subject to influence from Mvop (and Ndeba), as that is the language now spoken by the Njerep and Luo, and that the Camba all speak primarily a variety of Kwanja; that language has had some influence on Cambap [Connell 1999].

It is apparent from the data in Table 1, first, that the two Kwanja lects, Sundani and Ndung, are distinct from the others; developments reflected, for example, in the initial consonants of 'navel', 'person', 'blood', and 'salt' establish this. Among the other languages (the Mambila set), there are a number of developments evident, though those seen for Ba are most striking. The vocalic developments reflected in 'person', 'salt', and 'fowl', and the change in morpheme structure, CVCV(C) > CVC (e.g., 'skin', 'dog', 'crab', and 'fowl'), in particular, set Ba apart. Njerep, on the other hand, shares characteristics with the remainder, viz. Kasabe, Cambap, Langa, Gelep, and Karbap. The languages which are geographically closest to Njerep (with the exception of Kasabe), Ba, Sundani, and Ndung, then, are not those which are its closest linguistic neighbours.

Not all the comparative series in Table 1 form complete cognate sets. Some show evidence of borrowings. The apparent ng – f correspondence seen for 'head' between Njerep and Kasabe, on one hand, and Cambap and Langa, on the other, is indicative of an influence from Ba on Njerep and Kasabe; the true situation is more likely reflected in 'eye', as there are other items which could be cited showing the same correspondence. Similarly, comparing 'eye' and 'face', we are inclined to conclude that the semantic extension of 'eye' to 'face' in Njerep is an influence of Ba. And, the form found for 'navel' in Kasabe can reasonably be assumed to be a borrowing from Ba, as can the form for 'tongue' in Njerep.

Others of the comparative series are indicative of lexical innovation. On the basis of this evidence, the two Kwanja lects are again established as separate (cf. 'elbow', 'yam', 'calabash', and 'dog'). Among forms for 'eye', those in Njerep, Kasabe, Cambap, and Langa constitute one set of cognates, while those in Gelep, Karbap, and Ba, form another. Both 'face' and 'back' group Camba, Langa, and Gelep; on the evidence of 'back' Kasabe is also included with this grouping. 'Calabash' groups all of these with the exception of Langa.

In short, the combined evidence of phonological developments and lexical innovation clearly demonstrates the greater proximity of Njerep to Kasabe and Cambap, and these three to Langa, Gelep, and Karbap, all East Mambila lects. It will be noted, though, that many of their shared similarities are apparent retentions; it is Ba that has, in many respects, innovated compared to the other Mambila lects.

It is therefore difficult to propose a subgrouping among the East Mambila lects on the basis of shared innovations. However, regardless of what subgrouping may be established, Njerep is obviously part of the Mambila cluster, and within this cluster is closer, linguistically, to those languages which are geographically more distant.

4. Structural characteristics of Njerep

4.1. Phonology. In presenting the phonetic and phonological (and other) characteristics of Njerep it will be borne in mind that all of our speakers have been thoroughly absorbed by Ba Mambila: Ba is their primary language and has been for quite some time. What we discuss, therefore, is Njerep in its terminal stage; we are not in a position to say a given characteristic represents Njerep as it was when it was a primary language; we do, however, include information pertaining to the possible influence of Ba. It should also be noted that a certain amount of variation—‘inconsistency’—in pronunciation was observed, both across and within speakers. This is not unexpected in a language in its terminal stage, and indeed has been considered part of the contraction process [Dressler 1988; cf. Connell 1999]. Given these reservations, and the implicit possibility that there is no “fixed” phonemic system as is generally conceived, what we understand to be the phonemic inventory of Njerep as spoken by these two elders is presented in the tables below.

4.2. Consonants. Table 2 presents the consonant inventory of Njerep as determined by their occurrence in stem-initial position. A list of words exemplifying these consonants in initial position is given in (1). Noteworthy variation or other characteristics are included in the wordlist in Appendix 1.

4.2.1 A note on labialization. Other than the labialized velar nasals shown, there are a few consonants which may conceivably be considered labialized, such as /v/ in *vwàn* ‘two’, above, or /t/ in *tūā* ‘speak’. These are few in our data, and although the consonant itself is indeed labialized in these cases, the alternative analyses, that they represent an underlying vowel sequence (only /ua/ and /uo/ occur in our data) or a sequence of semi-vowel—vowel are more plausible. In sup-

Table 2. Consonant inventory of Njerep.

	bilabial		labio-dental		alveolar		post-alveolar		velar		labial-velar	
nasal	m				n		ɲj		ŋ			
prenasal	mb				nd		ndʒ		ŋg		ɲmgb	
plosive	p	b			t	d			k	g	kp	gb
fricative			f	v	s							
affricate							tʃ	dʒ				
approx.					l		j				w	

(1) Njerep consonants in initial position.

<i>mā</i>	‘build, construct’	<i>tʃádá</i>	‘monkey’
<i>mbání</i>	‘breast’	<i>dʒará</i>	‘firewood’
<i>pàndā</i>	‘skin’	<i>já</i>	‘eat’
<i>bǎ</i>	‘elder brother, sister’	<i>ɲàdà</i>	‘give birth’
<i>vwàn</i>	‘two’	<i>ɲǎ</i>	‘buy’
<i>fā</i>	‘village’	<i>kàmè</i>	‘chest’
<i>nágá</i>	‘lick’	<i>gāā</i>	‘tadpole’
<i>ndágá</i>	‘bed’	<i>ɲʷóbó</i>	‘steal’
<i>tàbà</i>	‘earth, soil’	<i>ɲɲʷɛní</i>	‘frog’
<i>dǎ</i>	‘sing’	<i>kpólók</i>	‘tortoise (Ba)’
<i>sámhá</i>	‘gourd rattle’	<i>ɲmgbà</i>	‘chief’
<i>làné</i>	‘invite’	<i>gbá</i>	‘calabash’
<i>ɲàmā</i>	‘animal’	<i>wù</i>	2S ⁵
<i>ndʒēlē</i>	‘nail, claw’		

port of the latter we note also that the only other permissible vowel sequences are /ie/ and /ia/.

4.2.2. Intervocalic consonants. Most consonants occurring initially may also occur intervocalically in C2 position. Exceptions are the doubly articulated labial-velars and the prenasalized palatals. Only one consonant occurs intervocalically that does not also occur initially, that is [r]. While it is tempting to analyze this consonant as an allophone of /d/, there are a few words, e.g., *tʃádá* ‘monkey’ which seem consistently to be pronounced with [d]. Seeing it as a variant of /l/ is also a possibility, as there are some words where this variation occurred, e.g., *tálí ~ tárí* ‘stone’. Alternation between [l] and [n] has also been noted; however, in the large majority of words where /l/ occurs intervocalically, there is no variation.

4.2.3. Final consonants. The great majority of words in Njerep are vowel final. Among those few that do end with a consonant, the repertoire of consonants available is restricted to /m, n, ɲ, p, r, k/. The trilled [r] may be seen as a positional variant of any or all of /t, d, l/.

⁵ The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

assoc	associative	imp	imperative	1S	first person singular
asp	aspect	io	indirect object	2S	second person singular
C	consonant	loc	locative	3S	third person singular
cop	copula	neg	negative	1P	first person plural
dem	demonstrative	pl	plural	2P	second person plural
do	direct object	poss	possessive	3P	third person plural
fut	future	t/a	tense/aspect		

4.3. Vowels. Njerep appears to have had a seven vowel system /i, e, a, ə, u, o, ɔ/. Examples of the occurrence of these are given in (2).

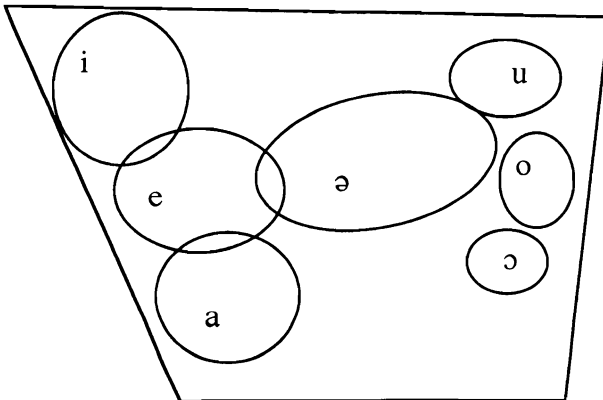
(2) Njerep vowels

<i>bīnī</i>	‘dance, song’	<i>búndú</i>	‘dog’
<i>bén</i>	1P	<i>mbòtò</i>	‘wine, beer’
<i>bá</i>	2P	<i>bón</i>	3P
<i>mbání</i>	‘breast’		

Among the speakers we worked with, there were a number of variations. First, in at least a few words, either [i] or [e] is realized; in all cases we consider these to be instances of /i/, as in [mí] ~ [mé] ‘house’. In closed syllables, /i/ is centralized and lowered. Second, /e/ may be realized as [e] or [ɛ] in open syllables, while in closed syllables, [ɛ] occurs. Third, there may be some variation between /e/ and /a/. We observed this only across speakers, whereas other instances of variation occurred both across and within speakers. Four, /ə/ is realized within a range from high back unrounded [ɯ] to mid central [ə]. Our data is insufficient to determine any conditioning factors, other than that when following velars, [ɯ] is the usual realization. [ə] is also seen to alternate with [ɛ] in grammatical words, e.g., *né* ~ *nə*, T/A marker, *mè* ~ *mə*, 1S. Finally, /u/ in closed syllables is somewhat lowered and centralized. In other cases, vowels in individual words are variable, perhaps as result of influence or borrowing from other languages known to our speakers. ‘Fire’ for example was given with three different pronunciations: *wú*, *wúɔ*, and *wā*. Figure 1 presents a vowel chart illustrating the variation as areas of overlap.

Figure 1. Vowel chart of Njerep.

(NB: the chart is based on impressionistic, rather than instrumental observation.)



4.4. Tones. Njerep has three level tones, High, Mid, and Low. The three tone system is a feature shared with other East Mambila lects, including Cambap, while western dialects such as Ba have four tones. The level tones combined to give a number of contours. Minimal or near-minimal pairs are given in (3).

(3) Njerep tonal contrasts.

<i>gbá</i>	‘calabash’	<i>ŋgà</i>	‘crocodile’
<i>gbā</i>	‘bad’	<i>ŋgǎ</i>	‘buy’
<i>ŋgbàŋ</i>	‘cave’	<i>gāā</i>	‘tadpole’
<i>ŋgbà</i>	‘chief’	<i>jíli</i>	‘fufu’
<i>tfá</i>	‘day’	<i>jílá</i>	‘name’
<i>tfà</i>	‘hunger’		

Table 3. Examples of Njerep tones compared to tones of cognate words in Ba. [Tone markings for Njerep are: H = ´, M = ¯, L = `; for Ba, tones are numbered 1 to 4, high to low.]

Tone	Njerep	Ba	Gloss
High	<i>hwómé</i>	<i>hwom</i> ¹	‘blood’
	<i>tú</i>	<i>to</i> ²¹	‘tree’
Mid	<i>tfōdō</i>	<i>tfuar</i> ²	‘fowl’
	<i>būndū</i>	<i>bor</i> ²	‘dog’
Low	<i>jùnù</i>	<i>sòr</i> ⁴	‘mouth’
	<i>mènà</i>	<i>məna</i> ⁴	‘neck’
High-Mid	<i>hóbō</i>	<i>hobo</i> ²¹	‘forest’
	<i>ŋgírī</i>	<i>ŋgərə</i> ²	‘tail’
	<i>tfádā</i>	<i>tfar</i> ²	‘monkey’
	<i>jálē</i>	<i>ja</i> ²	‘bush’
High–Low	<i>ŋgábò</i>	<i>ŋgap</i> ²⁴	‘antelope’
Mid-High	<i>jílá</i>	<i>jili</i> ²¹	‘name’
Low–High	<i>njàmó</i>	<i>njam</i> ³	‘animal’
	<i>ŋgwèní</i>	<i>ŋgwə</i> ³	‘frog’
	<i>nòr lòbó</i>	<i>nuar</i> ⁴ <i>lɔp</i> ³	‘witch’

4.4.1. Tone melodies. Lexical items in Njerep can be classified according to tone melody, though not all possible combinations of the three tones are found. Interestingly, nouns have a preponderance of Hs, while verbs are skewed towards Ls. The complete absence of LM sequences may suggest M to be in fact a downstepped H. However, as other phenomena associated with downstep, such as terracing, seem not to be present, an analysis of M is preferred. Beyond this, we can only speculate that lexical tone melody interacted with grammatical tones in the verb phrase, as this is the case in other Mambila lects, including both Cambap and Ba.

(4) Basic tone melodies

Nouns:

Melody	H	M	L	HM	HL	MH	ML	LH	LM
Monosyllabic	10	6	8	5	0	0	0	3	0
Disyllabic	23	8	17	22	6	3	0	17	0

Verbs:

Melody	H	M	L	HM	HL	MH	ML	LH	LM
Monosyllabic	7	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	0
Disyllabic	4	6	12	7	5	0	0	6	0

With one exception (see below), singular pronouns all bear Low tone, plural pronouns take High. This follows the pattern found in Ba, but not in Cambap, so it may be reasonable to assume that tones of pronouns in Njerep have come under the influence of Ba.

4.4.2. Complex tone patterns. A number of words in our data occur with more complex tone melodies. Almost all of these involve a contour on the final syllable of the word, and all but two of these involve a contour falling to L. For nouns, the final L can in most cases be analyzed as a tonal morpheme indicative of a possessive or genitive relationship (see below).

Similarly, a number of disyllabic verbs also have more complex melodies, with a HL contour on the second of the two syllables. The final L in these cases also may well be a floating tonal morpheme, though its function is not clear. In both Ba and Cambap, a suffixed floating L marks nominalized or (infinitive) verb forms.

5. Morphology

The great majority of words in Njerep are disyllabic, CVCV. Among nouns there is a propensity to this structure, while verbs are evenly divided between CVCV and CV forms. Words of a CVC structure are rather few in number. Three main word classes appear in our data: nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

5.1. Nouns. Njerep nouns do not bear any particular morphological marking. In other Mambiloid languages one finds vestigial evidence of a former noun class system relatable to Bantu. However, in Njerep, except for the possibility that stem initial prenasalized consonants reflect a former class prefix, as well as certain other C1 reflexes, this vestigial evidence has disappeared.

5.1.1. Pluralization. Three different means of pluralization are recorded in our data, all of which find their parallels in other Mambiloid languages. These are shown in (5–7).

(5) *nòr bə̀*
person PL

(6) *gálè-m*
bird-PL

(7) *bò-ŋwúnā*
PL-child

The first of these, assuming Njerep matched a pattern found throughout the region, was a generalized means of marking plural. In some West Mambila and most East Mambila languages, as well as many other Mambiloid languages, a second system of pluralization exists which involves a number of suffixes [Connell 2000]; the plural marker in (6) seems related to this system. The plural marker in (5) is cognate with that in (7); the preposing is through the influence of Ba, which regularly marks plurals in this manner. In cases where other quantifiers were used (e.g., numerals, ‘many’) the plural marker was omitted.

5.1.2. Personal pronouns. With the exception of the third person singular, there was only one paradigm of personal pronouns. These are listed in (8). Comparative evidence across Mambiloid suggests strongly that à, as a 3S subject pronoun, is borrowed from Ba.

(8) Personal pronouns

<i>mə̀ ~ mɛ̀</i>	‘I; me; my’
<i>wù</i>	‘you; your’
<i>à; mɔ̀</i>	‘he, she, it; him, her; his, her, its’
<i>bɛ̀n</i>	‘we, us, our’
<i>bí ~ bɔ̀</i>	‘you, your’ (<i>bí</i> from Ba)
<i>bɔ̀n</i>	‘they; them; their’

5.1.3. Adjectives. Seven adjectives are recorded in our data: *dʒírí* ‘black’; *tʃàrè* ‘small’; *dòlò* ‘large/wide’; *dəm̀ə̀* ‘big’; *lō* ‘good’; *gbā* ‘bad’; *sùnú* ‘single’.

5.1.4. Verbs. Like nouns, verbs in Njerep were not marked morphologically in their base form. The only information we have concerning modification to base forms involves suffixation or tonal changes, as discussed below.

5.2. Associatives. Associative constructions assumed an order of X + Y + \hat{V} : dependent + head, plus a suffix marking the grammatical relation. The suffix took different forms; either a vowel bearing a low tone (9, 10, 13) or simply the tone itself (11, 12). The latter is the marking used in Ba and may be seen as having been influenced by Ba. While the suffix vowel is in apparent partial harmony with the stem vowel, it is interesting to note that it is cases where the stem contains a back vowel that the suffix vowel is lost.

- (9) *nòr jíb-ì* 'thief'
man steal-ASSOC
- (10) *bàlé bē-ì* 'hand (palm)'
inside hand-ASSOC
- (11) *dʒú wā-`* 'smoke'
smoke fire-ASSOC
- (12) *gē tfōdō-`* 'egg'
egg hen-ASSOC

The influence of Ba in associative constructions is also seen in lexical borrowing. In (13), the Njerep form for 'calabash', *gbá*, is replaced with the Ba form, *ngàb*, but the Njerep associative marker is retained.

- (13) *tú ngàb-è* 'calabash tree' (lit tree of calabash)
tree calabash-ASSOC

5.3. Negation. Negation was indicated by suffixation; our sole example shows that the -V suffix replaced the final vowel of the CVCV stem and harmonized with the stem vowel: *gònè* 'like, want, accept' vs *gònò*.

- (14) *mà twá mǎ twá nòrè gòn-ò*
1S speak 1S speak person like-NEG
'I speak, I speak, people don't like/want it.'

6. Syntax

6.1. Word order. Like other Mambiloid languages, Njerep featured a basic word order of Subject–Verb–Object, demonstrated in (15–18) as well as other examples.

- (15) *bə tólē mé*
2P enter house
'You enter the house.'
- (16) *bə dà bá bīnī*
2P sing ASP song
'You sing a song.'
- (17) *mə kəmā mbīlī*
1S climb oil-palm tree
'I climb the oil-palm.'
- (18) *tā ṅàdá mə*
father bear 1S
'Father gave birth to me.'

6.2. Noun phrase. Modifying elements in the noun phrase—numeral quantifiers, possessives, and attributives—typically followed the noun.

- (19) *tònè vwàn*
elephant two
'two elephants'
- (20) *gbilé mə*
wife 1S.POSS
'my wife'
- (21) *nòr gbā*
person bad
'a bad person'
- (22) *gbá dəmə*
calabash big
'a big calabash'

6.3. Verb phrase

6.3.1. Imperatives. The basic verb form appears to have occurred in imperative forms. There is no change in tone between indicative and imperative forms; given that other Mambiloid languages do mark imperatives tonally, we speculate that its absence in Njerep may be a recent development.

- (23) *tólē* *ηmgbàŋ*
 enter (IMP) cave
 'Enter the cave!'
- (24) *lànέ* *nòr* *bə̀*
 invite (IMP) person PL
 'Invite people!'
- (25) *ηά* *mō* *kúlū*
 give (IMP) 3S stool
 'Give him the stool!'
- (26) *d3é* *bā̃* *fā*
 go ASP village
 'Go to the village!'

6.3.2. Order of Objects. Our data permit us only to say that direct objects preceded indirect objects.

- (27) *ηά* *mò* *gbá* *dəmè*
 give 3S.DO calabash.IO big
 'Give him a big calabash.'
- (28) *ηά* *mə̀* *gbá* *dəmè*
 give 1S.DO calabash.IO big
 'Give me a big calabash.'

6.3.3. Predicate attributives

- (29) *nòr* *ηgũ* *súnú*
 person COP alone
 'A single person.'
- (30) *nyàmé* *né* *kúkú*
 animal COP many
 'The animals are many.' (N.B.the absence of the plural marker in this case.)
- (31) *à* *nέ* *l5*
 3S COP good
 'It is good.'

6.3.4. Tense – aspect marking. On the limited data available, it is difficult to offer a clear statement as to tense and aspect marking. As examples (32)–(37) show, at least one form of both past and present were unmarked. A number of grammatical particles existed, though, which appear to function either as copula or aspect markers (exx. 29–31, 38), and either alone or in connection with the future marker. No doubt others, for which we have no evidence, also existed.

6.3.4.1 Past. Past tense could be indicated unmarked, as in (32). The verb *gíli* ‘finish’ was used to form what may be considered a perfective, as in (33).

(32) *mə ɲǎ gbá nìmè*
 1S buy calabash water
 ‘I bought the calabash (of) water.’

(33) *nòr kú gíli*
 person die finish
 ‘The person is dead.’

6.3.4.2 Present. Present tense could be indicated by an unmarked form (34–39).

(34) *mə tólē ɲmgbàŋ*
 1S enter cave
 ‘I enter the cave.’

(35) *mə kəmá mbíli*
 1S climb oil-palm tree
 ‘I climb the oil-palm.’

(36) *à twá lélē*
 3S speak lie
 ‘He/she/it tells a lie’.

(37) *mə tfá nō ɲɲɲi*
 1S sleep LOC here
 ‘I sleep here.’

(38) *mə mwá mbòtò mə mbàmò ɲènè*
 1S drink beer 1S urinate DEM
 ‘I drink beer, I urinate.’

(39) *bə mwā mbòtò bə sālé táp*
 2P drink beer 2P announce war
 ‘You drink beer, you announce war’.

6.3.4.3. Grammatical particles. Three grammatical particles are in evidence in the Njerep data. Two of these, *né* and *ɲgǔ*, exemplified in (29–31), above, functioned as copulas and appear to have indicated a present state. The difference between them is not known. The third particle, *bǎ*, also seems to have functioned as a copula (40), but was also apparently used to indicate a change of state (41–42). In Ba, a similar particle has this function [Perrin n.d.], and this analysis fits the Njerep data. For Ba, Perrin describes it as a copula but often labels it as an aspect marker. Similarly, *né* also appears to have had an aspectual function, as shown below in (47).

(40) *tfùà bá m̀è f̄jā*
 hunger COP 1S seize
 ‘I am hungry.’

(41) *b̄s dà bá b̄nī*
 2P sing ASP song
 ‘You (begin to) sing a song.’

(42) *m̀è d̄zè b̄ā m̀è d̄zè b̄ā mb̄à mb̄ām̀ò*
 1S go ASP 1S go ASP urinate urine
 ‘I go, I go to urinate.’

(In this sentence, repeating the initial part of the utterance was said to indicate seeking permission.)

6.3.4.4. Future. The future was regularly marked with *d̄zè*, a form of the verb ‘go/come’, preceding the main verb, as in (43). ‘Go’ and ‘come’ were differentiated only by tone, the former having a high tone and the latter a low tone. In Ba, a similar tonal distinction is used more generally, with the addition of a low tone to any verb of motion rendering the meaning ‘motion towards the speaker’. It is not known whether the tonal distinction in Njerep is due to a Ba influence; the Njerep words themselves are cognate with, but not borrowed from, Ba. This apart, one of our speakers varied the tone of *d̄zè* when used to mark future; it is not clear whether this functioned to mark different types of future, or was simply variation of the sort discussed earlier in 4.1.

(43) *m̀è d̄zè ñḡǎ gb̄á n̄m̀è*
 1S FUT buy calabash water
 ‘I will buy a calabash of water.’

Other examples of the future in our data show variations in word order, and have *d̄zè* combining with an aspect marker. In (44), the future marker follows the main verb, and in (45–46), it combines with *b̄ā* and follows the main verb. In (47), *d̄zè né* immediately follows the subject, while the verb is clause final. We note here the parallel with Ba non-narrative, non-focus forms where the verb is also clause-final [Perrin n.d], though in Ba a high tone is suffixed to the postposed verb, while in Njerep (from the one example available) a low tone appears to be added. We assume the variation in word order between (43) on one hand, and (44–46) on the other, also has to do with discourse level considerations.

(44) *ẁù tw̄á d̄zè lélē*
 2S speak FUT lie
 ‘You will tell a lie.’

(45) *n̄āsārā jé d̄zè b̄ā s̄ēnḡē*
 European eat FUT ASP palm nut
 ‘The European will eat the palmtree.’

- (46) *bá ŋgòlě dzè bá bīnī*
 2P dance FUT ASP dance
 'You are going to dance.'
- (47) *nàsārā dzè né mbīlī kàmā*
 European FUT ASP oil-palm tree climb
 'The European will climb the oil-palm.'

7. Conclusion

Populations move, merge, and separate in response to changing ecology, demography, and as part of political process. A dispute about succession can lead to schism [Kopytoff 1987]. Political ambition can lead to warfare and conquest. Local rivalry can lead to one group inviting a third party to help them against their competitors. Having won the battle they may then find they have become vassals in their own turn. Such processes make up (and have made up, over the *longue durée*) human history.

Over the last two hundred years the regional history of the Tikar plain in Cameroon has been dominated by the effects (mainly knock-on effects) of the Sokoto Jihad and the south-easterly spread of Islam. Consequent population movements and mergers have led some languages to flourish and others to disappear. One such language is Njerep, which we have documented here, albeit in a fragmentary fashion. This is all that remains of the language. Of its sister language, Kasabe (Luo), we know even less, and of Yeni barely a whisper. We can only speculate about the cultural variety that has also vanished but we take some consolation from the suggestion that it was ever thus.

APPENDICES

The appendices contain all available data for Njerep not included in the text. Since, in the case of terminal languages or last remaining speakers, semi-speakers or rememberers, the question of how well or how much an informant remembers of his or her language is of some interest, it is worth noting that standard elicitation techniques generally did not produce good results. This is in sharp contrast to the experience of, for example, Sawyer (as reported in Elmendorf 1981) working on Wappo and Yuki, both native American languages, where informants were able to recall details of their language, in one case after 60 years of non-use. In the present case, while many of the words in the following list were elicited without difficulty, others came only with the aid of a prompt. The singing of a song, for example, would often trigger the memory. Contrasting experiences such as these obviously may be due to a variety of factors, including individual abilities and an individual's relationship with his or her language; however, we believe the difference between our experience here and that of researchers such as Sawyer has much to do with the relation between the disappearing language and the replacing language, and provides some insight into the relation between language and culture. Exploration of such issues is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Appendix One: Njerep Wordlist

In the following wordlist, alternative transcriptions reflect different pronunciations from different speakers, or variation within one speaker. In such instances the most frequent pronunciation is given first.

Nouns

Body parts

<i>fǎli</i>	'head'	<i>tógō, tóō</i>	'throat'
<i>júli fǎh; sùbé</i>	'hair'	<i>mbágā, mbāgā</i>	'arm, hand'
<i>ŋgíē; ŋgí</i>	'eye'	<i>tǎkūdū</i>	'elbow'
<i>júnū</i>	'nose'	<i>bàlé bēi</i>	'hand (palm)'
<i>jùnù</i>	'mouth'	<i>jǎgǎ̀</i>	'finger'
<i>jíēn, jíē</i>	'tooth'	<i>ndzēlē</i>	'nail, claw'
<i>líbā</i>	'tongue'	<i>jòró; jì`r</i>	'body'
<i>wūli</i>	'chin'	<i>pàndá, pàdá</i>	'skin'
<i>díli</i>	'beard'	<i>kàmò</i>	'chest'
<i>wūli</i>	'jaw'	<i>mbání</i>	'breast (female)'
<i>ŋgíē; ŋgí</i>	'face' [cf. eye; from Ba]	<i>li, lè</i>	'belly'
<i>kúnú</i>	'forehead'	<i>kímbi</i>	'navel'
<i>tíā, kíā, cíā</i>	'ear'	<i>ŋgódzēk</i>	'back'
<i>mènà</i>	'neck'	<i>kí; tí</i>	'buttocks'

<i>sàr</i> ηγόη,	‘sheep’	<i>tú wā`</i>	‘ashes’
<i>sòr</i> ηγόη		<i>tfá wūò</i>	‘charcoal’
<i>nàgà</i>	‘cow, zebu’ (Ba)	<i>dzú wā`</i>	‘smoke’
<i>ηγábò, ηγábó</i>	‘antelope (generic)’	<i>táp</i>	‘war’
<i>tfádā, tfádá,</i> <i>kádā</i>	‘monkey (generic)’	<i>ηγāmō</i>	‘divination (general)’
<i>jàrɛ́</i>	‘buffalo, ‘bushcow’’	<i>dzū</i>	‘language’
<i>tònè</i>	‘elephant’	<i>jīlá</i>	‘name’
<i>ηγùì</i>	‘leopard’	<i>bīnē</i>	‘song; music’
<i>kpálók</i>	‘tortoise’ (Ba)	<i>bīnī; bīndī</i>	‘dance’
<i>ηγà:</i>	‘crocodile’ (Ba)	<i>ηγə̀</i>	‘thing’
<i>sà</i>	‘snake (generic)’	Nature	
<i>ηγwèní</i>	‘frog’	<i>tàbè</i>	‘earth, soil’
<i>gàlé</i>	‘frog spawn’	<i>tárí; tálí; tfárá</i>	‘stone’
<i>gāā</i>	‘tadpole’	<i>tòrò; tòrì</i>	‘hill, mountain’
<i>mátʃùk</i>	‘frog (sp, big)’	<i>ηmgbāη</i>	‘cave’
<i>kùlà dzīrí</i>	‘toad’ (<i>dzīrí</i> = ‘black’)	<i>nìmè</i>	‘river (= water)’
<i>gálè;</i>	‘bird’	<i>nìmè dòlò</i>	‘river, large’
<i>gáʃim, gáʃim</i>	[- <i>im</i> forms are plurals]	<i>nū:</i>	‘rain (n.)’
<i>bálè, bálè</i>	‘wing’	<i>lū</i>	‘sun’
<i>ηγwīlê</i>	‘feather’	<i>wáʃí</i>	‘moon, month’
<i>gē, gē tfōdò</i>	‘egg’	<i>mbèní</i>	‘star’
<i>tfōrò, tfōdò</i>	‘fowl, chicken’	<i>tfʃá; tfá</i>	‘day’
Living		<i>tfʃimbí</i>	‘night’; a proper name
<i>fā</i>	‘village’	<i>bèndí; béndí</i>	‘illness’
<i>ηγwòlé</i>	‘field’	<i>tfjùà; tfà</i>	‘hunger, famine’
<i>gádzē</i>	‘farm’	Verbs	
<i>ndún</i>	‘granary’	<i>já</i>	‘eat’
<i>mí; mím</i>	‘house’	<i>jáʃá</i>	‘chew’
<i>kòη</i>	‘wall (interior room divider)’	<i>mwá, ηγwá</i>	‘drink’
<i>kódzò; kúlū</i>	‘stool’	<i>nómó</i>	‘bite’
<i>ndágá</i>	‘bed’ (Ba)	<i>nágá</i>	‘lick’
<i>sámhá</i>	‘gourd-rattle’	<i>mèdà</i>	‘swallow’
<i>wú; wúò, wā</i>	‘fire’	<i>ndzódò; ndzòdò</i>	‘suck (e.g., breast)’
<i>dzárá</i>	‘firewood’	<i>kūlū</i>	‘spit’ (Ba)

<i>mbà</i>	'urinate'	<i>dǎ</i>	'sing'
<i>ɲàdà</i>	'give birth'	<i>kā̀</i>	'look at'
<i>dènà</i>	'live (exist)'	<i>ɲwónà</i>	'see'
<i>kúvá, kú</i>	'die'	<i>lànè</i>	'invite'
<i>gònè</i>	'like, love'	<i>ná</i>	'cook'
<i>tfá</i>	'sleep (v.)'	<i>ɲgàdé</i>	'roast'
<i>tólē</i>	'stand (up)'	<i>gùò</i>	'grind'
<i>dànè</i>	'sit (down)'	<i>tfō</i>	'chop, cut' (from Ba?)
<i>sátē</i>	'sit with legs extended'	<i>tūrū</i>	'break (with a stone)' (< Ba?)
<i>ɲálē</i>	'sit with legs extended' (Ba?)	<i>gātē</i>	'tap with force' (Ba <i>gērā</i>) 'tap sharply, with force')
<i>tólē</i>	'enter'	<i>kámó</i>	'squeeze (orange)'
<i>dʒè</i>	'come'	<i>mbàbà</i>	'carry (e.g., child at side)'
<i>dʒé</i>	'go out, exit, go (finally)'	<i>núlū</i>	'carry (e.g., on head)'
<i>wé</i>	'return, arrive'	<i>ɲimá</i>	'extinguish'
<i>jùá</i>	'leave'	<i>ɲgǎ</i>	'buy (general)'
<i>gólè</i>	'walk'	<i>gùlù</i>	'sell'
<i>dòlò</i>	'run'	<i>mwɔ̀bɔ̀;</i>	'steal'
<i>kàmâ; kàmá</i>	'climb'	<i>ɲwɔ̀bɔ̀</i>	
<i>lèlèbá</i>	'jump, fly'	<i>ɲá</i>	'give'
<i>ɲgólí</i>	'dance'	<i>tébé</i>	'throw (e.g., spear, stone)'
<i>kùlá</i>	'wash, bathe'	<i>wùlà</i>	'kill'
<i>jàgè</i>	'wash (things)'	<i>mā</i>	'build (house)'
<i>kàmá</i>	'touch (with hand)'	<i>nō</i>	'be (location)'
<i>fùgê</i>	'rub'		
<i>bīēn</i>	'greet (salute)'	Adjectives	
<i>mòno</i>	'think'	<i>dʒírí</i>	'black'
<i>kélè</i>	'know'	<i>lɔ̀</i>	'good'
<i>jénè</i>	'forget'	<i>gbā</i>	'bad'
<i>gònè</i>	'want'	<i>dòlò</i>	'wide, large'
<i>tūā</i>	'speak (a language)'	<i>dàmè</i>	'big'
<i>bīēn</i>	'ask (question)'	<i>tfàrè</i>	'small'
<i>twárē</i>	'reply (question)' (cf. speak)	<i>sùnú</i>	'single, alone'
<i>lélē</i>	'lie'	<i>kùkú</i>	'many' (< Ba?)
<i>gíli; gíē</i>	'finish' (<i>gíē</i> from Ba)	<i>tfén</i>	'one'
		<i>vwàn</i>	'two'

Appendix Two: Song lyrics

Three songs were recorded with Bondjie at Njerep hamlet on 26-03-00 with the assistance of Ciebeh Daniel. They were translated on 1-04-00 with the assistance of Mial Nicodeme. It was not possible to find glosses for all lexical items; consequently, some are marked with “?” where the gloss should be. Others parts of the songs, typically at the beginning and end of phrases, are semantically empty. A free translation is given to the right of each phrase. These are tentative translations only, partly due to the uncertainty of glosses in certain instances, and missing glosses in others. For Bondjie’s first song, especially, but for all of the songs to some extent, it is their nature that the phrases are not complete sentences, but rather fragments strung together to evoke a memory or mood. Words known to be loans from Ba-Mambila are marked with an asterisk.

1. Bondjie’s first song. In response to a request to explain the meaning of this song, Bondjie embarked on a long recounting of Njerep history.

<i>m̄m̄m̄í ó-ó ŋgbālē é-hē</i>	???
<i>wóbē ŋgbālē m̄ àō m̄m̄m̄</i> ? ? 1S	???
<i>à jǎjǎ m̄ tǎlé à-ē</i> eat 1S turn	Eating, I turn around
<i>m̄ jǎjǎ m̄ *ŋālē m̄-m̄</i> eat 1S sit, legs out	Eating, I sit with my legs extended
<i>è-hè óbī ŋgbà mvòp é è-hē</i> call chief Mvop	The Mvop chief calls
<i>m̄-m̄ wé wé-ō ē</i> returning returning	Returning, returning
<i>à-hà óbó m̄ wé-ō wé-ōō hm̄</i> call 1S return	Call, I return
<i>àm hm̄ wé-ē wé-ē óó</i> returning returning	Returning, returning
<i>m̄ óbó ŋgbà mvòp ē-hē</i> call chief Mvop	The Mvop chief calls
<i>m̄-m̄í télē m̄ ŋgí ò ò</i> enter my eye	I see him
<i>àm jǎjǎ m̄ tǎlé ē hm̄m̄</i> eat 1S turn	Eating, I turn around

<i>m̀ hm̄ t̄alé ē hm̄m̄</i> turn	Turn
<i>à-h̄ óbó-ó ówó jè ò-ó</i> call	Call
<i>h̄à ñálā m̀à dzé wòlé bá̄ h̄ē</i> ? 1S go field T/A?	I'm going to the farm
<i>m̀m̀ ñálā m̀à dzé k̀m̀ś bá̄ h̄ē</i> ? 1S go climb T/A?	I'm going to climb
<i>m̀ hm̄ óbíé t̄élē m̀à ñgíē h̄ē</i> call enter I eye	Calling, I see
<i>à ñgbà mvòp t̄élē m̀à ñgíē h̄ē</i> chief Mvop enter 1S eye	I see the Mvop chief
<i>à-h̄à jájá m̀à t̄alé à-ā</i> eat 1S turn	Eating, I turn around
<i> jájá m̀à h̄ālé à-ā</i> eat 1S regain	Eating, I'm satisfied
<i>m̀ óbó já ñgíē ò-hm̄</i> call eat eye	Call, eat, see
<i>m̀ ñgbà mvòp t̄élē m̀à ñgíē-h̄ē</i> chief Mvop enter 1S eye	I see the Mvop chief
<i>m̀-hm̄ dzé k̀m̀ś n̄é d̄ā-ā</i> go climb T/A? sing	Go, climb, sing
<i>óó òò jāā éé</i>	

2. Bondjie's second song. We might call this song "The chief of Mvop eats sisongo". Sisongo is 'elephant grass'; the tender young inside shoots are eaten, but (at least for the Njerep) normally only during lean times. Palmnuts, on the other hand, are well liked, a treat. The song illustrates, on one level, the ambivalent nature of relations between the Njerep and the Mvop, and, on another level, the dilemma the Njerep faced, aware of being absorbed by the Mvop.

"In times of famine the Mvop chief eats sisongo,
but the Njere chief eats sweet palmnuts. Whose house shall I enter?"

*tfō *jé gwī-ē m̄m̄m̄*
 chop eat sisongo Chop (cut) and eat sisongo

*ngbà mvòp tfō *jé gwī ndzóp ndzóp é-jēé*
 chief Mvop chop eat sisongo ? ? The Mvop chief eats sisongo

ngbà mvòp há
 chief Mvop ? The Mvop chief

*ngbà mvòp tfō *jé gwī ndzā dzín*
 chief Mvop chop eat sisongo bitter The Mvop chief eats sisongo,
 it's bitter

*ngbà njéré tūrū *jé sāngā ēè*
 chief njere break eat palmnut The Njerep chief breaks and
 eats palmnuts

*ngbà njéré gātē *jé sāngā ndán lē ndán*
 chief njere tap eat palmnut ? ? The Njerep chief taps (breaks),
 eats palmnuts

è-yē ngbà mvòp ā
 chief Mvop The Mvop chief

*ngbà mvòp tfō *jé gwī ndzā dzín*
 chief Mvop chop eat sisongo ? bitter The Mvop chief eats sisongo,
 it's bitter

ó - ò - ó - ò - ó - óí jēēē

mà tōlē dzé mí n̄jì bá
 1S enter FUT house where Q Which house will I enter?

dzē mà tōlē dzē ní bē-è-è
 go 1S enter FUT LOC? ? Will I enter here?

mà tōlē dzé mí n̄jì bá
 1S enter FUT house where Q Which house will I enter?

*ngbà mvòp tfō *jé gwī ndzā dzín*
 chief Mvop chop eat sisongo ? bitter The Mvop chief eats sisongo,
 it's bitter

*ngbà njéré gātē *jé sāngā ndán lē ndán*
 chief Njere tap eat palmnut ? ? The Njerep chief taps (breaks),
 eats palmnuts

3. Bondjie's third song. This song again had Bondjie embarking on stories of the past, particularly regarding the food people ate during hard times. In her explanation of the song, Bondjie talked, for example, of how they ate frogs and mice, though these words don't appear in the song.

m̀m̀ m̀m̀ t̀l̀é d̀é m̀í ē ǹn̄n̄-ē
 enter ? house Non-POSS Enter Non's house

*àe m̀è t̀l̀ē d̀z̀é *ẁā ē b̀ì-ē*
 1S enter FUT Q Bi-POSS Will I enter Bi's (house)?

*é m̀è t̀l̀ē d̀z̀é *ẁā ē ǹn̄n̄-ē*
 1S enter FUT Q Non-POSS Will I enter Non's (house)?

m̀-ṁ-ṁí gbá ṁgbá-ē m̀-ṁ
 calabash chief(?)·POSS The chief's calabash

àà-éé tá m̀è t̀l̀ē àà
 ? 1S enter I enter

*àà-éé já m̀è *g̀íē ǹn̄n̄-ē*
 eat 1S finish Non-POSS I finish eating Non's

*à-ṁ *j̀é g̀òṁì é à-ṁ*
 eat want I want to eat

à m̀āi já m̀ìṁà hòrò g̀òṁò b̀ā àā
 eat ? trouble want-NEG T/A? Eat, I don't want trouble

à j̀ó jájá hòrò g̀òṁò b̀ā à-ṁ
 ? eat troubles want-NEG T/A? Eat, I don't want trouble

é-è sà g̀ùó bá b̀ē ṁgb̀è à-ē
 snake ? COP ? chief The snake has come for the chief

m̀-ṁ m̀ān jáb̀ūó bá ṁgb̀ōm̀à m̀-ṁ-ṁí
 ? sound of shitting (ideo) COP ? ???

*m̀-ṁ *j̀é-ē è-ē*
 eat Eat

*è-è-ē *j̀é-ēē ǹāǹá à-ṁ*
 eat how? Eat—how?

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[Received June 2000;
accepted September 2000]

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