

IẀON VERBAL EXTENSIONS

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Systems of verbal extension, consisting of affixes that alter argument structure, are widely reported in the world, and are scattered throughout Africa, where they compete with strategies such as serial verbs and auxiliaries, plus verbal collocations. The Ijoid languages can have suffixed verbal extensions, but these are constructed out of very limited segmental material. There is an example of what seems to be a composite extension, but Ijoid does not generally allow seriated extensions. The paper describes the extensions that have been identified in IẀon and presents an analysis of their possible semantics. Although there are broad typological similarities to other branches of Niger-Congo, there are no transparent segmental cognates, suggesting that the Ij̄o system may be innovative.

Keywords: African languages, Ij̄o, verbal extensions, morphology, argument structure

1. Introduction: verbal extensions in Africa

Systems of verbal extension, consisting of affixes that alter argument structure, are widely reported in the world, and are scattered throughout Africa, where they compete with strategies such as serial verbs and auxiliaries plus verbal collocations (Aikhenvald & Dixon 2006). Muysken & Veenstra (2005) comparing Caribbean creoles with West African languages, note that serial verb constructions are in complementary distribution with derivational morphology in accomplishing the same function. Within Africa languages with extensions can be subdivided into two major sub-classes, systems which permit seriated or strings of verbal extensions and those where a variety of individual extensions may be affixed to the verb root, but which do not permit seriation (cf. Hyman 2003). Needless to say, transitional systems also exist but they are quite rare. Many Bantoid languages show examples where unproductive verbal suffixes show that seriation was formerly permitted. Kru languages, for example, have functional verbal extensions throughout the family, but nowhere permit seriation. shows a tentative distribution of African languages allowing seriated verbal extensions; information on Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan may be inaccurate.

Table 1. Distribution of African languages allowing seriated verbal extensions

Phylum	Branch	Sub-branch	Sample languages
Niger-Congo	(North) Atlantic	Fula-Seereer	Fulfulde
	Heiban-Talodi	West	Moro
	Kalak-Domurik		Kalak
	Tegem-Amira		Tegem
	Adamawa	Tula-Waja	KiTule
	West Benue-Congo	Edoid	Degema
	West Kainji	Kambari-Kamuku	Cicipu, Rege
	Bantoid	Mambiloid	Wawa
	Bantu	A languages	Akɔɔse
	Afroasiatic	Cushitic	Central
	Semitic	Ethio-Semitic	Amharic
	Chadic	Central	Bura, Muyang
Nilo-Saharan	Kadu		Krongo

Apart from functional systems, there are clear traces of fossilised or unproductive extensions elsewhere in Niger-Congo, such as in the Plateau languages of Nigeria. These are part of the link that joins the Benue-Congo languages to Bantu proper.

The Ijoid languages constitute an interesting transitional case. The verb can have suffixed verbal extensions, but these are constructed out of extremely limited segmental material. Although there is an example of what seems to be a composite extension, Ijoid does not generally permit seriated extensions. Both the existence and function of extensions can be inferred from the lexicon, but there is little evidence that these exist in the minds of speakers as productive morphemes, in the sense that speakers do not treat simplex and extended forms as subsets of the same lexeme. Since the meanings of extended forms are sometimes quite remote from the base form meaning, this treatment is not entirely surprising.

The analysis of verbal extensions in Ijɔ is virtually absent from the rather sparse grammatical literature on this branch of Niger-Congo. Hyman (2011) in a wide-ranging review of Niger-Congo features, does not mention Ijoid in his section of verbal extensions, presumably for lack of information. Williamson (1965: 54) describes a causative but does not treat this as part of a system of extensions and her section on ‘passive and intransitive’ does not deal with valency-changing extensions. Jenewari (1977) similarly does not refer to a system of verbal extensions, although morphemes similar to those in Iʒon are clearly present in the Kalabari lexicon. A glance at the Nembe dictionary (Kaliai 1964) again shows the presence of cognate forms.

Even Defaka, the most remote relative of Ijɔ, appears to have an extension *-ma*, cognate with Kalabari (Jenewari 1983), although this is conceivably borrowed from Nkɔrɔɔ. Defaka is a remnant language with less than 200 speakers, now entirely encapsulated by the Nkɔrɔɔ Ijɔ. Although the core lexicon of Defaka is highly divergent from Ijɔ proper, it shares many lexical items and some morphosyntax with Nkɔrɔɔ and it is usually considered that the lexical items are borrowings into Defaka. Indeed, to judge by the examples in Jenewari (1983: 28), Defaka may have a richer system of extensions, including reduplication to mark iteratives. This suggests that the topic has been under-analysed in the previous literature and that a fresh look at the verbal extension systems of Ijɔ is warranted. This paper¹ describes the evidence for verbal extensions in

¹ The genesis of this paper is as follows; I discussed the idea of analysing verbal extensions with my co-author Kay Williamson during 2004, and she then began to collect a file of examples based on the developing Iʒon dictionary. I have now written a paper based on the examples, as well as trawling the dictionary for other comparative material. All the text argumentation is by the first author, and I am unable

Kolokuma, a major lect of Izõn, or Western Ijõ, focusing on an analysis of the morphology. Although sentence examples are given, clearly much more work is required about the place of extended verbs in the broader syntax of Ijõ.

2. Background to Izõn

Ijõ, often anglicized as Ijaw, refers to a language cluster spoken in the Niger Delta of Nigeria and its associated waterways by people who recognize a common linguistic and ethnic heritage. Ijõ lects are spoken from the town of Nkõrõõ, in the extreme east of Rivers State, westwards to the towns of the Arogbo clan in Ondo State, and from the Mediterranean coast in the south to Elemebiri on the Niger and to within a short distance of Benin City in the north.

Ijoid languages belong to the Niger-Congo phylum, but their actual position is disputed; recent classifications have tended to treat them as early splits. They have no traces of a noun-class system, and have SOV word order, like Mande and Dogon. If we align Ijõ with Niger-Congo it is based largely on lexicon and phonology, since its morphosyntax seems highly divergent. Previous literature has not highlighted a verbal extension system, and although it is clear that such a system exists, its segmental morphology and behaviour is rather different from the more familiar systems of Bantu. The Izõn people constitute one branch of Ijoid, usually called ‘West Ijoid’ and they form a closely related chain of languages, the most widely spoken of which is Kolokuma Ijõ. Williamson (1965) is a grammar of Kolokuma, and a variety of publications analyse different aspects of the language (Williamson 1978, 1979a,b, 1991), including a locally-published dictionary (Williamson & Timitimi 1983). The examples in this paper are drawn from an expanded version of that dictionary, which is still being prepared for publication.

Table 2 shows the consonants of Izõn (Williamson 1965);

Table 2. Izõn consonant inventory

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Alveolar		Palatal	Velar		Labial-velar	Glottal
Plosive	p	b			t	d		k	g	kp	gb
Nasal	m					n			ŋ		
Trill											
Fricative			f	v	s	z					(h)
Flap						r					
Approximant							y			w	
Lateral						l					
Approximant											

Izõn has nine vowels, arranged in \pm ATR harmony sets:

to say whether Kay would have agreed with my analysis. In light of an absence of discussion of verbal extensions in Izõn, it seemed worthwhile to bring this paper to publication. Thanks to Bruce Connell, Larry Hyman, Thilo Schadeberg, Anne Storch, and Stuart McGill for their comments on the first draft. The comparisons with Defaka are largely due to Will Bennett, derived from his doctoral research.

Table 3. Ịzọn vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
	ɪ		ʊ
Close-Mid	e		o
Open-mid	ɛ	ə	ɔ
Open		a	

By Nigerian convention, the –ATR set are subdotted. Thus;

–ATR	Orthographic
ʊ	u
ɪ	i
ɔ	o
ɛ	e

Ịzọn operates strict vowel harmony with the central vowel harmonising with either set. However, recent loanwords, compounds and some suffixed elements can violate harmony. Nasalisation is symbolised by an –n following a vowel or sequence of vowels.

All Ịjọ languages have two tones, High (H) and Low (L). The tone-marking convention used in this paper is common in academic publications on Ịjoid. Tone is marked only when there is a change of height. Unmarked is low, but all tones after a high remain high unless or until a low tone is marked.

All Ịjọ verbs can be divided into three tone-classes, as follows;

- Class 1 LH
- Class 2 H
- Class 3 H(L)

When numbers are assigned to verbs in the course of the paper, they are assumed to have these tonal patterns.

3. Ịzọn verbal extensions

Verbs in Ịzọn, as in other Niger-Congo languages, can take suffixes which extend their meaning and may modify the syntax of a sentence. Table 4 shows the example of a simplex verb *fini*;

Table 4. Simple and extended verb stems in Ịzọn

	Ịzọn	PoS	Gloss	Example
a.	finí	<i>v.t.</i>	open; unlock	
b.	finíí	<i>v.i.</i>	be opened, unlocked	Wáribòò finíí dọ The door has opened
c.	finimọ́	<i>v.cs.</i>	separate; spread out	Bìdẹmọ́ finimọ Spread out the clothes
d.	finimọ́	<i>v.dir.</i>	open for, towards	Wáribòòbì nì u finimọ Open the door to him

NB. Final long vowels such as **oó** in **finimóó** and similar examples throughout this paper are LH, in the light of the Iʒo convention to not mark low tone. Thus **finimóó** is read **finimòó**.

In Table 4 ,

(a) is the transitive verb (v.t.) ‘open’

(b) is an intransitive verb (v.i.), with the suffix **-í/í(n)**, which changes the valency of the transitive verb

(c) is a transitive causative verb (v.cs.) in which the addition of the suffix **-mó** changes the meaning to ‘cause to open out’, i.e. ‘spread out’. However, intriguingly, the final high tone **ó** in the citation form is shifted leftwards to ‘clothes’ (normally **bídemó**)

(d) is a transitive directional verb (v.dir.) in which the addition of the suffix **-mó** changes the meaning to ‘open to(wards)’.

Table 5 shows the verbal suffixes recorded for Iʒon;

Table5. Iʒon verbal suffixes

Extension	Semantics	Comment
-mó	Causative	
-mó	Directional	
-í/í(n) or -yaí	Mediopassive, reciprocal and intensifier	-yaí suffixed to a root with only one consonant, -í/í to a root with two or more consonants
-meín	Extended directional, collectivity	
-imó	Seriation; mediopassive plus directional	Unique case

The rules governing the application of nasalisation to **-í/í** are unclear and this may be the unproductive relic of another former extension (§3.7). Numerous verbs exist only in extended forms providing no evidence for the form or meaning of the simplex root, although this can often be guessed. The segmental material is strikingly sparse and it seems quite possible that there has been an historical merger at some time early in the diversification of Iʒo.

3.1. Causative. The most common verb extension is **-mó** (corresponding to **-ma** in East Iʒo and Defaka) which resembles a causative. It transforms the meaning of the simplex verb into ‘make, cause (someone/something) to do/become X’. The tone is underspecified, and in classes 2 and 3 it copies the tone of the adjacent leftwards vowel, as shown inTable 6;

Table6. Causative extensions in Iʒon

Class	Tone	Iʒon	Gloss	+Suffix	Gloss
1	<u>L</u> H	biín	be many, plentiful	binmóó	make many, plentiful
2	H	bóu	drink; dry up; absorb	bóumó	make drink
3	H(L)	búnụ	sleep	búnụmó	make sleep

With some verbs, the verb **mié** ‘do, make’ is used instead of or in addition to the causative suffix (Williamson 1965: 54).

Izɔn has a rule whereby a long vowel in a simplex stem is shortened and the vowel in the suffix is subject to compensatory lengthening. Thus;

biín	be many, plentiful	binmó	make many, plentiful
oviín	clean	ovinmó	clean (e.g. blackboard); erase; disconnect
wíí	slip	wimó	cause to slip

In a few cases, the original simplex verb has been lost, and only the causative form persists (Table 7). The causative meaning can be retained, or it can be lost and the verb now has a plain transitive meaning. Hypothesised original simplex forms are given in this table and *henceforth in italics*. Under ‘Gloss’ I have given a hypothetical meaning to the simplex form. The question mark implies I am uncertain what to propose.

Table 7. Extended causative verbs where the simplex form is lost

Original	Gloss	Synchronic	Gloss
<i>biri</i>	dress	birimó	dress someone for a special occasion
<i>gbalá</i>	fill up	gbalamó	cover up; cause to fill up
<i>nini</i>	be short	ninimó	cause to become shorter; reduce the length of
<i>yeni</i>	?	yenimó	threaten or attempt doing something while not actually doing it
<i>yeni</i>	?	yenimó	exert more energy in pressing down; press down with extra vigour

The LH tone pattern in the hypothetical verb *gbalá* is based on an existing verb **gbalá** ‘to carry a baby on the back’, where simplex and extended forms are both recorded. However, the fall of the high tone to low is an anomaly so far unexplained.

Hyman (p.c.) notes that there is a similar derivational extension in Gokana, an unrelated Cross River language, which is contiguous with eastern Ijò. However, its general meaning is associative (i.e. comitative, instrumental), which does not seem very close to the Ijò causative.

3.2. Directional. A segmentally similar verb extension is **-mó** (corresponding to **-má** in East Ijò and Defaka) ‘directional’. This suffix converts both transitive and intransitive verbs into directional verbs (*v.dir.*) with the meaning ‘do (something) towards someone or something’. It has an inherent high tone, which combines with verb roots as in Table 8.

Table 8. Examples of directional extensions in Izɔn

Class	Tone	Izɔn	Gloss	+Suffix	Gloss
1	LH	bilé	dive	bilemó	dive towards
2	H	káj	lock (up)	káimó	lock against, either outside or inside of a door or gate
3	H(L)	fina	tie; bind	fīnamó	fasten, attach (to something)

Some verbs appear to have two homophonous extensions and it is therefore open to doubt whether they are ultimately distinct. For example:

sóu *v.i.* ‘become activated’ has two main senses;

1. to sprout, germinate, grow (of plants);
2. to come up to surface; snap at flies (of fish);

and an extended form with two possible uses;

sòùmọ¹ *v.cs.* cause to be activated; make germinate; make (fishes) come to surface, e.g.,

mìnìmẹ̀fìn sòùmọ make someone's mouth water

sòùmọ² *v.dir.* grow towards. For example:

T̄f̄n ikemibi kiri ki sòùmọ̀yemi
 tree root ground FOC grow towards it
 The root of a plant grows downwards

In Class 1 verbs the tone is different for causative and directional:

pítí bend
pítimọ́ cause to bend
pítimọ̀ bend towards

but in Classes 2 and 3 it is the same.

In a few cases, the original simplex verb root has been lost, and the directional verb survives (Table 9).

Table 9. Extended directional verbs where the simplex form is lost

Original	Gloss	Synchronic	Gloss
<i>bẹ̀nì</i>	gather	bẹ̀nìmọ̀	gather together
<i>gbéle</i>	lean	gbélemọ̀	lean against
<i>sán</i>	call	sánmọ̀	call to someone at a distance

3.3. Mediopassive -í/ì(n). A highly problematic verb extension is **-í/ì(n)**, where the vowel quality reflects the harmony set, which carries the sense of agentless, passive, middle and sometimes reversive. Alternatively these could be treated as several homophonous extensions, since these senses are rather different. A small number of these are nasalised and are discussed in the next section. In the published Kolokuma dictionary (Williamson & Timitimi 1983) this was labelled 'self-action', to indicate that it excluded an action performed on something else. There is no ideal term, but mediopassive is adopted here to express this range of meaning (cf. Mous 2007 for Afroasiatic examples). There is a segmentally identical and clearly related extension with a reciprocal meaning, discussed in §3.5.

When added to any transitive or intransitive verb, it causes the root to become low, whatever its original tone pattern.

Table10. Examples of the mediopassive extension in Izon

Class	Simplex	Gloss	Extended	Gloss
1	akaná	go round; encircle	akanáí	turn round; rotate
2	píge	'pin'; fix stick in ground	pigeí	become 'pinned', fixed
3	fína	tie; bind	fínaí	get entangled; get tied up

As with the other suffixes, in some cases only an extended form is recorded. Table 11 shows synchronic non-nasalised verbs with the *-í/í* extension and the hypothetical simplex verb with its probable meaning.

Table11. Extended mediopassive verbs where the simplex form is lost

Simplex	Gloss	Synchronic	Gloss
<i>béni</i>	gather	bénií	gather together
<i>biri</i>	dress s.o.	birií	be dressed
<i>gbó gbó</i>	break s.t. down	gbogboí	disintegrate (as disused house, canoe, or decaying animal)
<i>gbuni</i>	confuse, mix	gbunií	get confused; get mixed up
<i>kpakpa</i>	rub, smooth s.t. hard	kpakpaí	wear away (of wood, etc.); go bad with getting soft (of yam)
<i>kpokpolo</i>	knock down	kpokpoloí (= kpokpoléí)	(used with kóro) fall out, scatter (as sparks, coins, ripe palm nuts)
<i>li</i>	erase, hide	lií	be out of sight; disappear (e.g. of scar on the skin); fade away
<i>nana</i>	?	nanaí	take complete possession of; occupy fully (e.g. enemy territory)
<i>suri</i>	get rich	surií	emerge from poverty to a better standard of living
<i>to</i>	finish	toí	come to an end; be almost finished: Egberí bo tóído The story is coming to an end.
<i>zala</i>	push over	zalaí	fall down
<i>zi</i>	stretch	zií	be stretched, slack (as of clothes, rope, etc.)

Table shows examples where both the simplex and extended verbs are nasalised:

Table12. Simplex and extended verbs with nasalisation

Simplex	Gloss	Extended	Gloss
ɛvɛn	search eagerly or thoroughly	ɛvɛvɛn	move about speedily and with all seriousness
bíyán	meet in anger	bíyáín	meet each other in anger
sún	stretch; straighten	súín	be straight, horizontal, well spread out
yárin	shake; sift; sieve; rouse; move to action	yáriín	be shaken; be moved

The reduplication in **ɛvɛvɛn** is without parallel elsewhere in the Izon verbal system.

3.4. Collective passive -mɛ́n. An apparently complex verb extension is *-mɛ́n*, which may be a merger of *-mó* + *-í/í(n)* [mediopassive see §3.3], where the *-í/í* has had its usual effect of lowering the tone of the preceding stem, including the *-mó*. However, Izon permit sequences of

back and front vowels so it is unclear why the -*ó*- should have become a mid-front vowel. Another possible source is the Igbo auxiliary *me* ‘do make’ which may have become suffixed to the *Ijò* root and compounded with the -*i/í*(n) mediopassive. Table 13 shows the verbs for which a -*mẹ́n* extension is recorded and for which either a simplex or directional form also exists. The semantics are not uniform, but most collective passives have a valency-changing function combined with both directionality and collectivity. Thus *pẹ̀lẹ̀*, a standard verb meaning ‘to cut’, has an extended form ‘to be isolated/cut off’ which applies to a collectivity, such as fishes in a river. As before, italic font means that the form and its meaning are reconstructed.

Table 13. Directional and extended directional verbs

Simplex	Gloss	Directional	Gloss	Collective passive	Gloss
<i>bẹ̀nì</i>	<i>gather</i>	bẹ̀nìmọ̀	gather together	bẹ̀nìmẹ́n	be gathered or come together
dìẹ̀	share out; divide	dìẹ̀mọ̀	share between, among	dìẹ̀mẹ́n	be spread; be scattered all over
dọ̀sụ̀ (= dọ̀sì)	pour (out); spill	dọ̀sụ̀mọ̀	pour out upon; anoint with	dọ̀sụ̀mẹ́n	poured out over
gbéle ² (= gbólo) kpekí [í]	touch; tamper with; affect get together	gbélemọ̀	lean against	gbélemẹ́n	lean back against
kpoó	clear away (rubbish); gather (things)	kpoomọ̀	gather towards, together (as of rubbish)	kpoomẹ́n	be collected, gathered into one place; be wrinkled or gathered in lines
palí	stick; paste on	palìmọ̀	be stuck to	palìmẹ́n	be gummed to, attached to
pẹ̀lẹ̀	cut; stop	pẹ̀lẹ̀mọ̀	cross (one’s path); intercept; interrupt	pẹ̀lẹ̀mẹ́n	be stranded, cut off (as fishes from river)
pín	become too small for (of clothes); be overcrowded	pínmọ̀	push through; force one’s way through	pinmẹ́n	force one’s way into or out of an already filled-up place
pọ̀ọ̀	snatch at	pọ̀ọ̀mọ̀	pull apart with a struggle	pọ̀ọ̀mẹ́n	be released through one’s own effort
tíẹ̀	stand	tíẹ̀mọ̀	lean (s.t.) against s.t.	tíẹ̀mẹ́n	lean against

Table 14 shows cases where either only the form with the -*mẹ́n* extension has been recorded, or else the relationship with other verb forms is opaque. However, there is evidence in some glosses for a ‘collective’ sense.

Table 14. Extended directional verbs with no simplex or opaque relationships

Simplex	Gloss	Directional	Gloss	Extended	Gloss
djá	show			djameɣɛn	portend something; be ominous
gbáa	say; tell	gbáamɔ	accuse	ɛsimeɣɛn	hesitate; delay action
gbéin	jump from tree to tree like monkeys	gbéinmɔ	sew together	gbameɣɛn	pretend; feign
				gbeimeɣɛn	clasp; embrace
				gbelemeɣɛn	be related to, connected with
				gimeɣɛn	break out (of fight, uproar, etc.)
				ingimeɣɛn	produce pressure in the stomach in order to bring out faeces; bear down
				imeɛn	leak (a small amount, of fishpond and canoe)
				kokomeɣɛn	be collected (as faeces collect in a stagnant river)
kpun	pull; haul; drag			kpunmeɣɛn	wriggle along on buttocks
léi	?	léemɔ (= léimɔ)	deceive; trick	leimeɣɛn	feign; pretend
nini	shorten	ninimɔ	cause to become shorter; reduce the length of	ninimeɣɛn	shrink
páa	come or go out, away: appear; shine (of sun); break out (as war); happen			paameɣɛn	occur to; happen to; appear to
?	?			pumeɣɛn	wake up briefly and then go to sleep again
pɔ	free (v.t.)			pumeɣɛn	get free; get out of trouble; recover from sickness
san	?			sanmeɣɛn	peer
súɔ	enter	súomɔ	approach	súomeɣɛn	accompany; join
tɛ	stand	tɛmɔ	make stand; stop	tɛmeɣɛn	be collected together

An intriguing aspect of some extended verbs such as **pumẹ́n** is that Izõn does not usually permit simplex CV verbs synchronically. The hypothetical simplex forms suggested in Table 14 argue that these were formerly present in Izõn but have now been deleted from the lexicon. Connell (p.c.) proposed that this extension was cognate with the Defaka **mmi** ‘passive’ marker which would place this extension at the Ijoid level.

3.5. Reciprocal. The least common extension is the reciprocal, which has two allomorphs, **-yaí** or **-í/í**. The first variant is suffixed to a root with only one syllable, the second to a root with two or more. The second variant is identical in form to the mediopassive, but with a specific extension in meaning. Table 15 shows the reciprocal extension on verbs with one syllable:

Table 15. Reciprocal extension on verbs with one syllable

Simplex	Gloss	Reciprocal	Gloss
bọ́ọ (=búọ)	miss; make mistake over s.t.	bọ́ọyaí	miss each other
bọ́ọ (=búọ)	match; be equated	bọ́ọyaí	be equal, equivalent to, equated in value:
dáa	challenge one’s authority; oppose	daayaí	be opposed to; be at loggerheads (with)
naá	hear; understand	nayaí	commune; take a decision together; talk together; discuss intimately
púu	A. split; B. separate; breach; make a gap, e.g. through a dam; C. peel (plantain); D. incise; operate on; pierce	puiyaí	compete; challenge one another

Table 16 shows the reciprocal extension on verbs with two or more syllables:

Table 16. Reciprocal extension on verbs with two or more syllables

Simplex	Gloss	Reciprocal	Gloss
kọ́biri	mix (bags of <i>farina</i> or <i>gari</i> with different contents)	kobirii	be mixed; be in close contact with (e.g. people)
<i>gbolo</i>	<i>meet</i>	gbeleí (<i>arch. gboloí</i>)	meet (each other)
gbọ́lú	box	gbọ́lìí	box one another
kpọ́tu	chase; drive away	kpotíí	chase each other
labá	coil; embrace; wrap	labaí	be coiled; embrace each other
naná	have; own; possess; marry	nanaí	be closely-knit (in marriage or friendship)

Some verbs with this extension cannot be related to any simple verb root (Table 17);

Table 17. Verbs with reciprocal extension and no simplex form

Root	Reciprocal
duguyaí (=dukuyaí)	clash; meet; be in opposition; butt against (<i>e.g.</i> rams, fowls)
fiyaí	agree with; be on good terms with
galabaí	be in disagreement (as husband and wife)
gbeleí (arch. gboloí)	meet (each other)
ikiá (=ikié)	befriend; make friends with
koriyaí	get on well with
kõlejí	(of lovers or spouses) play; embrace
oboyaí	shout ceremonially during the uzií ceremony for a deceased hero, or during a storm
zuinií	meet unexpectedly; mix; intermingle

3.6 A combined extension. There is a single case of a sequence of extensions, **-í/í** plus **-mó** ‘directional’ (Table 18).

Table 18. A case of serial extensions

Extensions	Izõn	Gloss
Simplex	kfa	filter; strain
Mediopassive	kyaí (=kjaí)	ooze out; be dried by water oozing out (<i>e.g.</i> of wet cloth)
Causative	kjamõ	strain; filter
Directional	kjamó	sift into
Combined	kjaímó	be drained, filtered into

Bennett (p.c.) observes that Defaka allows more serialised extensions, which points to the conservation of an archaic pattern which may formerly have been prevalent across Ijò.

3.7 Was there a nasalisation extension? Izõn has a large number of verbs with final **-í/í(n)** and no simplex form or other indications of etymology. Only one of these, *áiin*, is lacking a high tone on the *í* and its source may thus be different.

Table 19. Verbs with *-i/i-n* and no simplex form

Izõn	Gloss
áiin	go in large numbers; troop out en masse, <i>e.g.</i> people
besenaïn	turn away disdainfully
fangaïn (=fanghaï)	be twisted
ginaïn	resemble; be alike
kuaïn	leave en masse
opïin	remove the top part of the skin of cocoyam
osïnsïin	be bruised
oviin	go out (of lamp or fire); “quench”
pemerceïn	move restlessly, itching to go into action
püşïin	press an object flat with the hands and feet
tamanaïn	guess
tanaïn	spread; creep (<i>e.g.</i> of plants)
ukureïn	squat
yemuïn	be sunk
yeriïn	be in readiness; be imminent; be on the alert

At least some of these verbs have a sense of increasing intensity. About half have a mediopassive interpretation, suggesting that the ‘lost’, non-extended form was active and vice-versa. It therefore seems credible that there was an additional extension, originally combined with *-i/i*, which marked increase in intensity through nasalisation. Will Bennett (p.c.) notes that Defaka has a *-ni* passive marker which could well be cognate with the nasalised form of this extension. In a very few cases simplex and extended pairs exist (Table 20).

Table 20. Simplex and extended verbs with nasalisation

Simplex	Gloss	Extended	Gloss
biyaï	hold discussion, meeting	biyaïn	meet in anger
inú	be smooth and well-mixed (of food)	inúin	become smooth and well-mixed; be fully harmonious (of music or speech); be fully in agreement

These seem to support the hypothesis that nasalisation was an extension denoting an increase in intensity. However, there are very few pairs of this type and an alternative interpretation might be that nasalisation is a quasi-ideophonic process marking intensity.

4. Discussion

Izõn has evidence for a small number of verbal extensions, whose meaning is sometimes hard to determine, suggesting that there have been mergers at some time in the past. Moreover, the system appears to be moribund, i.e. many forms with apparent extensions no longer have simplex equivalents, and speakers are not free to create new forms by adding extensions. Moreover, many extended forms now have highly idiosyncratic meanings, which points to the loss of a productive system. There is a single case of a verb with a sequence of two extensions, suggesting this has never been a general strategy in Izõn. However, the *-mein* extension could be the morphologization of *-mó* + *-i/i(n)* although this is not entirely phonologically consistent.

Strikingly, the segmental material does not appear to relate to other branches of Niger-Congo (e.g. Gerhardt 1971; Wolff & Meyer-Bahlburg 1979; Nurse 2008). Valency-changing suffixes, causatives and directionals are common in Bantu and other Benue-Congo branches, but the forms in Izo appear to be unique. There is no trace of the number marking on verbs found elsewhere in Niger-Congo (e.g. Aron 1996/7; Blench 2003; McKinney 1979). The Edoid language Degema, which is spoken in the same area, also has verbal extensions but they are quite unlike those in other Edoid languages outside the Delta, but also with few similarities to Ijo (Kari 1995). Depending on what view is taken of the internal structure of Niger-Congo, Ijo may have had both verbal extensions and noun classes and lost them, or alternatively form part of the subset of languages (including Dogon and Mande) in which these were not present even in the proto-language.

Rapid inspection of lexical sources suggests that related morphemes occur across a wide range of Ijo languages, including the otherwise remote Defaka. A system of verbal extensions can thus be proposed for proto-Ijo. The uniqueness of the segmental material suggests the possibility that the Ijo systems are innovative, formed by analogy with contact languages, but not through direct borrowing. Even so, it is not easy to determine the source of the segmental material. The next step will be to analyse other Ijo languages for a sense of the comparative perspective.

Abbreviations

ATR	Advanced Tongue Root
FOC	Focus
SOV	Subject-Object-Verb
v.t.	Transitive verb
v.i.	Intransitive verb
v.cs.	Causative verb
v.dir.	Directional verb

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