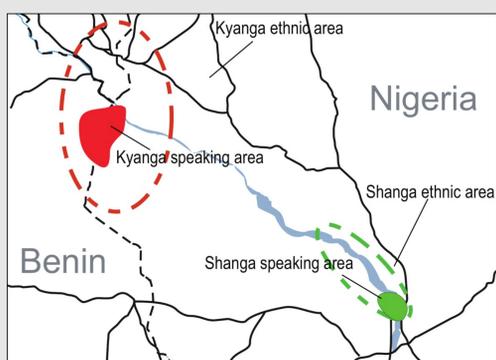




Documentation of Kyanga & Shanga

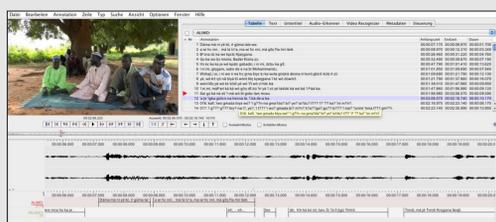
The languages

The Kyanga and Shanga languages are the last surviving vestiges of a distinct branch of Eastern Mande (Niger-Congo) and are situated in a region that is of very interest to African linguistics. In this highly diversified linguistic convergence area, speakers from three different African macro-families are cohabiting and their languages show linguistic traits that are rarely found elsewhere in Africa. The project aims to document these languages that have remained only in six (Kyanga) and four (Shanga) villages along the Niger River in the Nigeria/Benin Republic border area. After having resisted political pressure from their powerful neighbours for a long time, Kyanga and Shanga are today severely endangered as a result of the post-colonial Nigerian language policies and social change in the speech communities as speakers are shifting to the dominant languages of wider communication Hausa and Dendi.



The purpose of the project is to create a multimedia corpus of these two languages that is designed to serve as a basis for the empowerment of the communities and further research by linguists, anthropologists, ethnographers and historiographers. The rationale behind the design is that historical research in Africa heavily relies on interdisciplinary research of linguistics, ethnography and archaeology, as written sources are rarely available. The Niger is known as a cultural axis and the trade along the river is considered a major factor in the processes of state building in the West African middle ages.

As other historical sources of this region are scarce, a loss of these languages and the people's cultural practices would have an even wider impact on historical research of trade networks along the Niger River. The materials in the archive provide annotated video material of spontaneous speech of actors from conversant social networks, performances of oral traditions, rites and commented production of traditional handcraft in Kyanga and Shanga in a standard format (ELAN). A special emphasis is laid on the analysis of language use and speaker roles, in order to include the interactional dimension of the linguistic performances in the annotation.



Annotated video recording of founding-myth of Tondi and dependent villages, performed by a member of the Shiba clan in August 2012



The Team

This research project is located at the Department for African Linguistics and Ethiopian Studies, (Asien-Afrika-Institut, Hamburg University). The principal investigators are Jun.-Prof. Dr. Henning Schreiber and Marlene Altebockwinkel in cooperation with the Kyanga Community Association Kyangakwai (Kebbi State, Nigeria) and the local traditional political leaders.



Commented video recording of cultural techniques in Sarhu in August 2012

Specimens of grammar: grammatical number and reference in Kyanga

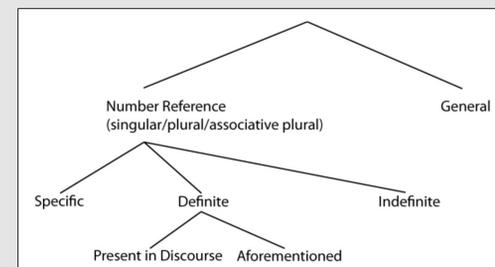
While singular and plural are obligatorily marked in the majority of African languages, Kyanga has a number system in which the categories general (number), singular, plural and associative plural are distinguished. Unmarked noun forms in Kyanga express pure reference (Corbett 2000:10) and may have semantically both, a singular and a plural reading depending on the context. There is no number agreement, neither on dependents in the noun phrase, nor cross reference marking.

1a) Bare noun, general number

Má kōkō dè.
1sg. chicken-ø kill
"I killed a chicken/chickens." (Grsk 2.2)

1b) Má cí gú ká wà.
1sg. NegP person-ø none see
"I saw nobody (lit. no man)." (Grsk 2.3)

Furthermore, the markers in Kyanga & Shanga do not only indicate number, but also specificity and definiteness (Chestermann 1991, see also Ross 1998, Chap.4 on Boko/Busa), indicating a speaker's assumptions about the hearer's level of information (definite, aforementioned, indefinite) vs. "pure reference" to a specific noun.



Nominal categories in Kyanga

	Speaker's assumptions				
	Generic	Specific	Definite	Indefinite	
General,	-ø	--	--	--	--
Singular	--	-lè	.bé	.giná	-Ñ (+ vowel alternation)
Plural	--	.ná	.béná	.nánò	.nà
Associative Pl.		.nò			

Marking of specificity, grammatical number and definiteness in Kyanga ('.' = clitic; '-' = suffix; 'ø' = zero)

Chestermann, Andrew. 1991. *On definiteness: A study with special reference to English and Finnish*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Corbett, Greville G. 2000. *Number*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Ross McCallum. 1998. *The Boko/Busa language cluster*. München: LINCOM.



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