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The Dialects of Anii

The Anii language is spoken by 40-50,000 people in approximately fifteen villages in the West African country of Benin, and three villages in the neighboring country of Togo. Both Togo and Benin are francophone countries on the south-facing Atlantic coast of West Africa. Other names for Anii that have been used in the past include Ouindji-Ouindji (Winji-Winji), Basila/Bassila (after the largest Anii village), and Akpe (in Togo). In addition, most of the villages have their own specific names for the dialect spoken in that village (e.g. the language of Bassila is called Gısıda, that of Balanka Gılɛmbulnya, etc.) [1], which is indicative of the social and linguistic differences between the villages. A map of Anii land is included in Appendix A. This paper will be a preliminary survey of the dialects of the Anii language and a first attempt at possible explanations for extensive observed phonological variation among villages, even in a small wordlist.

Background

The first principled attempt to classify Anii with regard to language families was made by Bernd Heine in 1968 in a description of what an earlier scholar, Struck, had called Togorestsprachen, or Togo Remnant Languages. This grouping includes fourteen languages, mostly clustered around the southern border between Togo and Ghana, but also Anii (called Basila by Heine), which is geographically quite separate from the others. Other scholars (e.g. Johnson 1919 and Westermann 1927, quoted by Blench 2006a,b and Dakubu and Ford, 1988)

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[1] This information is partially from http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=blo, and partially from personal knowledge.

had earlier classed these languages together as a group and vaguely related them to Bantu in the Niger-Congo family, which is now the largest in the world by number of languages (1514, according to www.ethnologue.com). These early classifications were largely based on the fact that most of the Togo Remnant languages (now usually called Ghana Togo Mountain (GTM) languages) have functioning noun-class systems, which at the time were considered to be a feature of Bantu languages (but now have also been found in the Gur languages (a sub-group of the North branch of the Benue-Congo branch of Niger-Congo), which are largely spoken just to the north of where Anii is now spoken, and in other language groups as well) (Blench 2006b and my own knowledge). Greenberg (1970) posited that the Togo Remnant Languages were members of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo language family, and though Greenberg's Kwa group has been modified in several ways by later scholars, most people still classify the GTM languages as a member of what is now known as new Kwa. New Kwa is a branch of the Volta-Congo branch of Niger-Congo, sister to the North branch (containing Gur) and the Benue-Congo branch which contains the Bantu languages, among others. Scholars in Benin itself, however, sometimes claim that Anii is a Gur language (République du Bénin 2003, 70, and also a language map the author has seen from the National Center for Languages and Linguistics (CENALA)).

Unfortunately, most of the early scholarship on the classification of the GTML was written in German, which the author cannot read, but the classification is summarized by Blench (2006a, b) and Dakubu and Ford (1988). These researchers claim that these languages were given this name because it was assumed that speakers of these languages represent the remnants of earlier populations of the area that were largely absorbed or replaced by more recent migrations. Dakubu and Ford (1988) think this analysis plausible at least for the Ghanaian languages in the group, especially as they are mostly found in hard-to-access highland areas. In contrast, Blench (2006a) thinks that cultural similarities could also be explained by similarities in

environment, and there is no evidence to say either way how long GTML speakers have been in their modern locations, so the idea of them being remnant peoples has "no validity, either ethnographically or linguistically" (Blench 2006a, 2). However, Heine (1968a) apparently accepted the 'remnant' hypothesis, and thus attempted to reconstruct a proto-language for all fourteen of the Togo Remnant Languages. In that reconstruction (based mostly on lexical comparisons) he placed Anii (Basila) on a node with Adele (also known as Adere), which is spoken on the border of Togo and Ghana.

Since Adele, like Anii, is a very small language group, it was hard to find information about it, but through www.ethnologue.com, it was possible to find titles of several publications in Adele, and it does appear that Anii and Adele may be distantly related. At the very least, they seem to share a distinctive way of showing possession, and perhaps some distantly related vocabulary. These conjectures are based on the title for an Adele alphabet book, *Gɛŋwara gʋ gɪkpa*, (translated on the website to mean 'Alphabet Book') in which the word *gɪkpa* is presumed to mean 'book', as it is used in other publications whose titles are translated to include the word 'book'. If this is the case, the literal translation of the title above would be 'alphabet of book', or maybe 'alphabet its book', meaning 'alphabet book'. In comparison, the Anii for 'alphabet book' would be something like *ibii ka gʋbɔ*,[2] where *ibii* is the word for 'letters' and *gʋbɔ* is the word for book, so again, 'alphabet book' is literally said 'alphabet its book' (this seems to be the preferred translation, so the *ka* may be a pronoun, not a possessive marker in Anii (Stefanie Zaske, personal communication)). It is certainly interesting that the two languages have the same construction for possession which is not common in the area in my experience, and some traces of possible similarity in the words (e.g. g- versus k- in the possessive marker, which at least in

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[2] The seemingly IPA vowels in the Anii words given in this paper are actually Anii orthography for writing the four vowels in their inventory that are pronounced without Advanced Tongue Root.

Anii does show vowel variation so it is hard to know how to compare the vowels), but from this comparison it can be seen that if Adele and Anii are indeed related, it is a fairly distant relation by this time.

As for relations beyond the possible Anii-Adele connection, Heine (1968a) divided the GTML (then Togo Remnant Languages or Central Togo Languages) into two groups, based on whether the word for 'meat' could be constructed as containing *na or *ka. He called these groups Na-Togo and Ka-Togo. Blench (2006a) uses an updated set of wordlists he obtained from Jaques Rongier (1989, 1994, 1995a) for languages in Togo and Benin (including several dialects of Anii, and though his lists don't always fully conform to my data and knowledge of Anii, they seem mostly correct) and the Volta Region M Projects (VRMP) for Ghanaian languages. Using these lists, Blench showed that Heine's reconstructions and classifications might have been a little over-optimistic, but while there is little evidence that the Ka-Togo languages really constitute a group separate from other Kwa languages, there is *some* evidence (such as the roots meaning 'water' and 'give') for the Na-Togo grouping. However, there is also extensive mixing apparent in the data-sets, and it is not certain that the complicated linguistics relationships will ever be able to be untangled with certainty, though perhaps more extensive grammatical comparisons (which in my knowledge have not been done) would help the classification efforts.

As for ethnographic and social evidence for the origins of Anii, it is important to note that there are stories in Anii-land that the author has heard and read (in unpublished documents in the archives of the Anii project of SIL) of how some of the villages were founded, and there seems to be a general knowledge in the minds of the elders of at least some villages that the Anii originally came from somewhere in Ghana. This migration seems to have happened fairly recently, as in the last couple of centuries (at least some Anii seem to have been already there when early French colonists arrived in the area, which was probably around the end of the 19th century, as the

area of modern-day Benin became a French colony in 1872 according to the CIA World

Factbook). In listing the royal genealogy from the founding of the village of Bodi, an elder of

that village, Papa Amadou AYAH GADO, listed seven kings who ruled for a combined 198

years before the king who was ruling in 2003 (AYAH GADO 2003). The author does not know

how long the current king of Bodi has reigned, or if it is the same king as there was in 2003, but it

appears that even taking into account this uncertainty (and with the knowledge that this

information comes from oral tradition only recently written down, though it must be pointed out

that this fact does not necessarily invalidate its accuracy, as genealogies are very important to the

Anii people and are carefully kept), it seems that the village of Bodi was founded near the

beginning of the 19th century by a large group of people from Ghana (presumably speaking Anii),

and a smaller group (probably Yom speakers) who were already in the area. This ethnic mixture

is discussed below.

The villages of Bassila, Penelan and Bodi (at least—the author does not have access to

information about other villages, but these three villages are in three different dialect areas of

Anii-land) explicitly trace the origins of most of their people back to 'Ashanti-land', which is

presumably somewhere in southern Ghana. In fact, one word on the wordlist used for this paper

(*agbagba*[3], meaning 'plantain') is explicitly considered to have been borrowed from the Ashanti

(presumably some dialect of the Akan language from what I know of Ghanaian history and

culture). In the case of Bassila (Stefanie Zaske, personal communication) and Bodi (AYAH

GADO 2003), most of the people came from Ghana, but the royal families were ethnically Bariba

(from the northeast of Anii territory) and Stefanie Zaske (personal communication) has said that

the Bariba word for a girl born in the rainy season differs only by the final vowel from the Anii

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[3] Anii words are transcribed in italics according to the conventions described in Appendix B, but there is no claim
about phonemes or close phonetic transcription that can yet be made so no brackets of any kind will be used.

word for rainy season. The Bassila royal family traces their roots back to Nikki, a Bariba village in Benin, and the royal family of Bodi seems to have come from a Bariba village called Barini. In addition, in the history of Bodi, Papa Amadou AYAH GADO traced the history of his own family from a the Aledjo-Koura area (AYAH GADO 2006), where a language related to Yoruba is spoken, so it seems that there has indeed been a good amount of ethnic mixing in at least some Anii villages which may have affected dialect formation. It is also important to note that Anii-land is in the middle of what was until the last 50 years or so an extensive forest, and communication between villages was not always easy. A main north-south highway has recently been brought through the area, but for the villages that are not on that highway, communication remains difficult, especially the villages in the northeastern part of Anii land such as Bayakou, Dengou, Mboroko, Saramanga, etc., so they are still to some extent isolated from other villages though that is changing.

As for outside information, the sociolinguistic atlas of Benin published in 2003 does indicate that the Anii arrived in their current location from somewhere to the West, though there is not much detail given (République du Bénin 2003, 35). There may still be speakers of Anii somewhere in Ghana, as there are still a few Ghanaians who come to Bassila and seem to be able to communicate although they don't speak French or any other local lingua franca (personal knowledge), but the exact location of this possible Ghanaian Anii community has not been discovered by researchers, and it is unknown whether, if it exists, it is an old community from which the Anii migrated, or simply a community of the Anii diaspora, where Anii people have settled more recently than colonial times. A sociolinguistic survey of the country of Benin published in the atlas mentioned above stated that many rural youth often find seasonal agricultural work in Ghana or Nigeria, which might also explain some contact with English (République du Bénin, 2003, 19).

There is also further linguistic evidence to support a link with Ghana, or at least some English-speaking area. This comes from a small group of loan words that are considered by Anii people to be Anii words, but which were likely borrowed from English at some point in time. It is instructive to remember here that Anii is spoken in the heart of a French-speaking area, and very few Anii people know any English. These words (given in the dialect of Bassila) include *kpogiti*, meaning 'bucket', *sukuru*, meaning 'school', and, perhaps most interesting because of the time depth it might indicate, *wɛlɛɛsi*, which means radio, and is probably derived from the English word 'wireless'.

There are also many other borrowings in Anii, however, such as *radio* (pronounced with the French vowel [a], not the English diphthong [ei] in the first syllable) for radio (now used sometimes instead of *wɛlɛɛsi*), and *moto* for motorcycle, both from French, but there seem to be less of these than the words from English. There are also a few religious terms that are widely used by other Muslim people groups in the area, such as *alaafiya* (good health), and *ami* (amen) that have also been borrowed into Anii and at least one greeting term that has been borrowed from a neighboring language, Tem (*gaabite*, meaning roughly 'welcome back,' or 'how was your journey?'). As shown above, there are also loan-words from other languages such as *agbagba*, perhaps from Akan. Also, Stefanie Zaske's (personal communication) has observed some vocabulary similarities with Yom, the language bordering Anii territory to the northeast, close to the northern village of Bodi. Also, the words *kɛkɛ* (bicycle), *takuku* (another word for motorcycle), and *cogoto* (a common kind of pants worn by men), which are all in the data used for this paper, are used by many languages in the area and their exact origins are unclear (Stefanie Zaske, personal communication).

The last bit of background information that is important to understand Anii dialects is the historical connections between Anii villages. The sociolinguistic atlas of Benin mentioned that

the villages of Kodowari, Bayakou and Bodi were all founded from Bassila (République du Bénin 2003, 36). As there is a detailed history of Bodi available which contradicts this conclusion (and this section of the atlas seems to be a rather haphazard collection of local folk-tales, including stories about people with tails who used to live in northern Benin), this information seems suspect, but it does indicate that at least some people consider there to be historical connections among Anii villages. It is known for certain that the village of Nagayile was founded from Penelan (by a group of rebellious young people, apparently) in the 1960s or 70s, as Nagayile does not even appear on older maps (Stefanie Zaske, personal communication). There are also certain continuing connections such as shared markets which certainly encourage interaction and communication (for example the villages of Bayakou and Dengou seem to attend each others' market days, and the people of Agaradebou certainly attend the market in Saramanga) (personal knowledge).

Data

The main data to be used in this project are a preliminary set of surveys, i.e. a written self-report (from one person per village) of a 51-word wordlist from twelve Anii villages from approximately 2003 and, more importantly, recordings of the same list from fifteen villages that the author collected in January and February of 2007. The villages of Iyo and Yari were not recorded because they are both very small. Agaradebou was not recorded because the author's Togo visa had expired before she could visit that village. Barikini is noted as a village on the map in Appendix A, but is really part of Bassila and the SIL project has not been able to find significant differences between Barikini and the rest of Bassila, so Barikini was not included in the recording project. Otherwise, the complete wordlist was recorded by two speakers, one male and one female, in each village except Mellan where there was only time for one speaker (a male)

to be recorded. The total number of informants from the fifteen villages, then, was twenty-nine (fourteen women and fifteen men), one from Mellan and two from each of the other two villages. Unfortunately, it was impossible to control for age in the limited time we had in each village, but we made sure each person we recorded had been born in the village where we recorded them, and had also grown up there.

The actual recordings consist of two pronunciations of each word in isolation from each speaker (three from the female Bassila speaker). They were recorded directly onto a computer using a lapel mic, in SpeechAnalyzer 2.7 (© SIL, International 2005). The sampling rate was 44,100 Hz, 16-bit mono. It should be noted that the recording conditions were certainly not ideal, as they were often made outside or in a crowded room, so there was very little control over background noise or speakers' uncertainty about how close to hold the microphone, how loud to speak, etc.

The recordings were transcribed by the author through a combination of impressionistic transcription and a preliminary acoustic analysis. The author is not a native speaker of Anii, so there were difficulties distinguishing certain vowel sounds. This defect will eventually be corrected by a more extensive acoustic analysis of the vowels, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. Uncertainties of transcription were either omitted from the data used here or are pointed out when the data is given. A particular difficulty that has been left out is the comparison of [ɪ] and [ə], which may be allophones of a single phoneme based on native speaker confusions when trying to learn to write the difference (both are letters in the Anii alphabet). Indeed, these two sounds show a quite unsystematic distribution across the villages in the words in the wordlist that had been intended to address the question, so that data is omitted from this study. As a final note on transcription, it should be said that lexical tone is not transcribed for this paper as a tonal

transcription of the data has not yet been made though a preliminary impression showed that there were few tonal differences between the dialects for this wordlist.

It appears that all the dialects of Anii have basically the same phoneme inventory. This inventory is given in Appendix B. The particular phonological and morphological phenomena to be investigated for the drawing of isogloss boundaries using the wordlist data include intervocalic voicing of stops in some villages, pre-nasal voicing of stops in some villages, a correspondence that in some way involves [t], [tʃ] and [ts], a correspondence between velars and labiovelars (and corresponding variation in the following vowel), a correspondence between [s] and [ʃ], and a difference in the singular noun class marker for class 7 nouns, which is sometimes simply a nasal consonant, and sometimes 'gi-' or 'gɪ-' (a list of all the Bassila dialect noun classes with singular and plural markers is given in Appendix C). There is also a very preliminary attempt to figure out the vowel correspondences, and draw isoglosses, but this situation is extremely complex, and often the transcription of the vowels is less certain than that of the consonants (especially with reference to the vowels that are pronounced without advanced tongue root), so conclusions based on vowel variation may need to be more fully confirmed after an acoustic study of the vowels has been carried out, which is beyond the scope of this project. In addition, isoglosses will be drawn where it appears different villages use entirely different words or place similar words in different noun classes.

Analysis

This section will be a synthesis of the evidence for dialect clusters among the Anii villages. The evidence for each proposed cluster is given, and then possible complications
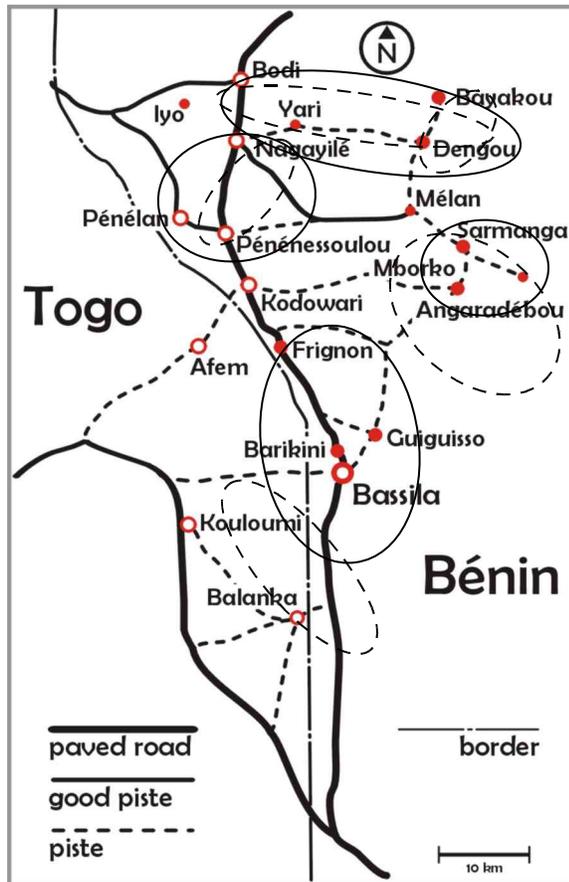

Figure 1: Map showing proposed dialect clusters

discussed. It seems there are at least four, possibly five dialect clusters among the villages that are part of this study. In addition, there seem to be affiliations between certain clusters, creating what could perhaps be called mega-clusters. A map of these clusters is shown in Fig. 1 below. Note that Agaradebou is placed in a cluster with Mboroko and Saramanga, though there is no data from that village. This is done for geographical and social reasons and the grouping should of course be checked against linguistic data in the future. Other inclusions of villages with no data in this set are accidental artifacts of the process of drawing circles, since there is no way to even hypothesize about their language at this point (except to remind the reader that Barikini should be considered effectively a part of Bassila). The circles indicate groupings with good support in the data, while the dashed circles indicate other possible groupings or sub-groupings. Kodowari and Mellan seem to each have their own patterns, and group with different neighboring dialects depending on which phenomenon is in question.

The Togolese villages, Kouloumi and Balanka in this study, may group together, in some small way (as indicated in Figure 1), but it is very clear that Balanka is in many ways a very separate dialect. In a survey carried out by SIL in the 1990s and reported in the Ethnologue, there was actually only 72% comparable vocabulary between Balanka and Bassila. It is not known what the criteria for vocabulary compatibility would be, but in the data being used here, it is clear that the dialect of Balanka has completely different lexemes from the other dialects in the words for 'god', 'hand', 'money', 'toad', and 'broom', and has possibly related words with, however, extremely salient phonological differences, from all the other dialects (such as having less syllables or using some completely different phonemes). The chart in Figure 2 below compares these unique (not used in any other village) Balanka usages with Bassila versions of the same words.[4] The bolded elements are those that are different in Balanka from all the other villages (other differences that can be observed are shared with at least one other village).

Balanka	Bassila	Gloss
sokoto	tʃogoto	pants
gɪkɪnu	gʊtʃʊnʊ	intestines
gi**rie**	gije	yam
gukul**ɛ**	gukulu	hole
nfu**fua**	ntʃəfoi	fingernail
ŋkə**ba**	ŋkəwa	bone
np**ua**	npoo	animal skin
ɩyɩra	nyɪda	name
aʃɩ**ŋ**go	asuko	horse
unat**i**	ʊnyɪnʃta	small path
mufile	nuʃile	good afternoon
gus**ɔn**ɔ	gutʃaŋkɔ	door

Figure 2: Unique Balanka features

It should also be noted that there is some evidence tying Kouloumi and Balanka together, to whit the uniquely shared use of the word *ŋŋo* for grass (compare Bassila *guŋɔ*) and the use of the word *ginyisono* instead of *gijibɔŋɔ* to mean 'goodnight'. The latter feature is shared only with the otherwise far-separated northeastern dialect group of Bodi, Bayakou and Dengou. Kouloumi

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[4]The Bassila dialect is used as a baseline comparison (despite the fact that in some ways it seems to be a pretty innovative dialect) because it is the most well-known Anii dialect and there are some features it shares with Balanka that more northern villages would not.

itself also has one unique feature of its own, which is there is no obstruent stop in *ŋulo*, the word for 'cloud' (compare Bassila *ndəla*).

Given all this information, we tentatively label a dialect group of the villages of Kouloumi and Balanka, and call it the Possible Southwest group with a large caveat that this is a very tentative grouping and there are many instances when these two villages do not show similar features. Often this is because Balanka shows a more northern pattern and Kouloumi a more southern one (this will be discussed below), though sometimes the opposite occurs. There are, however, some words (e.g. with regard to the final vowel in the word for 'firewood', which is [ʊ] in all the southern villages and [a] in the others, the labiovelar in the word for blood, which in Bassila and related villages (defined below) and Kouloumi is *akɔnɔ*, in Balanka *akɔna*, and in the northern dialects *akpana*, or the word for 'oil palm', *gupa* in all the southern villages) in which Kouloumi and Balanka both pattern with the other southern dialect cluster, that of Bassila, Guiguisso and Frignion, which we will label the Southeast group.

With the complication of the Togolese villages out of the way, the clearer evidence for the other dialect groups can be discussed. We will begin with the Southeast group mentioned above.

Southeast	Others	Gloss
buʃi	busi	oil
giʃɛlu/giʃelu	gusɛlu/usole	tail
uʃile	usile/usule	day/sun
nuʃile	nusile/nusule	good afternoon
gutʃaŋko	gutʃɔnɔ/gutaŋkpa	door

Figure 3: Unique features of the Southeast dialect group.

The major feature that can be considered diagnostic of the Southeast group is that in these villages, an [ʃ] appears before high front vowels where in other villages there is an [s]. In addition, in the word for 'intestines', there is an [ŋk] cluster which is unique to the Southeast group. These diagnostic features are illustrated in Figure 3. There are also times when the Southeast group clearly patterns with Kouloumi (Balanka in these cases shows a separate pattern or uses an unrelated lexeme) to form a larger southern dialect cluster.

These instances include the word for 'small path' (*unyɪntʃa* versus more northern versions *unatia*, *unɛtɛ* or *unyintʃiɛ*)**,** the word for 'goat' (*utʃe* as compared to northern forms such as *uti* or *utie*), and a partial similarity in the word for firewood (Southeast *vlakʊ*, Kouloumi *vrakʊ*, with other forms including *vrawa*, *vlawa* and *vlakpa*). In comparison, in Balanka the word for 'small path' is *unati*, the word for 'goat' is *utiə*, and the word for 'firewood' is *vlalʊ*, showing the tendency that was mentioned above for the forms from Balanka to be more similar to northern forms and those from Kouloumi to be more similar to southern forms. Thus, when Balanka is considered separately from the other villages, there is good evidence for a larger southern cluster including the Southeast group and Kouloumi though there are still a few ways in which Kouloumi is linked to Balanka and not the Southeast group, as was shown above. Therefore we postulate that there is some reality to a grouping of the southern villages (even, in some cases including Balanka, e.g. the word for 'oil palm' discussed above) in opposition with the other villages, which up until now we have been calling 'northern' as a purely geographic description. We will now turn to the three dialect clusters and one single village which constitute this group, which will eventually allow us to see whether there is any argument for a single unified northern group to compare to the southern group described above.

The major groups of northern part of Anii-land are what I will call the Northwest group, the Northeast group and the North group. The Northwest group consists of the villages of Penelan, Penessoulou and Nagayile**.** The most salient feature defining this group is that of final vowels often showing up as [ɛ] or (more rarely) [e] where other dialects have other vowels,

especially [i]. This is shown in Figure 4. There are also a good many examples where the village

of Kodowari patterns with the Northwest group (mostly with reference to vowels and labiovelar

consonants), and those examples are below

the bold line in Figure 4. There are,

however, many ways in which Kodowari

instead patterns with other groups. For

example, in the word for 'fingernail',

Kodowari patterns with the Southeast group

for the final vowel though not for most of

the rest of the word. The Northwest group

has the form *nsɛfi*, and other northern

groups have forms such as *gʊsɪfi* or *gɪtʃɪfi*,

Northwest	Others	Gloss
ganyʊmpərɛ	ganyʊmpɪri/ganyʊmbɪri	hoe
gitʃɛnɛ	gitani/gitʃɛni	money
gʊŋmɛ	gʊŋɔ/gʊŋma	grass
asʊre	aʃɪrɪ/asʊrɔ	head hair
ʊnɛtɛ	unyʊntʃa/ʊnati	small path
asɛkpe	asuko/asugo/asogo	
gʊji	gije	yam
gʊtaŋkpa	gʊtʃaŋkɔ/gʊtɔŋɔ	door
ʊlakpa	ʊrawa/ʊlawa/ʊlakʊ	firewood
uti	utʃe/utie/utʃie/utʃiə	goat

Figure 4: Unique features of the Northwest dialect group and features shared with the village of Kodowari

while the Southeast group shows basically *ntʃəfɔɪ*. The form for Kodowari is *gɪsɪfɔɪ*, in which the

root patterns partially with the northern groups and partially with the Southeast group. The

differing beginnings of the forms meaning 'fingernail' should be noted, as well, for they are

indications of the main way that the village of Kodowari patterns with the two northern dialect

groups other than the Northwest group—in the phonetic form of the class 7 singular noun-class

marker.

The Northwest group patterns with all of the southern villages (including Balanka) with

regard to class 7 nouns, as shown in Figure 5 below. In the other northern groups, the noun-class

marker for singular class 7 nouns is *gi-* or *gɪ-* (it appears that Anii might have affixes that

undergo vowel harmony with respect to +ATR or –ATR vowel features, but that is something

that will need to be confirmed by acoustic analysis, and so can only be presented as a hypothesis

here) while in the southern groups and the Northeast group, that marker is a place-assimilating

nasal.. This is not a case of
assigning nouns to different classes
in the lexicon or anything of that
nature, as the same words are
found in the same class (with the
same plural noun-class marker) in
all the dialects. It is just the

Northwest/Southern	Others	Gloss
mpa	**gɪ**ba/**gɪ**pa	village
ndəla/**n**dɪla/**ŋ**ulo	**gɪ**dɪla/**gɪ**bule/**gɪ**wɪle	clous
ndi/**n**die/**n**ri	**gi**ri/**gi**rie	head
ŋkəwa/**ŋ**kəba	**gɪ**kəwa	bone
ŋkoruma/**ŋ**korume	**gɪ**korɪme/**gɪ**kpɛrɪme	toad
mpoo/**m**po?/**m**pua	**gi**po/**gu**poo/**gu**boo	animal skin

*Figure 5: The Northwest/southern class 7 singular noun-class marker
compared to the other dialect clusters.*

phonetic shape of the noun-class marker itself that is different, a more extreme difference than

the other differences in phonetic shape explored in this paper, and one of the few phenomena

discussed here that is obviously not phonetically-conditioned. It should also be noted that this

phenomena results in an extremely salient difference in the way sentences are produced, as there

is noun-class based agreement on verbs as well as on nouns and adjectives, and that agreement

also differs depending on the phonological shape of the marker on the noun, so the difference is

repeated at least twice in every sentence involving class 7 nouns. This morphological difference

is the main reason Kodowari was not classed with the Northwest dialect group. Kodowari also

patterns with the non-Northwest, non-southern groups with reference to rounding of the

penultimate vowel of the word for toad (see Figure 5). The southern and Northwest dialect

groups show rounded high vowels there while the other groups do not.

A further complication with the Northwest dialect group is that there are a few indications

that Penelan and Nagayile are patterning together to the exclusion of Penessoulou. Since

Nagayile is known to have been founded from Penelan within the last 50 years, as explained

above, this is not entirely surprising. There are some cases where Penelan and Nagayile pattern

with Bodi with regard to vowel rounding (i.e. those three villages have *usule* for 'day/sun' and

nusule for 'good afternoon' where other villages have *usile/uʃile* and *nusile/nuʃile*). These are

three lexemes, but they are all closely related (*nusile* literally means 'and the sun'?), so this example could almost be considered only one word, but it still shows a close Penelan-Nagayile connection, as well as some relation with Bodi on its own, though it is the only indication of that relation. Also, Penelan and Nagayile are the only villages that add the morpheme *aja-* before the word for spider (i.e. they have *ajatata* where other villages simply have *tata* or *tʃatʃa*). There are also instances where Penelan and Penessoulou seem to pattern with what I have called the North dialect group, which consists of Bodi, Bayakou and Dengou. These cases are where there are unrounded final vowels in the words for 'cloth' and 'hole' (*gikpɘre/ŋkʊre* and *gukule*[5] instead of *ŋkuro* and *gukulu*).

Apart from the odd mixings described above (and below), the North dialect group is the best-motivated of all the groups described here, judging from pure numbers of forms. This may be in a way an artifact of the crafting of the wordlist, which was partially created to investigate the question of intervocalic voicing of stops which is the major defining feature of this group. That is, a defining feature for the North group is that there seems to be a neutralization of voicing contrasts for the stops in this dialect groups when they appear intervocalically. This may not apply to alveolar consonants, however, as the only example in this data set where it might apply is a loanword from English where it applies inconsistently at best and there may be other explanations (see footnote 13).

North	Others	Gloss
gu**ba**o	gupa/gupɔ	oil palm
gɪ**ba**	mpa/gɪpa (gipa?)	village
u**b**ie	upi/upie	child
gu**b**o/gu**b**oo	npoo/gupo/gipo	animal skin
uwələ**b**ie	uwələpi/ulupi/uwələpie	pestle
as**og**o	asuko/asɪkpe	horse
ʊjʊŋgʊrʊ	ʊtʃʊŋkʊrʊ/ʊtʃʊŋkʊra/ ʊjʊŋo	broom
gi**kp**əre	ŋkuro/ŋkure/ gikuro	cloth
guny**a**	gʊnyɛ	hand
gbogɪ**di**	gbogɪti	bucket

Figure 6: Features of the North dialect group.

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[5] In this case, Dengou has *gukulo* and does not pattern with Bayakou and Bodi, which is odd.

Alternatively, it may be that certain tones or stress positions inhibit the neutralization. This question cannot be resolved without further data collection. With the alveopalatal affricate, it seems that both the North group and what will be called the Northeast group (Mboroko and Saramanga) show intervocalic voicing (see Figure 6). Another defining feature of the North dialect group seems to be the presence of vowel clusters (there is not enough evidence to know whether these clusters are diphthongs or not, so the word cluster will be used throughout) where other villages show only one of the vowels in the cluster, or even occasionally what appears to be somehow a combination of the two vowels into one (e.g. [e] compared to [ia]). These vowel clusters may turn out to be a conservative feature of the North dialect group, but as this paper is not concerned with the historical derivation of the dialect boundaries at this time, we will leave investigation of that speculation for further research. A table showing the relevant features of the North group is given in Figure 6 above. As can be seen there, the North grouping also shows vowel differences other than the clusters, and in one case has a labiovelar consonant where other dialects show a plain velar.

There are cases where the North group actually patterns relatively closely with the Possible Southwest group, for example the use of *ginyisone* for 'goodnight' where the Possible Southwest villages have *ginyisono* and the other villages have *gijibɔŋɔ*, but even there the final vowel is unique to the North group, and the Bayakou and Bodi speakers inserted *ni-* before the word (i.e. *niginyisone)*, though in Dengou the speakers did not. In fact, there have been several instances discussed so far of Dengou patterning separately, for example having *gbogɪti* instead of *gbogɪdi* in the word for 'bucket' and *gukulo* instead of *gukule* for 'hole'. However, in Figure 1 we also made a tentative sub-grouping of Bayakou and Dengou separated from Bodi. This grouping is based on the word for 'cloud', which has a [b] in it only in those two villages (*gibule* as opposed to *guwəle* in Bodi and *ndəla/gɪdəla* or *ŋule/ŋulo* elsewhere). Also, there is the word for

'fingernail' where Bodi has *gusəfi* and Bayakou and Dengou, have *gɪsɪfi*. So, there are

confusions, but all in all the North dialect group seems to hold together well given the evidence.

The final Anii dialect group to be discussed is what will be called the Northeast group.

This consists of the villages of Saramanga, Mboroko, and probably Agaradebou (because of its

social and geographical situation) although there is no data as yet from the latter village, so no

confident claim can be made. The village of Mellan may also be related to this group as it often

seems to pattern with the group, but there are many exceptions, which will be discussed below.

The difficulty in positing the Northeast group is that there are very few single features that

uniquely set the group apart from the others. In fact, the group is really constituted in the way it

attaches to other groups or other individual villages. For example, in the word for 'path', the

villages of the Northeast group show a palatal nasal, as do Kouloumi and Bassila where other

villages have an alveolar nasal (*unyɪntʃiɛ*, compare Bassila/Kouloumi *unyɪntʃa* and other villages

unatia/unati/unati). This word also has a final vowel that is unique to the Northeast group, and so

is the best word to differentiate these two villages from all the others for these reasons (along

with truncation of the word for 'broom').

Also, in the word for 'head hair', the Northeast group patterns with the Southeast group

with regard to vowels, in having *asɪrɪ* instead of *asʋrʋ* or *asɪre*, though the sibilant differentiates

the two groups, the Southeast group actually has *aʃɪrɪ* while the Northeast has, as mentioned

above, *asɪrɪ*. Thus, it is the whole word that differentiates the Northeast group, with vowels

patterning with the Southeast group but the consonants patterning as other northern groups do.

There is even one case where the Northeast group patterns with the Northwest group as opposed

to all the others. This is in the word for 'nose', which in the Northeast (including Mellan, this time) and Northwest is *gɪŋʋna,* where the North cluster and the southern villages have *gɪŋʋnʋ.*

Although mostly defined by unique patterning with a variety of other dialect groups rather than specific features, in general the Northeast group seems to show many of the vowel clusters that the North group has, but none of the intervocalic voicing assimilation, though the North and Northeast groups share the feature of postnasal voicing assimilation. As shown above, the Northeast group also shares some features with the Southeast group, but as will be discussed further below, it also shows the general northern features of extensive use of labiovelar consonants where southern groups have plain velars. The diagnostic information for the Northeast group is given in Figure 7 with footnotes to mark when the features are shared with other groups. The tendency towards final vowel clusters combined with the postnasal voicing neutralization may indicate that the North and Northeast groups along with Mellan form a subgroup of the northern Anii languages separate from Kodowari and the Northwest group.

Northeast	Others	Gloss
unyɪntʃiɛ	unyɪntʃa/unatia/ unati/unati	small path
gɪpa	mpa/gɪpa (gipa?)	village
u**pie**	upi/ubie	child
uwələ**pie**	uwələpi/ulupi/uwələbie	pestle
ʋjʋ**ŋo**	ʋtʃʋŋkʋrʋ/ʋjʋŋgʋrʋ/ ʋtʃʋŋkʋra	broom
gi**rie**	ndi/ndie/giri	head
ʋt**ia**	ʋtʃa/ʋta	arrow
utʃie[14]	utʃe/uti	goat

Figure 7: Features of the Northeast dialect group.

However, there are times (for example with the class 7 noun-class markers where it is only the Northwest group that patterns with the southern villages and Kodowari and Mellan both pattern with the North and Northeast groups. And there are also times when Mellan patterns with the North group and not the Northeast group. For example, the word for 'firewood' in the North group

and Mellan is *ʋrawa*, whereas in the Northeast group it is *ʋlawa*. The North and Northeast forms, however, do seem to be more closely related to each other than the forms from other villages. Kodowari and the Northwest group have *ʋlakpa*, the Southwest group has *ʋlaku*, Kououmi *ʋrakʋ*, and Balanka *ʋlalʋ*. It can be seen that the word for 'firewood' is a generally good diagnostic of dialect relations in Anii though of course it does not tell anywhere near the whole story.

There are two remaining phenomena that need to be discussed with reference to Anii dialect classifications. The first is, as mentioned above, post-nasal voicing neutralization in stops. That is, for the North and Northeast clusters, including Mellan, there are no voiceless stops following nasals. Examples are given in Figure 8 with the 'other' forms now specified by village

or dialect to try and clarify the complications a little. It appears that Kouloumi Balanka may also have some sort of post-nasal voicing feature, but it seems to be different from that of the North and Northeast dialects. In fact, more data is needed on this phenomenon in general since there are not many applicable words in the wordlist given here and those that are there are not as consistent as could be desired, so it seems there is more worth investigating here.

There are also other phenomena that link the North and

North/Northeast	Others	Gloss
usɩmbɩre	usɩmpɩre (Southeast and Northwest) usɩmbɩre (Kouloumi) usʋmbʋre (Balanka)	woman
ganyɩmbɩri	ganyɩmpɩri (Southeast, Kouloumi, Kodowari) ganyɩmpɩrɛ (Northwest) gatɛpiri (Balanka)	hoe
gitonjɩla	ntʃʋntʃʋno (Southeast) ntontʃɩna (Northwest) gitontʃʋno (Kodowari) ntontʃʋno (Kouloumi) ntoɲʋna (Balanka)	charcoal
ʋjʋŋgʋrʋ (Mellan)	ʋtʃʋŋkʋrʋ(Southeast) ʋtʃʋŋkʋra (Northwest) ʋjʋŋo (Northeast) ʋtʃʋŋgʋro (Kouloumi)	broom

Figure 8: Postnasal voicing neutralization in stops

Northeast groups together, for example the lexical item *gitonjɪla* meaning charcoal which seems quite different from the other items which have a nasal instead of a lateral as the last consonant. Also, there are the final vowel clusters, as described above, and also the noun-class placement of the word for 'tail', which in the North and Northeast is in class 8, whereas in the other villages it seems to be in class 6. In addition, there is the word for 'toad', which is *gikpɛrɪme* in the North and Northeast but *gikorɪme or ŋkɔruma* elsewhere. Thus, there is evidence that the North group and the Northeast group are separate dialect clusters, but there is also evidence that shows perhaps they are closer to each other than to any other group.

Finally, there is one phenomenon that seems to link the Northwest, North and Northeast villages along with Kodowari and Mellan together. This is sequences of labiovelar consonant and unrounded vowel where the southern villages (the Southeast group and the Possible Southwest group) have a simple velar stop followed by a rounded vowel. This is an important diagnostic for what I have been broadly calling northern and southern groups throughout this paper. In particular it is the main feature that brings all the northern groups together into a larger grouping. The two words that illustrate this phenomenon are the word for 'blood' and the word for 'grass'. The word for 'blood' in the northern area is *gʊkpana* while in the southern area it is *gukono* (*gʊkɔna* in Balanka). The northern word for 'grass' is *gʊŋma* (*gʊŋmɛ* in the Northwest group), and the southern word is *guŋɔ (ŋŋɔ* in Balanka and Kouloumi). The transcriptions of the rounded vowels in the southern group are not fully certain (whether they are +ATR or –ATR), but they are certainly rounded mid vowels. It should also be mentioned that the word for money is also easily divided along general northern and southern lines, with the northern form being *gitʃɛni* (*gitʃɛnɛ* in the Northwest group) and the southern form *gitani*, so there is indeed a good amount of evidence for a general northern group of dialects, as well as evidence for a southern

one, so those larger groups can be defined individually instead of simply in opposition to each

other.

Conclusions

As can be seen from the complexity of the analysis given above, the problem of

classifying Anii dialects is not a simple one. However, it is possible, even from a simple 51-word

wordlist to make basic linguistic groupings that are also geographically coherent. In some cases,

these groupings are even supported by partial evidence of historical links between particular

villages. With further research, it will likely be possible to clarify some of the conclusions that

have been drawn in this paper, and it may even be possible to discover whether these changes are

simply evidence of subgrouping in historical transmission and Neo-grammarian sound change, or

whether some of the dialect differences can be attributed to contact with other ethnic groups in

different ways in the different villages. Before this question can be answered, however, more

knowledge of village histories and of surrounding languages would be required. For now, this

paper serves as a preliminary description of the dialects of the Anii language and one small step

in the process of understanding this little-studied variety.

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Appendix A: Maps

A map of Togo and Benin showing the location of Anii and neighboring languages. Part of the Adele area can also be seen, number 2 on the Togo map.
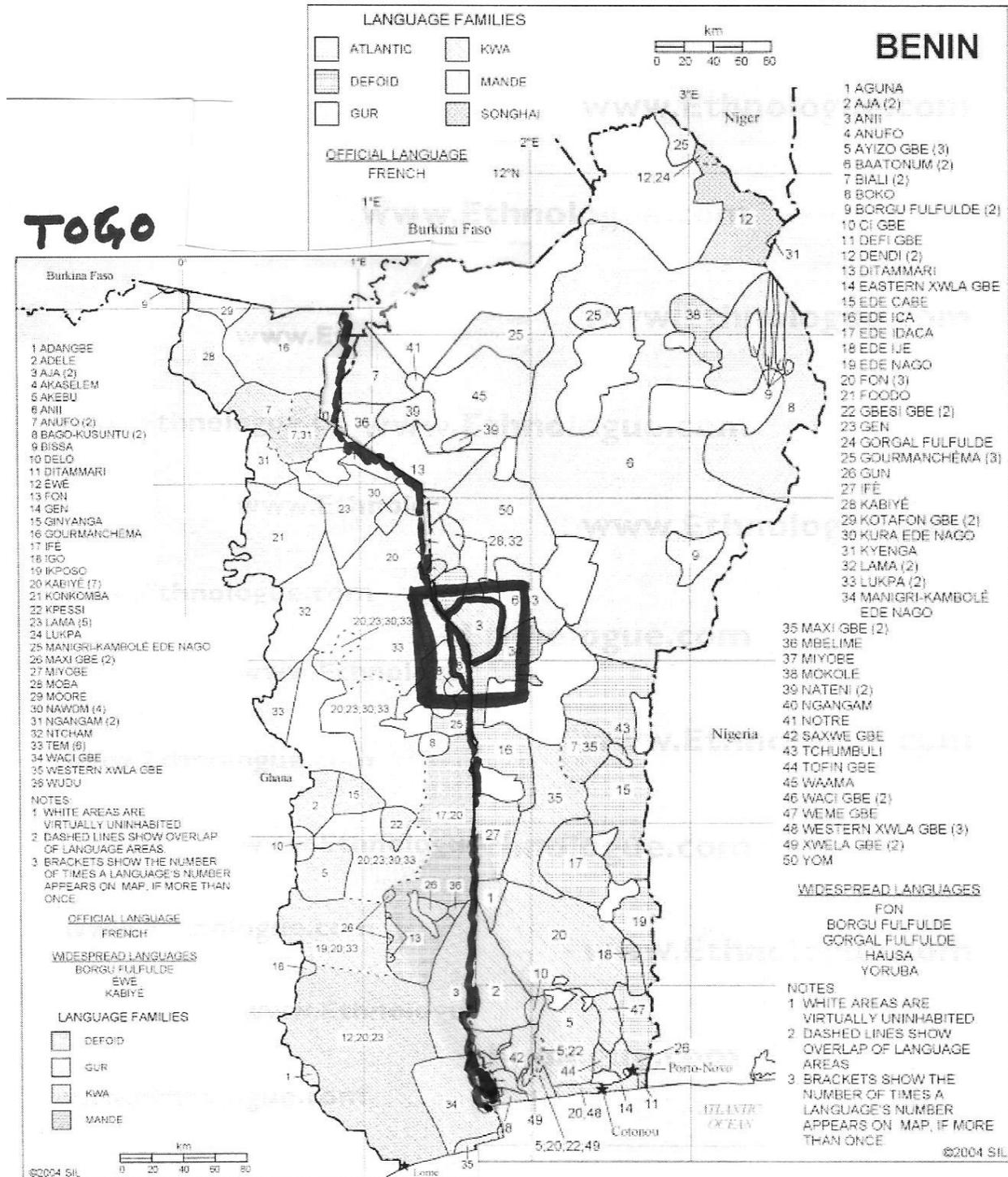
A close-up map of Anii-land, showing all the villages (piste is the French word for a dirt road). The villages where no recordings were made are crossed out and the main dialect groupings circled and labeled.
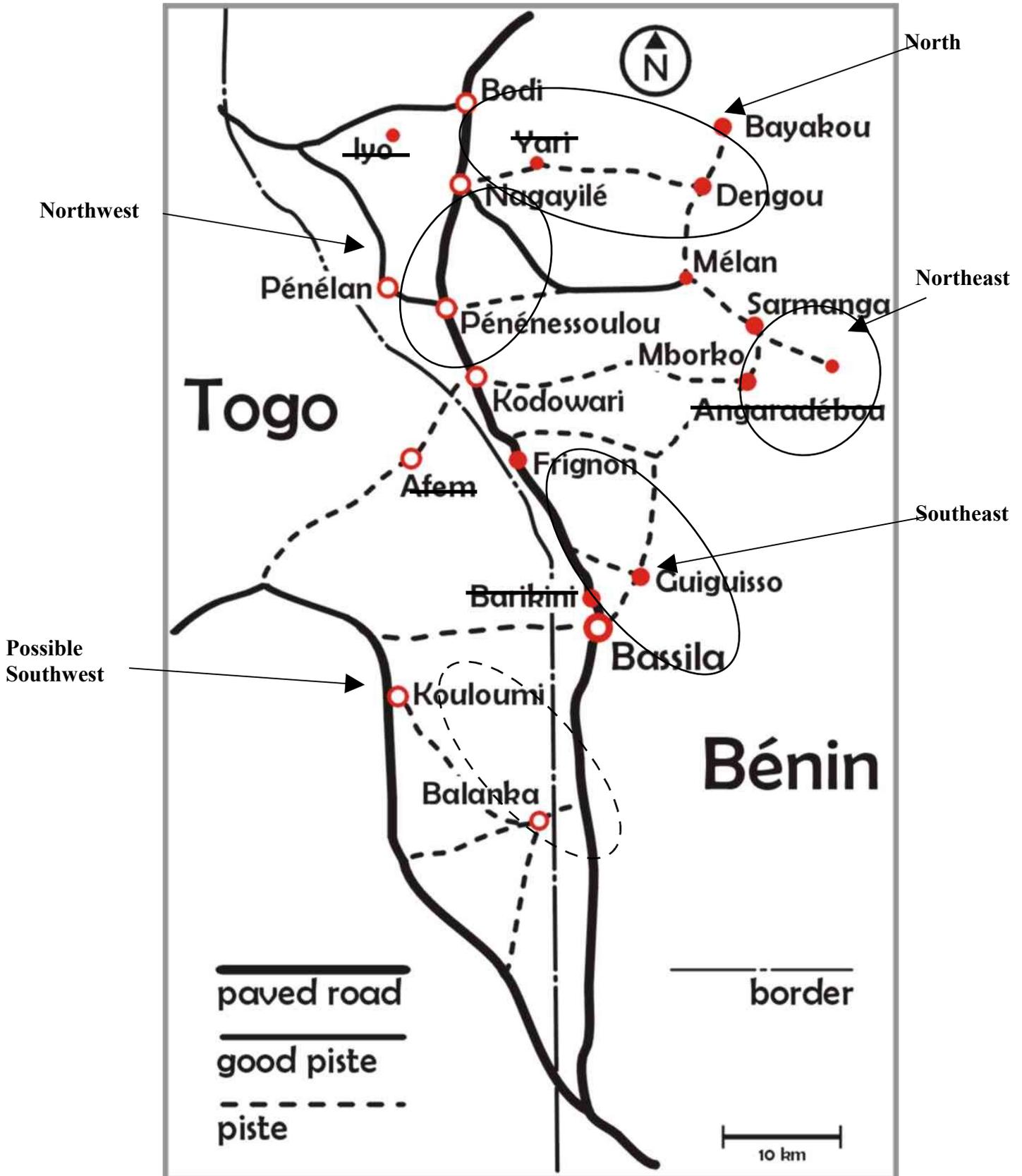
Appendix B: Anii Phoneme Inventory

Consonants

	Place of articulation/ manner of articulation	labial		labio-dental	alveolar		palato-alveolar, alveo-palatal		palatal	velar		labio-velar		glottal
		vcl	*vcd*	*vcl*	*vcl*	*vcd*	*vcl*	*vcd*	*vcd*	*vcl*	*vcd*	*vcl*	*vcd*	
obstruent	stops, plosives	p	b		t	d				k	g	kp	gb	
	secondarily articulated stops													
	fricatives			f	s		ʃ							h
	affricates				(ts)[6]		tʃ	dʒ						
sonorant	nasals		m		n				ɲ[7]		ŋ		ŋm[8]	
	laterals				l									
	liquids				r									
	glides								j[9]				w	

Vowels

	front	central	back
high	i ɪ		u ʊ
mid	e ɛ	(ə)[10]	o ɔ
low		a	

Note: ɪ, ɛ, ɔ, and ʊ are the representations usually used in the area for –ATR vowels, and have been used in published material for that purpose (e.g. Guion, Post and Payne 2004). The [ə] may also be a –ATR corresponding to the +ATR [a], but this is unclear.

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[6] The [ts] seems to be in free alternation with [tʃ], at least in Bassila and some other dialects, so it is not a phoneme, but is noteworthy from a variation standpoint. The letter c is used in the Anii alphabet to write both [ts] and [tʃ].
[7] Transcribed with ny in the data to comply with the Anii alphabet
[8] The labio-velar nasal is rare, and may not be present in some dialects, this remains a research question.
[9] Transcribed with y in the data to comply with the Anii alphabet

[10] It is not yet fully clear whether this is a phoneme in its own right, or simply a variant of [ɪ], and perhaps a reduction of some other vowels.

Appendix C: Bassila noun classes with example words and singular and plural markers

Class	Marker		Example (Bassila Dialect)		Gloss
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	
Class 1	a-	ɪ-	atʊŋa	ɪtʊŋa	guinea fowl
Class 2	—	ɪ-	kodi	ɪkodi	banana
Class 3	u-/a-	ba-	upi/aka	bapi/baka	child/wife
Class 4	ga-	bu-	gafala	bufala	house/household
Class 5	gu-	a-	guyo	ayo	tree
Class 6	gɪ-	ɪ-	gɪsana	ɪsana	feather
Class 7	N- (gI-)	a-	ntala	atala	stone/rock
Class 8	ʊ-	ɪ-	ʊbu	ɪbu	snake
Class 9	bu-	a-	buto	ato	water

NB: Most loanwords are put in Class 2, although not all the words in Class 2 are borrowings. Class 3 usually refers to people. The other semantic generalizations for the classes are much more fuzzy. Also, the ATR quality of the vowels in these prefixes may not be fixed, this is an open research question.

There are also a few words that do not fit into these classes, but reanalyzing them along the lines of the way Bantu noun classes are described (not fixing plurals with singulars) may fix this confusion.