Overview of noun classes in Gur (II)
(revised and enlarged version)

Gudrun Miehe, Ulrich Kleinewillinghöfer, Manfred von Roncador,
and Kerstin Winkelmann

Abstract

The *Overview of noun classes in Gur II* is a revision and expansion of Miehe, Kleinewillinghöfer, von Roncador, Winkelmann 2007. It contains significant amendments which take account of supplementary data and deeper insights into noun class systems of Gur languages. References to North Volta-Congo are made occasionally in support of the interpretation of current noun class systems and the proto system.

The overview provides a summarising discussion of all noun classes known in Gur languages (Miehe & Winkelmann 2007, Reineke, Miehe & Winkelmann, forthcoming), most of which have already been reconstructed by Gabriel Manessy (see Miehe 1997 for a summary). We hold that the convention of a fixed numbering system for noun classes is indispensable for comparative purposes. We have therefore set up a general Gur numbering system, which we first introduced in 2007. The numbering system corresponds as much as reasonable to the system of the Bleek/Meinhof tradition in Bantu, applied later to Benue-Congo (de Wolf 1971) and to Niger-Congo (Williamson 1989). While the singular classes are genetically related to classes with the same number in Benue Congo this was, however, not always feasible for the plural classes except for class 2 and class 6.

A re-examination of published material on Gur languages, together with the data from our own extensive field research, allows us to draw a picture of the Proto-Gur noun class system, which is more elaborate and more complex than previously documented in the literature. Thus, it is enlarged by 'new' classes, but at the same time we have to note the absence of classes that are well known and attested in other Niger-Congo systems (cp. Williamson 1989). This is true, in particular, of the single class 11 (*LU) and of the gender 7/8 (*KI/BI). On the other hand, there are genders for which there is very strong evidence, and others which are more weakly represented in the Gur languages. For instance, we have found some weak traces of locative classes. This evidence corroborates the findings in the seminal article by Westermann (1935), in which he pointed to the close relationship between Bantu and 'Western Sudanic'.

We assume that the general outline of what we reconstructed as Proto-Gur noun class system is essentially akin to the class system of the common ancestor of Central Gur, the Senoufo languages, as well as the isolated languages and groups (Cɛfɔ, Viemo, Tusia̧, Samu group), termed "Improbable Central Gur" in Naden 1989.

As far as the position of Gur within 'North Volta-Congo' is concerned, we have to acknowledge that the application of Manessy's morphological and lexical criteria for the internal classification of Central Gur languages and groups would require that several (so-called) Adamawa groups particularly Tula-Waja and Sama-Duru had also to be counted as part of Proto-Central Gur (Kleinewillinghöfer 1996, mss). On the basis of their class systems all these groups appear to be core branches of an hypothetical (Central) Adamawa-Gur.

References:

De Wolf, Paul P. 1971. *The Noun Class System of Proto-Benue-Congo.* The Hague: Mouton.

Kleinewillinghöfer, Ulrich. 1996. Relationship between Adamawa and Gur languages: The case of Waja and Tula. *Gur Papers / Cahiers Voltaïques*, 1: 25-45.

Kleinewillinghöfer, Ulrich. (2012). Sama-Duru, a core group of Central Adamawa. An appraisal of its lexicon and noun class system. Paper prepared for the International Congress "Towards Proto-Niger-Congo: Comparison and Reconstruction", Paris, 18-21 September 2012.

Kleinewillinghöfer, Ulrich. (in preparation). Noun Class Systems in Gur Languages, Vol. III. Gurunsi.

Manessy, Gabriel. 1999. Langues et histoires des peuples voltaïques: signification et limites de la comparaison historique. *Gur Papers / Cahiers Voltaïques,* 4: 3-18.

Miehe, Gudrun. 1997. Gabriel Manessy et les langues voltaïques. *Gur Papers / Cahiers Voltaïques,* 2: 3-16.

Miehe, Gudrun & Kerstin Winkelmann (eds). 2007. *Noun Class Systems in Gur Languages*. Vol. I *Southwestern Gur Languages (without Gurunsi).* Köln: Köppe.

Miehe, Gudrun, Ulrich Kleinewillinghöfer, Manfred von Roncador & Kerstin Winkelmann. 2007. Overview of noun classes in Gur. In: Miehe, Gudrun & Kerstin Winkelmann (eds). *Noun Class Systems in Gur Languages*, Vol. I. *Southwestern Gur Languages (without Gurunsi).* Köln: Köppe; 7-22.

Miehe, Gudrun, Ulrich Kleinewillinghöfer, Manfred von Roncador & Kerstin Winkelmann. (forthcoming). Overview of noun classes in Gur II (revised and enlarged version). In: Reineke, Brigitte, Gudrun Miehe & Kerstin Winkelmann (eds). *Noun Class Systems in Gur Languages*, Vol. II. *North Central Gur Languages.* Köln: Köppe; 5-37.

Naden, Tony. 1989. Gur. In: Bendor-Samuel, John (ed). *The Niger-Congo Languages.* Lanham - New York - London: University Press of America; 140-168.

Reineke, Brigitte, Gudrun Miehe & Kerstin Winkelmann (eds). (forthcoming). *Noun Class Systems in Gur Languages.* Vol. II. *North Central Gur Languages.* Köln: Köppe.

von Roncador, Manfred & Gudrun Miehe. 1998. *Les langues gur (voltaïques).* Bibliographie commentée et inventaire des appellations des langues. Köln: Köppe.

Westermann, Diedrich. 1935. Nominalklassen in westafrikanischen Klassensprachen und in Bantusprachen. *MSOS, Afrikanische Studien,* 38: 1-53.

Wiiliamson, Kay. 1989. Niger-Congo Overview. In: Bendor-Samuel, John (ed). *The Niger-Congo Languages.* Lanham - New York - London: University Press of America; 3-45.