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- Author's address: School of Linguistics & English Language,
Bangor University, Gwynedd LL57 2DG, UK
v.evans@bangor.ac.uk*

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Bernd Heine & Derek Nurse (eds.), *A linguistic geography of Africa* (Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xviii + 371.

Reviewed by OLIVER BOND, School of Oriental and African Studies

Published as part of the Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact series, Bernd Heine & Derek Nurse's (henceforth H&N) latest edited volume at first glance promises to make an important contribution to the field of language contact and areal linguistics in Africa; it is a data-driven volume written by experienced Africanists with expertise spanning the continent. However, despite the anticipated quality of the volume's authorship, the articles vary greatly in terms of their focus on language contact, their methodological rigour and their originality. Given this fact, each contribution is best considered in terms of its individual merit. The empirically rigorous chapters will appeal to those concerned with developing theories of language contact based on evidence for contact-induced change, while other chapters exhibit a more impressionistic approach to 'areal' data from across the continent.

In the 'Introduction' in chapter 1, H&N introduce the field of study with some brief comments on the nature of language contact and the objective of the book – which is to consider perspectives on Africa (or significant portions of Africa) as a macro-linguistic area – before providing an overview of the contents of each chapter. Chapters 2–4 concern Africa as a continental areal-typological unit; chapters 5–7 present evidence for some smaller linguistic areas within Africa; chapters 8 and 9 each consider a specific typological feature within an areal context.

Bernd Heine & Zelealem Leyew's chapter, 'Is Africa a linguistic area?', attempts to answer this question in a quantitative fashion by surveying the occurrence of eleven (phonological, syntactic and semantic) properties of language that are common across Africa in a sample of 99 African languages. The occurrence of the same features is subsequently reviewed in 50 non-African languages for the sake of comparison. For the African languages examined, the authors comment that their sample is neither 'genetically nor areally entirely balanced' (28). The sampling procedure used for selecting the non-African languages, which exhibit skewed representation (e.g. ten languages from Europe and eight from Asia), is not discussed. Neither do the authors acknowledge that non-African languages are grossly under-represented in relation to the African languages in their sample. They conclude that there is evidence to define Africa as a linguistic area based on the quantitative analysis of their data survey. However, given the unscientific nature of their sampling procedure, which introduces rather than eliminates bias, it remains unclear what the benefit of their survey is in relation to the question posed in the title. The methodology amounts to a way of pseudo-quantifying what the authors already believed, i.e. that there are linguistic features that are common to Africa, but none that exclusively define it. Fortunately, more enlightening content is provided in a subsequent section of the paper in which the authors briefly examine isoglosses across Afroasiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Congo languages in Northern Nigeria.

In chapter 3, 'Africa as a phonological area', G. N. Clements & Annie Rialland propose that Africa can be divided into six phonological zones that cut across genetic boundaries: North, Sudanic, East, Rift, Center, and South. The zones are characterised by differences in the distribution of fourteen segmental and prosodic properties. Quantitative analyses of the data are provided across a sample of 495 languages, of which 150 are African languages (comprising 100 Niger-Congo languages and 50 from other families) and 345 non-African languages. Despite the quantitative slant, the conclusions regarding the occurrence of the phonological features investigated for the phonological zones are largely qualitative. The central body of the chapter addresses themes familiar from Clements (2000) in H&N's earlier volume on African languages, but is complemented by the substantial comparative non-African sample and an in-depth look at 'lax' question markers – a proposed areal feature of the Sudanic Belt – characterised by all, or a subset, of the following features: falling intonation, lengthening, breathy termination, and an (open) vowel. The aims of this interesting article are both realistic and well supported, making it one of the higher-quality contributions to the volume.

Chapter 4 comprises a collaborative overview of 'Africa as a morpho-syntactic area' by Denis Creissels, Gerrit J. Dimmendaal, Zygmunt Frajzyngier & Christa König. The chapter is divided into subsections dealing with various grammatical phenomena such as core grammatical relations,

verbal and nominal morphosyntax, word order, etc. The authors identify nineteen features as those most likely to be relevant for the characterisation of Africa as a morphosyntactic area. While substantial in size (65 pages) and extensive in terms of the number of topics covered, the language data used to illustrate the variation evident in Africa comes from a restricted set of languages that the authors know well and there are seldom references to follow up the brief comments provided about the data. The conclusions are impressionistic, given that the contents of the chapter are not based on a stratified survey or any type of quantitative measure. In the conclusion, Africa is treated as an a priori morphosyntactic area without reference to the geographical or genetic distribution of the features that are considered particularly common or exceptional to Africa, and there are no indications of how Africa as a unit differs (in terms of exhibiting a selection of recurrent features) from any other similarly sized contiguous area in the world. While this chapter concerns 'areality' in a broad sense, there is little mention of language contact in this chapter and certainly no mention of the types of contact situations in Africa that might be relevant for contact-induced morphosyntactic change.

The highlight of the volume for the reader interested in language contact methodology comes in chapters 5 and 6. In chapter 5, 'The Macro-Sudan belt: Towards identifying a linguistic area in northern sub-Saharan Africa', Tom Güldemann delimits a large geographical area, referred to as the 'Macro-Sudan belt', in which six areal isoglosses are proposed at the phonological and morphosyntactic level. These features comprise logophoricity, labial-velar consonants, Advanced Tongue Root vowel harmony, S[ubject]–(Aux[iliary])–O[bject]–V[erb]–X word order, V–O–Neg[ation] word order and labial flap consonants. Each feature is surveyed across language families in a sub-Saharan belt spanning the width of the continent. Explanations are accompanied by high-quality maps demonstrating the distribution of individual features. Güldemann is transparent about the methodology that underlies his study, demonstrating sensitivity to the challenges of continental sampling and issues relating to the empirical limitations of his coding system. He argues convincingly for an areal analysis of features that are characteristic of the languages in question, but not necessarily of the genetic groups to which they belong.

Chapter 6, written by Roland Kießling, Maarten Mous & Derek Nurse, concerns language contact in 'The Tanzanian Rift Valley area'. This chapter makes an original contribution to the topic in that it provides discussion of the possible direction of borrowing in contact situations in the area and also discusses what the implications of contact must be for reconstruction and higher-level relationships. Through examining contact phenomena between languages belonging to the four phyla of Africa, plus the isolate Hadza, the authors propose a historicist approach to the complex shifting contact situations that have occurred between five genetic stocks of the Rift Valley.

The arguments are clearly explained and exemplified with data. Since the plausibility of their proposals relies somewhat on knowledge of the movements of people within the area, this chapter will especially appeal to those with further knowledge of the region.

In chapter 7, 'Ethiopia', Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer discuss the Ethiopian Linguistic Area (ELA) in relation to past research on this subject and present twelve new morphological and syntactic features, which they propose as possible candidates for areal features of the ELA. They argue that the features they propose support the assumption that the ELA is a viable contact zone. Many of the suggested features are examples of common grammaticalisation processes also identified outside East Africa (e.g. ablative > comparative) and it remains unclear to what extent these examples are representative of contact-induced change. While the authors acknowledge this issue, it is the typologically unusual properties within a geographical area that provide the most convincing evidence for a linguistic area. Neither is it possible to deduce without further background reading how the new claims of the authors relate to the criticisms made by those who do not argue in support of an ELA (e.g. Tosco 2000). Like some of the other contributions, this chapter suffers from a lack of editorial input – example numbers are rarely referenced in the text, and no maps are provided of the area under discussion or of the location of the languages exemplified.

The final two chapters discuss areal features from a typological perspective. In chapter 8, Christa König gives an overview of 'The marked-nominative languages of eastern Africa', which are unusual in that African languages rarely have case, and, in contrast to case systems in general, the nominative case is functionally and morphologically marked in relation to the accusative. In the body of the chapter, König discusses the case systems of Turkana and Dhaasanac in some detail, showing how they differ from each other, but also how marked nominative systems have quite distinct characteristics from 'prototypical' case systems. The data discussed are multiple and complex, but the clarity of the argumentation is somewhat marred by various typographic errors in the text and segmentation issues in the glosses (for instance in the twelve sentences provided in example (1)); this makes it sometimes difficult to see the point being made.

In the final chapter, Gerrit J. Dimmendaal discusses the morphosyntactic and pragmatic properties of 'Africa's verb-final languages' in relation to Heine's (1976) typological study of African languages. Dimmendaal argues that when typological similarities exist between verb-final languages in Afroasiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Ijoid (Niger-Congo) and Central Khoisan, they are attributable to genetic inheritance, areal diffusion and the 'self-organising principles' of these languages rather than a presumed universal typological principle. The central tenet, then, is that constituent order typology is of little consequence in explaining the differences between these

languages; rather, the focus is on the importance of information structure in determining basic word order. The most interesting points of this paper (which are somewhat underplayed except in the introduction and conclusion) are potentially controversial statements regarding the extent to which syntax adapts to discourse structure or vice versa. This chapter therefore serves as a taster for more significant work to come in this domain.

One major criticism of the volume concerns the type of target audience to which it will appeal. In content, it bears some similarity to H&N's earlier book, *African languages: An introduction* (Heine & Nurse 2000), in which the chapters devoted to phonology and morphosyntax cover a comparable amount of ground at a similar level of descriptive complexity. In this sense the present volume is accessible for newcomers to Africanist linguistics, yet in some of the regional papers, the authors assume a detailed understanding of the relevant genetic relationships between the languages discussed. Furthermore, the volume under review does not provide a sense of how areal features of Africa (or micro-areas of Africa) contribute to our understanding of language contact in general, because many of the chapters do not deal with specific instances of contact or employ methodologies that are empirically sound. This makes it less appealing to those readers who are more interested in theoretical aspects of contact, rather than in African linguistics. In fact, reference to recent theoretical work within the field is seldom made, with much self- and cross-referencing to the contributors themselves. There is a great deal of repetition across the volume, which would have benefitted from more editorial input, both in terms of what could be and should be realistically addressed.

On a more positive note, the volume as a whole has the potential to encourage linguists working with apparent genetic units in Africa to consider how areal features contribute to our conceptualisation of 'relatedness' and to re-assess the importance of genetic units in accounting for similarities across languages within a particular geographical area where contact is attested or historically likely.

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 Author's address: Department of Linguistics, School of Oriental and African Studies,
 Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG, UK
 oliver.bond@soas.ac.uk

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