

Za:r

(Dictionary, Grammar, Texts)

Bernard CARON

IFRA, Ibadan

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Foreword

This first publication on Za:r is part of a work that first started in 1991 in Azare and has now taken the shape of a lifelong enterprise. The general purpose of describing the Za:r language is to help put on the linguistic map a language spoken by about 150 000 speakers in the South of Bauchi State, Nigeria, and mainly in the Bogoro Local Government Area. Although Chadic languages are beginning to be relatively well documented, little was known about the 30 or so « Saya » languages among which Za:r is the largest. Filling the gap with a description as exhaustive as possible will improve the understanding of the evolution of Chadic languages, help reconstruct the history of their speakers and place « Saya » languages in the typology of human languages. And last but not least, it is a well-known fact that the best way to give children access to education is to teach them through the medium of their mother tongue. This implies reading and writing in their own language, which in turn implies equipping the language with its own orthography and written grammar.

The present work is primarily aimed at Za:r speakers. All of them are bilingual, using Za:r locally and Hausa regionally. English is a prerequisite in the Nigerian system of education. Through the use of Za:r, English and Hausa in the dictionary and collection of texts, this book is meant to develop the readers' competence in the three languages and will help Za:r children become more familiar with English.

Finally, we have chosen to use the local (Bauchi) Hausa for the translation of the collection of texts, and document a non-standard variety of the language.

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Symbols and Abbreviations

§	chapter	NP	noun phrase
1	1st person	n.v	verbal noun
2	2nd person	num	numeral
3	3rd person	on	onomatopoeia
adv	adverb	p, Pl	plural
aor	aorist	PPrt	predicative particle
AP	adjectival phrase	prep	preposition
aux	auxiliary	prf	perfective
cf	see	prm	Previous Reference
conc	concomitant	Marker	
cm	centimeter	Pro	pronoun
cond	conditional	prt	particle
conj	conjunction	punct	punctiliar
cont	continuous	quest	question word
cop	copula	R	Rising Tone
ctf	counterfactual	rec	recent
dat	dative	ref	reflexive
deict	deictic	rel	relative
det	determinant	rem	remote
do	direct object	s	singular
E	English	sbj	subject
e.g.	for example	sbjv	subjunctive
excl	exclamation	sp	type of
F	falling tone	TAM	person, tense, aspect
Fr	French	and mood complex	
fut	future	v	verb
gen	generic	v.i	intransitive verb
GL	genitive link	v.imp	impersonal verb
H	High tone	v.ref	reflexive verb
Ha	Hausa	v.t	transitive verb
id	ideophone	v.ti	v.t and v.i
imm	immediate	v.x	irregular verb
ind	independent	VN	verbal noun
interj	interjection	VP	verbal phrase
iprf	imperfective	Y	Yoruba
L	Low Tone		
lit	literal translation		
loc	locution		
M	Middle tone		
n	noun		

Introduction

The Za:rs live in the South of Bauchi State (Nigeria), in the Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro local government areas. In the absence of a population census, a rough estimate would put their population at 150 000.

The names derived from root "Saya" (i.e. *Bàsáyè:* (pl. *Sáyá:wá:*) for the speakers, and *Sáyáncì:* for the language) are the names used by the Hausas. The speakers call themselves *Za:r* (pl. *Zàrsə̀*) meaning 'human being', and call their language *vìk Za:r* (lit. 'the mouth of men'). As they consider the term "Saya" derogatory, we use the term *Za:r* to refer both to the people and the language.

According to their oral tradition, the Za:rs originate from the lake Chad area. They started migrating South-West about four hundred years ago, because of the deterioration of farming conditions, or because of the multiplication of slave hunting that developed in Hausa and Borno kingdoms. After stopping in Duguri, they moved again South-East. Shimizu (78 : 10) states that :

"The homeland of the speakers of the southern Bauchi group of Chadic was around the three hills Tala, Kir and Buli hills, which are located just to the south of the Bauchi township."

They moved again further South to take refuge in the hills on the East side of the plateau area. A large part moved down to their present location in the plain at the foot of those hills when the area was pacified under British colonisation.

The *Za:r* "village" is a dispersed habitat where they live in the typical compound of the Nigerian savannah. The compound (*dən*, pl. *dənsə̀*) is made of mud huts (*vì:n*, pl. *vì:nsə̀*) with grass roofs arranged in a circle and linked with walls that preserve the intimacy of the inhabitants. Formerly, the Za:rs only had a religious chief, but they have recently adopted the Hausa chieftaincy system.

According to [Newman 90], *Za:r* (which he calls *Saya*) belongs to the the West-B3 group of Chadic languages, with some doubts arising from the properties it shares with *Angas*.

Four dialects can be distinguished within *Za :r*, named after the main villages or towns where they are spoken : ^aogoro (formerly called the *Lusa* dialect), *Gambar Lere*, *Marti* and *Kal*. The *Kal* dialect is very close to what is generally called the *Sigidi* or *Gu:s* language (cf. Caron 2001), to the extent that *Gu:s* might be called a dialect of *Za:r*.

Most Za:r people of the younger generation are bilingual Hausa-Za:r. They are schooled through the medium of Hausa in primary school, before learning English. The Za:rs are Christians, and use a Hausa translation of the Bible. The older generation are not very confident in Hausa, whereas the younger educated elite, who often hold positions in the administration, police and education, switch between Za:r, Hausa and English.

Writing

We have chosen to use a spelling that preserves the phonetic value of allophones and tonal realization, and is thus closer to the actual pronunciation of the language than the phonological system.

Tones are marked with accents : H with an acute accent: *á*; L with a grave accent: *à*; M is left unmarked: *a*. In the alphabetical order, digraphs are not treated as a unit.

ALPHABETICAL ORDER

spelling	value	example	
<i>a</i>	a	<i>kará</i>	beg
<i>a:</i>	a:	<i>ka:rá</i>	increase
<i>b</i>	b	<i>bàndà</i>	pot
<i>ɓ</i>	ɓ	<i>ɓuruk</i>	all
<i>c</i>	tʃ	<i>Coghɲ</i>	God
<i>d</i>	d	<i>da:n</i>	chair
<i>dz</i>	dz	<i>dzàŋ</i>	sun
<i>d'</i>	d'	<i>dát</i>	be short
<i>e</i>	e	<i>belle</i>	tribal scars
<i>e:</i>	e:	<i>àle:dè</i>	pig
<i>ə</i>	ə	<i>tôpm</i>	road
<i>ə:</i>	ə:	<i>dǎ:l</i>	open space
<i>f</i>	f	<i>fúpm</i>	long
<i>g</i>	g	<i>ga:m</i>	head
<i>gh</i>	ɣ	<i>ghəsək</i>	tree sp.
<i>h</i>	h	<i>haske</i>	light
<i>i</i>	i	<i>lim</i>	six
<i>i:</i>	i:	<i>mí:səŋ</i>	soup
<i>j</i>	ɕ	<i>jít</i>	in-law
<i>k</i>	k	<i>kávit</i>	night
<i>l</i>	l	<i>lú:</i>	clothes

<i>m</i>	m	<i>mátaŋ</i>	tamarind
<i>mb</i>	^m b	<i>mbasl</i>	liver
<i>n</i>	n	<i>nàmbóŋ</i>	one
<i>nd</i>	ⁿ d	<i>ndúri</i>	short
<i>ndz</i>	ⁿ dz	<i>ndzũ:n</i>	shame
<i>ng</i>	ⁿ g	<i>ngíl</i>	song
<i>nj</i>	ⁿ ɕ	<i>njíri</i>	cold
<i>ny</i>	ɲ	<i>nyá:tsa</i>	sand
<i>ŋ</i>	ŋ	<i>ŋas</i>	bite
<i>p</i>	p	<i>pá:tsə</i>	leaf
<i>r</i>	r	<i>rô:m</i>	axe
<i>s</i>	s	<i>saghát</i>	be clever
<i>sh</i>	ʃ	<i>shíshĩr</i>	dew
<i>sl</i>	ʃ	<i>slú:</i>	meat
<i>t</i>	t	<i>tápní</i>	straight
<i>ts</i>	ts	<i>tsal</i>	break
<i>v</i>	v	<i>vòràŋ</i>	blood
<i>w</i>	w	<i>wurbá</i>	money
<i>y</i>	j	<i>ya:sl</i>	earth
<i>z</i>	z	<i>za:r</i>	human being
<i>zh</i>	ʒ	<i>zhèdí</i>	mosquito
<i>zl</i>	ʒ	<i>zli:</i>	body
