# Sama-Duru, a core group of Central Adamawa

## An appraisal of its lexicon and noun class system

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As a contribution to the classification of the somewhat impressionistically clustered Adamawa language groups, the paper presents the initial results of a comparative study of the noun class morphology and basic lexicon of Sama-Duru. The bulk of the Sama-Duru languages, representing Greenberg's (1963) Adamawa groups 2 (Chamba or Samba Leko) and 4 (Duru, Vere), are spoken in a contiguous area extending from the Adamawa Region and North Region of Cameroon into the adjacent Adamawa State of Nigeria.

The northern part of the Sama-Duru area is dominated by the towering Alantika Mountains. Their remote uplands and valleys straddling the border of Cameroon and Nigeria are the home of several hitherto largely undocumented varieties of the close-knit Gimme-Vere languages, the largest sub branch of Sama-Duru. Together with the closely related Lɔŋto (and to a much lesser extent also Dooya̰a̰yo), these languages constitute a contiguous zone of noun class languages, outstanding among Adamawa languages in terms of the complexity and archaisms of their class systems. All of them appear to have preserved ancient features of a noun class system which seems to be characteristic for the still hypothetical Adamawa-Gur. The rich class morphologies of the languages in this zone contrasts significantly with the situation in most Adamawa languages, where noun class morphologies are generally largely reduced or even completely absent. This is also the case in the other Sama-Duru languages outside that zone.

Thus Sama-Duru is principally defined by common phonological traits, a significant number of common retentions and a number of shared innovations in its basic lexicon. It was established as a genetic unit under the name "Chamba-Namshi" by Bennett in 1983, who connected the Sama-Duru languages with Mumuye (and Nimbari) to form one of the divisions of his Cameroun-Ubangian. Boyd (1989) basically maintained Bennett's grouping but classified this unit (unnamed) as one of the (three) core groups of Adamawa. This stance essentially continues to be the view inherent in classifications to date, e.g. Williamson & Blench 2000, the Ethnologue (Lewis 2009), and it is also presented on the Classification Chart "Les Langues Niger-Congo" (G. Segerer 2011-12) linked to the homepage of this Congress.

The paper presents lexical and morphological data to substantiate the validity of Sama-Duru and concludes with an attempt to further define its position within (Central) Adamawa-Gur.

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