

# Proto-West Benue Congo Stem C<sub>1</sub>

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## Abstract

Reconstructing Niger–Congo is subject to reconstruction of its various internal nodes, one of which is WBC. The groups which make up WBC are Oko, Ukaan Akpes, Defoid, Ayere, Edoid, Ebiroid, Nupoid, Idomoid (Platoid) and Igbooid. Each group is comprised of several languages. The basic vocabulary of groups like Yoruboid, Edoid, Nupoid /Ebiroid have been reconstructed and their consonant inventories clearly identified by Akinkube , Elugbe (1986) and Bankale (2006). Although wordlists differ by authors, cognates across WBC were identified after an examination of all the available reconstructions and comparison with corresponding items in other WBC languages yet to be reconstructed. Stem C<sub>1</sub> consonant correspondences at this level were identified and reconstructed based on the phonological plausibility of their development. This was particularly necessary as groups like Defoid and the Akpes/Edoid/ Ukaan had more than one reconstructed form; (Defoid: hoe *\*-gb/\*-ro*, navel *\*-kp/\*-d*) and where there were single reconstructions, reflexes varied per reconstruction. Fresh reconstructions were carried out in stages based on the internal classification of WBC by Williamson and Blench (2000) as reviewed by the author. This resulted in major adjustments to WBC, YEAI and NOI in the form of a tree with three primary nodes EDIA, ONEI, Ikaan. Reconstruction was thus first at different nodes within WBC before arriving at the proposed Proto-WBC C<sub>1</sub>. Olukumi was considered an additional Defoid language although it is located in the heart of Lower Niger languages. Some of the reconstructed C<sub>1</sub> sounds proposed as Proto-WBC consonants comprise: implosives, nasals, fortis/lenis plosives, affricate and approximants (see Table 2). Sometimes two sounds are reconstructed at Proto-WBC level when a number of the groups have variant forms; for instance ..... Identified places of articulation include bilabial, alveolar, palatal velar and labial-velar. Further research is suggested into the proposition of Proto-WBC V<sub>1</sub>, leading on to the reconstruction of complete basic lexical items; after which Proto-WBC may be synchronised with other nodes of Niger-Congo.

**Table 1. Proto-WBC C<sub>1</sub> Consonants**

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar
Nasal	*-m	*-n			
Lenis	*-mh				
Plosive	*-p *-b	*-t: *-d	*c	*-k *-g (u,i)	*-kp *-gb
Lenis	*ph *-bh	*-th *-dh	*-ch	*-kh *-gh	*-gbh
Implosive	*-ɓ	*-ɗ			
Affricate	*-ts				
Approximant			*-j		*-w

**Table 2. Some WBC Cognates with two reconstructed Stem C<sub>1</sub>**

Gloss	Oko	Ukaan	Akpes	Yoruboid	Akokoid	Edoid	Nupoid	Ebiroid	Proposed Proto-WBC
Ashes	<i>ewunu</i>	<i>i-huko</i>	<i>u-hūhū</i>	<i>e-rīrū</i>	<i>ɔ-ŋɔ/ɔ-ndɔ</i>	<i>A-mhuNə</i>	<i>V-tuNu</i>	<i>a-tɪtɔ</i>	<i>*-mh / *-d</i>
Axe	<i>ɔ-dɔ</i>	<i>u-dugo</i>	<i>a-kēke</i>	<i>o-keke/</i> <i>ɛdɔ(SEY)</i>	<i>ɔ-hɔ/ɔ-ŋɔɔ/e-ŋɛ</i>	<i>A-ʒueNi</i>	<i>gbakun</i>	<i>ɪraga</i>	<i>*-gb/*-d</i>
Break( calabash)	<i>apinɔ</i>	<i>fɛgɛ</i>	<i>jai</i>	<i>fɔ</i>	<i>fɔ</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>ba</i>	<i>tiaka</i>	<i>*p/*ti</i>
Corpse	<i>eporo</i>	<i>ɔniox<sup>o</sup>x<sup>o</sup></i>	<i>ɔ-niohuhu</i>	<i>o-ku</i>	<i>kuokuō/</i> <i>ikuku</i>	<i>O-dhɪmhɪ</i>	<i>-ku</i>	<i>o-ku</i>	<i>*-dh / *k</i>
Die	<i>efo</i>	<i>x<sup>o</sup></i>	<i>hu</i>	<i>Ku</i>	<i>kū/ku</i>	<i>ghU</i>	<i>tiu</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>*-gh: / *-t:</i>
Ear	<i>ɔ-tɔ</i>	<i>a-ruk</i>	<i>a-suku</i>	<i>e-ti</i>	<i>u-to</i>	<i>ghU-chəGɪ</i>	<i>CV-tuNakpua</i>	<i>ɯ-tɔkpa</i>	<i>*-ch/ *-t</i>
Make	<i>e-sije</i>	<i>kɛnɛ</i>	<i>mɛ</i>	<i>Ce</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>dhu</i>	<i>zi</i>	<i>mɛ</i>	<i>*-m / *-dh/ *c</i>
Saliva	<i>e-fua</i>	<i>a-sa/</i>	<i>ũ-sua/Nsua</i>	<i>ɪ-tɔ</i>	<i>i-tɛ̃/u-tɛ̃</i>	<i>A-ciaNɪ</i>	<i>miNikiNi</i>	<i>a-tɛ</i>	<i>*-b / *-ts</i>
Shoot	<i>bɛ</i>	<i>Fa</i>	<i>ɲā</i>	<i>ɲū/ta</i>	<i>ʃɪ/ʃibɔ</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>tsie</i>	<i>tʒe</i>	<i>*-kp / *-t</i>
Tree	<i>o-ti</i>	<i>ɔ-hon</i>	<i>ɔ-hūnɛ</i>	<i>e-gi</i>	<i>ɔ-hɔ̃/u-ŋɔ</i>	<i>V-thaNɪ</i>	<i>V-cigbəNa</i>	<i>ɔ-ʃi</i>	<i>*-d / *-b</i>
Twenty	<i>ɔ-gbɔɔ</i>	<i>u-gbɔɔ</i>	<i>ŋmgbɔɔ</i>	<i>o-gū</i>	<i>u-gbɔɔ</i>	<i>U-gheGi</i>	<i>e-tsi</i>	<i>o-fu</i>	<i>*-b/ *th</i>

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