

Review Articles

Sergio BALDI, On Maaka People, a review article of: Alessandro Suzzi Valli, *Maaka Oral Tradition and Proverbs*, Studi Africanistici, Serie Ciado-Sudanese 5, Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”, 231 p., Napoli 2014.

Maaka (also known as Maha, Maka, Maga, Magha) is a West-Chadic language of the Afro-Asiatic phylum, spoken in two main towns, Bara and Gulani in southern Yobe state of Nigeria by ca. 10,000 people (according to *Ethnologue* 1993), even if the author of a recent book (Suzzi Valli 2014: 13) puts the number at approximately 3,000. According to Suzzi Valli “The Maaka language comprises two dialects, located in the two main centers of the Maaka speaking area, Bara and Gulani”. The number of publications on Chadic languages is still not satisfactory at all, considering that for most of these 150 idioms, sufficient documentation is lacking, and publications are sometimes limited to a list of words and some scarce information. For this reason every new publication in this field is very welcomed.

But this book on Maaka, is a bad attempt at increasing our knowledge on Chadic languages. The volume consists of a short introduction, a bibliography, a text on the history of Bara (pp. 36–205), proverbs and riddles in Maaka collected by Herrmann Jungraithmayr and Jibril Jatau Bara (pp. 207–211), a Glossary of Maaka-English/French (pp. 213–229) and an appendix, where the number of pages is not given.

Apart from the previous consideration on the still limited number of publications on these languages, and also considering the importance and the characteristics of these idioms; we would not really miss this publication on the Maaka language! In fact the work is littered with mistakes of different kinds; in writing, translation and grammatical analysis.

The first kind of mistakes is related to the author’s English. We notice: “frame work” instead of framework (p. 7, note 1); lecturer instead of informant, speaking of Malam Mahmoud Adam (p. 10, line 8), who by the way I can personally testify, does not speak such a bad English, nor knows Maaka at all! This fact should be mentioned because the author thanks Malam Mahmoud Adam for his help (“in the interpretation and translation of the text”) and for revising his English (“final revision of the English version”).

In going through the book we find such: porpose (p. 18, line 1) instead of purpose; The story(es) instead of the stor(ies) (p. 21, line 1); porpously instead of purposely (p. 21, line 9); in (p. 21, line 20) instead of on; cases (p. 25, line 8) instead of case; convintions (p. 27, line 32) instead of convictions; declared (p. 29, line 27) instead of declared; asked to (p. 39, line 8) instead of asked; arrived (p. 47, line 8) instead of arrive; lift (p. 49, line 8) instead of lifted; tighten (p. 73, line 6) instead of tightened; conqueedr (p. 83, line 7) instead of conquered; trib (p. 89, line 5) instead of tribe; hopped (p.89, line 10) instead of hop; topenetrater (p. 95, line 7) instead of to penetrate; wheather (p. 131, line 7) instead of whether; the all (p. 139, line 6) instead of all; founde (p. 163, line 7) instead of found; Where is him? (p. 163, line 9) instead of Where is he?; ran (p. 165, line 6) instead of run; grew (p. 181, line 8) instead of grown; wednsdays (p. 187, line 7) instead of Wednesdays.

Sometimes the author reaches humoristic levels when he says *tail* (p. 18, line 16; p. 21, line 12) for *tale*, or he reaches a level of mystery: *re? 'Q'* (p. 116, lines 11), just to mention a few examples, or it is really difficult to understand what he is talking about: “Means short time left after the main job, for late afternoon part-time” (p. 183, note 28).

Another kind of problems is the Bibliography, which is full of mistakes. Cyffer’s article is “Who are (and not *were*) the ancestors of the Saharan Family?” (p. 33, line 2); Hoffmann and not Hoffman (p. 33, line 9). The first full name is given for all scholars except for E. Mohammadou (the late Eldridge, a very well-known scholar, recently honoured by the town of Garoua, who dedicating one of its avenues to him) and O. Temple (Olive Susan Miranda Mcleod), who compiled the book quoted from official reports, edited by her husband Charles Lindsay Temple.

In the bibliography, the author quotes six of his own articles, some of which are of little academic value, not mentioning any of Anne Storch’s or Rudolf Leger’s articles. This remark is important because, these scholars were responsible for the DAAD project, thanks to which the author got funding in a research project in Germany, which he used to write the book.

The third type of mistakes are in the marking of tones: the system is completely inconsistent and contradictory:

shéní ‘year’ (p. 36, line 4), but *shènì* (p. 226, line 8);

káláa ‘but’ (p. 36, line 14), but *kálà* (p. 124, lines 9 and 13; p. 136, line 18; p. 160, line 15), *kálàa* (p. 146, line 1; p. 174, line 14) and *kàláa* (p. 220, line 14);

incà ‘now’ (p. 40, line 5), and *incà* (p. 130, line 7), *incá* (p. 140, line 5), *incá* (p. 140, line 5 and p. 219, line 23);

pòccó ‘arrow’ (p. 44, line 11 and p. 50, line 7), and *póccó* (p. 225, line 14);

jiláí ‘eight’ (p. 44, line 13), and *jiláy* (p. 220, line 1);
bèmbà ‘ten’ (p. 46, line 9), and *bémbà* (p. 182, line 16; p. 188, line 9 and p. 190, line 1), *bèmbà* (p. 198, line 10) and *bèmbá* (p. 214, line 13);
děssinè ‘smallness’ (p. 48, line 3), and *děssínè* (p. 217, line 4);
lòò ‘meat’ (p. 50, line 15 and p. 66, line 17), and *lòó* (p. 222, line 17);
bòncè ‘here’ (p. 50, line 3 and p. 215, line 8), and *bòncé* (p. 54, line 17);
làa ‘child’ (p. 56, line 11), and *lóa* (p. 222, line 1);
sòssiré ‘big’ (p. 66, line 9), and *sòssarè* (p. 226, line 23);
*zámà-m*¹ ‘generation’ (p. 66, line 17), and *zàmàn* (p. 104, line 7), *zámàn* (p. 108, line 9), *zámà-n* (p. 186, lines 5 and 16), *zámán* (p. 228, line 14);
kimbà ‘pepper’ (p. 70, line 15), and *kimbà* (p. 221, line 2);
bòmòzì ‘male’ (p. 72, line 5), *bómózi* ‘male’ (p. 215, line 6) and *bómózi* ‘man’ (line 7);
pàrà ‘fight’ (p. 72, line 9), and *pára* (p. 225, line 2);
sòmbòdì ‘day’ (p. 74, line 17), and *sómbódí* (p. 226, line 21);
kùshì ‘baobab tree’ (p. 76, line 1), and *kùshì* (p. 221, line 32);
*bóndón*² ‘between’ (p. 82, line 1), *bòndò* (p. 94, line 18) and *bòndò* (p. 215, line 10);
àlì ‘area/land’ (p. 84, line 5), and *àlí* (p. 213, line 8);
bàyàncé ‘slaves’ (p. 84, line 9), and *bàayà* (? a singular of *bàyàncé*) ‘slave’ (p. 213, line 28);
dìshì ‘grandfather’ (p. 84, line 13), and *dìshì* (p. 217, line 13);
sàmnó ‘toll’ (p. 86, line 15 and p. 88, line 9), and *sámnó* (p. 225, line 31);
ádà ‘dog’ (p. 102, line 12), and *áda* (p. 213, line 2);
dòw ‘follow’ (p. 104, line 3 and p. 106, line 3), and *dòw* (p. 217, line 27);
Nàsàrà ‘European’ (p. 104, line 17), *Nàsàrà* ‘Europeans’ (p. 106, line 1), *Nàsàrà* ‘Europeans’ (p. 160, line 13), and *nàsáaràa* ‘white man’ (p. 223, line 28);
dáandè ‘children’ (p. 112, line 16 and p. 120, line 7), and *dáandé* (p. 216, line 3);

¹ -m/n is a genitive link (?).

² Here again another inconsistency of the author’s marking of the genitive link, sometimes attached to the word and sometimes preceded by a hyphen: *bòndò-n-sù* ((p. 94, line 18)). On the other hand the author does not care to be coherent, considering that this genitive link is marked grammatical and another time phonetical: *Dáandé-m-mù* ‘Children-G’ (p. 142, lines 3–4). In *bòndò* we also find two ejectives in the same word, something very unusual in Chadic.

- Kìmbà* (why is there a capital letter?) ‘pepper’ (p. 114, line 9), and *kìmbà* (p. 221, line 2);
- zèní* ‘west’ (p. 118, line 4 and p. 228, line 21), and *zèni* (p. 118, line 4; p. 120, line 15 and p. 122, line 9);
- á* ‘if’ (p. 118, line 11), and *Áa* (p. 130, line 9);
- átì* ‘thing’ (p. 102, line 3), and *átìṅ* (p. 213, line 19);
- dèssinè* ‘small’ (p. 120, line 9), and *dèssinè* (p. 217, line 4);
- láy* ‘who?’ (p. 120, line 9), and *láy* (p. 228, line 3);
- bòdí* ‘place’ (p. 120, line 13), and *bòdí* (p. 214, line 31);
- pàdǎú* ‘four’ (p. 120, line 15), and *pàdǎú* (p. 224, line 34);
- yàlá* ‘north’ (p. 122, line 1), *yàlàa* ‘north’ (p. 178, line 7), *yàlàa* (p. 196, line 1) and *yàlá* (p. 228, line 2);
- tàryá* ‘month’ (p. 126, line 10; p. 227, line 5), and *tàryá* (p. 126, line 14);
- kùnù* ‘three’ (p. 126, line 10), and *kùnù* (p. 221, line 34);
- pàrá* ‘fight’ (p. 128, line 16), and *pàrá* (p. 225, line 2);
- sàntàl* ‘jar’ (p. 134, lines 8 and 10), and *sàntál* (p. 225, line 32);
- dǒolí* ‘play’ (p. 134, line 16), and *dǒolí* (p. 217, line 23);
- kókkó* ‘up’ (p. 136, line 18), and *kókkò* ‘above’ (p. 221, line 10);
- dàshí* ‘alright’ (p. 142, lines 11, 15 and 17), and *dàashí* (p. 144, line 1);
- lùwáí* ‘what’ (p. 160, line 13), and *lùwàý* (p. 222, line 20);
- òtè-kálàk* ‘Bundle of potash’ (p. 166, lines 1), and *òtè-kálàk* (p. 152, lines 11 and 12; p. 166, line 1);
- bàbá* ‘father’ (p. 174, line 7), *bàbà* (p. 176, line 1 and p. 200, line 1), and *bàabá* (p. 214, line 27);
- pòoyò* ‘new’ (p. 174, line 12), and *póoyó* (p. 225, line 18);
- dèesè* ‘small’ (p. 174, line 14), and *dèesé* (p. 216, line 22);
- làa* ‘child’ (p. 174, line 16; p. 210, line 20), and *lóa* (p. 222, line 1);
- lèemà* ‘nothing’ (p. 176, line 14), and *léemá* (p. 222, line 11);
- kòkíunú* ‘thirty’ (p. 178, line 15), and *kòkíunú* (p. 221, line 12);
- ṅgànú* ‘seven’ (p. 180, line 1), and *ṅgàanù* (p. 224, line 17);
- pàdǎú* ‘four’ (p. 180, line 5), and *pàdǎú* (p. 224, line 36);
- làatù* ‘person’ (p. 180, line 9), *làatù* (p. 188, line 13 and p. 196, line 13) and *làatí* (p. 222, line 3);

mòodì ‘one’ (p. 180, line 17), *mòodí* (p. 182, line 4) and *móodí* (p. 223, line 20);
Mòodè ‘women’ (p. 182, line 1), *móodù* (p. 182, line 12) and *móndé* (p. 223, line 15);
wànjì ‘formerly’ (p. 184, line 10), *wanji* (p. 184, line 16) and *wánjì* (p. 227, line 21);
tày ‘food’ (p. 190, line 2), and *tái* (p. 226, line 35);
sáakà ‘morning’ (p. 194, line 16), and *sàkà* (p. 225, line 27);
gàadà ‘calabash’ (p. 196, line 7), *gádà* (p. 198, lines 8 and 10) and *gàadǎ* (p. 218, line 5);
kòrò ‘donkey’ (p. 196, line 13), and *kóoró* (p. 221, line 17);
bìnkínù ‘six’ (p. 200, line 6), and *bìṅkínù* (p. 214, line 26);
bòtò ‘corpse’ (p. 200, line 8), and *bótó* (p. 215, line 23);
bàa ‘five’ (p. 202, line 7), and *báa* (p. 213, line 26);
lándà ‘stick’ (p. 207, line 7), and *làndà* (p. 222, line 6);
kúmà ‘ear’ (p. 207, line 18), and *kúmá* (p. 221, line 26);
ándǎrǎs ‘Scorpion’ (p. 208, line 18), and *ándǎrǎs* (p. 213, line 16);
búnì ‘grinding stone’ (p. 208, line 24), and *bùní* (p. 215, line 31);
jáa ‘far’ (p. 209, line 4), and *já* (p. 219, line 25);
dòm ‘also’ (p. 209, line 25), and *dòm* (p. 217, line 20);
átìṅ ‘thing’ (p. 210, line 10), and *átìṅ* (p. 213, line 19);
bàrà ‘hunting’ (p. 210, line 20), and *bàrà* (p. 214, line 2);
wìshì ‘snake’ (p. 211, line 8), and *wìshí* (p. 227, line 25);

Sometimes the marking of tones is absent:

sə ‘he’ (p. 112, lines 5, 9 and 17; p. 114, line 3; p. 144, line 9 and 13; p. 154, lines 1, 4 and 10; p. 162, line 8; p. 211, line 8 and p. 226, line 1);
Mai (why is there a capital letter?) ‘chief’ (p. 114, line 17);
ka-n-ni ‘alone’ (p. 116, lines 7);
Wannji ‘Formerly’ (p. 146, lines 12), but *wánjì* (p. 227, lines 21);
mam ‘how many’ (p. 154, line 8);

Sometimes the marking of tones is incomplete:

kàsən ‘prepare’ (p. 98, line 7 and p. 220, line 22);
késən ‘war’ (p. 110, line 5; p. 114, line 13; p. 138, line 18 and p. 221, line 1);

mòodu ‘woman’ (p. 134, line 14);
sòssàré ‘big’ (p. 136, line 10) and *sòssàrè* ‘biggest’ (p. 226, line 23);
sòkkàré ‘in-laws’ (p. 148, line 14), but *sòkàré* ‘son-in-law’ (p. 226, line 16);
Mírəŋgà ‘town’ (p. 156, line 3);
àmbàllè ‘interj.’ (p. 160, line 1);
ánəm ‘south’ (p. 178, line 3);
kəmàŋgàr ‘wicked’ (p. 190, line 10);

Sometimes the marking of tones is absent and the words are not in the Glossary:

iyey ‘yes’ (p. 86, line 1);
a’a ‘no’ (p. 86, line 5);
kan ‘alone’ (p. 110, line 13);
a ‘and’ (p. 110, line 17);
Kilàdò (why is there a capital letter?) ‘wicked’ (p. 114, line 9);
ka ‘so’ (p. 122, line 7);
Đgazar ‘tribe’ (p. 128, line 5);
Bummburum ‘peace of tree wood’ (p. 150, line 3) and why the capital letter?
way ‘how’ (p. 150, line 5);
har ‘up to’ (p. 128, line 9);
ma ‘myself’ (p. 150, line 13);
Diya ‘evid.’ (p. 154, line 1);
na ‘of’ (p. 162, line 2);
Zanzine ‘Peoples (Kanuri)’ (p. 162, line 12);
Kaw ‘interj.’ (p. 170, line 11);
ndoko ‘arrive’ (p. 170, line 13), but *ndòkò* ‘arrive’ (p. 170, line 15);
dàrè ‘with’ (p. 182, line 16);
Dàshi ‘Alright’ (p. 190, line 8);
ka ‘interj.’ (p. 196, line 9);
dàre ‘and’ (p. 200, line 3);
takdè ‘ask’ (p. 202, line 3);
diya ‘evid.’ (p. 202, line 12);

On the other hand, there are some items which are missing in the Glossary:

àncé ‘thing’ (p. 80, line 2);

bàgái ‘what?’ (p. 80, line 4);

kàlkàl ‘ideo. ‘all right’ (p. 80, line 12);

gám ‘ram’ (p. 80, line 14);

sàttù ‘hand’ (p. 82, line 7);

yágànà ‘younger sister’ (p. 82, line 11);

àm dà ‘here is’ (p. 86, line 15);

sàì ‘except’ (p. 92, line 5);

sòrò ‘rectangular room’ (p. 114, line 1);

dàshì ‘all right’ (p. 114, line 5 and p. 202, line 18), and *dàashì* (p. 204, line 1);

mòcci ‘locust bean tree’ (p. 116, line 16);

díyà ‘evid.’ (p. 124, line 17);

gàngàm ‘Very big’ (p. 138, line 1), here, by the way the capital letter, used many times in this page, it is not justified;

sàbdùwà ‘Saturday’ (p. 140, lines 7 and 13);

òtè-kálák ‘Bundle of potash’ (p. 152, lines 11 and 12; p. 166, line 1), why the capital letter?

bòlsímè ‘proverb’ (p. 154, line 1);

gàlà ‘north’ (p. 160, line 1);

kàgàbù ‘fool’ (p. 166, line 11);

gòrù ‘wall’ (p. 174, line 1);

mòshé ‘side’ (p. 176, line 18);

àn ‘I’ (p. 184, line 1);

tálákwà ‘Tuesday’ (p. 188, line 3), and *tàlàkúwà* (p. 202, line 18);

kótùm ‘black wooden bowl’ (p. 190, line 4);

kwálá ‘finger’ (p. 190, line 8);

Dàshì ‘Alright’ (p. 190, line 8);

kàmàngàr ‘wicked’ (p. 190, line 10);

ngè ‘for’ (p. 190, line 10);

káa ‘like’ (p. 190, line 10);

hèrmà ‘friend’ (p. 190, line 14);

sám ‘day’ (p. 192, line 1);
làká ‘such’ (p. 192, line 1);
mòrpúulá ‘butter’ (p. 192, line 8);
àmà ‘this’ (p. 192, line 10);
pál ‘one’ (p. 198, line 8);
pákàni ‘bundle’ (p. 198, lines 8 and 10);
jàm ‘still’ (p. 198, line 12);
sàndà ‘stick’ (p. 198, line 12);
sábùl ‘soap’ (p. 198, line 14);
dàadàk ‘hundred’ (p. 200, line 3);
bùkù ‘sack’ (p. 200, line 12);
Lèe ‘Even’ (p. 202, line 1);
kwànò ‘dish’ (p. 202, line 5);
gáazú ‘do business’ (p. 204, line 11);
táaná ‘food’ (p. 207, line 9);
jìmè ‘talk’ (p. 208, line 12);

There are some items which are translated with different meanings in the Glossary:

pàl pàl ‘ideo. completely’ (p. 48, lines 7–8), but *pàl pàl* ‘one one’ (p. 142, lines 7–8);
súbà ‘Cloth’ (p. 86, line 9), but *súbà* ‘shirt’ (p. 226, line 25);
sàwàri ‘meeting’ (p. 176, line 5), and *sáwàri* ‘discussion’ (p. 225, line 35);
bée ‘father’ (p. 178, line 13), and *bée* ‘son’ (p. 214, line 6);

There are some items not present in the Glossary and quoted in different ways in the text:

á ‘if’ (p. 94, line 1), but we find *áa* ‘if’ (p. 102, line 12; p. 142, line 1 and p. 207, line 7), which is which?
yànè ‘interj.’ (p. 128, line 7), but we find *yànè* ‘evid.’ (p. 128, line 11);

Sometimes there are discrepancies between the text and the glossary:

’òssí ‘fire’ (p. 112, line 18), and *ʔòsí* (p. 229, line 5). Here, by the way, it is not clear why the glottal occlusion is written in a different way;

bòkkáará ‘door’ (p. 114, line 8), *bòkkárá* ‘palace’ (p. 116, line 18) and *bòkkáar* ‘entrance’ (p. 214, line 32);
jàw ‘pain’ (p. 160, line 7), and *jáw* ‘paining’ (p. 219, line 29);
yànkái ‘trousers’ (p. 166, line 18), and *yànkáiláy* ‘trousers’ (p. 228, line 4);
bìnkínù ‘six’ (p. 178, line 18), and *bìṅkínù* ‘six’ (p. 214, line 26);
bùdà ‘servant’ (p. 180, line 15), and *bùdà* (p. 215, line 28);
dìmbì ‘skin’ (p. 200, line 3), and *dímbí* (p. 217, line 12);
báyà ‘differently’ (p. 204, line 11), and *báyà* ‘but’ (p. 214, line 3);
nàmáa ‘this’ (p. 204, line 11), and *nàm* ‘this’ (p. 223, line 27);

Sometimes the translation is completely absent and the word is not present in the Glossary:

dré (p. 152, line 7);

The translation is completely incoherent:

bée ‘father’ (p. 70, line 17), and *bée* ‘son (of)’ (p. 214, line 6);
ndàkkò ‘go’ (p. 134, line 5; p. 223, line 32), *ndàkkò* ‘come’ (p. 223, line 33)
 and *ndòkò* ‘arrived’ (p. 134, line 11);
Ábbà ‘Name’ (p. 152, lines 17 and 18), but at p. 153, in the text, Abba is present
 (line 4), meanwhile in the translation (line 9) it disappears;

The work is also full of typographical errors:

bùdákùr ‘servan’ (p. 72, line 17), instead of ‘servant’;
Dáandé-m- ‘Children-G’ (p. 142, lines 3–4), why the capital letters?
altek (p. 145, line 2), instead of *àllék* (p. 144, line 9; p. 213, line 10);
my self (p. 149, line 7), instead of *myself*;
Five (p. 152, line 10), instead of *five*;
Town (p. 154, line 15), why T in a capital letter and the rest of the word
 in italics?;
Sòssarè (p. 168, line 18), instead of *sòssarè*;
Chirómà (p. 174, line 5), instead of *Cirómà*, a Kanuri title;
wednsday (p. 204, line 2), instead of *Wednesday*;

The alphabetical order in the Glossary (pp. 213–229) is completely misleading, because the author mixes the different phonemes not separating letters from the correspondent ejectives, so *b* and *ḃ*, *d* and *ḏ* are listed mixed,

as well as *n* and *ŋ*. The words starting with *ʔ* are at the end, when one would have expected them at the beginning of the glossary.

Some of the mistakes denote haste and an incredible sloppiness as following: “The 208rnament208 is against people” (p. 208, line 4); “ka shafa 208at sum ruwa.” (p. 208, lines 26–27); “It is a leson of 209at sum:” (p. 209, line 1); “This proverb explains that you cannot comple209mam trust even your best friends or people closest to you.” (p. 209, lines 7 and 8); “idan ya 211at summa zai gudu.” (p. 211, line 10). In other part of the text we find sometimes the German quotation marks, without any real explanation: „iyey ni ndewo” (p. 47, line 2).

In concluding the review of this disgusting work, I would like to underline what the author says at p. 8, that the publication of this book is due to the funds granted by a PRIN 2009. But he avoids mentioning the person responsible for that national program – Professor Sergio Baldi – thanks to whom he got a scholarship within the PRIN 2009 program, while he was working in Germany. For lack of space, I will end this review, by saying, *in cauda venenum*, the only thing written without any error, is the author’s name.

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