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The creation and appropriation of a pidgin
Draft

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Introduction

It is appropriate that the first theme of this conference is on the notion of contact. Its problematic nature is signaled by occasional inclusion within quotation marks, as in the announcement of the convening of this conference. We ask ourselves, “Is it a phenomenon that can be studied or a concept that enables linguists to investigate and theorize about an array of quite different phenomena?”

In Uriel Weinreich’s pioneering book, *Languages in contact*, a work to which many are indebted (I read it more than fifty years ago on the suggestion of André Martinet, editor of *Word*, after I had submitted a paper on Pidgin Sango, discussed again here), languages are said to be “in contact” “if they are used alternately by the same persons.” For him contact appears to have been a cognitive phenomenon, because “the locus of contact” is language-using individuals (1953:1). And he quotes approvingly the statement, in a slightly different context, that “In the last analysis, it is individuals who respond to and influence one another. . . . Individuals are the dynamic centers of the process of interaction” (1953:6fn18).

For some research, such a psychological perspective is a necessary one, but for my study of the creation of Sango a social perspective is also required.¹ (Every perspective possible should be used, a truth evident in the number of approaches that have appeared in theoretical linguistics since the ‘eclipsing’ emergence of generative grammar in the 1960’s.) In this present work I focus on data that are called historical as well as on data that are linguistic. They are the coordinates whose convergence in a certain place and time leads to an understanding of what happened in what we call contact, in this case the abrupt, disorderly, and brief interaction of persons with extremely different linguistic histories. (Another view is that the evolution of pidgins and creoles—PC’s they are called—is not abrupt [Mufwene 1992],² but it need not detour our present discussion.)

¹ The reader should not be alarmed at the word *creation* even though there are alternative ways of saying the same thing. The variation in usage in the literature on pidgins is rhetorical more than substantive. But notice the way it is used in evolutionary discourse: “the divisive influence of the ice sheets’ waxing and waning across the [North American] continent had a creative effect and probably generated many of our most recent species of shrews” (Adrian Forsyth, *Mammals of North America*, 1999:26).

² Creoles were formed gradually. It is time that we stopped talking about the formation of creoles as an instantaneous melange of colored liquids in a bottle (Mufwene 1992:137, 145).

Colonial context

Sango came into existence in the few years after the arrival of the first colonial expedition at the source of the Ubangi River about 600 km east of what is now Bangui. (From this latter western area the river begins to flow southward; it does not figure in the origin of Sango.) The expedition came late in 1887 in the name of King Leopold II of the Belgians consisting of a small steamer and canoes and a few white and African personnel and left in little over a year to return to Leopoldville, 2,000 km away, the whites' time being spent primarily in the purchase of elephant tusks. In June of 1889 the same officer, Alphonse Van Gele, arrived, now with more personnel and staying for eighteen months. About the same time, the French arrived at Bangui with a much smaller party, making their way slowly up the river by canoe, competing with the Belgians for control of its right (northern) bank, which was finally ceded to the French by treaty in 1894. In the meantime, a few administrative and trading posts of private companies (Belgian, French, and private) had been founded, the latter interested mostly in buying tusks.

Very quickly a jargon appeared on the river, documented by statements in 1892 and 1893, but it is in 1896 that we have an attestation of what a missionary priest called "this barbarous river language that enables you to speak with all the river tribes. It's not a language, but some kind of *volapuck*".³ Since this is a derogatory allusion to an international language created by a German a few years earlier, we can translate the word jargon, concoction, or ersatz language. Attestations then follow year by year until the publication of grammatical notes and a dictionary in 1911 (Calloc'h 1911). Pidgin Sango was very likely a stabilized idiom by 1900, and it spread quickly northward in France's Haut-Oubangui and southward in the Congo Free State as the occupation of the region continued with soldiers who spoke the young language.

Significant contact with the indigenous peoples first took place along the banks of the Ubangi—and the Mbomu and Uele rivers, which flow into it in the east. Almost entirely riverine, similar in having a culture based on the use of the river with huge dugout canoes for fishing and for trade, they speak languages of two groups of the Ubangian family of Niger-Congo: Gbanzili and Ngbandi.⁴ The bush cultivators behind them, more or less clients of those on the river, speak varieties of Banda, but in the period when Sango was coming into existence, Bandas had little contact with colonial forces, and those around Bangui, who did, had little opportunity to participate in its creation. Gbanzilis were chronologically the first to be involved in colonization, because they were the closest geographically to Bangui, but they did not seem to have served in transporting the Belgian expeditions as much as the Ngbandis did; in any case, they travelled mostly only to the edge of Ngbandi territory upriver, where Ngbandis usually took over. The Gbanzilis were not a numerous people, whereas the Ngbandis were. The latter, moreover, were recruited for transportation the whole length of the upper Ubangi and, since the political aims of both the Belgians and the French drove them determinedly eastward, further up the Mbomu

³ "Je ne parle pas de ce langage barbare de la rivi re, qui fait que tu te comprends avec tous les tributs riveraines. Ce n'est pas une langue, mais un volapuck quelconque" (Father Raoul Goblet, Mission Sainte Famille, 31 July 1896, Archives, Congr gation du Saint-Esprit).

⁴ I use the word Ngbandi in learned discourse to simplify exposition for the people who, since colonization and on the initiation of whites, call themselves Sango and Yakoma. My nomenclatural practice should not be taken as a denigration of a particular ethnolinguistic group of Central Africans.

River, in territory that was familiar to the Ngbandis, they even continued over land toward the Nile River..

It is clear that if an indigenous language were going to be used by the invading foreigners, it would be that of the Ngbandis, who were not distinguished severely by dialects or divided by morbid animosity. These Ubangians happily traded with whites for things that they could use in trade with their Nzakara and Banda clients to the north and bush Ngbandis to the south, where the greatest number of them are found, and they provided canoes and crews in tremendous numbers over long distances and periods of time, during which they had intimate contact with the foreigners, especially the blacks. To make a round trip from one end of this part of the Ubangi River to the other took about a month, with stops every evening for a meal and rest. Villagers would have created their MacDonaldis to cater to the needs of the travellers on the watery expressway. There was as much contact on these occasions as there would be—using a different metaphor—between vegetables in a rich pot of *minestrone*! For one French expedition in 1897–1898, 4,500 to 6,500 canoers were required, and in a single convoy they could number 700, 900, 1,500, or more. To summarize, we should note that Ngbandis were

- (a) receptive, submissive to colonial authority, cooperative, enterprising, and venturesome;
- (b) they were cohesive culturally, socially, and linguistically;
- (c) they were numerous;
- (d) they provided transportation and skilled manpower, probably increased in number by their own slaves;
- (e) they were available for recruitment, not obliged to work in gardens for sustenance; and
- (f) they were distributed over the Ubangi River basin in the area most critical for the colonizers.

The foreigners

The foreigners, on the other hand, constituted a small, extremely diverse, and extremely dependent mass of humanity despite the wealth and power exhibited in the steamboats and arms and the determination and aggressiveness revealed in the behavior of both whites and Africans.

As to numbers, on the first Belgian expedition of 1887–1888 there were **six** whites and roughly forty-five (ninety, according to one source) Africans. On the second expedition there were eleven whites and 156 Africans. For the final decade of the century numbers are difficult to establish for the Free State, but for the French there is considerable information. Although the Nile campaign occasionally sent swells of men through the region (350 arrived in May 1894), there were in 1896–1897 only five principal French posts and two nascent Catholic missions, the latter only in the west, on the Ubangi River's banks, and the militia consisted of around 200 men. By this time, as noted above, an identifiable jargon had emerged.

As to linguistic diversity among the newcomers, it was much greater in the French work force, with a preponderance of so-called 'Senegalese' West Africans speaking Atlantic and Mende languages, whereas in the State's force they were mostly speakers of Bantu languages, the so-called 'Zanzibaris' from East Africa and 'Bangalas' from around the equatorial confluence of the Congo and Ubangi rivers. (On the latter more is said below.) This difference, in conjunction with the respective difference in the numbers of "auxiliaries" brought to the

region, is a significant factor in the emergence of Sango. This is to say that the birth of Sango took place in a Belgian context rather than a French one, a conclusion I have come to recently after having re-examined my data.

What these African newcomers had in common was, on the one hand, the necessity to interact with the Ngbandis for their daily needs and, on the other hand, the experience they had had with other contact languages to fend for themselves for food, firewood, and shelter. They were already veterans in what might be called colonial contact.⁵ From the moment of their recruitment, and for many, even before that, they had worked and traveled among very diverse groups of people. All, of course, had traveled from the coast (almost 300 km over land to the Pool), through regions where pidginized Kongo and Bobangi were emerging to become what we know today as Kituba, Bangala, and Lingala. In fact, they were contributors to their creation! (See Samarin 1986a, 1990 And now they encounter another language, whose words they would put together in a contextually meaningful way. *Ils se débrouillaient!*)

Here is a colorful example of the linguistic aspect of field colonialism. A Belgian “explorateur” who is traveling, probably in 1892, with a contingent of militia (*miliciens*) from the equator to the Belgian post at the extreme east, starts to open a can of food to eat, when, he reports, “my little *boy*, a child who had been given to me at Zongo to work for me ... came and asked, ‘*Kusala kobe kobe* [?], and, obviously seeing that I don’t understand, looking at me with his clever eyes, he makes a gesture of eating [in central Africa, fingers of the right hand brought to the mouth], showing me a live chicken that he holds in his hand. Taking the risk, I say yes, without any idea of how he is going to pull it off”.⁶

Besides, the newcomers were probably not much interested in learning Ngbandi, because they did not expect to remain very long among its speakers. They just needed to get through each day. It is therefore not true of Sango that “pidginization is second language learning with restricted input” (Romaine 1988:204). If such a statement be retained to guide one in understanding some aspects of language contact, the concept of *learning* would have to be clearly defined.

Pidginization with convergence

Perhaps the linguistic challenge was not a great one. Most of the Africans spoke tone languages with at least two levels although Ngbandi has three. The rest of the phonology was not very different from that of their own languages. And they did not need much of Ngbandi’s

⁵ We might note the report that of the officers of the Senegalese “Régiment de Tirailleurs” at Mobaye in March 1895, six had had experience in Senegal, four in Dahomey (Colonel [illegible], Directeur de la Défense, approved by Ministre des Colonies [name illegible], signed, Paris, 12 August 1895, Archives Nationales, Gabon-Congo XVI13). Many Senegalese, of course, spent several years in the colony. For example, it was reported that in the period 1896–1997, of one hundred Senegalese on the Ubangi River, ninety had already been “libérables” (eligible for being mustered out) for two and three years beyond their recruitment period (Bobichon 1899:10).

⁶ “mon petit *boy*, un gamin qui a été mis à mon service à Zongo [opposite Bangui] ... vient me demander: ‘*Kussala kobe kobe*’ et voyant bien que je ne comprends pas, en me regardant de ses yeux malins, il me fait le geste de manger, en me montrant un poulet vivant qu’il tient dans la main. A tout hasard je réponds oui, sans trop savoir comment il va se tirer d’affaire” (*La Belgique Coloniale*, 2nd year, no 45, 8 November 1896, pp. 539–540). — This is a Bantu version of Sango, apparently meaning ‘Make food’. According to the version that was being used by whites, *kusala* (with its prefix *ku-*) was the generalized (‘finite’) form for ‘do, make’. It has been retained in Sango for the noun ‘work’, *sala* (nowadays *sara*) being the verb. *Kobe* is also a Sango word acquired from some foreign source for ‘food’ or in particular the staple mush that is used for dipping up a sauce (*boule* in French).

morphological grammar, most of which is realized tonally, to get along. Some of them, however, must have thought that the absence of a copula was strange, because they introduced one of their own, an innovation that Ngbandis quickly accepted (Samarin 1986b).

With this characterization some might like to consider Sango a proto-typical pidgin, but in a few critical ways it is not. In this work we look only at phonology. For example, “[T]he sound inventory of pidgins, particularly when compared to their lexifier and substratum languages” is small (Mühlhäusler 1986:148).⁷ And it has been averred that one of the features “typically associated with pidgins” is the “avoidance of ‘difficult’ sounds (i.e., those which are ‘highly marked’ in phonological terms)” (Sebba 1997:39).

The phonology of Ngbandi is intact in Sango except for the apparent disappearance of the prenasalized fricative /mv/ in recent years, which, in any case, occurred in only a few words in Sango and occurs rather infrequently in Ngbandi. This retention of a characteristic Ubangian set of ‘difficult’ consonants is easily explained by the well known phenomenon of convergence, because they are found in the West African and Bantu languages (or closely related to languages) that may have been spoken by the foreigners who were creating in the 1890’s (or earlier) a working vocabulary in the jargon.

Information has been obtained for fifty-seven West African languages from four families to determine the distribution of Ngbandi-like consonants as an areal feature.⁸

Kru, 8 (Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire)

Kwa, 16 (Liberia, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, Togo)

Mande, 24 (Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Benin)

West Atlantic, 9 (Senegal, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Burkina Faso)

These are displayed in the tables, where the Ngbandi consonants are identified by cell shadowing. The inventories are seen to be more or less congruent. Most of these West African languages have contrasts between *p/b*, *t/d*, and *k/g*. (For an overview see Bendor-Samuel 1989.) They also have the nasals *m/n/...* Among the fricatives most have *f*, with somewhat fewer *v*; likewise, *s* is more common than *z*, as *l* is more common than *r*. Finally, *h*, *w*, and *y* are quite common. The co-articulated stops *kp/gb* are widespread, but they are absent in some West Atlantic languages. The only series egregiously absent is that of prenasalized stops: *mb*, *nd*, *ng*, *ngb*, although the first three occur in two Mande languages and in three West Atlantic languages.

Although West African languages could have contributed to the maintenance of Ngbandi’s consonantal inventory, this is not likely, because their speakers came in small numbers and were not involved with Ngbandis as much as the Congolese were. In the colonial archives one rarely finds a record of 220 Senegalese being in one place, as they were in March 1895 near the Sudan.⁹ In small numbers, on the other hand, they were ubiquitous wherever

⁷ The following comment by the author on that statement does not seem to illuminate what happened in the creation of Sango: “... the more contact [that] languages are involved in [in] a pidgin situation[,] the smaller the common denominator on which pidgin speakers can focus” (Mühlhäusler, personal communication, 11 April 2000). — Note also these generalizations: “... pidgins do not have a stable phonology” (Romaine 1988:178) and “It is well known that pidgins do not have a single phonology” (Romaine 1990:173).

⁸ I am very much indebted to members of SIL International, Africa Branch, for providing me with information on so many languages.

⁹ Report by Cpt. Ditte, Rafaï, 10 March 1895, France, Archives Nationales Section d’Outre-Mer, Gabon-Congo IV14.

whites were found: at every post and station, and fewer at trading “factories” and Catholic missions. They were the ones who were responsible for guarding the storehouses, collecting provisions for others at encampments, for supervising indigenous labor at the posts, and for recruiting canoes and canoers. They also accompanied every convoy to protect the transportation of cargoes. They might, therefore, have had had more influence than their numbers might suggest.

The Bantu-speaking Congolese were much more numerous than were West Africans, beginning with a small group in the first colonial expedition (cited above), which had about twenty to thirty “natives” or Bangalas, as they were also called.¹⁰ (This was a term attributed in the early years indiscriminately to most of the riverine inhabitants on the Congo River around the station at Bangala, which came to be called Nouvelle Anvers and now Mbandaka). Many of them would have been conscripts from the Belgian pool of liberated slaves, who were obliged to “reimburse” the State for their liberation by serving it for a number of years, and “captives” from what were considered insubordinate or insurgent villages. In 1890 there were 600–700 of the so-called “indigenous volunteers” in the army, and in 1893 Bangalas made up most of the 3,500 men in the State’s militia or “armée coloniale” known as the *Force Publique* (Wauters 1890:220, 268; Vincent 1895:409).¹¹ In the period of 1892–1900 from the Bangala area alone 5,830 men were levied, and cumulatively in the period 1892–1914 a total of 13,701 (Flament 1952).

A large number of Bangalas would most certainly have been sent to the Ubangi region. Because official documents are scarce, those from before the establishment of the Belgian colony in 1908 having been destroyed by decree, we must infer this conclusion from the objectives and the policies of the State, which cannot be adequately described here, and on the basis of the following facts.

The language being used by many of these so-called Bangalas was the so-called Bangala language, the pidgin precursor of Lingala. It was sufficiently important in the State’s Sudanese campaign in the southern Lado Province that linguistic material was published to assist the whites (e.g., Mackenzie 1908, Wtterwulghé 1903). As a result of that campaign, moreover, so many of these Bangalas stayed in the northeastern corner of the State, where there is a large population of Zandes, speaking a Ubangian language, that this language became its lingua franca, which has retained its pidgin characteristics while Lingala evolved. It is hard to believe that, given the predominance of Bangalas in this region, they would not have had a significant presence in the area where Sango was emerging. After all, a Belgian officer reported in 1893 that “Songo”, as he called it, was the most widely spread language in the Ubangi, one that “all of us know more or less well”.¹² There surely must have been frequent and significant contact between Bangalas and Ngbandis, as well as with others speaking the Ubangian jargon.

Grammatical sketches of a number of the Bantu “parlers riverains” (river languages) reveal that fourteen of them have the co-articulated stops /kp/ and /gb/ and one /mv/. (It is not unexpected, therefore, that Bangala and Lingala, which are based on some of these languages,

¹⁰ Another inventory records 91 Africans: 40 Zanzibaris, 32 Bangalas, six *libérés* children who serve as *boys*, two persons from Accra, one Hausa, two women, and two “Mobanghis” (“Récapitulation générale” for 1888, Van Gele archives, Ivoire I). The last were probably Bobangis from the lower Ubangi river. **See below.** Yet another inventory is this one: 17 Hausas and Zanzibaris, 16 canoers, and 24 natives from the equator (Lotar 1937:68–69).

¹¹ “... ce sont des esclaves nègres qui achètent ainsi leur liberté. Dans certains districts, on la [the military] tire au sort comme dans la Belgique civilisée” (Wauters 1895 [l’Annexion]:6).

¹² **Erreur ! Document principal seulement.** Raph[aël] Stroobant, *Mouvement Géographique*, Vols. 14–22, 1896, writing at Banzyville, 9 March & 10 April 1893.

have the co-articulated and prenasalized stops.) For the consonants of one of these languages, Likátá, is chosen by way of example, for which see Table 5.

Appropriation with pidginization

Although convergence of consonantal structures contributed to the retention of Ngbandi's phonologically complex ones, we must consider the way the Ngbandis may have immediately appropriated the new way of speaking their own language and placed their stamp of approval on it. That, of course, can only be conjectured, for we have no historical evidence that they did so. It is true, nonetheless, that they and other Central Africans have considered Sango to be *their* (the Ngbandis') language.¹³ Never, to my knowledge, has any Central African considered Sango a foreign way of talking a Central African language and never, even by some linguists, considered a pidgin or some form of broken or debased language. And I suspect that Central Africans might not receive my history for the origin of Sango.

Nonetheless, I would like to argue that evidence for this appropriation is in the fact that Sango was created in about ten years and stabilized in twenty, if not less.¹⁴ Ngbandis caught on to what foreigners were doing, adopted the new version of their language, and then spread it as their role in colonization was institutionalized in their becoming significant members of France's militia as they had been for the Congo Free State. In 1952, when I learned Sango, it was still known as *Sango ti turugu* 'soldier's Sango'.¹⁵

If this argument is valid for Sango, it should be valid for Chinook Jargon. In fact, I would like to amend what I have written about the origin of this pidgin by citing Sango (Samarin 1986c, 1988). Whereas others have declared that Chinook Jargon's very complex consonantal system can only be explained by the Chinooks' having simplified the grammar and lexicon of their language before the arrival of Europeans (e.g., Thomason 2003), I propose that they appropriated something already in existence—the Nootka jargon—and made it very quickly their own.

Contact and creation

This dissertation should be considered an explanation of the origin of Sango with linguistic data supported by historical argumentation. Embedded in the latter is an implication of the nature of the contact that led to its creation. First, Sango was never a trade language. Instead, Sango was a work language, as I have described all of the central African lingua francas (Samarin 1989). Second, Sango arose out of normal human interaction between persons who were mutually dependent on each. Although some of the foreign blacks some of the time could exercise power and authority over the Ngbandis, most of them most of the time were just getting their jobs done while extracting pleasure from their experiences as much as they could. About these kinds of relations we almost never learn anything. The following documents are therefore important:

¹³ This fact was dramatically demonstrated when I presented a copy of my grammar in 1963 to the ambassador of the Central African Republic to the United Nations, himself a member of this ethnic group.

¹⁴ A rapid origin for Sranan has also been asserted. See Voorhoeve 1964, 1971, 1973.

¹⁵ *Turugu* is derived from *turku*, that is, Turk.

“Those who had served as canoers came again and again to our camp to socialize with our workers, to help them build temporary huts, and to bring them supplies of water.”¹⁶

“[The Ngbandis] made themselves appreciated by everybody, even the Senegalese, who, when they become familiar with them, are willing to serve under their orders, because they understand that these are not ‘savages’”.¹⁷

This is a characterization of the context of Sango’s *origin*. Very soon after, life became worse for Central Africans, and when Sango was spread over the region, Ngbandis became in many circumstances the instrument for the exercise of power and authority over the bush people, a fact that affects the politics and life of the Central African Republic today.

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¹⁶ “Ceux qui m’avaient servi de payeurs venaient sans cesse à notre campement s’entretenir avec nos tirailleurs, les aider à construire de petites huttes provisoires et leur porter des provisions d’eau” (Dybowski 1894:220).

¹⁷ “[Les Ngbandis] se sont fait apprécier de tous, même des Sénégalais, qui, lorsqu’ils les connaissent, accept[ent] de servir sous leurs ordres, car ils comprennent que ce ne sont pas des ‘sauvages’” (Bruel 1918:307).

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Note

The following five tables are regrettably not entirely edited.

Table 1. The Consonants of Ngbandi and Early Sango

p	t	tf ¹	k	kp	kw ²	ʒ ³
b	d	d,,	g	gb	gw	
m	b	(...) ⁴				
f	s					h
v	z					
mb	nd	nz	ng	nmgb		
mv						
	l					
	r					
w		j				

The restrictive use of “early” in the heading is necessary, because, as the result of contact with Ubangian languages and perhaps of internal change in recent years, the Sango of Bangui has a greater inventory of varying sounds, some noted in Samarin 1997. Of Early Sango we have to rely mostly on missionary publications. — On Ngbandi see Boyd 1988, Boyeldieu 1975, 1982.

(1) Although neither tf nor d, are anywhere cited in the literature for Ngbandi, I heard the first in the speech of one woman, where it was a variant before a front vowel. This is probably a dialectal phenomenon; one would therefore suppose the existence of d,. Furthermore, Kpatiri, also known as Gbayi, a language closely related to Ngbandi, formerly thought to be a variety of this language, has these as phonemes. Its speakers were once said to have been the nearby Kotto river (Boyd 1988).

(2) Both kw and gw occur as sequences of consonants. No one but Lekens has considered them as unit phonemes.

(3) The glottal stop and h vary inter- and intra-dialectally, in the latter apparently in free variation (Boyeldieu 1982: 33).

(4) The palatal nasal is probably a sequence of either ni or nj before a vowel.

Table 2. Consonants of some Kru languages.

(Hartell 1993, Marchese 1986)

p	t	<i>tf</i>	k	kp	kw	
b	d	<i>d,,</i>	g	gb	gw	
m	n	<i>...</i>	<i>ng</i>		<i>ngw</i>	
f	s					h
v	z					
	l					
	r					
w		j				

The sample of six languages and their classification are the following: Eastern: Bété, Dida, Godie; Western: Grebo, Nyabwa, Tepo, Wobé. Godie may also have palatalized tj and dj; Bété and Dida (and possibly Godie) have voiced bilabial and velar fricatives; Dida, Godie, and Nyabwa have an implosive bilabial stop. Some researchers consider the sequence C + w as a systematic phoneme, others as sequences of Cw (Marchese 1986:13) as in Ngbandi.

Table 2. Consonants of some Kru languages.

(Hartell 1993, Marchese 1986)

p	t	tf	k	kp	kw	
b	d	d,,	g	gb	gw	
m	n	...	ng		ngw	
f	s					h
v	z					
	l					
	r					
w		j				

The sample of six languages and their classification are the following: Eastern: Bété, Dida, Godie; Western: Grebo, Nyabwa, Tepo, Wobé. Godie may also have palatalized tj and dj; Bété and Dida (and possibly Godie) have voiced bilabial and velar fricatives; Dida, Godie, and Nyabwa have an implosive bilabial stop. Some researchers consider the sequence C + w as a systematic phoneme, others as sequences of Cw (Marchese 1986:13) as in Ngbandi.

Table 3. Consonants of some Mande languages (Hartell 1993)

p	t	tf	k	kp	kw	§
b	d	d,,	g	gb	gw	
m	n	...	ng	ngm		
f	s					h
v	z		ǀ			
mb	nd	... <u>ᵐ</u>	ng			
	l/r					
w		j				

The sample of nine languages from the Mande family used here are classified according to Dwyer 1989 as Mande: Busa, Bisa; Manding; Dyula; Southeastern: Ben/BÓrn/Gan?/Ngain?, Dan; Southwestern: Bandi, Mende; Northwestern: Soso/Susu, Ligbi. Only Bisa and Ben have tf and ʈ; kw and gw are found only in Dan; the only languages with prenasalized stops and a voiced velar fricative in this sample are Busa and Bandi, the latter being the only Mande language in Liberia, but the series does occur in other Mande languages; in Dan l seems to alternate with r; only Ben has both l and á, although Susu and Bandi also have only l; only Mende seems to have no z; several languages have ...; only Busa has š.

Table 4. West Atlantic consonants (Sereer) (Hartell 1993)

p	t	tf	k	q	ʒ
p'	t'	tf'			
b	d	d	g		
l	á				
m	n	...	ng		
mb	nd	...d,,	ng		
f	s		x		h
v					
	l				
	r				
w		j			
		ʒj			

The series p', t', tf' are presumably glottalized. The absence of z is curious, possibly just an editorial error.

Table 5. The consonants of Likátá, a Bantu language (Motingea 1984)

p ¹	t		k	kp	
mp	nt		nk		
b	d		g	gb	
mb	nd	...®	ng		
m	n	...			
	l				
		s			h
		z ⁴			
w		j			

Note: (1) p is realized everywhere as a voiceless bilabial fricative k̥ but as p following a nasal as in mp. — The sequences mw and pw are not listed in the author's chart but occur in lexical citations; perhaps there are other Cw clusters: either units or sequences of sounds. The nasals preceding stops should be, one would assume, homorganic with the following stop. Motingea does not treat the prenasalized stops as units but as N + Stop.