

High vowel fricativization as an areal feature of the northern Cameroon Grassfields

Matthew Faytak

WOCAL 8, 京都 — August 23, 2015

Overview

High vowel fricativization is an areal or contact feature of the northern Grassfields, which carries implications for Niger-Congo reconstructions

1. What is (not) a fricativized vowel?
2. Where are they (not)?
3. Why is this interesting?

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Fricative vowels

Vowels with a fricative-like supralaryngeal constriction, which may or may not consistently result in audible fricative noise

Not intended to encompass:

- Devoiced or voiceless vowels Smith (2003)
- Pre-/post-aspirated vowels Helgason (2002)
Mortensen (2012)
- Articulatory overlap at high speech rate
- Wall noise sources in high vowels Shadle (1990)

Vowels that **do** fit one or both of the given definitions:

- **Apical vowels** in Chinese

Lee (2005)
Feng (2007)
Lee-Kim (2014)

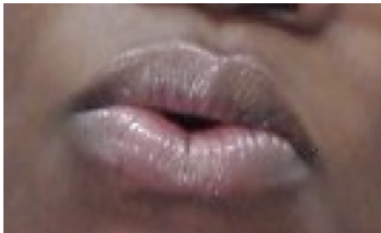
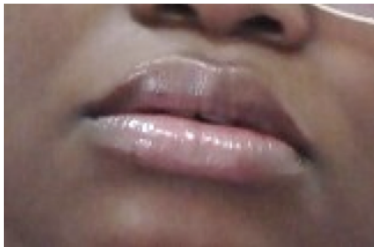
- **Viby-i, Göteborges-i**, etc. in Swedish

Holmberg (1976)
Engstrand et al. (2000)
Schötz et al. (2011)

- **Fricative vowels** in Bantoid

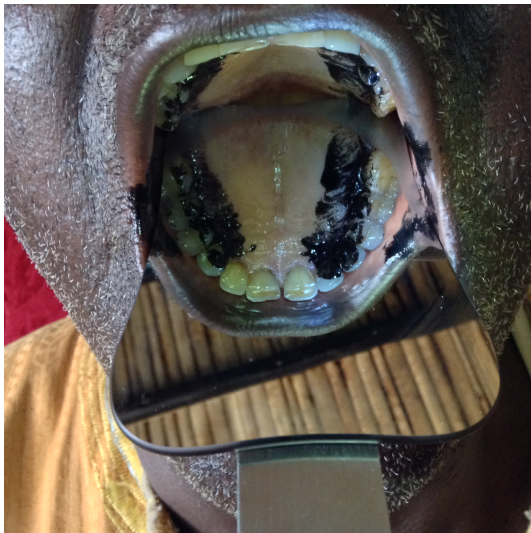
Medjo Mvé (1997)
Connell (2007)

Articulatory evidence of constriction



Olson and Meynadier (2015)

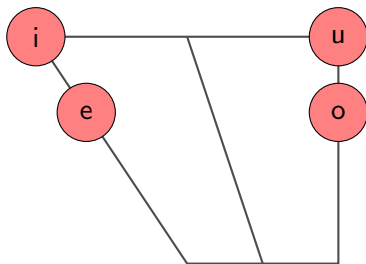
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High vowel fricativization (HVF)

Fricative vowels arise from normal high vowels /i u/, often in tandem with raising of the next-lowest vowels

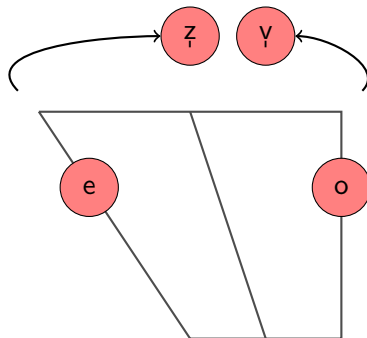
Faytak (2014)



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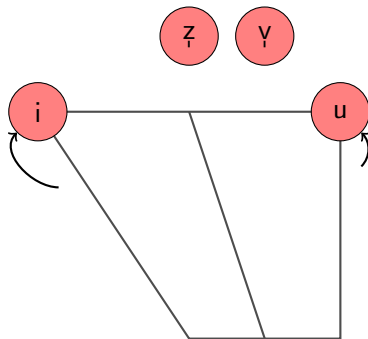
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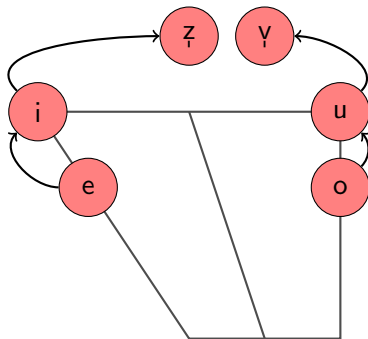
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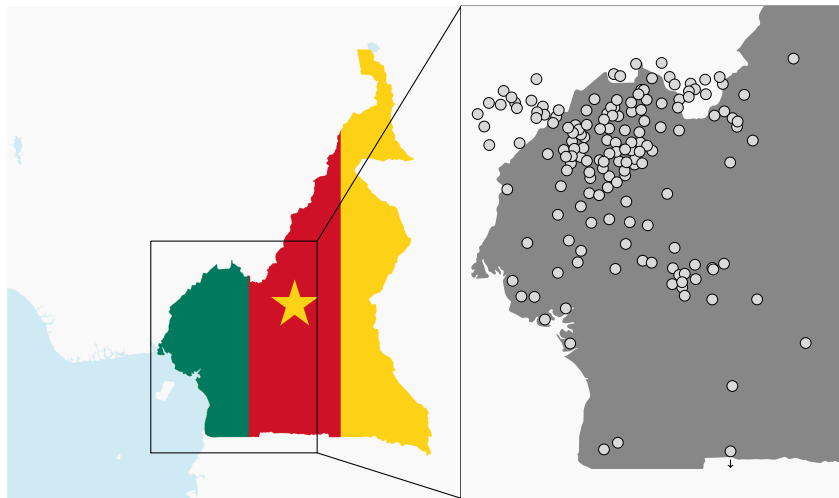
Cameroon

All non-Bantu Bantoid languages, mapped



Cameroon

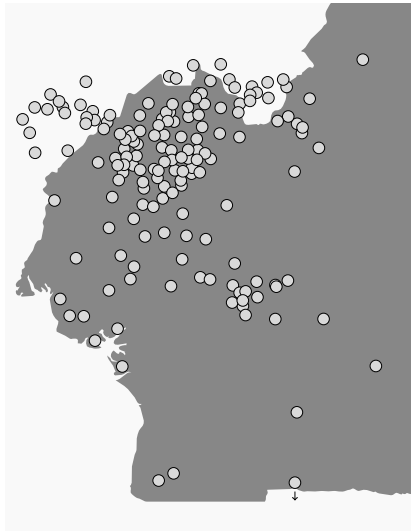
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Genetic grouping

Several branches of Bantoid at issue

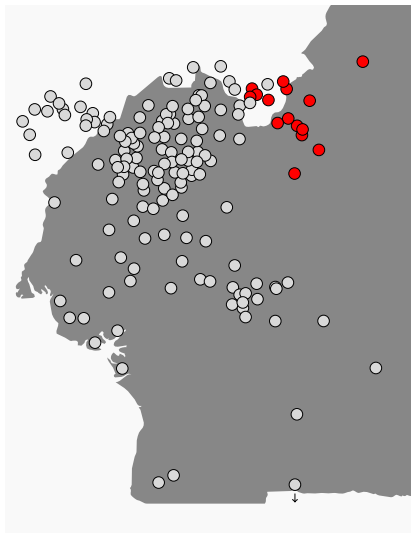
Piron (1995); Grollemund (2011)



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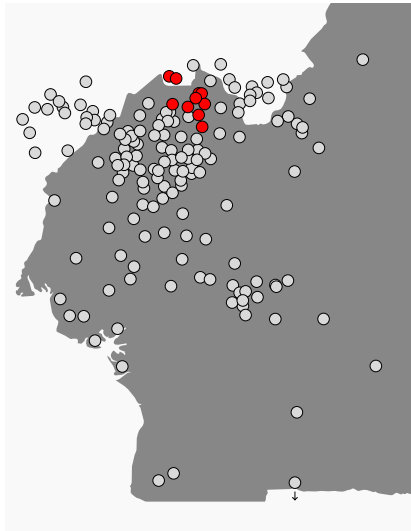


- “Northern Bantoid”
 - incl. **Mambiloid**

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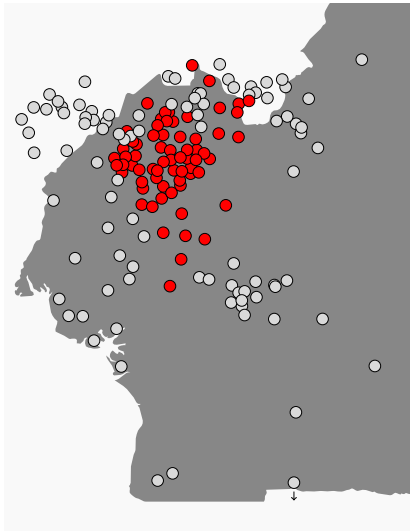


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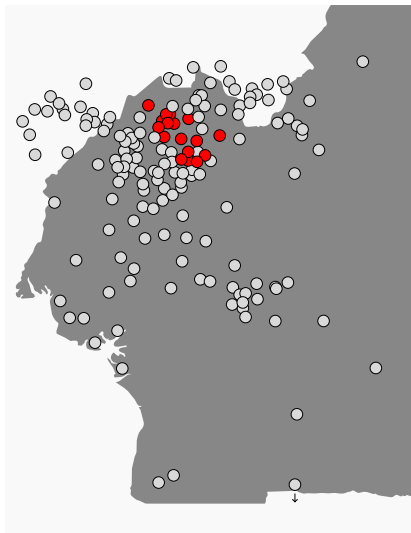


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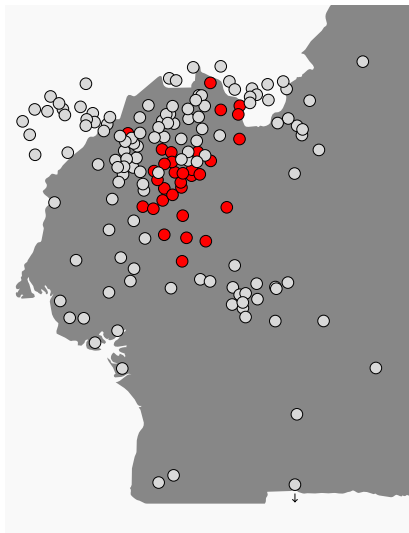


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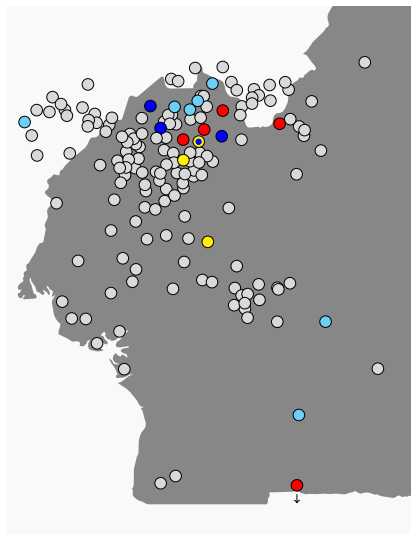
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 - **Mbam-Nkam**

Languages with fricativized vowels

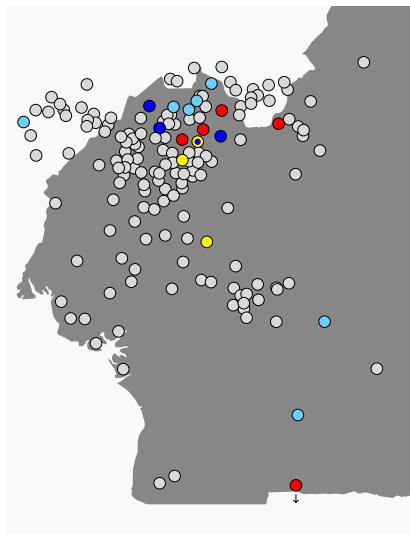
Different realizations, varying levels of evidence



- Confirmed, frication
- Confirmed, low-frication
- Centralized, restricted
- Suspected

Confirmed, with frication

Recorded audio evidence, fricative noise



● Kom [bkm]

Labial Coronal

● Noni [nhu]

Hyman (1981)

● Limbum [lmp]

Labial

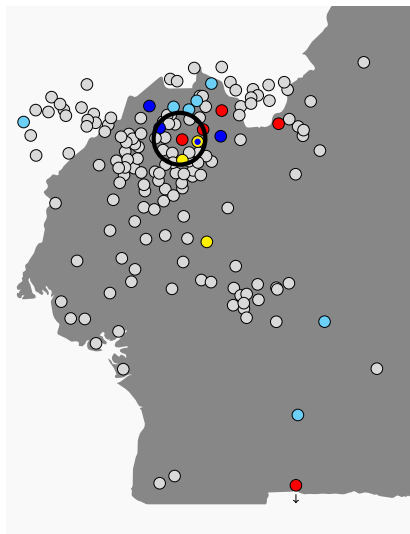
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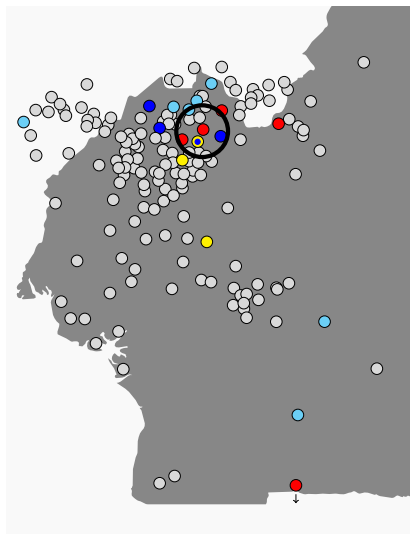
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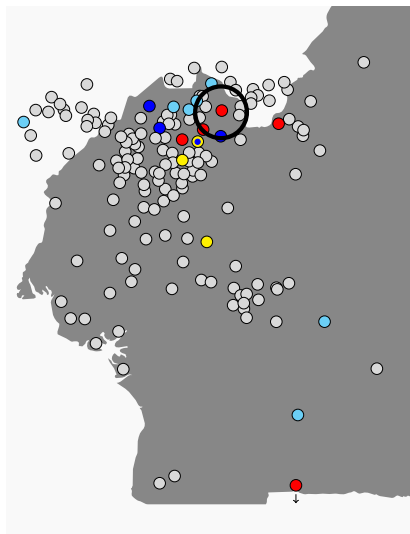
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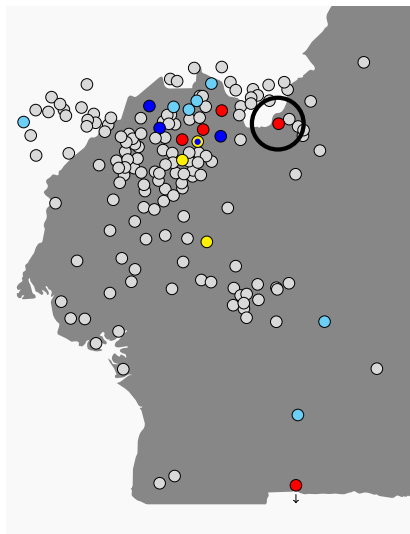
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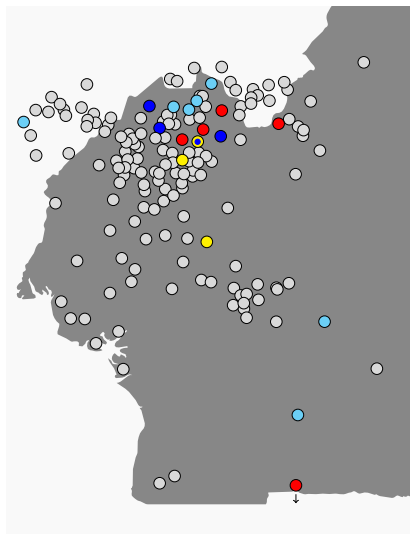
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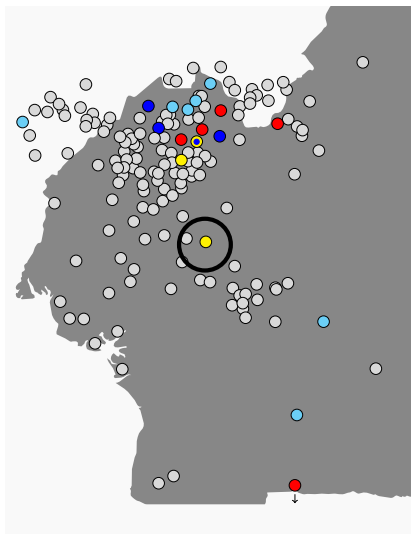
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Labial (with trill)

Olson and Meynadier (2015)

● Babanki [bbk]
● Oku [oku]
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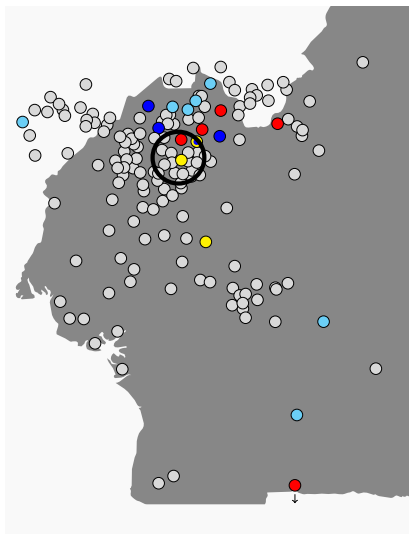
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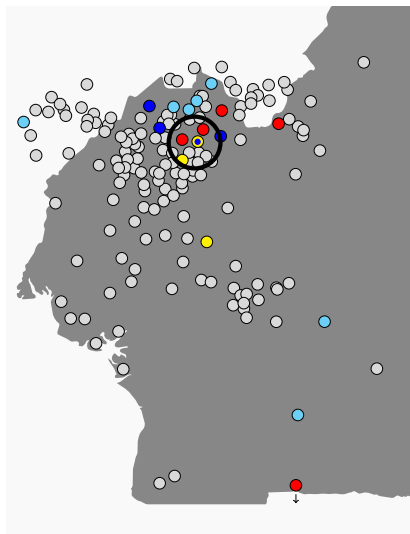
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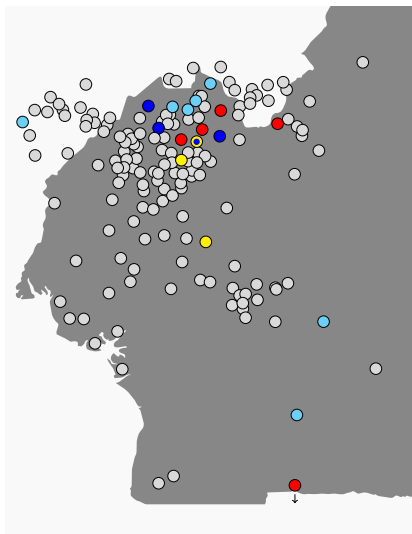
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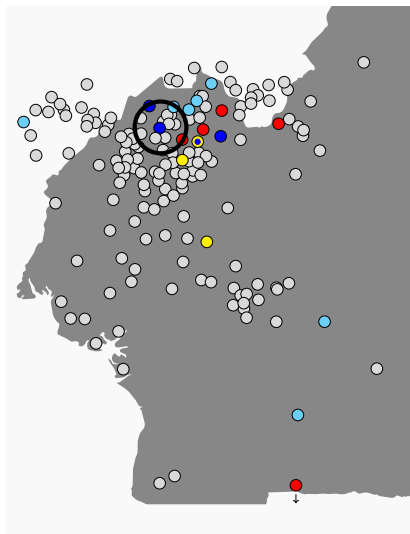
Non-peripheral vowels after fricatives or affricates (sometimes /ɲ/)



- Aghem [agq]
Front Back
- Isu [isu]
Back vs. [u]
- Oku [oku]
- Lamnso' [lns]

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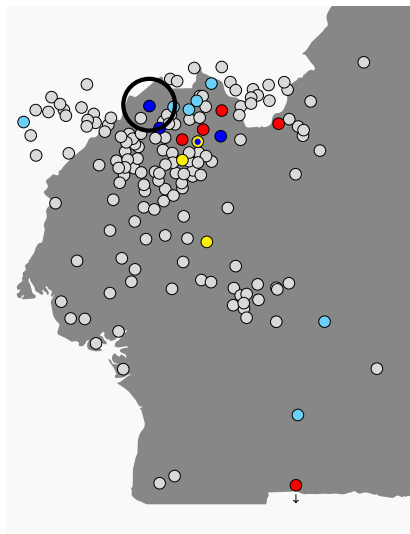
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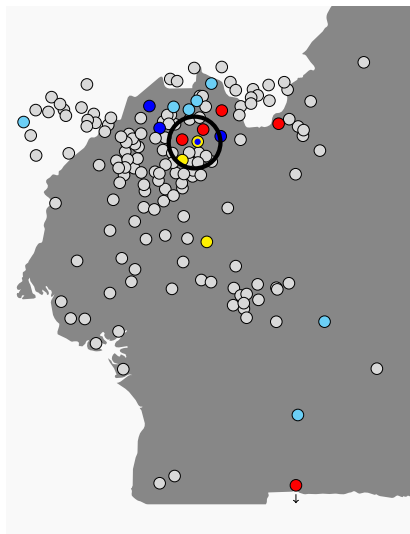
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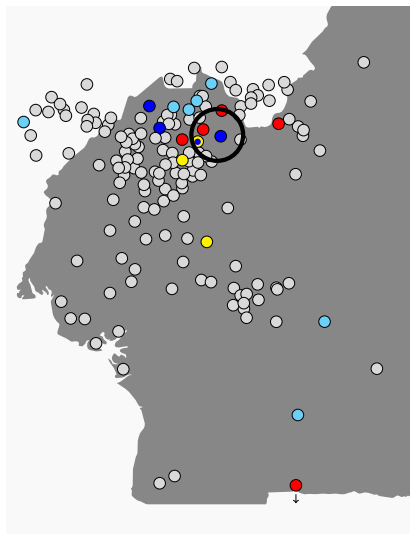
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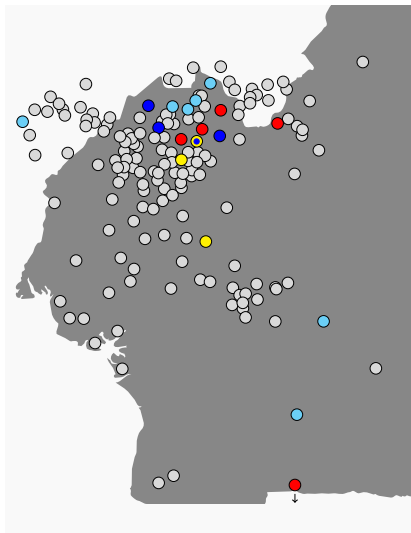
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Suspected

Suggestions from other researchers (see acknowledgements section)



● Several langs. in Beboid and Lower Fungom area

Labial, Fang
Labial, Mbuk

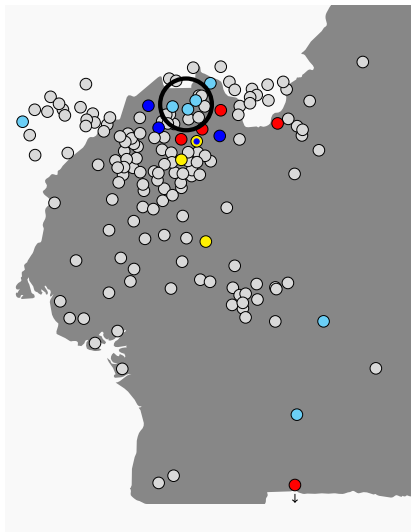
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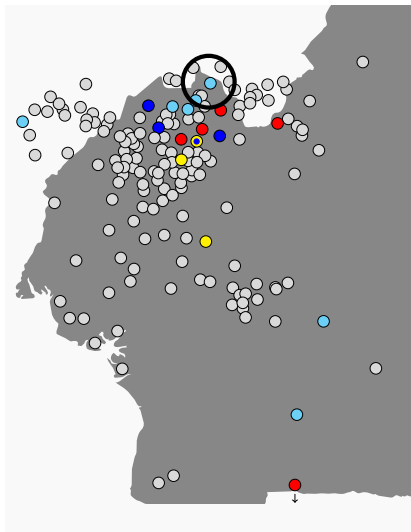
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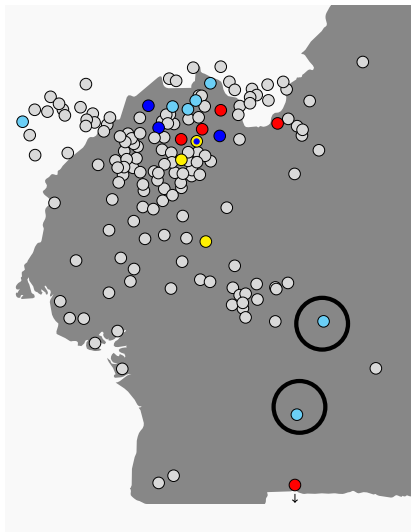
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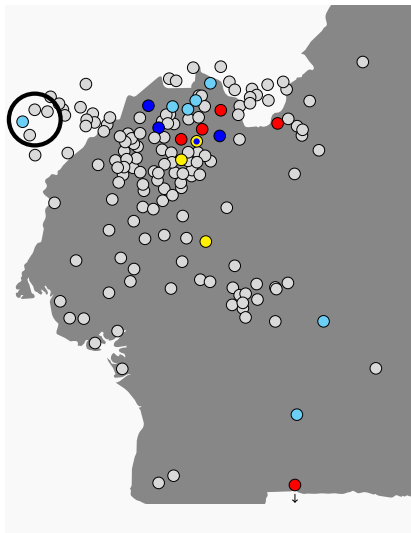
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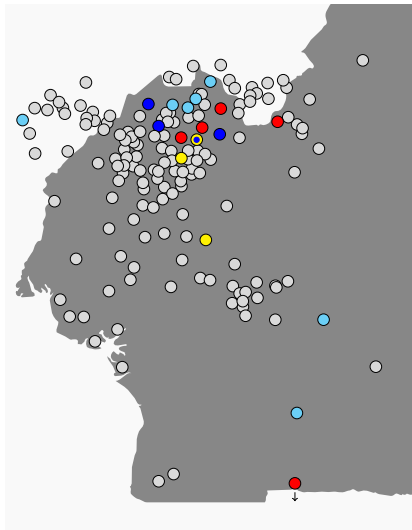
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Defining the core area

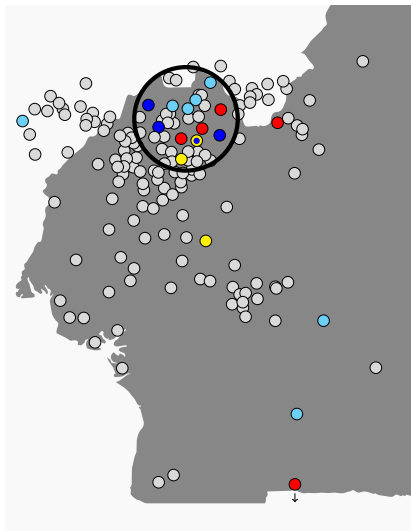
Centered in northern Grassfields, in Bebid, Lower Fungom, Ring Road area



- Mostly north of the Ring Road; possible extension further north to or past Nigeria
- Spatial pattern suggestive of **gravity model**, change radiating from centers to other centers Trudgill (1974)
- But do we have reason to think this is **not genetic**?

Defining the core area

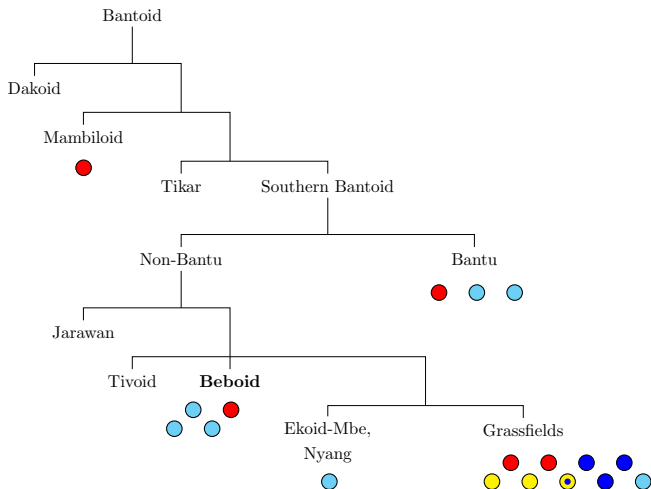
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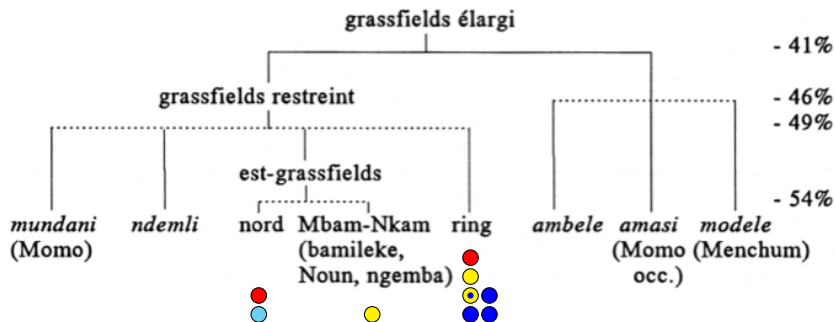
HVF is geographically restricted

Languages of several genetic subgroups, but only in N. Grassfields



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Piron (1995)

HVF is recent

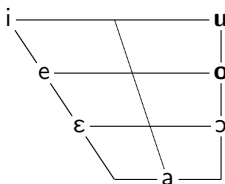
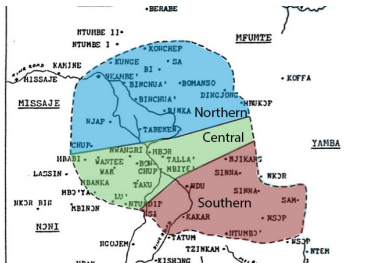
Recency: HVF post-dates several language and subgroup-specific sound changes, e.g. Kom simplification of VV sequences and labial dissimilation

PCR	Kom	PKom	Oku	Bum
*-ua	-v/-u	*-u	-uo	-u
*jua to hear	ʒv	ʒu	juo	ju
*tua to spit	tʃv	tʃu	tuo	tʃu
*kua to die	kv	ku	kuo	ku
*fua to burn	fw	fu	fuo	—
*bua dog	bw	bu	buo	bu

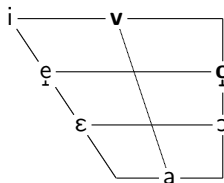
Hyman and Jisa (1978)

Case: Limbum /u/ ~ /v/

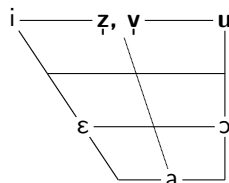
More fricativization the closer to core area



Chup (North)



Wat, Taku (Center)



Ndu (South)

Overview 3

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Historical details

I suggest that the original occurrence was a **distinct but related reinforcement** of old Bantoid category contrasts

- ▶ I **do not claim** HVF is a retention of some reconstructible vowel quality, since it most likely **areal and recent**
- ▶ I **do claim**: precursor to several well-known sound changes can be pinpointed
 - ▶ High vowel “fricativization”
 - ▶ Bantu “Spirantization”
 - ▶ Bamileke “aspiration”

Deg. 1 and deg. 2 vowels

A potentially unstable contrast in ancestor of Bantoid: “degree 1” and “degree 2” high vowels. To avoid merger ...

Schadeberg (1994)

*i *u
*_l *_ɔ
↓
s_i, s_u
i, u
Bantu Spir.

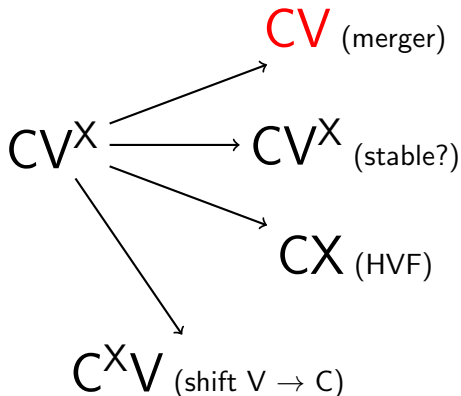
*i *u
*_l *_ɔ
↓
h_i, h_u
i, u
Aspiration

*i *u
*_l *_ɔ
↓
F_ɨ F_ɘ
i, u
Centralization

*i *u
*_l *_ɔ
↓
z, v
i, u
HVF

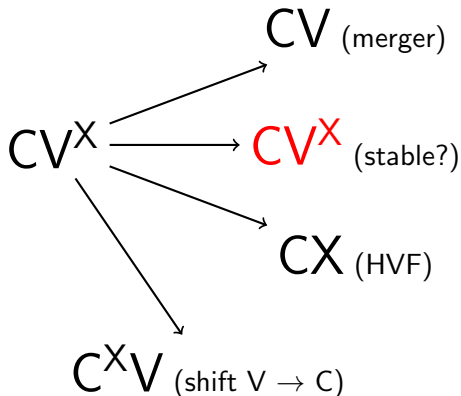
Reflexes of Deg. 1 vowels

The important part: what happens to the highest vowel **suggests noise or constriction as a common precursor or intermediary stage**



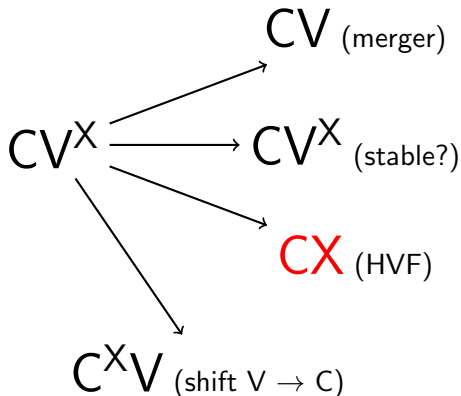
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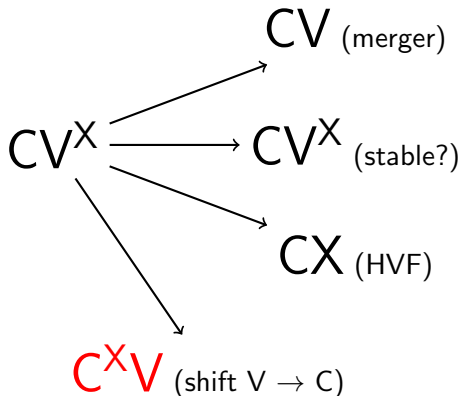
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Conclusions

Re fricativized vowels:

- Fricativized vowels are interesting and potentially informative
- Strong presence in N. Grassfields
- There might be more (the /ɨ ʉ/ problem)
- One of several possible reactions to Deg. 1 and Deg. 2 vowels

Re linguistic areas:

- Detailed case study → broader area
- Cameroon “gap”?

These slides can be found at goo.gl/XFDcFP

Thanks to

Larry Hyman and Jeff Good

Pius Tamanji † and Philip Nguessimo Mutaka for their assistance and sponsorship in Cameroon

Séraphine Dougophe, Andrienne Magakou, Mathias Nembo, Emmanuel Mucho Chiabi, and Robert Ngwainbi for invaluable logistical help

and Katie Franich, Jack Merrill, Ken Olson, Bruce Wlebe, and Jesse Lovegren for discussion or field recordings



どうもありがとうございます

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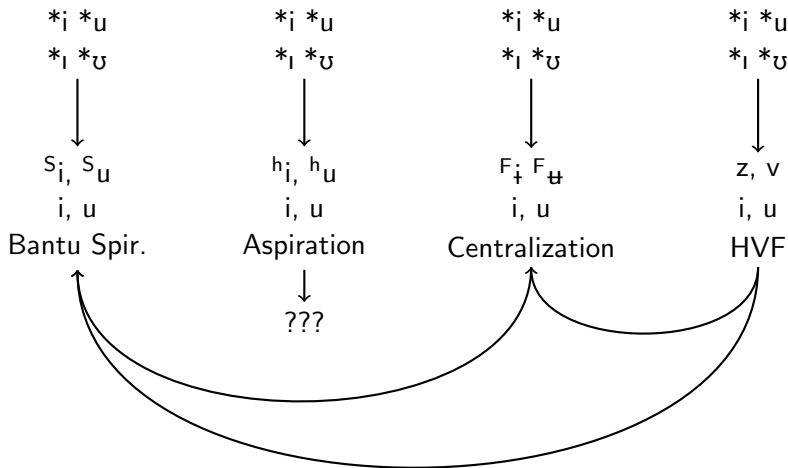
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Deg. 1 and deg. 2 vowels: it's complicated

A potentially unstable contrast in ancestor of Bantoid: “degree 1” and “degree 2” high vowels. To avoid merger ...

Schadeberg (1994)



Appendix: language sources

Language	ISO	Source
Len Mambila	[mcu]	Connell (2007)
Ekajuk	[eka]	Crabb (1965)
Dzodinka	[add]	Bruce Wiebe, p.c.
Ewondo	[ewo]	Redden (1979)
Fang (Cam.)	[fak]	Jeff Good, p.c.
Fang (Gabon)	[fan]	Medjo Mvé (1997)
Medumba	[byv]	Olson and Meynadier (2015)
Naki	[mff]	Jeff Good, p.c.
Kemezung	[dmo]	Cox (2005)
Noone / Noni	[nhu]	Hyman (1981)
Mbuk	dial. [cug]	Jeff Good, p.c.
Aghem	[agq]	Hyman (1979)
Isu	[isu]	own notes, Anderson (2014)
Oku	[oku]	own notes
Lamnso'	[lns]	own notes
Kom	[bkm]	own notes
Kijem / Babanki	[bbk]	own notes
Limbum	[lmp]	Fiore (1987); Fransen (1995)