

Development of Dogon number marking

Kirill Prokhorov¹

¹Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow – Russia

I argue that the Proto-Dogon (PD) number/animacy system was similar to the type presented in Yanda Dom (YD) – the most archaic northwestern Dogon language (NWD). PD marked animate plural referents in with marker **-mu*, animate singular and inanimate referents were unmarked. PD also had a system of numeral and possessive classifiers. Two other NWD languages — Najamba-Kindige (NK) and Tebul Ure (TU) developed noun-class markers as the result of reanalysis of N(PL) + classifier sequences. Thus, according to (Heath 2022) NK animate plural marker *-mbo* is a combination Proto-Dogon **-mu* + *bo* (cf. PL plural animate *-mu* and numeral classier *bo*). I argue that singular inanimate **(η)gO*, **(η)ge* in found in NK, TU, Dogul Dom and as frozen extensions in southwestern Dogon languages were once unbound possessive classifiers with typical singulative/small measure meaning.

The northwestern Dogon languages (NED) have preserved the original animacy distinction but lost most Proto-Dogon number markers and rebuilt a minimalistic animacy-based system via introduction of a singular suffix originated in grammaticalization of the Proto-Dogon noun **no* ‘person’.

In the newly emerged human/non-human system of Proto-southeastern Dogon (SED) the same source root **nu* became a human singular marker, while plural animate suffix *-mu* was reinterpreted as the human plural.

In Togo Kan (SED), Tomo Kan (East), Dogul Dom (West), Ben Tey (NED) and in the southwest languages the original Proto-Dogon number-marking scheme was fully or partially replaced by newly emerged plural clitics, that do not distinguish either (in-)animate, or (non-)human referents. The plural clitics developed as the result of grammaticalization of Proto-Dogon 3PL pronouns – inanimate **kéé* in the southwestern Dogon languages and human/animate **béé* elsewhere. The latter development can be explained as a result of the common substrate influence of a non-Dogon language.