

## Text 4: GR104: An assessment of Borno politics, 1991, 1992

This is a group of young men living in in the extended compound, described in detail in Owens (1998: chapter 12). The recording itself was made in 1991 in sub-compound 2, though there are participants from sub-compounds 1 (1), 2 (2) and 5 (2). The discussion begins with the recently-held gubernatorial primary elections in Borno. About two-thirds of the text is translated here.

DAN = Danna, D = Dawud (son of abdulgadir, IM08), H = Hamid (Danna's step brother), A = abdulrahman, M = musa (brother of Mai),

<DAN> allaaj keef as siyaasa, as siyaasa šiftaha keef,  
DAN: Alhaji, what about politics, how do you see it?

<M> siyaasa hiil dugut di, mafi fiya arabi, siyaasitna hiil dugut di čatta barno haw waid fiyum, buguulu nušša arabi, šába dugut abba tiraab da, sai gaalo gal šigga arabi, haw šigga birnaay, amma ana da bašiif da, maafí, hu da mi arabi, walla keef (0.39)  
M: Nowadays there are no Arabs in politics. It only involves the Kanuri people, though one of them<sup>1</sup> is said to be part Arab, this Abba Tiraab, and part Kanuri, though as I see it I don't think he's Arab, or what do you think?<sup>2</sup> (0:39)

<DAN> wəi, an naas buguulu hu arabi amma ankuun mi arabi,  
DAN: That's right. People say he's Arab, but maybe he isn't.

<H> sei gaalo gal naadum hana kaala balge, ja sei kabraan fi baama,  
H: Didn't they say that he comes from the Kala Balge region,<sup>3</sup> that he came (from there) and grew up in Bama.

<M> a?a hu wuldó wuldó kula sei fi tiraab biu qaadi,  
M: No he was really born over there in the Biu region.

<DAN> fi miringá wala šunú,  
DAN: In Miringa,<sup>4</sup> or where?

---

<sup>1</sup> I.e. one of the candidates.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of this discussion in November, 1991 it had been planned to build up to a gradual handover from military to civilian rule. The first step was the holding of local council elections, followed by the governorship contests, and finally the presidency. There were only two political parties sanctioned, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Republican National Convention (RNC). At this point primary elections had just been held to decide the two candidates for the Borno governorship. In the NRC Abba Gana Tirab had just defeated Mustafa Bulama, and Maina Maji, the eventual winner of the gubernatorial election, had defeated Abba Gubio in the SDP. All the candidates were of Kanuri ethnicity.

The elections were ultimately annulled by the then dictator Babangida and military rule continued until 1999.

<sup>3</sup> A largely Arab-populated region, south of Ngala and east of Gulumba. Abba Gana Tirab is from the Bama region.

<sup>4</sup> = Miringa, a city about 12 miles north of Biu in the Bura area.

<M> aa, wuldó kula fi miringá qaadi,  
M: Ya, he was born there in Miringa.

<H> hu raasha (1.00)  
H: He himself.

<D> aa humma dugut da al arab humma taabiin mustafa bulama bas sei, mastafa  
bulama dugut hu, ma ligi akal, ille tiraab bas ligi akal  
D: Those Arabs now they support Mustafa Bulama. But Mustafa Bulama didn't win,  
rather Tiraab turned out the winner.

<DAN> haw masta bɛlama, haw al arab yatú yatú at taabʔinna,  
DAN: And Mastafa Bulama, which Arabs are supporting him?

<M> waadiin kula naas šeeex jarma dool  
M: Among others the supporters of Shex Jarma

<H> naas aššeeex jarma at taabinna hu bas  
H: All of Shex Jarma's<sup>5</sup> people are his followers

<M> haw allawaan badawi allawaan badawi dool  
And those of Lawan Badawi

<D> wuldó fi marte, fišaan da bas, (1.26)  
D: He was born in Marte, that's why.<sup>6</sup>

<M> aa gaalo hu wuldó fi marte, haw gal gal, hu towwa kan lígi kabbaró bígi gamna,  
gaal esemji dool čatta bisawwiyum árab, haw emirat waaid, dool emirat fi bukaan  
marte qaadi ke gal, bisowwu bisowwu forming hana emirat, hana árab  
M: That's right, they said he was born in Marte. Had he won and been appointed  
governor, he promised that all the SMGs<sup>7</sup> would be given to Arabs, and an Arabic  
emirate would be founded in Marte.<sup>8</sup>

<DAN> yauwa,  
DAN: Okay!

---

<sup>5</sup> Shex Jarma is a Nigeria Arab politician who became governor of Borno in 1983 during the second term of the Shagari presidency (Second Republic). His tenure of office was short-lived, however, as within three months of his election the military took over power. His brother, Allawan Badawi is also a well-known Arab politician. Both politicians continue to be important personages in Borno politics.

<sup>6</sup> Shex Jarma and Lawan Badawi are both from the Kirenawa region, not far from Marte.

<sup>7</sup> Probably SMG = Secretary to the Military Government, though technically, since the election ushered in civilian rule, he would have been an SSG, Secretary to the State Government, the top administrative position in the state government.

<sup>8</sup> See discussion in chapter

<M> ha dugo hu kan ma lígi ákal, gaal bisawwiiɓm  
 M: But then he didn't win. But he said he would create them.

<DAN> ha abba tiraab, le l árab bisey šunu, (1.58)  
 DAN: And Abba Tiraab, what'll he do for the Arabs? (1:58)

<M> aʔa , abba tiraab da gal abba ma biseyyi šai, ma simiina še biseyy le l árab,  
 M: No, Abba Tirab, Abba Tirab won't do a thing, we haven't heard a thing that he'll do for the Arabs.

<H> ha sei gal kaamil naaɗ waid ke gal ke hu mi arabi kula,  
 H: Didn't he say one day, he said that he wasn't an Arab at all?

<D> gal hu mi arabi ya dugut  
 D: He's not an Arab up to now!<sup>9</sup>

<H> gaal ke sei (2.09)  
 H: That's what he said

<A> aʔa hu mi arabi, inšaan, naas waadiin biguulu gal akít, an naas al bisowwu operešan damusa wala šunu, gal sawwo sowwo organayzing šúqul waahid fi, haw naadó hu ijí, hu kan kabiir hana šunu, kabiir hana šunu haw naadó idiss iida, haw hu kan dassa iida gaal, an naas al bisurgu dool da, gal kula arab haw fallaata bas ikattulú, inšaan da, humma al aráb maahum haabbinna bilheen da, ha kan hu arabi da, ai ma biguul ke, le n naas towa kula al árab haw fallaata bas as saraariik, (2:40) haw be naáar d'aaka, [X] naas waadiin buguulu ke gal bisey lančing fi ruwan zafi, gal hu aarif, towa kula al árab gal humma siyaat bágar, haw siyaad hine xála bas, kan ligí akál da gal iʔaawunum gal fi, fi d'aaka, fi xidimithum hiil al bagár haw ke, an naas inšaan da bas ma habbó bilheen da, haw naas waadiin kan buguulu gal hu kan ʔamɓa gal ʔarabiye, gal abú hu arabi haw gal ma bidoor bibga min al aráb, as sahi, fusúx allahu aalim (3.15)

A: No, he's not an Arab, because some people say that the people who were in charge of Operation Damusa<sup>10</sup> or whatever, they said they had an organizing meeting, and

---

<sup>9</sup> *ya dugut* 'up to now' appears tautological, since it was already established that he does not align himself with Arabs, but in theory it would be possible for Abba Tiraab to claim Arab ethnicity via his father or mother (both are mentioned below).

<sup>10</sup> The so-called Operation Damusa was the name for a long-running security program headed by the Nigerian army against armed robbery. In Borno it was called 'Operation Damusa' and has had other names as well (e.g. 'Operation Zaki'), while in other parts of Nigeria the same activity has other names (e.g. in Lagos = 'Sweep'). At the time of this recording there had been a spate of robberies and operations against them in the Bama region (eastern Borno), for which Arabs and Fulani were popularly (in some circles) held responsible. Whatever the truth of the ethnicity of the thieves, it does appear that not a few of them were Chadians, and hence spoke Arabic as a lingua franca (whether or not they were Arabs). Blaming the Fulani and Arabs together reflects the ongoing conflict between nomadic peoples (Fulani and Arabs) and sedentary ones (Kanuri). Arabs often ascribe the charges against them as a provocation by the Kanuri to justify discrimination against them in rural areas. Casual

they invited him as the head of something to sign up officially. And when he did he said that those people who were stealing, they were all Arabs and Fulani and they<sup>11</sup> they are the ones doing the killing. That's why the Arabs don't like him much. Had he been an Arab, he wouldn't have said that, that Arabs and Fulani are thieves. (2:40) Then one day some people say he organized a meeting in Ruwan Zafi, and he said that he knows that formerly Arabs were nomads and bush people. If he won he said he'd help them in their work with the cattle. So the people didn't like him much. And other people say his mother's an Arab or his father's an Arab, but that he doesn't want to be considered an Arab. Whether that's the truth or a lie, God knows.

<DAN> ha mastafa bulama haw be mine bigiifu,  
DAN: So Mustafa Bulama will stand against who?

<M> dugut da a, dugut da sei gaalo abba gana tiraab bas ákal,  
M: Now, now they say Abba Gana Tirab won.

<D> abba tiraab  
D: Abba Tiraab

<DAN> hu bas ákal a,  
DAN: So he's the one who won?

<D> abba gana tiraab haw maina maaji  
D: Abba Gana Tirab and Maina Maaji

<DAN> haw maina maaji, humma bas bigiifu, ha hu maina maaji biriid al arab ala ma raayidhum,  
DAN: And Maina Maji, they are the ones standing. And this Maina Maaji likes the Arabs or not?

<D> a?a ma raayittum,  
D: No, he doesn't.

<H> angalté kula ma alkallam be al árab, hu burñaay towa kula mun gabuḷ kula,  
(3.38)

---

questioning by colleagues in Maiduguri about Operation Damusa did not suggest an inherently ethnic element to it, so the current affair probably has a local basis.

<sup>11</sup> *ikattulú* 'they are killing many/all the killing'. One of the stem meanings/functions of form II verbs such as this is to indicate a plural object, as implied here. The stem II usages remain to be studied in NA, though meanings such as this fall outside of the "intensive/denominative/causative of stem I" meanings classically associated with the form in most forms of Arabic. The interesting historical question is whether this association is due to areality – co-territorial Chadic languages for instance typically have a special verb form used when the object is plural – or whether this doesn't represent a relic function in Arabic itself.

It can, incidentally, be remarked that the classic stem II meanings also are well represented in NA.

H: Maina Maji never spoke Arabic. He's originally Kanuri from the beginning.<sup>12</sup>  
(3:38)

<D> wal wal damasak,

D: That right, from Damasak.<sup>13</sup>

<H> haw al arab kula ma bitábo esdipi

H: And the Arabs as before won't support the SDP.

<DAN> wəi, al bittabbiium le esdipi šunu,

DAN: Ya, what do they expect from the SDP?

<H> ha lenšaan da hu kan kula ma faakir beehum

H: Of course, that's why he didn't think of them.

<I> espidi da miné

I: Who are the SDP?

<DAN> wəi burnaay, haw al waahid al biguulu arabi kula mi arabi, hu kula burnaay, gal jidda, ábu hana abú, ja minaşšabah, be al kanemi jamí, faqir hana al kanemi, haw ja, hassa humma axayaan, axayaan šaba hine beet aš šeex dool da, haw hine beet aš šeex hana baama da, humma hine baama budoorú, amma hu da da, ma bidoora finšaan hu naadum hana baama kan lamma raasa behum da, kan kan hu ákal da, bi?aawun [Y] naas baama, (4.28)

DAN: Ya, he's Kanuri, and the other one whom they say is Arab is not an Arab, but rather Kanuri. It's said his grandfather, the father of his father, came from the East, together with Al-Kanemi,<sup>14</sup> one of Al-Kanemi's religious leaders and he came And they're brothers,<sup>15</sup> like those at Dikwa and Bama, but it's the ones in Bama who like him. But the others [Dikwa/Maiduguri] don't like him because he's a Bama person and joined forces with them. Should he win, he'd favor the Bama people.

<M> naas baama [Y] aha, da bas ma bi?aawun naas hine yerwa,

M: So, Bama people, ya, the others won't help the people of Maiduguri.

---

<sup>12</sup> He has and makes no claims about having an Arab ancestry.

<sup>13</sup> NW of Maiduguri, near the Niger border. He is in fact from Kukawa in the Mongono area.

<sup>14</sup> Shehu Al-Kanemi, who came from Kanem in Chad and rescued the Sefuwa dynasty from the attacks of the Fulani in the first part of the nineteenth century. He ultimately succeeded to the Bornoan throne, and it is his successors who currently rule as the Shehus of Borno. Al-Kanemi is said to have had an Arab mother, and had much support among the Arabs, who provided him with important military help. As a reward they were given special privileges in the early part of the Kanemi rule (see Brenner 19). The reference to Al-Kanemi in the present context indicates that history is very much alive in current political debate. Cf. reference to Tiraab in text M1.

<sup>15</sup> The reference is not completely clear here, but Dana may be saying that since the grandfather of Abba Tiraab is said to have come with Al-Kanemi, who founded the current ruling dynasty in Borno, the Tiraab lineage can be considered to be brothers of the Al-Kanemi.

<A> da bas ma šifta yaamaat faatan akt<sup>16</sup> as siyaasa da, mustafa bulama, da umar ali šaal leya watiir waade, land rover walla lan kruza ke, šaalha and'aaha leya zerga ke kabiire, dada xalaas siyaat hine bama kula sowo kontribušan, lammo gurs kan mašó šeró leya hu kula waade, waade ke and'ooa leya (4.49)

A: That's why a while ago, Mastafa Bulama, Umar Ali<sup>17</sup> brought him a car, a Land Rover or Land Cruiser like that, brought it and gave it to him, a big black car, then the Bama people organized a contribution, they collected money and went and bought him (Abba Tiraab) a car like it and gave it to him.

<DAN> ha dugut, aš šeex hiil bama, haw hiil yarwa, doola bidooru al al hakuuma timši lehum, al gomna ixarim minhum humma, doola kula ke, ašúqul ille bigi duwaas hana borno, aniina al árab, babuur, haw ke, al qabaayil ad dugaaga da, ille waafkiin haw niraaʔi, (5.10)

DAN: So now the Shehu of Bama and the Shehu of Maiduguri, they both want the government to favor them, so the governor comes from their camp. So that's the thing which causes friction among the Kanuri. We Arabs, Bura and the like, the small tribes, we can just stand back and watch.

<H> yatu kula kan ákal ka xalaas suld'aan bas

H: Whichever of the candidates wins becomes the leader.

<DAN> yatú kula

DAN: Any one of them.

<M> humma al arab maa

M: Those the Arabs ...

<A> abba ganá tiraab da, da mustafa bulaama min, borno emiret sei, haw d'aaka kan min bama emirat inšaan, da bas humma busowwu, da kula bidoor bidis hana, da kula bidoor bidis haná

A: Abba Gana Tiraab, (rather) that one, Mustafa Bulama is from the Borno Emirate,<sup>18</sup> while the other one is from Bama, so each [Shehu] wants to put his own man in power.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Idiosyncratic for *waqəṭ/wakt* 'time'. A uses the same w-less form later.

<sup>17</sup> Unidentified person.

<sup>18</sup> I.e. Maiduguri. Mustafa Bulama had the support of the Shehu of Borno.

<sup>19</sup> As described in this discussion, the gubernatorial elections (at all levels) is depicted as an interal Kanuri contest, with the two power bases centered in Maiduguri and the western part of Borno vs. Bama and the eastern. Symbolically these two places are represented by the Emir of Bama (Kyari Ibrahim al-Kanemi) and the Shehu of Maiduguri (Mustafa Umr Al-Kanemi). Both belong to the house of Kanemi. Although officially subordinate to the Shehu of Maiduguri (also = Shehu of Borno), the Emir of Bama commands considerable political power, and in fact designates himself a 'Shehu', implying equal status to the Shehu of Borno.

The consensus in this group is that the election is dominated by a strong geographical rivalry, as symbolized by the struggle between the two Shehu's. Probably a more decisive factor in the final election outcome was the support for Maina Maji by the national chairman of the SPD, Kingibe, who is himself a Kanuri/Kanembu.

<DAN> ille ašúqul čat bigi al ámar hana borno, fiya naadum aaxir mafi, (5.37)  
 DAN: Its just that the whole thing has become a Kanuri affair. There's no one else involved.

<M> tawwa helú da al arab kula igayyimu leum naadum,  
 M: To me it would have been nice if the Arabs had produced a candidate.  
 [...]

I: Before didn't the Arabs and Margi join in alliance?

<DAN> lammo raasum, amma as sana da, ma lammo sei, ma lammo, fišaan naas potiskum da, maafi, wala ma ke, towa kula al bisawwú da naas fotiskum, bolawa humma bilummu raasum, haw buguulu aniina, burnaay ke ma nitabá, biu bitibaahum humma, al arab bitaboohum humma, haw margí ka titiba al borno dada, wa hassa, al quwa čat bígat hiil borno, wala ma ke, (6.19)  
 DAN: They did, but this year they really didn't. Because Potiskum people aren't there, or what?<sup>20</sup> Previously the Bolewa<sup>21</sup> were unified and they said that we (the Bole) won't support the Kanuri, and the Biu people<sup>22</sup> would follow them [the Bolewa], and the Arabs would too, but the Margi supported the Kanuri, and now all the power's been concentrated among the Kanuri, isn't that right?

<D> ke bas, an náfar al gade čatta xáram,  
 D: That's right. All the other ethnic groups were excised (from Borno).

<I> naas gooza  
 I: What about the Gwoza people?<sup>23</sup>

<A> humma ma induhum heel sei,  
 A: They really don't have any power, so they can't do a thing.

<M> humma šiya  
 M: They are few in number.

<D> haw ma bigdaro  
 D: and they can't (mix in politics)

<DAN> humma ma induhum ilim, ilimhum kula šiya,

---

<sup>20</sup> In the 1983 election Potiskum was a part of Borno State. In 1991 Borno was divided into two parts, the western part, including Potiskum, becoming part of Yobe State.

<sup>21</sup> An ethnic group centered in Potiskum, which holds the emirship of Fika with Potiskum as its administrative center.

<sup>22</sup> The language is generally known as Bura. It is spoken by a people who divide themselves into two groups, the Babuur and the Bura. The differences between them are dialectal, geographical (Babur the more northerly group, Bura the southerly), political (the royal emir's clan is Babur) and historical, inter alia, the Babur being under stronger Kanuri influence than the Bura. In NA *babuur* is the generic name for the language and the people.

<sup>23</sup> Of SE Borno.

DAN: Nor are they well educated. Their knowledge is too little.

<M> towa al helú da

M: For me it would have been nice...<sup>24</sup>

<DAN> ha intu dugut šiftu keef fi as siyaasa di, wučiiya da, zeen wala fásil, (6.43)

DAN: And what do you [pl] think about these politics, its future, is it good or bad?

<M> a?a wučiiya da fásil, gaalo gal ámis wala ma awaltamis kula addaawaso, naas mastafa bulama haw naas abba tiraab, addaawso ha alkattolo naas kula,

M: No, its future is bad. They said that yesterday or the day before they even fought, Mustafa Bulama's and Abba Tirab's supporters, and it's said that there were even people killed.<sup>25</sup>

<A> allah,

A: Really!

<A> allah,

Really?

<M> alla

Really.

<A> ween da,

Where's that?

<M> dowá hineen, fi bakaan mafa da, gal kattalo naas tałaata, (7.02)

M: Right here, in the Mafa area, they said they killed three.

<A> ha huda šunu anfaaní da, ha huda kan,

A: So what's the value in all that?

<M> humma čat fi as siyaasa al waaid bas, čattum naas enarsi,

M: All of those are in one party, all NRC: supporters.

<D> kan maaši, kan mašeet<sup>26</sup>

<DAN> hi mafá sei foog yerwa, taabe yarwa sei,

DAN: Isn't Mafa under Maiduguri, following Maiduguri.

<M> taabi yerwa

---

<sup>24</sup> M tries a second time to express his idea but again is cut off.

<sup>25</sup> See. n. 11 for intensive form.

<sup>26</sup> Difficult to interpret.



M: Under Maiduguri

<DAN> ha dikwa haadi ankuun tibga tiit bama

DAN: And Dikwa on the other hand is under Bama.<sup>27</sup>

<D> siyaad baama buguulu ke, kan kam kula buktulú, abba gana tiraab yirkab gomna, ha da bas kan binšu bisowwu kampén kula, biguulu le n naas ke, be l heel kula gal birkab, (7.31)

D: That's what the Bama people say. As many as it takes to be killed, Abba Gana Tirab will assume the governorship, and if people go and campaign, they tell people, he'll win by force if necessary.

<A> haw hu kula gal ke sowa saavis katiir haw d'aaka d'aaka, binši ke, hu kalaam hagga čatta ille muwoori šaba gadaara gadaara ke, fishaan da bas, naas waadiin hine enarsi kula mahum haabbinna,

A: And it's said that he's promising a lot of services and this and that and apart from that he's somehow arrogant, and for that reason some people in his own party the NRC don't even like him.

(Two women beggars intervene here.)

<M> dawud sei leek inta,

M: Dawud, they mean you.

<D> gal an nairá di gal ma biyaaxuduua

D: He said he won't take this naira.

<H> biyaaxuduua mana,

H: They'll take it of course.

<DAN> biyaaxuduua, hi gide mafí a, haaka di, áxud di,

DAN: They'll take it. There isn't another. Here, take this one.<sup>28</sup>

<H> hu kula an naira čatta gidim sei, biyaaxuduua (8.11)

H: Naira notes are always old. They'll take it.

<D> yo, dugut šiif, fi fi mafá kula gayyamo lahum burnaay bas čattihin, di al hille waajib al arabi bigiif, maafá, diikwa kula ke, simiitu sei, ha dugut fi, esdipi kula fi marte kula ke, bikaan al hille al arab ač čaaman ankuun humma kula igiifu fi l bakaan da, čatta kula borno bas wufko, ille al wahid ad dugut simiiná gaalo gal wal aš šeex jarma kula waagif (8.41)

D: Okay, now look in the Mafa area they nominated all Kanuri. That's a village where an Arab should be able to stand. And Dikwa's like that as well. Did you get that? And now the SDP in Marte is the same way. Any village where maybe [the Arabs] could

<sup>27</sup> Dikwa and Mafa have a common border, so the implication is that the conflict was regionally based.

<sup>28</sup> We are interrupted here by beggars, who don't like the look of the naira notes that are offered them.

put up a chairman,<sup>29</sup> it's just Kanuri who stood. The only exception we heard is that the son of Shex Jarma is standing.

<H> wal lawaan badai,  
H: The son of Lawan Badawi.

<D> wal lawaan badawi  
D: The son of Lawan Badawi.

<H> haadi budoor ač čaaman  
H: But he prefers the chairmanship.

<M> budoor al kuburiyye sei  
M: He wants the chairmanship.

<D> fi marte,  
D: In Marte

<H> walada baana irifta sei,  
H: His son is Bana, do you know him?

<D> fi marte  
D: In Marte.

<H> wəi hana enarsi  
H: Ya, for the NRC.

<DAN> mine fi angala  
DAN: Who is in Ngala?

<D> fi ngala da  
D: In Ngala

<H> amma sei hana ngala čaman hanaaum sei arabi,  
H: That's right, in Ngala their chairman is an Arab.

<D> arabi gujja  
D: An Arab (named) Gujja.

<H> amma sei angala sayid bigaasamu lokal gamant hi ma sallo minha lokal gament ai  
H: Except that Ngala, at the time they created new local governments, they didn't make a local government out of it.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> The chairman heads the local government council. In 1991 he and the council were elected officials, all belonging to one of the two political parties.

<D> ma salló,  
D: They didn't.

<H> ha lešaan ma binzil gide, (9.01)  
H: That's why he didn't hand over.<sup>31</sup>

<D> towwa dikwa fookha,  
D: Formerly Dikwa was part of it.<sup>32</sup>

<H> aaa  
H: That's right.

<D> towwa dikwa ba baama ba,  
D: Formerly Dikwa wasn't under Bama.

<H> diikwa tawwa kula baama  
H: Dikwa was under Bama even before.

<D> a? fi marte, fi [X] ngala  
D: No in Marte, Ngala

<A> diikwa fi ngala  
A: Dikwa was under Ngala.

<H> dikwa fi baama, maafá ka fi kondiga, dugo jo salsaloohin,  
H: Dikwa was part of Bama. Mafa was in Konduga, then they came and carved out their own areas.

<D> dikwa fi bama ai (9.16)  
D: Right, Dikwa was part of Bama.

---

<sup>30</sup> Since Ngala was left intact, there was no need to hold new local government elections, so the already serving chairman remained.

<sup>31</sup> The implication is, if they had created a new local government in Ngala, the Arab would have needed to stand down.

<sup>32</sup> What follows here is a short discussion about which areas formerly belonged to which ones. Generally speaking, the administrative history of Nigeria since independence has been the creation of ever more smaller units. At independence, for example, there were three national administrative regions, while as of 1996 there are 36 different states. Similarly, at the state level more local government areas (LGA) were created. As of 1996 there are 27 in Borno alone. 6 new ones were created in 1996, including two which are said to be for Arabs, one in the Balge/Ran area in the NE part of the Arabic-speaking region, and one centered around Khaddamari, a village NE of Ambudha. The latter happens to be the home village of the (Shuwa) wife of Sani Abbacha, Nigeria's Military strongman as of 1996.

Here, one speaker says that Dikwa LGA was created out of the Ngala LGA, while the others say it was created from Bama LGA. The latter is correct, the division taking place in 1987.

<H> diikwa mid'owwule sei sallooha kaamil

H: Its been a long time since Dikwa was removed from Bama (local government).

<M> aha maafá, marte monguno,

M: Right, Mafa, Marte and Mongono.<sup>33</sup>

<D> ma kondiga,

D: Along with Konduga.

<H> kondiga, marte mongonó

H: Konduga, Marte and Mongono.

<DAN> ha kula mastafa bulama názal sei,

DAN: So Mustafa Bulama lost.

<D> názal

D: He lost.

<DAN> maina sei faɗɗal (9.30)

DAN: Just Maina remains.

<D> maina maaji

D: Maina Maji

<H> maina maaji kula an naas gal bilkallamú kula ma bišiif, gade ya dugut kula hanaahum gadé ya dugut kula gal bigi kalaam hana an naas

H: Maina Maaji, people say he can't see well but till now what they say only amounts to words.<sup>34</sup>

<DAN> hu kula inda problem hana šunu, (9.39)

DAN: What sort of problems are associated with him?

<D> siyaasa hiil dugut di čatta froblem,

D: All contemporary politics are problems.

<H> gaadiin busowwu

H: (The politicians) are keeping at it.

<D> ámis bisowwu kula addaawaso ha kansal sawwo haw kattaló, ma bikuun gal ille bisowwu gade [X], dugut prameri elekšan da, čatta makunuus, (9:53)

---

<sup>33</sup> I.e. these are the older LGS's.

<sup>34</sup> *gal bigi kalaam* 'It's said it just amounts to words', i.e. is not true.

D: Even yesterday they quarreled and held a (local) council election and they annulled<sup>35</sup> it and said they'd repeat it. And the primary elections are all screwed up. (9:53)

<M> hu maina maaji gaalo gal be riyaaha,  
M: Maina Maaji, they say he's psychotic.

<D> biddaawaso, haw bəsowwu ...  
D: The ones are fighting and the others are doing ...

<H> ha hana al hille ya dugut biswowwuuan jadiidiyye ai  
H: And (the elections) of the town (i.e. Maiduguri) they are holding anew.

<D> ille  
D: except ...

<H> frameri elekšan  
H: Primary election.

<DAN> biyaad'u maal  
DAN: They give money.

<D> biyaad'u maal (10:05)  
DAN: They give money.

<DAN> ha dada an naas buktulu  
DAN: Then people kill.

<H> fi maiduguri walla ween  
H: In Maiduguri, or where?

<D> ma addaawaso hine, ma addaawaso, amma  
D: they don't fight here, not here, but...

<DAN> habbaaba [Y<sub>1</sub>] taali šiili usaada jiiibiya  
DAN: Habbaaba, come and carry a cushion and bring it.

<D> šába fi d daar da, [Y<sub>2</sub>] fi fi kano, kaduuna, fi kaano esdipi, ma sowwat, lissa ma waggafu, fi kaduuna enarsi ma waggafat ya dugut, ille finšaan am bado bas biddaawaso, ámis ka fi kano addaawaso, ašúqul da ille, ille ha bígi hana duwaas haw ma bígi hana aš sahi čatta (10.38)  
D: Like in this region ... Like in Kano, Kaduna. In Kano the SDP didn't hold (a primary election), and in Kaduna the NRC didn't. But here, as soon as they begin they

---

<sup>35</sup> *Kattal* in this sense, 'annul'.

fight. But then in Kano yesterday they were fighting, and they fight just for the sake of fighting, not for good reasons.<sup>36</sup>

<M> ana fi šoofi da babangida da, isid ašučul da, as siyaasa di,  
M: In my opinion, Babangida,<sup>37</sup> he should close down this thing, politics.<sup>38</sup>

<H> čatta iguul ille naynti tu gide kula biseyí gade,  
H: In 1992 he should do it again.

<A> kawni šučul šaba hana prameri elekšan haw ke dool da čatta mafi šai bisey le an naas tašin hankali bas, ixallí kawai, mine kula hal imši an našiiba al bilgá, ka dada ilga bas, (10.58)

A: Creating things like primary elections and such things doesn't do a thing to satisfy people but rather just disturbs them.<sup>39</sup> (It's better) to leave it. Let everyone seek whatever fortune he finds, and let him have it.

<DAN> dugut sei gaalo bi?iddu an naas,  
DAN: Now isn't it true that they're counting people [in the census]?<sup>40</sup>

<D> aha bi?iddu an naas  
Ya, they're counting the population.

<DAN> bi?iddu da keef  
Counting people.

<H> ambaakir, alyoom ambaakir alitinen sei, aṭ ɗaṭaata  
H: Tomorrow, today's Monday, on Tuesday.

<D> alitineen aj jaai haadi, at ɗaṭaata aj jaay,  
D: This coming Monday rather, or next Tuesday.

<H> ha, gide kula waddó ya iširiin wa sitte a, tawwa sei gaalo ašara arba?a bas,  
H: Oh, so they shifted it to the 26th? Before they said it would on the 14th.

<sup>36</sup> This paragraph was difficult to follow, and appears to me (and my assistants) to be contradictory.

<sup>37</sup> The then military president of Nigeria. He was to have handed over to a civilian governments in 1993, but rather than allow the winner of the election, Mashood Abiola assume power, the military annulled the election and reassumed power. Besides annulling the presidential election, all other elected officials were dismissed.

<sup>38</sup> The statement mirrors a fairly deep-seated distrust of civilian politicians among the populace.

<sup>39</sup> *tašin hankali*, Hausa = *bigayyim agal-ak* 'it disturbs your mind' (lit. 'makes your mind get up')

<sup>40</sup> In 1991 there was a national census, whose figures are somewhat problematic.

<M> iširiin sitte

M: 26<sup>th</sup>.

<D> ad doora d'iike, dugó bihaasubu an naas, (11.19)

D: Next (that) week, then they'll take the census.

<H> ille doort ambaakir

H: Until next week.

<D> maseet lei šerin poda, tálaf, xalaas,

D: I applied Shirley powder to my body.<sup>41</sup>

<A> harre a,

A: It's hot?

<D> harre,

D: It is.

<M> šúqul da maknuus tara ana baguul ad dasseta da, [...]

M: This thing is spoiled, I tell you.

<H> mi maknuus fa,

H: It's not spoiled

<?> a?a

?: no

<H> sei tara

H: that's just it (i.e. it's not spoiled)

<A> a?a kan naadum mi arif leha haadi,

A: No, only if a person doesn't know how to use it.

<D> attallaf haadi, šiif ma ákal (11.43)

D: Nope, it's spoiled. Look, it's ineffective.

<DAN> wa hu kula kan naadum amar

DAN: And he already has a reddish complexion.<sup>42</sup>

(laughter)

<A> wallahi had'd'eetha fi katiir fooga haadi,

A: Really, I put on too much.

---

<sup>41</sup> Shirley Power, a medicinal powder to fight blemishes.

<sup>42</sup> I.e. the powder will make the reddish complexion of the man even redder.

<DAN> keef šabaaha hi,  
DAN: What's it like?

<H> beeda bas  
H: Just white.

<D> šába, sei al beeda di bas,  
D: Isn't it this white thing?

<H> šaba al fooda di,  
H: Like this powder.

<A> afine sei,  
A: Isn't it smelly

<M> afine aha, (12.04)  
M: Smelly, yes.

<H> antálafat sei,  
H: Its simply spoiled.

<A> ana kan yeení kula kan xad'd'eetaha hineen da, doora kula bašum efanitha  
A: Whatever it is, having put it on in this spot, I smell it's odor for a whole week.

<DAN> sei, šába da an naas bišubbu ad' d'arašaan  
DAN: Like people put it on as perfume.

<D> yo, šába dugut al hayyá di, buguulu humma, billammo amma yeen, (12.21)  
D: Okay, like today, the Al-Haya club. They say they are unifying, but how!

<H> a?a al hayya da mi xallaha minnak, gade hi kula ma la ma la  
H: No, the Al-Haya, shouldn't you forget about it. After all it has no ...

<D> ma la manfá (12.24)  
D: It's of no value.

<H> kan taguul aššahí da [Y] humma kula bilummo  
H: To tell the truth,<sup>43</sup> it would be better if they unified.

<D> al arab bileen šaggo [Y]  
D: The Arabs didn't do it right.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Kan taguul as sahi* lit. 'If you tell the truth' in sense of 'it would be better if'.



<H> fi lubbuhum da, bigaymu leum naadum fi lubbuhum bas ašaan le ifattiš al gomna, ikattubu katkathum

H: Among them, they search out a candidate among themselves, so that he should run for the governorship and they should all fill out a form for him.

<D> al arba, fi lub al fi lub al hayá dugut da al araba čattuhum bígo šik šik, alhaaji abdullahi suleiman hu kula bígi wahada, (12.37)

D: Within the Al-Haya the Arabs have become differentiated. Al Haji Abdullahi Suleiman has his own group.<sup>44</sup>

<D> hu kula bígi bitaba maina maaji,

D: He came to support Maina Maji.

<A> bígi wahada kefkef

A: Why did he go his own way?

<H> hu kula bigi

H: He also became ...

<A> enarsi esdipi

A: NRC SDP

<D> aha, al haaji xurso, bítaba abba gubio haadi, (12.49)

D: Al-Haji Xurso's group on the other hand supports Abba Gubio.<sup>45</sup>

<H> ayaa, abba gubio haadi,

H: So Abba Gubio!

<D> abba gubio, simiit sei,

D: Abba Gubio, you heard?

<H> [Y] fi lubb al esdipi bas čattuhum

Within the SDP, both of them.

<D> aamad grema dool [Y] humma bítabu mastaa bulama,

The Ahmad Grema supporters, they support Mastafa Bulama,

<H> aš šeex jarma dool masta bilaama, arabi dugo taabi abba gana tiraab da mafi le ke, kan assahi da ka, amma sait gábul kádar<sup>46</sup> hu (13.04)

H: And Shex Jarma's Mustafa Bulama. So there's no Arab supporting Abba Gana Tirab. But really ... but before it was him (who they supported).

<DAN> gujja feema sei humma

<sup>44</sup> Various prominent people of the Al-Haya club are mentioned here.

<sup>45</sup> One of four SDP candidates in the primary election.

<sup>46</sup> In sense of *gabul* 'before'.

Gujja Fema<sup>47</sup>

<D> Gujja feema  
Gujja Fema

<DAN> gujja feema  
D: Gujja Fema

<D> gujja feema, sei mastá bulama,  
D: Isn't Gujja Feema for Mustafa Bulama?

<H> aʔa le ke da abba gana tiraab bas (13.10)  
H: No, he supports Abba Gana Tirab.

<D> abba gana teraab,  
D: Abba Gana Tiraab

<H> biaasubú arab  
H: They consider him to be an Arab.

<D> amma ma bigoodan fishaan maigida  
D: But they<sup>48</sup> won't stay together because he's his patron?<sup>49</sup>

<H> aʔa mi ke, le aguul ke maygida haná sei,  
H: No that's not it. I should say that (Tirab) is his (Feema's) patron.

<D> aʔa  
D: No

<H> le ke hu kula gul biyaasubu al árab abu ru zeeniin walla šaba hu da, ke kan ile gal biʔezzilu kula šunu hajithum, l arab az zeeniin kula mášo tábo masta bulama haadi, hu kan taba abba gana tiraab bilga šunu (13.28)  
H: To that point I say, there are Arabs considered of high status, not like this guy (Gujja Feema).<sup>50</sup> So if they select (Tirab) what benefit do they derive from it?<sup>51</sup> But all the prominent Arabs or like them went and supported Masta Bulama instead. The

---

<sup>47</sup> The man's name is Gujja Adamu Balge, a former chairman of the Ngala local government, though on the tape Feema seems to be pronounced.

<sup>48</sup> The references are difficult to follow, and consultants gave different interpretations. What is considered the most likely is that the politics of the different Hayaa? members –Sheix Jarma, Gujja Feema and others, will not stay unified, since each has different patrons from outside of the Hayaa?. The reference to the political allegiances of the members “explains” the FPL *bu-good-an*, which in this context can only refer to a non-human reference.

<sup>49</sup> Who would be Mustafa Bulama.

<sup>50</sup> The interpretation here is that Gujja Feema is being singled out as an exception among the Arabs.

<sup>51</sup> *šunu hajithum*, lit. ‘What is their interest?’. An idiomatic collocation implying that is of no interest to them or that it is not their business, e.g. *šunú haajit-ki be l watiir di* ‘What interest do you have in this car’, implying that you have no benefit from it.

prominent Arabs<sup>52</sup> went and supported Mustafa Bulama instead. If he (Gujja Feema) supports Abba Gana Tirab, what will he get from it?

<D> humma kan šatto ille al árab gal humma bas kubaara al hayyá, xalaas čattuhum  
mine kula, kárab darba,

D: They are divided (lit. dispersed). It just happens that all the Arabs considered themselves the big men in the Al-Haya, and each went his own way.

<H> amma said burbut da sayid bado as siyaasa da,

H: But now its in the early stages of politics.

<DAN> alla ifzaana, haw siyaasithum di čat nitallifuua,<sup>53</sup> isawwu gade,

DAN: God help us. Let's ruin this politics of theirs so that they can have a different one.

<H> tawwa kan sawwó leena ka axeer,

H: If they had done that it would have been better.

<A> wallaahi

Agreed!

<H> tawwa hu da kan sawwo ke ka axeer, (13.45) amma sait burbut bado

H: It would have been better. But now the time has begun...

<DAN> kan mi al árab kula dugut baburaay wúguf fi, a,

DAN: If there isn't an Arab, is there a Bura who stood for election?

<H> a?a mafi, margaay fi,

H: No, there isn't. There is a Margi

<?> baabuur

?: A Bura.

<H> buburaay haadi a, yo

H: A Bura rather, oh.

<D> humma ma bišuufu al fost al kabiir, ille at taani,

D: Those [ethnic groups] don't run for top office, just subordinate ones.

<H> At taani

The subordinate.

<D> da bas humma, al d'aaka ákal ka humma at taani hanaahum, šunu kula at taani hanaahum, (14.03)

---

<sup>52</sup> *l arab az zeeniin* lit. 'the good Arabs', here in sense of 'the prominent ones'.

<sup>53</sup> Dan usually does not use the n-...-u 1PL form.

D: That is just them. If the others [Kanuri] won the top position, the second position is for them. In everything they are the number twos.

<DAN> abba tiraab dugut naʔiba baburaay a,  
DAN: Abba Tirab, isn't his running mate a Bura?

<D> baabuuraay  
D: Bura

<DAN> ha maina maaji  
DAN: And Maina Maaji?<sup>54</sup>

<D> margaay  
D: Margi

<A> d'aaka, summa šunu  
A: And that one what's his name?

<DAN> ha humma sei hanaaum bígi axeer min hanaana, búgo anjád minnina, baana, áduxul xud'd'a fi beetí,  
DAN: So isn't it so that those have it better than us. They're cleverer than us. Baana, put the millet in my room.<sup>55</sup>

<H> abba saad burbut bádo as siyaasa abba gana tiraab sayid gaalo bigi bifattiš al gumnaana hana enarsi da, árab tal da kunni arabi kan fakka qašima da buguul abba gana tiraab, (14.31)  
H: Abba [Gana Tirab], when they began politics, when Abba Tirab began running for the governorship nomination of the NRC, every Arab would just talk about him.

<D> humma anšaan, margaay da dugut waahid wúguf,  
D: Those ones because, from the Margi one is running.

<H> fi gomna ba  
For governor right?

<D> aha alla kula ma aad'á  
D: Ya, except he didn't win (God didn't give him)'

<A> baburaay alla,  
A: Bura!

<H> margay haadi a  
H: A Margi rather.

<A> summa šunu d'aaka da (14.38)

---

<sup>54</sup> Maina Maji's deputy governor was Al-Haji Mohammad Hasan, a Bura.

<sup>55</sup> An interruption.

A: what's his name?

<H> maramá,  
H: Marama

<D> maramá da margaay,  
D: That Marama is Margi<sup>56</sup>

<H> a?a baabuuraay  
H: No, Bura.

<DAN> abba gana tiraab biguulu mi zeen da, amma ana galbí habbá u, (14.44)  
DAN: Abba Gana Tirab, they say he isn't good. But I like him.

<H> ana kula, kan assahi da galbí habba hu bas, ana kula  
H: Me too, really I like him, me as well.

<DAN> maalá maalá ma badiri, amma ana habba hu, yo, sayid fi bikaanhum da, an naadum da, gaalo ke humma bas binazzulú, haw busowwú, yawaraaši gal aš šeex kaal ma bidowra, da bas tára ad daliil al ábo fiya,  
DAN: Why I don't know, but I do. You know, they (forces opposed to Tirab, like the Shehu) said that this guy (Tirab), they said they were going to defeat him, which they're going to do. Afterwards the Shehu (of Borno) said he didn't like him. That's why they don't want him [Abba Gana Tirab].

<D> mmm (15.05)  
D: mm

<DAN> ha hu sayit biseyyi fi mašaaiba gal hu fi, bixadim fi eneso sei, ha sayit baxadim fi eneso haw gaal al árab ikattuluuhum haw ke ke da, maalá, maalá awaan d'aaka ma gaalo dugut ya dáxal as siyaasa dugó búguulu, (15.19)  
DAN: During the time of those troubles, they say he (Tirab) was involved, working for the NSO.<sup>57</sup> And when he was working for the NSO he said Arabs should be killed. But why, why didn't they say that [accuse him of that] then, rather than waiting till now when he's entered politics?

<H> dugó buguulú da, nahaar al hayá da kula gal, humma naas al hayá gal lešaan lešaan ma budooru abba gana tiraab da, naadum wahid ke gal jaabo, sayit zamaan al hayá busowwu fi al hayá hanaaum da, mi ad'd'oohum bakaan waahid ke bibuno, biso sakateriya a, ha sayit da bas gal be katkatum waahid ke jaabó, ha gaalo hu bas bidis iida, abba gana tiraab, haw yam waddó da kan gal ma badissa, šiilú minní (15.42)  
H: Then they say, the Haya once said, the reason its members don't like Abba Gana Tirab, and they supported another candidate, is that during the time when the Al-Haya was functioning [better], didn't they gave them a place to build a headquarters? And

---

<sup>56</sup> He is in fact a Bura.

<sup>57</sup> Nigerian Security Organization, a powerful internal security body

at that time they brought the papers, to Abba Gana Tirab to sign, but when they brought them he said he wouldn't. Take them away from me!

<D> hu sayit da direkta jeneral

D: He at the time was Director General.

<H> aha hu sayit fi direkta jeneral, ha lenšaan da bas humma al árab xallá minna, min an naár d'ak bas anfakko minna, lenšaan da bas ma bidoorú, da bas, binšu bulummu maa (15.52)

H: At that time he was the Director General.<sup>58</sup> And because of that the Arabs left him and from that time onwards the Arabs split with him, and they don't like him or want to join with him.

<D> humma al arab ma budooru naas baama kula, naas baama da, šaba sayit, wal baama da, aš šeix hana bama da, walada kataló, xalaas gaal ille kan ligo arabi kaad ke bas buktulú, xalaas al árab gal ma bidoorum, siyaad hana baama, šeex hana bama šunu šunu, haw muammad šitta máša addaawas maa aš šeex kula, šeex hana baama (16.18)

D: Arabs don't like Bama people at all. The Bama people, at the time the son of Bama, the Shehu of Bama, his son was killed, so he said, if they should find any Arab wandering about, just to kill them. So they don't like the Arabs, those Bama people, the Shehu of Bama, and Mohammad Shitta<sup>59</sup> went and quarreled with him, the Shehu of Bama.

---

<sup>58</sup> In the Ministry of Works, a ministry responsible for building permits.

<sup>59</sup> A prominent Maiduguri Arab, a former army general.