

AN HISTORICAL-COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOME  
WEST BAMILEKE DIALECTS

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## AN HISTORICAL-COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOME WEST BAMILEKE DIALECTS

### 1.0. Introduction

This paper makes a comparative study of seven dialects which have been assigned to the Bamileke subgroup of Greenberg's Wide Bantu, which is a member of the Bantoid branch of Benue-Congo. The purpose of the study is to establish systematic sound correspondences based on cognate sets. The correspondences will be used as the basis for a preliminary reconstruction of the group as a whole. The dialects will be compared for possible subgroupings based on shared innovations.

### 1.1. Classification of the dialects

As already stated, the Bamileke dialects under study have been classified under Wide Bantu by Greenberg. The Wide Bantu group is broader than the group referred to as Bantu in the studies of Meinhof (1932) and Guthrie (1953). Their classification has come to be referred to as 'Narrow Bantu', in contrast to Greenberg's. Bamileke is excluded from Narrow Bantu.

Part of the problem of delimiting the boundary of the Bantu group is lack of study of the Bamileke group and other related languages along the northern Bantu border. While these languages meet what is generally accepted as one of the criteria for inclusion within Bantu--the possession of a noun class and gender con-