



# THE BURAK

A collection of ethnographic and historical data from fieldwork 1989-1993

## Series

Ethnographic and Historical Profiles of the Peoples of the Muri Mountains  
- The Northern Groups

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# Ethnographic and Historical Profiles of the Peoples of the Muri Mountains - The Northern Groups

## The Burak

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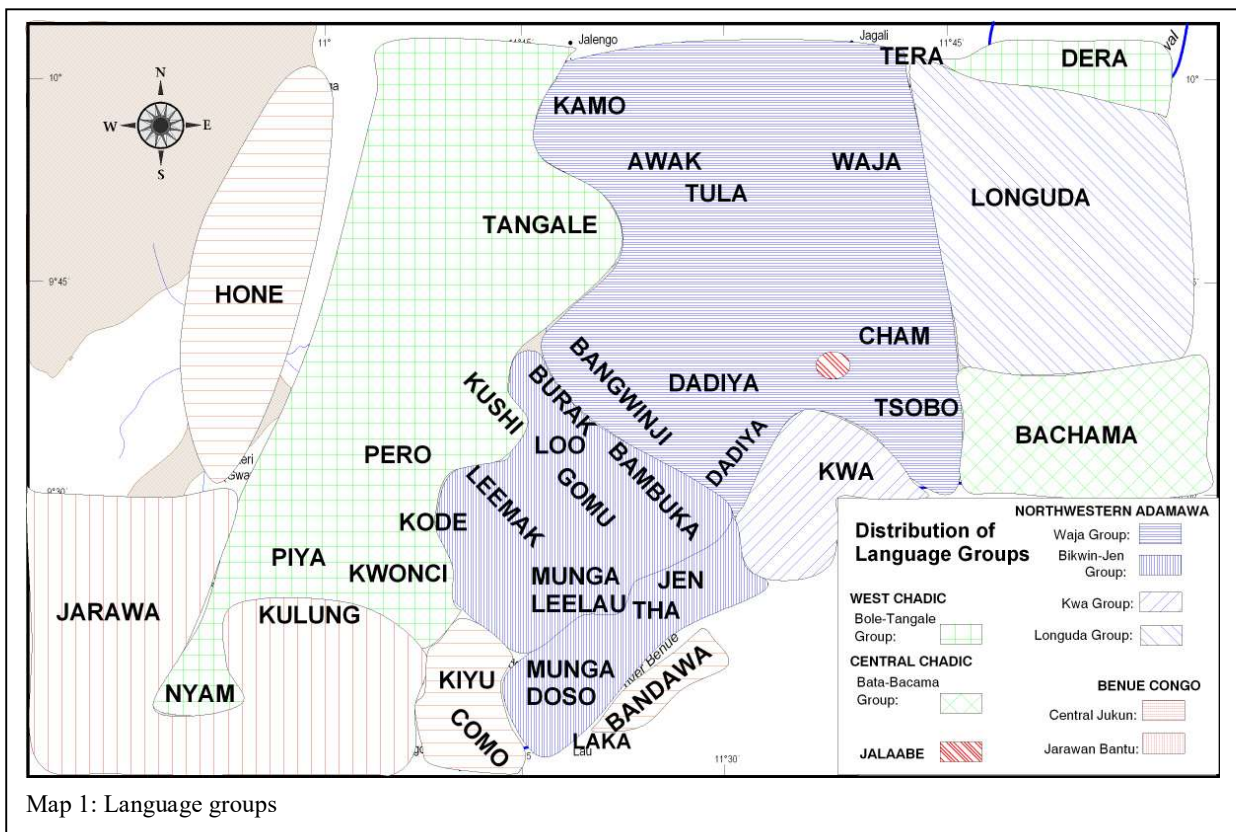
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## Introduction

Ethnographic field research was undertaken within the framework of the interdisciplinary research project “Cultural Development and Language History in the Environment of the West African Savannah” (SFB 268) in the years 1989 to 1993. The information provided below reflects the situation at that time.<sup>1</sup>

The Burak [bys] language is part of the Bikwin-Jen sub-group of the North-Western Adamawa languages of the Niger-Congo phylum.<sup>2</sup> Other members of the Bikwin sub-group are the Loo [lɔ], Gomu (or Moo) [gɔw], Leemak [pɔl], Tala of Kode [gɔm], Munga Leelau [lɔk] and Bambuka [bɔk]. Their autonym is *Búúrak*.



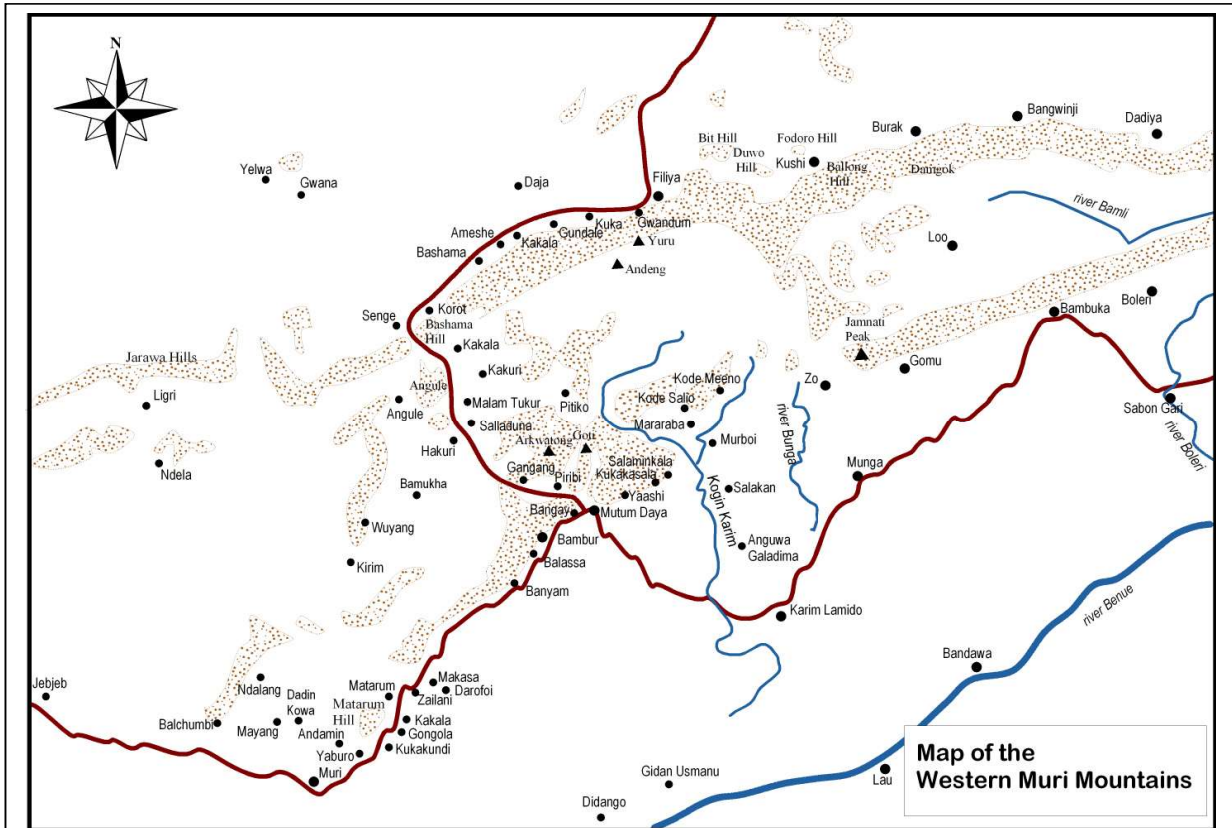
Map 1: Language groups

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Chief Gondak Garba, Baba Wakili Ngai, Dangle Baade, Isa Quinn, Kantum Jejek, Karatu Susu, Lamenson Baraya Boltom, Madaki Voori, Man Kashi, Mohammadu "Italya" Adamu, Othman Dangle, Philemon Bala, Umaru Boltom, Wakili Paulo and Wakili Yunge for their co-operation during my research. My special thanks go to the late Simon Magaji, Cain Simon Kawuni, Othman Dangle and Philemon Bala for their untiring and invaluable assistance, to Chief Gondak Garba and Simon Magaji for their hospitality. I am grateful to Pete Eccles for correcting my English.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kleinwillinghöfer 2015, see also Othaniel 2017. Miracle Oppong Peprah (2023) is writing a thesis on the Burak language. In square brackets are the ISO 639 names of the languages.

Settlement area and demography

At the time of research there were 512 taxpayers registered at Burak,<sup>3</sup> that may be extrapolated to a population figure of about 5,000-6,000 people; a more reliable figure, based on the population census of 1991, is given by Brunk (1994: 70-71) with 4,634 inhabitants for the Burak Village Area.<sup>4</sup>



Map 2: Western Muri Mountains

The land on which the majority of the Burak have settled nowadays was formerly a border area between the Kushi and the Bangwinji.<sup>5</sup>The area that is administered by the Village Head of Burak stretches in the west up to a river called Goturo (or Aak in Kushi) between the hamlets of Layara (Kwanan Kuka) and Daajelum (or Fokbwem in Kushi), in the north beyond Lasanjang (a Tangale settlement), in the east to Deejam (a Bangwinji settlement) and in the south into the Loo Basin, coinciding with the boundary between Bauchi State and Taraba State.

The main settlement of the Burak people nowadays is the village on the northern foothills of the Chonge-Mona Range, known by outsiders as Burak, but called Tiire by the Burak themselves. It consists of the three wards: Shemnyam, Tidi and Loovoogbere (or Sabon Layi). The administrative centre of the Burak Village Area and the seat of the Village Head is located in Sabon Layi,

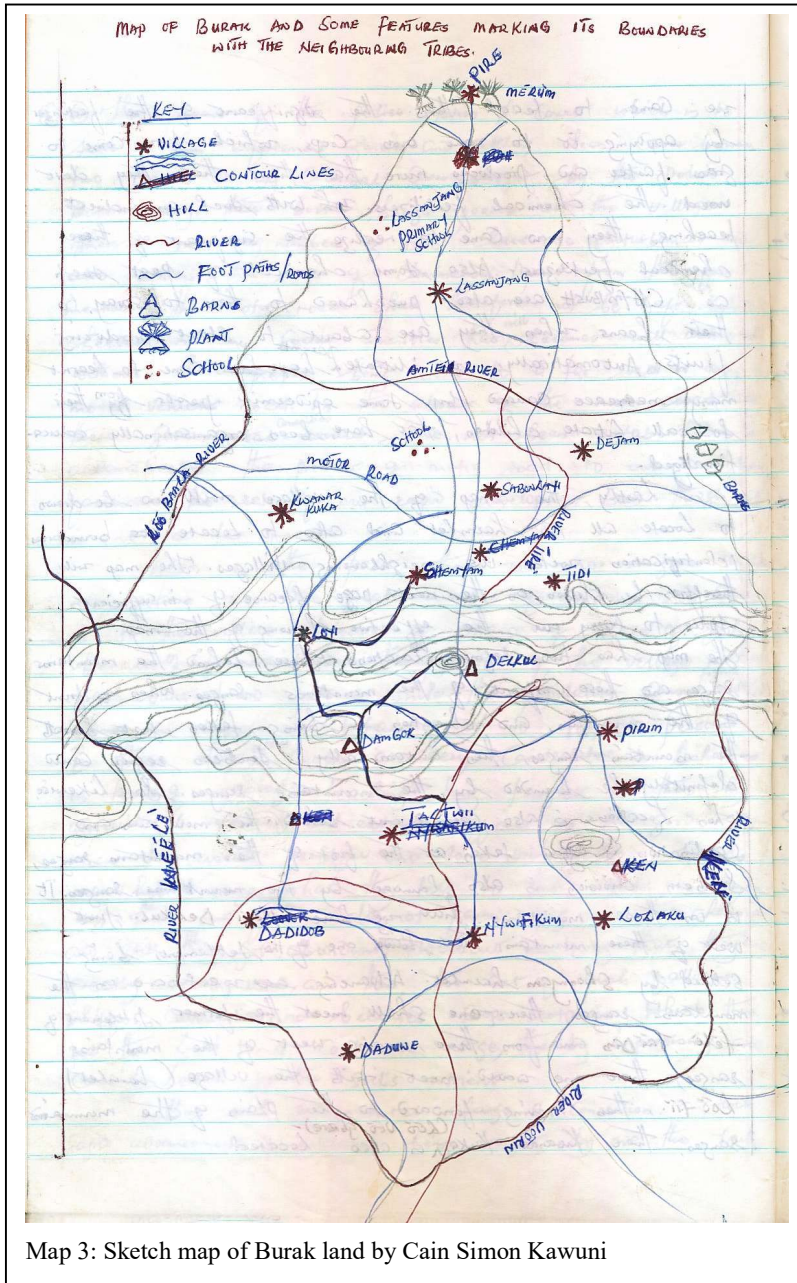
<sup>3</sup> Tax Payers List of 30<sup>th</sup> September 1989.

<sup>4</sup> In the ethnographic survey by CAPRO (1995: 93) a population figure of 5,000 is given without referencing a source.

<sup>5</sup> The following is largely taken from Adelberger, Brunk & Kleinewillinghöfer 1993: 27-33



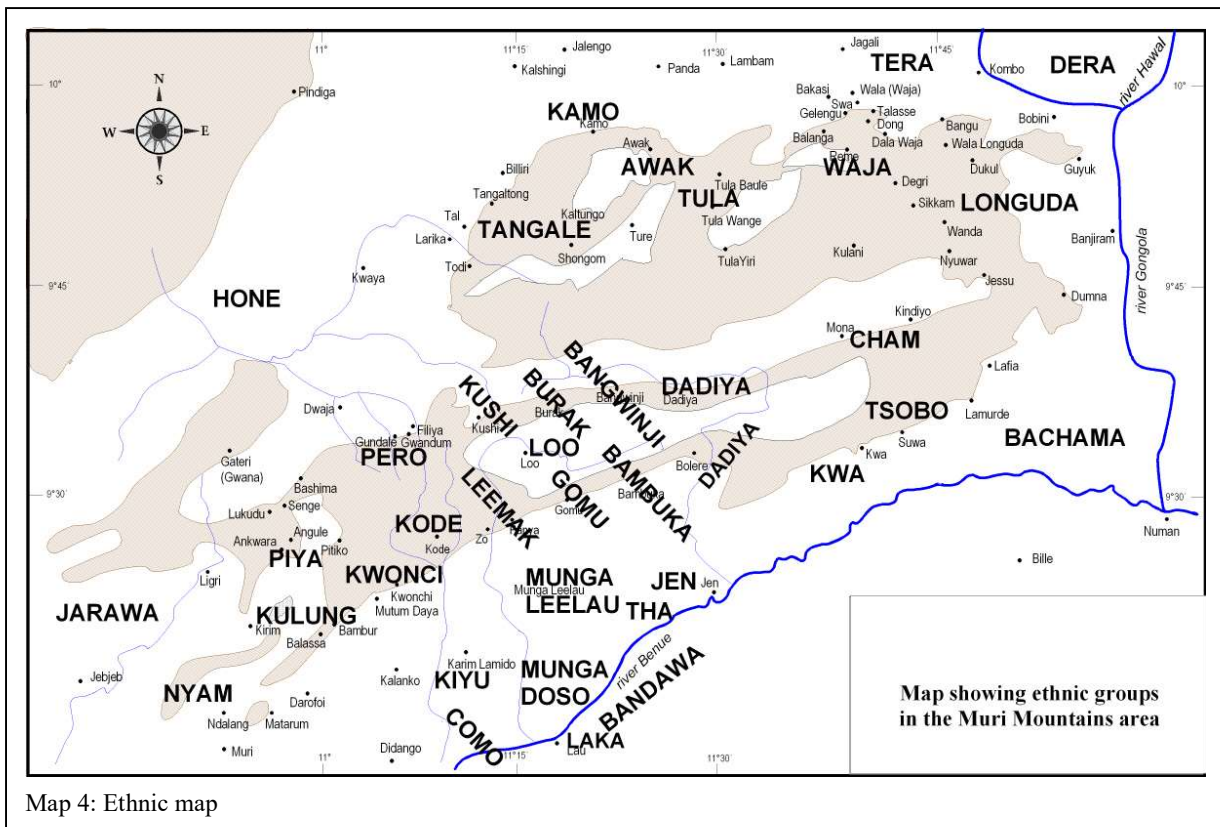
and it is economically the most important place in the Chonge District, due to the weekly market which is held every Saturday. The market is visited by buyers and sellers from other areas and is especially important in marketing cotton. A primary school, maternity hospital, dispensary, police station and a functioning borehole add to the significance of Tiire. Its development in recent years can be attributed to the initiative of the dynamic Village Head. Other hamlets inhabited by the Burak people are Looyii, Layara and Daajelum (Fokbwem) on the northern side of the Chonge-Mona Range, and inside the Loo Basin Taljwi, Pirim, Nyuaabwetek, Nyuaafiikum and Dikadit, which had formerly been their main settlement. People from other ethnic groups are also living in several hamlets.



Map 3: Sketch map of Burak land by Cain Simon Kawuni

## Interethnic relations

Their neighbours to the north are the Shongom-Tangale [tan], to the east the Bangwinji [bsj], to



Map 4: Ethnic map

the south the Loo [Ido] and to the west the Kushi [kuh].

In general, the Burak have cordial relationships with the neighbouring ethnic groups and intermarry with them, but there were also conflicts with the Loo and the Tangale in pre-colonial times. The amicable relations are extended to the other groups of the Bikwin cluster such as the Gomu or Leemark, as well as to those groups with whom the Burak claim a historical relationship like the Jen or Bandawa.

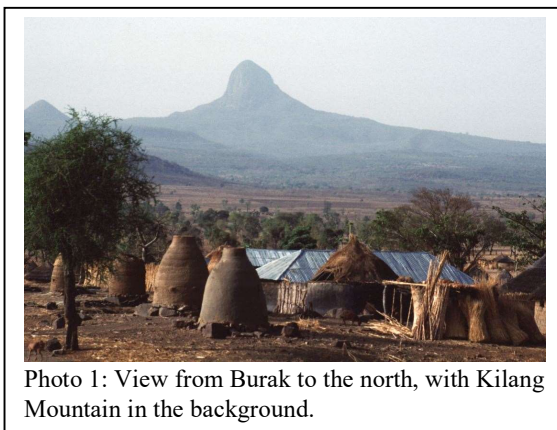


Photo 1: View from Burak to the north, with Kilang Mountain in the background.

The Burak share a cult of ancestor veneration with the Pero (called *bweng* by the Burak, *kindi-ma* by the Pero); apparently this cult was imported by the Pero from Dikadit when the Burak were still living there. And it is said that the *dabang* celebration of the Pero is akin to the *mam kandit* celebration of the Burak. Further, the Burak imported the *nunbwere* cult (*dodo* cult with vertical masks) from the Loo and the *mam gabra* from the Gomu. *Mam gabra* (also called arm-slashing cult, *boori* in Hausa) is regional cult widespread in the area.



Table 1: Burak names for neighbouring ethnic groups

Ethnic group	Burak name
Bangwinji	Jáŋáá
Bandawa	Shiram
Dadiya (of the south)	Buleere
Fulani	Yeletanyek
Gomu	Shaŋmu
Jukun	Kpana
Karimjo	Keyi
Kode	Tara
Kushi	Tááráá
Leemak	Mak
Loo	Shónó
Munga Leelau	Nyem
Pero	Píllàn
Tangale (of Billiri)	Yunjo
Tangale (of Kaltungo)	Wán Káyúúp
Tangale (of Shongom)	Wán Kándàm
Tsobo	Piire

## History

### Pre-colonial migrations and movement of settlements since the beginning of the colonial period<sup>6</sup>

Oral traditions refer to a place called Lookina at the southern ranges of the Muri Mountains as the place of origin for most of the Burak clans. At Lookina they claim to have lived together with other

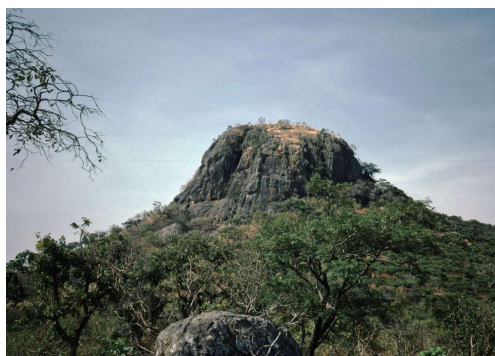


Photo 2: Damgok peak

linguistically closely related groups such as the Gomu, Loo, Leemak and the Jen but also with the Bandawa, who speak a Jukunoid language. The Burak left Lookina to the north because of a conflict and settled at the foot of Damgok Hill, calling this settlement Dakudit. Here another conflict arose, namely between the clans of Shaalo and Waawo, which consequently affected the whole of the Burak. The reason for the conflict is related in a tradition as a

dispute over resources, couched in the idiom of kinship relations: a leper called Delwel from the Shaalo was treated badly by his clan mates, so he moved to his maternal relatives from the Waawo clan who took care of him and he recovered from the illness. Out of gratitude he allowed the Waawo to farm on his land. This aroused the anger of the Shaalo and they attacked the

<sup>6</sup> The following is largely taken from Adelberger, Brunk & Kleinewillinghöfer 1993: 27-33.

Waawo when they were cultivating the land. The fracas escalated and many people were killed; those remaining either fled to neighbouring ethnic groups like the Tangale, Bangwinji, Dadiya, Loo, Pero and Gomu, or they moved up-hill, where they founded the village of Dikadit. Spatially Dikadit was arranged in three quarters: Taadam [*taa dam* "behind the up (mountain)"] on the western side of the mountain, Nyuaalimi-Dam [*nyuaa limi dam* "mouth/edge of *limi* - up"] on the upper part of the south-eastern side and Nyuaalimi-Yub [*nyuaa limi yub* "mouth/edge of *limi* - down"] on the lower part of the eastern side. Ritually, Nyuaalimi was the more important section of Dikadit since all the major shrines (e.g. the ones of *limi*, *mam kandit*, *diime* and *mom*) were located here.

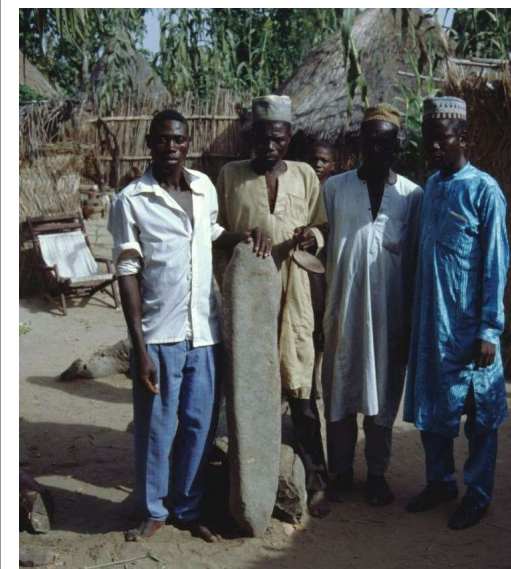


Photo 4: Monolith that was discovered on the mountains



Photo 3: Stone artefact attributed to the Gok, allegedly used for fire making

There is a tradition, that a group named Gok<sup>7</sup> [*gok* = "grasshopper"] related to the Burak also lived at Dakudit, but when leaving they did not stop at Damgok Mountain [*dam gok* "up/mountain rooster"] to settle at Dikadit, but moved further and settled along the northern slopes of the Chonge-Mona Range. Due to an outbreak of epidemics, they dispersed in various directions, some of them went back south to meet the Burak at Dikadit, others went to Filiya and Gwandum in Pero land, to Kaltungo and Ture in Tangale area,<sup>8</sup> to Tula Baule, to Loofiyo in Dadiya land, to Bamle in Gomu area and even to Bambur in Kulung land. Artefacts like millstones or potsherds found in the region were repeatedly pointed out as material traces of the Gok. It is, however, difficult to decide whether this tradition reflects an historical event or serves as a legitimation for the claim on the territory north of the mountain range which the Burak inhabit now. Only two clans have an origin different from Lookina, these are the Dongo and the Danga. While the Danga came from the east, from a place named Jaa in present Cham area and met the Burak at Dakudit, the Dongo came from the Loo area (Koorok Hill) via a hill called Tara to the west of Damgok. Unfortunately, there is no direct clue which would

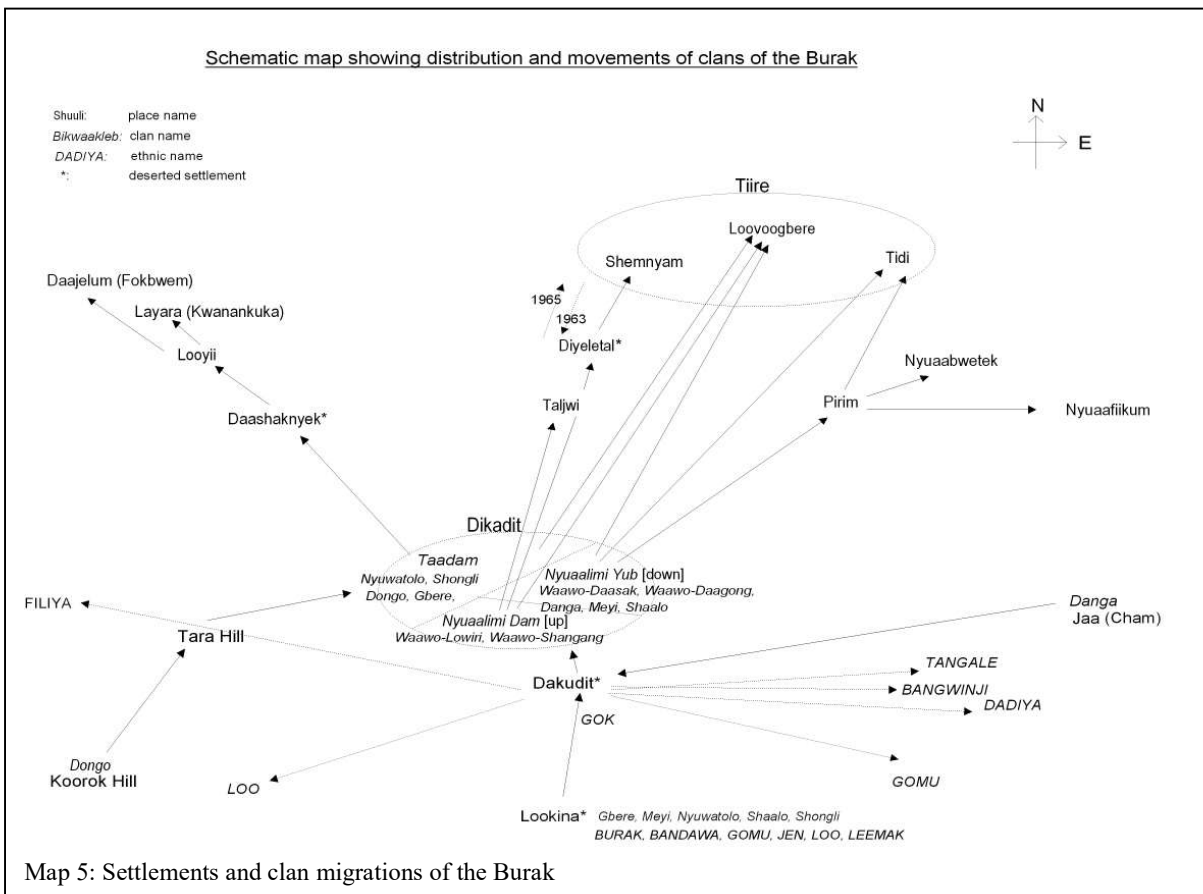
<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that there is a kin group among the Gomu bearing the name Gok.

<sup>8</sup> It was said that people from Ture-Balam used to visit a certain site on the northern slopes to perform rituals.

allow at least an approximate dating of these events. It can only be assumed that the process of integrating the Dongo clan must have taken place chronologically before the arrival of the Dongo clan at Kushi, because the Dongo of Kushi arrived from Burak. Further it may be assumed that the Gbere clan of Kushi left Burak in the course of dispersion after the intra-tribal conflict at Dakudit. If the tentative dating based on a list of ten chiefs for the Kushi is correct, it would mean that the intratribal conflict took place sometime in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Dikadit, the settlement on Damgok Hill, has a high significance as a point of ethnic identification. It is the place, where the process of segmentation into clans and lineages valid up to now took place, and where the major shrines, which are still worshipped nowadays are located.<sup>9</sup> In 1991 only a few families headed by old men still lived there. The compounds are built on dry stone terraces, the house walls consisting either of stones or sometimes mud, but in the latter case they are quite thin, because mud as a building material is not available in great quantities.

At the beginning of this century, the Burak had not yet crossed the mountain range to the north but were still living on Damgok Mountain as can be gathered from the reports of the early colonial patrols (cf. NAK SNP 10 - 263P/1913). The Pax Britannica offered the chance to get away from Damgok, particularly as the Burak suffered from harassments by the neighbouring Loo and they started moving gradually northwards, in distinct movements according to their territorial sections.



<sup>9</sup> The attachment of the Burak to Dikadit is such that it is said that on the rock above Dikadit blood can be found or rocks tumble down whenever something happens to an important Burak person.

People from Nyuaalimi-Dam were the first to leave; they founded Diyele Tal almost on the crest of the Chonge-Mona Range, before moving to the adjoining Dadiya Basin to Shemnyam and Loovoogbere. People from Taadam founded Daashaknyek on the southern slopes of the mountain range, before moving further north to the lower slopes of the Chonge-Mona Range to Looyii and adjacent hamlets. Additionally, people from Nyuaalimi-Yub crossed directly to the northern side of the mountain range to Tidi. In the course of time other hamlets within the Loo Basin such as Taljwi and Pirim were established. As a small interlude in the 1960's, some people of Shemnyam went back to Diyele Tal because elephants destroyed their fields, but they returned to Shemnyam a few years later.

### **Relations with the Fulani emirates<sup>10</sup>**

The Bauchi Emirate was founded by Yakubu, who had already received a flag from Uthman dan Fodio prior to 1804. In 1809 Bauchi town was founded and in the following years a vast area, including the Wurkun hills in the western Muri Mountains, down to the rivers Benue and Gongola, was conquered. Yakubu pitched a war camp in front of Bambur Hill, (McBride, n.d.:15; Fremantle 1972:27) and it is said that he destroyed Kode and Gomu and received slaves as a sign of submission, but no regular tribute was paid.<sup>11</sup> Under Yakubu's successors, however, the control over the subject peoples weakened, especially under Umaru (1883–1902). The region inhabited by non-Muslim peoples in the south of Bauchi Emirate was a regular target for slave raids (Yakubu 1992:147).

Although suffering from the various raids, and at least being nominally under the administration of the Emirate of Muri, parts of the populations were able to retain their independence. It is said that the Wurkun groups were never successfully subjugated by the Fulani.<sup>12</sup> Many groups were strong enough to be able to disrupt trade routes. For instance, the German traveller Eduard Vogel noted in 1855 that the road from Muri to Yola was blocked by the Bachama, who had already defeated the troops of the Emir of Adamawa. It seems that they were supported by troops of the Shehu of Borno (Vogel 1858:32).

The military strategy of the Fulani emirates was largely based on their cavalry, with noble horsemen leading the attacks (Marjomaa 1998:218–19, 232–34, 254–56; Smaldone 1977:29–32). Mounted warriors could employ their military tactics to great effect on the undulating plains of the Northern Nigerian savannah, but could not exploit their superiority in the craggy and hilly landscape of the Muri Mountains area nor in other mountainous regions. The inhabitants of the plains surrounding the hills, especially in the Tula area, built defensive stone walls and thorn hedges, which were successfully used to check attacks by horsemen. As a protective measure, the villag-

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<sup>10</sup> The following is largely taken from Adelberger 2009; see also Adelberger 2018.

<sup>11</sup> NAK SNP 10 - 77P/1913, Muri Province, Gwomu District, Lau Division, Assessment Report by T. H. Haughton.

<sup>12</sup> NAK SNP 7 - 3803/1909, Patrol Tangale-Waja, Report on: From the Resident Bauchi Province to the Secretary to the Administration, Zungeru, by E. H. Lewis Resident Bauchi 5<sup>th</sup> July 1909.

es were strategically well-placed in the steep and rocky hills. Usually, they were protected by stone walls and could only be reached through narrow, winding paths, partly obstructed by gateways. These could be well defended against emirate raiders, even if they approached armed with rifles.

Firearms were part of the weaponry of the emirate forces, especially since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but since they were of the front-loader musket type and, compared with contemporaneous European standards, few in numbers, their effect was mostly psychological inducing fear through their loud discharge. The arms of the mountain dwellers consisted of spears with varying, often quite vicious, tips, bows and arrows, the latter often poisoned, daggers, short swords and clubs. For protection, shields made of buffalo hide and elephant ears were used.

Thus, although the different emirates exercised considerable pressure by undertaking frequent raids on the population groups of the wider Muri Mountains area and adjacent regions, their control of the area was rather loose and varied over time. Supported by a suitable terrain, the mountain dwellers could successfully defend themselves or were able to withdraw into even more inaccessible regions. The acephalous nature of their societies and the existence of a multitude of factions on the one hand made it difficult to form alliances for more successful defence, on the other hand the subjugation of a single community did not entail the conquest of any wider political network.

Mountain dwellers, such as the Awak, Cham, Dadiya or Pero, were able to retain their independence against the Fulani (Temple 1922: 34, 87, 88, 365).

### **Colonial encounters<sup>13</sup>**

A combined patrol of forces from Gombe and Muri, with officers from both provinces, toured the Muri Mountains proper in May and June 1909.<sup>14</sup> They went along the northern edge, then crossed the hills to the south and returned along its southern edge. Several places in that mountain refuge were visited for the first time. At Gomu, a violent conflict arose which resulted in about 30 Gomu being killed. The Gomu warriors were defeated at the same place where they had beaten the Fulani forces years before.<sup>15</sup> The proclaimed intention of the patrol was to bring the area under con-

<sup>13</sup> The following is largely taken from Adelberger 2009; see also Adelberger 2018.

<sup>14</sup> NAK SNP 7 - 147/1911, Boundary Muri - Bauchi: Extract from report on Wurkum Patrol, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1909 by Elphinstone; NAK SNP 7 - 5093/1907, Wurkum Patrol 1909:

- Report by Col. Sergeant C. Bailey 15<sup>th</sup> June 1909,
- Report on Wurkum Patrol by Resident Lau Division Elphinstone 1<sup>st</sup> July 1909,
- Extract from report from AR Gombe to Resident Bauchi by Lt. Hugh de Putron, OC Nafada.

<sup>15</sup> NAK SNP 7 - 147/1911, Boundary Muri - Bauchi. NAK SNP 7 - 3803/1909, Patrol Tangale-Waja, Report on: From the Resident Bauchi Province to the Secretary to the Administration, Zungeru, by E. H. Lewis Resident Bauchi 5<sup>th</sup> July 1909.

NAK SNP 7 - 5093/1907, Wurkum Patrol 1909. NAK YolaProf Acc. 15, Misc. Papers re Wurkum and Muri 1912: Gwomu District Wurkum Country Assessment Report Nov. 1912 by AR T. H. Haughton.

NAK SNP 10 - 77P/1913, Muri Province, Gwomu District, Lau Division, Assessment Report by T. H. Haughton.



trol and to stop offences being committed on traders disturbing the important trading centre of Lau.

On 20<sup>th</sup> April 1909 Colour Sergeant Bailey, with 22 rank and file, left Nafada and marched via Deba Habe, where they joined Assistant Resident of Gombe Carlyle, to the Jukun town of Gateri where they arrived on 28<sup>th</sup> April. Here they expected to meet with the party from Muri Division, but, due to an illness of the Assistant Resident Fitzpatrick, the meeting was delayed. Eventually on 12<sup>th</sup> May they were joined by Resident Lau Division K. V. Elphinstone, Assistant Resident Brice-Smith and Lieutenant Feneran with 54 rank and file. The combined patrol left Gateri on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

From here they first marched east and then south along the boundary line on which, however, both parties had differing views. That stretch of country was covered for the first time by a British patrol. They first visited the Pero settlements of Gwandum and Filiya, and Elphinstone remarked that he was repelled especially by the Pero. As the Pero and Tangale claimed the same saltings on the river, that topic was discussed during the visit by the Galadima of Tangale and Sarkin Filiya. The next settlements they reached were Kushi and Burak. The Burak expressed their contentment with the new administration protecting them against the neighbouring Loo and Pero, and they prepared a road to Gomu. Then the patrol continued to Loo, Gomu and Bambuka. Bambuka had been visited by W. P. Hewby in 1900, (he was an agent of the Royal Niger Company on the Benue and, later, Resident of Benue province), and the Bambuka were said to have been subject to the Emir of Yola. Recently there had been a series of disputes between the Gomu and the Bambuka. When the patrol approached Bambuka, the people, armed with spears and shields, were working in the fields, and, at first, they assumed that the patrol were Gomu warriors. To settle the discord, Resident Elphinstone decided on a fine of spears and shields from both groups, but the Gomu resented the fine. After waiting for one day, the patrol marched into Gomu town on 25<sup>th</sup> May. Half way up the pass the force was met by the Gomu ready to defend their town, so the soldiers fired two volleys at them and fighting ensued, in which the Gomu were joined by the Loo who were their allies. At the end there were 31 Gomu killed and 19 wounded, and one Loo killed and 9 wounded, with no casualties on the British side.

The patrol continued to Kode. They considered the Kode people to be at a low stage of development but friendly and co-operative. Then they passed through Panya, Bambur and Kwonchi without incident and continued to Pitiko, Bashima, Kirim, Balassa, Ankwara and Batingo. The inhabitants of these settlements were considered to be friendly with the exception of those of Angule. Angule had been burnt three times and fought twice in the past, but now the inhabitants showed no resistance. The patrol did not collect the full amount of tribute, and nothing was given to the Emir of Muri as they felt he had not earned it, for the villages were not administered by him. Although the district had been placed under the Emir by the British administration in 1900, he had never visited it.

The route taken by the patrol was determined to be impractical and it was recommended that it should never be taken again.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May the two parties split and the Gombe party proceeded to Tangale country, arriving at Nafada on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

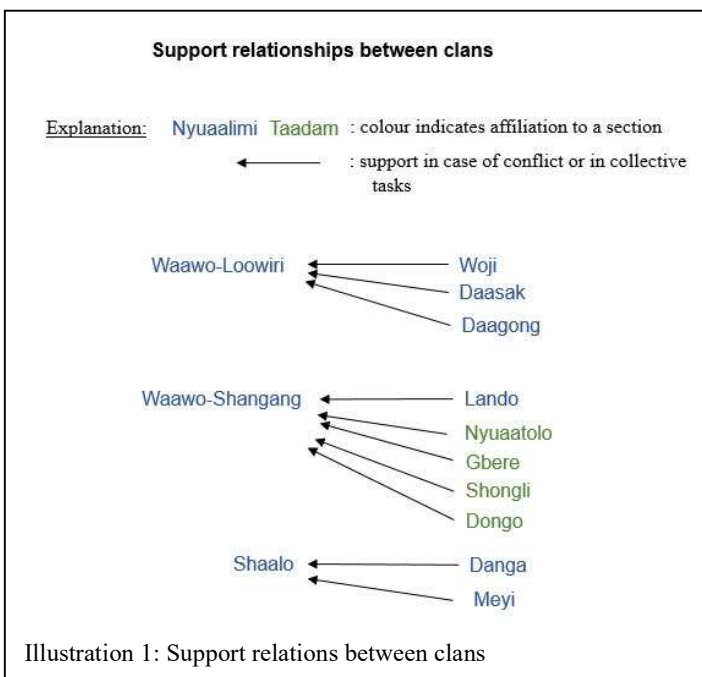
## Social structure

The Burak are composed of a number of patrilineal and localised descent groups which are organised into three sections. These three sections can, however, be reduced to a dual division: Taadam and Nyuaalimi, whereby Nyuaalimi is subdivided into Dam and Yub. The divisions above the clan level refer to spatial, more or less co-resident groupings which are derived from the territorial arrangement at Dikadit, the former main settlement of the Burak at Damgok Hill. The Burak term for these sections/co-residential groupings is *yélé*, i.e. *yélé* Nyuaalimi and *yélé* Taadam. The Nyuaalimi-Dam, Nyuaalimi-Yub and Taadam each settled separately at Dikadit, migrated from there along distinct routes and still inhabit different hamlets and wards. Only in the ward of Sabon Layi (Loovoogbere) at Tiire do they mix. There is also a section named Taadam among the neighbouring Loo, but the Burak deny a relation between the two sections.

## Clans

*Dààdit* means clan or lineage in the Burak language. The clans, or major lineages, are partly subdivided into smaller units or lineages. The lineages are strictly exogamous units, for example marriages between lineages belonging to the Waawo clan are possible. Close relationships between clans are forged through frequent intermarriages. Each clan has an idol (*dodo* H.) representing its collective ancestors.

Waawo-Loowiri and Waawo-Shangang are the ruling lineages. Followers of the Loowiri are the



kin-groups Woji, Daasak and Daagong; followers of the Shangang are the Lando, Nyuaatolo, Gbere, Shongli and Dongo. The Danga and the Meyi are backers of the Shaalo. The members of these three associations support each other in battle, hunting and farm work.

The Danga, who had migrated from Jaa in Cham area, only joined the Burak at Dakudit when the latter had already left Lookina; and the Danga were taken in in a servile position. When the Burak had moved further to

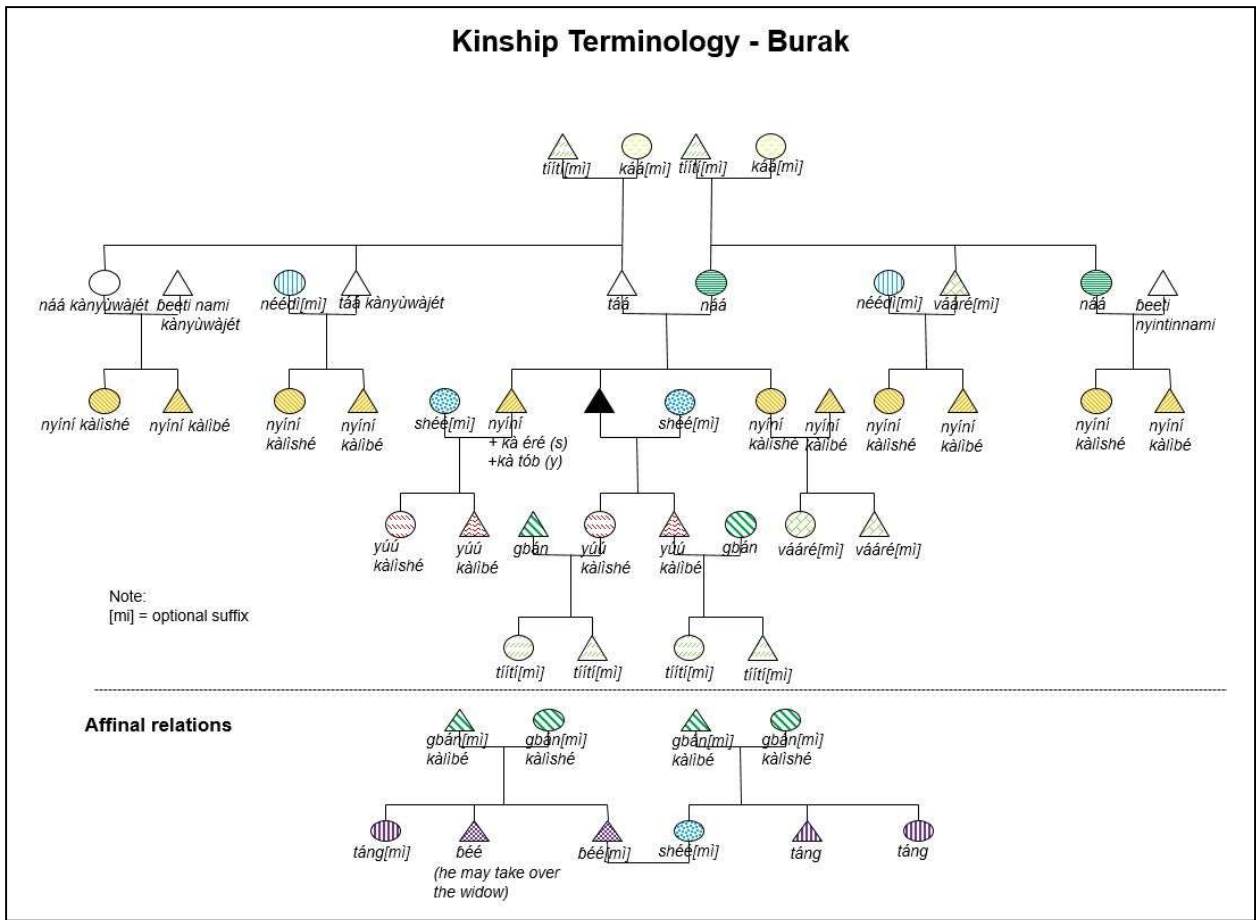
Dikadit, the Dongo arrived from Tara Hill west of Damgok, where they had migrated to coming from Koorok Hill. Like the Danga before them, the Dongo joined the Burak with a subservient status. It is said that the Dongo did not know death, therefore they went to the Kushi with a dead animal to learn about funeral rites and imported these, subsequently they started to die; they are said to have originally been called Beshi, *beshi* meaning 'foolish'. The Woji are said to be descendants of the Gok and are considered to be successful farmers, they joined the Burak when these were living on Damgok Mountain.

Table 2: Burak clans

Section	Clan	Lineage	Sub-lineage	Origin	Comments
Nyuaalimi - Dam	Waawo	daadit Loowiri		Lookina	Nyuaalimi lived on the southern side of Dikadit, N.-Dam on the upper side. Loowiri was a former chief, <i>wiiri</i> = heap of guinea corn. One of the ruling lineages
Nyuaalimi - Dam	Waawo	daadit Loowiri	Woji		Woji are descended from the Gok; Woji is a name for a person who has one leg or a shortened leg.
Nyuaalimi - Dam	Waawo	daadit Shangang			Shangang is the name of their ancestor. One of the ruling lineages
Nyuaalimi - Dam	Waawo	daadit Shangang	Kalkamu		
Nyuaalimi - Dam	Waawo	daadit Shangang	Ngeneŋ (Lando)		are in charge of spirit <i>limi</i> and are first with sowing guinea corn
Nyuaalimi - Dam	Waawo	Daasak			<i>daashak</i> means "open field"
Nyuaalimi - Yub	Waawo	Daagong			Nyuaalimi lived on the southern side of Dikadit, N.-Yub on the down side. <i>daagong</i> means "dead or fallen tree"
Nyuaalimi - Yub	Shaalo				are in charge of the spirit <i>mam</i> and provide the rain-makers. Yuubik is a nickname for the Shaalo and the spirit calls them by using the name Yuubik. <i>shaalo</i> means "isolated people"
Nyuaalimi - Yub	Danga			from Jaa in Cham area	arrived as a group with their goats and possessions
Nyuaalimi - Yub	Meyi			Lookina	
Taadam	Nyuaatolo			Lookina	Taadam lived on the northern side of Dikadit. <i>nyuaatolo</i> means "people living at mouth of river"
Taadam	Dongo			from Koorok Hill near Loo	arrived as a group, their original name was Beshi. There is a Beshi clan among the Kode, and a Beci clan among the Piya.
Taadam	Gbere			Lookina	
Taadam	Shongli			Lookina	

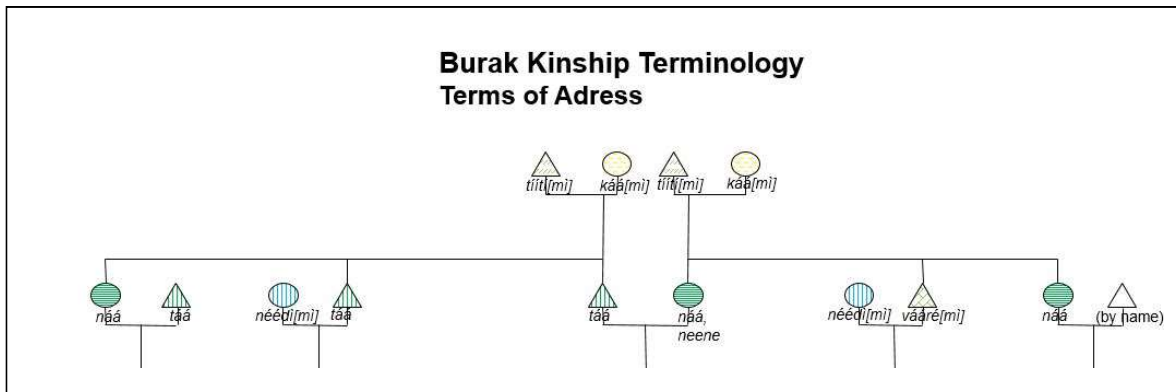
### Kinship terminology

The kinship terminology of the Burak fits the category of an Eskimo system, where cousins are



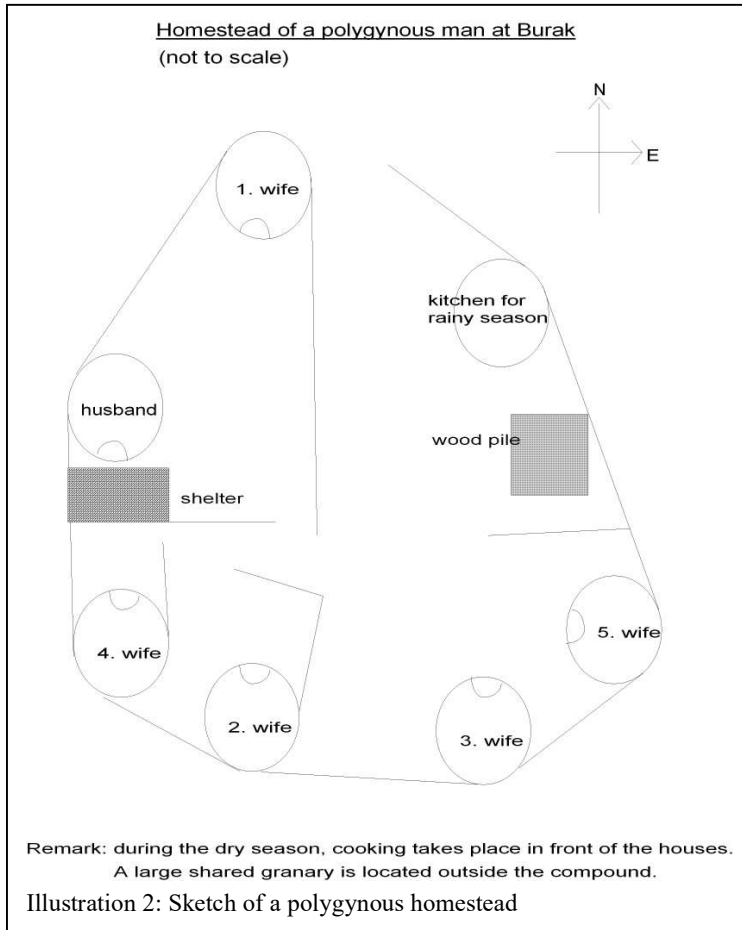
called by the same term as siblings, only differentiated by gender.

In the first ascending generation, however, the terminology defies easy classification: it could be classified as a generational system (Fa=FaBr=MoBr, Mo=MoSi=FaSi) - and this becomes more evident when considering the terms of address - however, because the MoBr is termed differently, it moves to a bifurcate merging system on the matrilineal side.



## Family

A core family consists of a man with his wives and children. A husband has to build the houses in

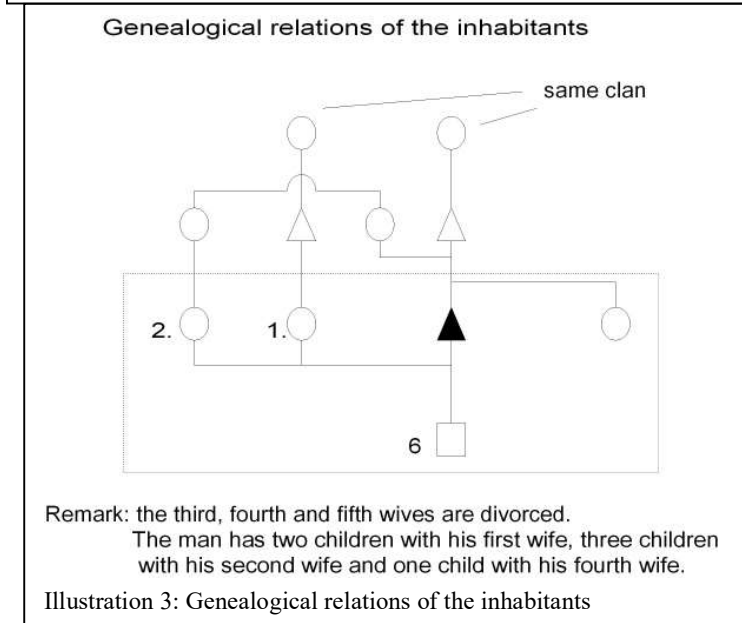


a homestead, provide his family with clothes and foodstuff and cultivate the fields. Cooking meals, fetching water, assisting on the farm and brewing beer are the duties of a woman.

In a polygynous household, the first wife is in charge of the supplies and distributes what is needed to the other wives from the granary of the husband. The husband alternates between the houses of his wives, spending from one to several days with each, but always spending the same amount of time with each. Each of the wives cooks for herself, her children and the husband.

In the situation where both parents die, a paternal relative, usually a brother of the father, will take care of the orphans. The maternal side takes full responsibility if the paternal side mistreats or rejects a child.

There is a special relationship between the mother's brother (MoBr) and the sister's son (SiSo) that only exists during their lifetime, the SiSo does not inherit anything from his MoBr. But during his lifetime he can expect full support from the MoBr, even take a field



from him and the MoBr will agree. The SiSo respects and at the same time fears the MoBr. The MoBr will contribute to the bride-price of his SiSo and he may even pay the full amount if the boy's father is poor. But if both are equally wealthy, the father contributes a larger share.



When a man dies, only his sons have an inheritance, his wife/wives or daughters get nothing; if there are no sons, then his inheritance goes to his brothers. In the case that the sons are still children, the husband's brother, who fulfills the levirate/marries the widow receives the inheritance. If a woman dies, her husband or her son inherits her property. If she has no son, her daughter may only inherit something if there is no one else. If a woman is not married, it is her brother who inherits from her.

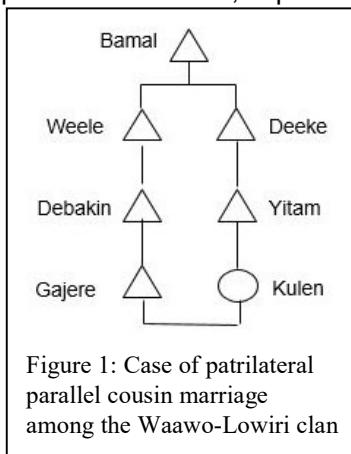


Photo 5: Interior of a Burak homestead, with resting place

## Marriage

In the past, sister exchange was common, but became rare nowadays; when sister exchange was practised, no bride-price was paid in addition.

There is no prohibition against marrying a second wife from the same clan as the first wife, or marrying a wife from the maternal clan, as is the case among some other ethnic groups. Clan exogamy – or more precisely, lineage exogamy is practised. Therefore, a patrilateral cousin is not suitable for marriage, but a matrilateral cousin. Depending on the size of the clan, the rule of exogamy is applied on the clan level or the lineage level; members of the Waawo clan may marry within the clan but outside of their lineage. Despite the avoidance rule concerning the marriage of patrilateral cousins, in practice these cases occur: an example was recorded with the Waawo-



Lowiri lineage where a distant patrilateral parallel cousin was married. When it is recognised that a couple is related in such a way, a ritual has to be performed involving the breaking of a new calabash over their heads symbolising the break-up of their kinship relation (ms "History of Origin and Culture of Burak")

Levirate is practised, after the death of a husband, the wife is asked which of the father's brothers she likes. No bride-price is paid in this case, the chosen one just brings a rooster into the house, indicating that he is now in charge. Members of the deceased's age group gather at the compound, each one comes with

a chicken, which is sacrificed in the homestead; they drink beer and consume roasted chicken for three days. One of the brothers of the deceased will be chosen by the widow as her husband, the chosen one will put one cockerel under her bed: this is the entire bride-price in such a case. The newly married wife stays in the homestead, the new husband now has two homesteads: his original one and the one from his deceased brother. If the widow does not want to marry one of the brothers, she takes her pots and other belongings and moves back to her parents. The children do not belong to her, but to the dead husband's parents.

If a husband wants to divorce his wife, he will take her back to her parents and the bride-price he has paid will be lost to him. If a wife wants to be divorced, she has to pay back the bride-price that was paid.

The bride-price traditionally consists of 50 pieces of traditional iron money (*bit*), one or two goats, about four chickens and millet beer, in addition bride service is performed by the prospective spouse by working on the fields of his future father-in-law. If the woman is a divorcee, the bride service does not have to be carried out.

The residence rule is viri-patrilocal.

A certain degree of avoidance is practised towards affinal relatives: one may not eat in the presence of the parents-in-law (this applies to husband as well as wife), only drinking beer is allowed; one may eat with the siblings-in-law, but from separate pots or dishes.

There are different categories of marriage:

- *bárá*: man or woman marry for the first time; if a man marries a second (or any further) wife who has never married before, this is also called *bárá*.
- *sárájùmà*: marrying a wife who has been divorced. When marrying a divorced woman, no bride service has to be carried out.
- *lìshédákòng dìt*: levirate, a brother of the deceased husband marries the widow.

Another category is marriage by elopement or abduction.

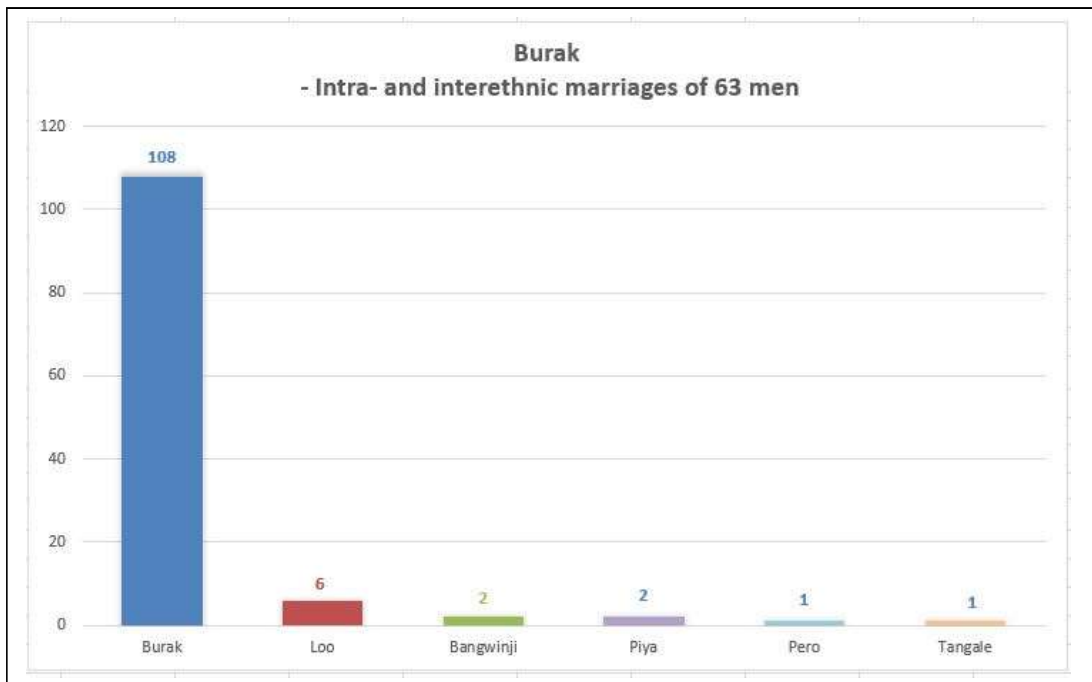
When a boy has the intention of marrying a girl, he meets with her in a secluded place to discuss the proceedings. Then the girl's father arranges for *burkutu* (millet beer) to be prepared and the boy is invited to a work party on the father's fields. He has to help his future parents-in-law on their farms, sometimes for a period of three to four years, but usually for one or two years. If the boy has won the favour of the girl's parents, at their request he has to organise a work party (this one is called *bèrènáà*) with his clan mates (about 10-20 people) for which he also has to provide the required millet beer; this is a manifestation of the engagement. Sometime later, the boy should organise a second, larger workparty (*wówò*), with 100-200 persons involved consisting of members of the local communities of the bride and groom. Here too, the boy has to provide the required millet beer with the assistance of his parents. This is followed by a third work party (*gònjó*) which now comprises the groom's and bride's age group members who will again work in the fields of the bride's parents. The millet beer provided by the groom is divided into two parts: 12-20 pots of *burkutu* for the bride's parents, the other half for the work party participants. Additionally, he has to give four baskets of sesame, of which two go to the bride's parents and two to the age group members. From the share that goes to her parents, the bride invites her maternal and paternal grandparents in order to impress them, so that they will later give her adequate wedding gifts (*nùmígbàn*) in return (e.g. calabashes, pots and other household utensils). After the work parties, in the dry season, the construction of the house is started so that the couple has a home of their own. Eventually, the bride-price is handed over consisting of about 50 pieces of traditional iron money (*bit*), two hens, two roosters, two female goats (*bát*). Then the marriage is completed.

The wife can visit the husband's house, but avoids taking food there until the husband's father or the husband's father's brother offers her an object like axe, hoe or pot, indicating that she is recognised as a relative-in-law and accepted as a new family member. This usually takes place when she finally moves into the house of her husband. Before that, she cannot eat inside the homestead of her husband and has to return to her own homestead to eat. For the final moving of the bride into the compound of her husband, the bridegroom organises the brewing of beer, the bride's grandparents provide her with baskets full of grain, sesame seeds, peanuts, with mats, pots and calabashes, etc. All these items are carried in a procession by the relatives of the wife (FaSi, FaBr, MoSi, MoBr as well as Si and Br) escorting her to the husband's homestead. The women cook, the participants celebrate until the next day. From now on the wife stays at the hus-

band's homestead. One or two weeks after she has moved in, a small celebration (*bérété*) is organised by the parents of the husband and from then on, the wife is allowed to cook. Her friends and relatives may also help with the preparation of the *bérété*.

### Some statistics

In a sample of 63 married Burak men, there were a total of 120 wives, of which 108 were from the Burak, and 12 were from neighbouring ethnic groups.



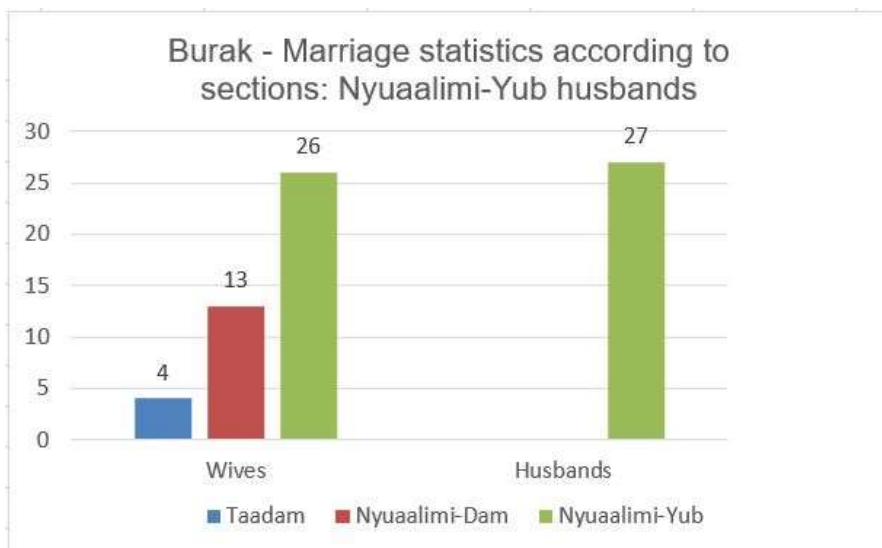
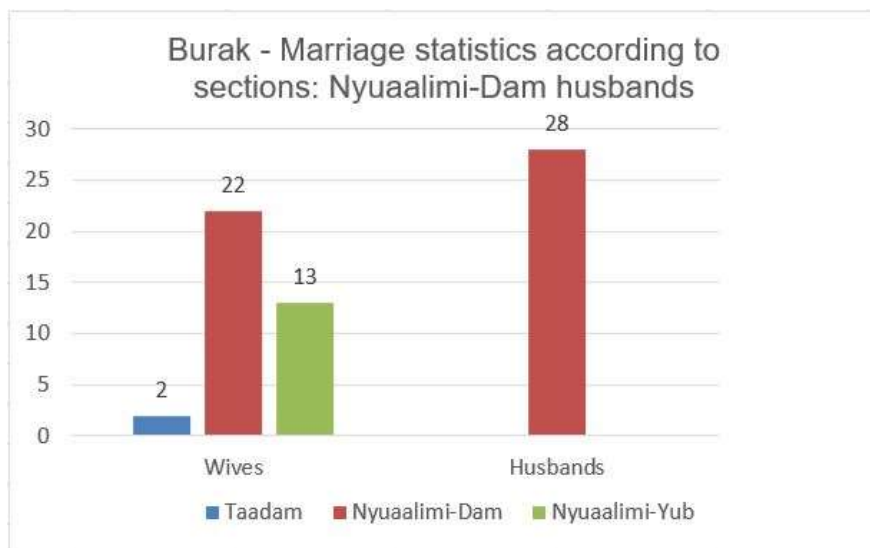
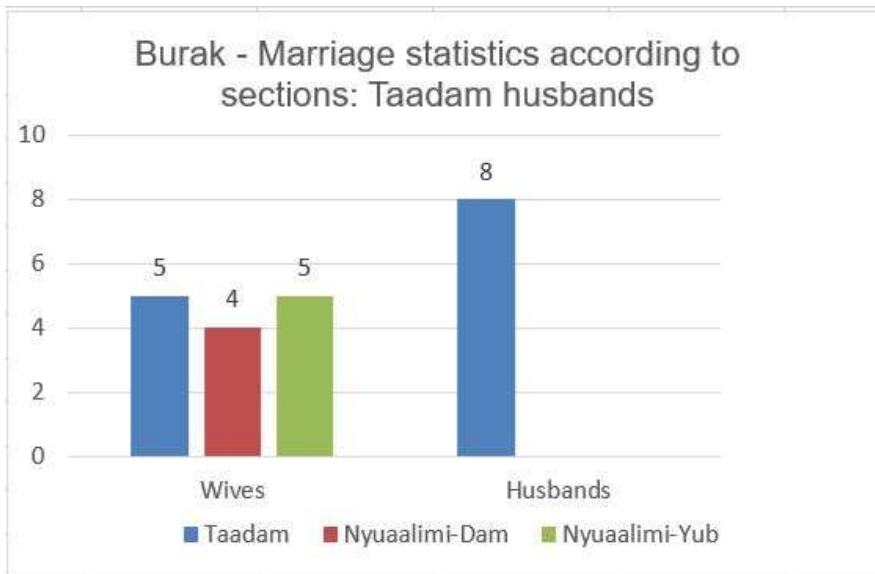
The overall polygamy rate was 1.9, the polygamy rate with concurrent wives (i.e., wives who were divorced or deceased were not counted) was 1.2.

On the basis that the Burak consist of the three sections Taadam, Nyuaalimi-Dam and Nyuaalimii-Yub, marriages with partners from the same section are prevalent.

Marriage within the same section: 56.4 %

Marriage with a wife from a different section: 43.6%

Marriage outside the ethnic group: 10.0 %.





## Granaries

Granaries are usually standing outside the homestead because their content may attract rats and,



Photo 6: Burak granaries

these in turn, snakes. They are built by men in the dry season. Staple crops like guinea corn, millet, maize and beans are stored in granaries. The granaries are replenished by men, but removing the contents is done by women. If a polygynous husband has several granaries, taking out the supplies is organised as follows: the first wife fetches the grain from the first granary and shares it with the other wives. If the first granary is empty, then the husband will open the second

granary, the first batch is received by the first wife, but then it is the task of the second wife to



Photo 7: Burak granaries with new covers

distribute the supplies from that second granary. After the second granary has been emptied, and the husband has still another granary, then he will open the third one, give the first batch to his first wife and then it is the third wife's turn to distribute the supplies, and so on. The covers of granaries are made from the *yílèṅ* and *nuṅlo tal* grasses.

## Birth

A birth usually takes place in the mother's house located in the compound of her husband. Only if



Photo 8: Two wooden *gúnùl* of the Burak

the mother is very young it may probably take place in the homestead of her parents. Oil is applied with a feather on the navel of the baby. The umbilical cord is wedged into a split guinea corn stalk, wrapped with a cord and fixed to the ceiling of the mother's room, where it remains until it decays of its own accord. The afterbirth is buried in the bathroom of the mother in a potsherd, and a stone is placed on top of it. Standing on that stone, the mother washes herself during the postpartum haemorrhage. In the case of the birth of twins, a pair of wooden statues (*gúnùl*) may be procured from a traditional

healer (*yélé wúú*) or a small pot (*jùli tén*) from which the children will drink their water and, in later years, millet beer. Two pots are placed together in a heap of clay at the entrance of the mother's house. Two chickens are sacrificed (for a daughter a chicken, for a son a cockerel), the feathers are glued with blood to the outside of the pots and then millet beer is poured into the pots. A traditional healer/divinator will determine from which spring the children should get their water, as there are several springs near the settlement. The twins must then drink from this spring until they have grown up, otherwise they may fall ill or even die. Twins are considered as being perilous: if one insults them, they may wish for a snakebite or similar and it will happen.

In order to protect the children and keep them healthy, offerings of millet beer are made to these *gunul* idols annually in connection with the *mam kadau* ritual in August and the *bobedit* celebra-

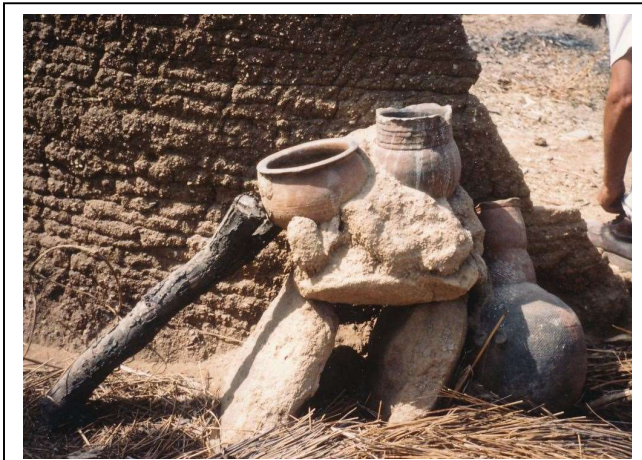


Photo 9: Ritual place with pots for offerings

tion in November, this ritual is called *sita tem ti yumangtem* "settling of the pots of twins".

In the event of stillbirth, miscarriage or death of the baby after birth, a particular ritual (*folishuwashilishee*) was performed; this is said to have been abandoned in recent times, and it consisted of a symbolic re-enactment of the birth process. Outside of the village, two holes about three meters apart were dug and a tunnel connecting them through which the woman crawled three times. First, her waist chain was taken off and leaves were tied around her waist instead, then she crawled through the shaft three times with her head first. Afterwards, she left the place, the tunnel was closed and several items belonging to her were destroyed on top of it by a woman from the clan of the traditional healer. These items were calabashes, cooking pots for sauce and porridge, cooking rod, ladle, her waist chain as well as the leaves she had worn. This ritual ensured that the woman will have a normal birth in the future. No woman will visit this place without a reason, otherwise it will harm her.

Traditionally, no circumcision was practised, but the practice is gaining ground. In some cases, 7-year-old boys are circumcised in groups. The foreskin of each individual boy falls into a hole and is buried.

### Name giving

Names are given differently depending on whether or not a traditional healer or priest had to be called upon for conception, pregnancy or birth. In case of barrenness, often priests of the spirit *bweng* are consulted. If a ritual expert (for example *gub mam* - priest of *mam kandit*) was involved, the name is given by him. If a woman was barren and went to the priest to seek advice, when she later gets a girl, this is called Wandili, if it is a boy he is called Gorjo. Such a name shows that the child was conceived with the help of the ancestors. The priest may choose other

names which come to him in his dreams. When the toddler starts to crawl or walk the name is given with offerings of beer and chicken to *mam kandit*.

In all other cases the name is given to the child by its paternal grandfather or grandmother. Usually, a name is chosen depending on which ancestor it resembles. This applies to both boys and girls. Only at the age of three to four years, or when the child can talk, may the name of the ancestor it resembles be given and mentioned aloud, otherwise the child may die. It is believed that an evil spirit pretending to be that ancestor will take possession of the child.<sup>16</sup>

If a child cries unusually often or even constantly, the parents consult a soothsayer (*yele wuu*), who will move a horn back and forth along a thread stretched between his toes and his hand, while calling out the names of the ancestors, when the horn stalls and the child stops crying, this ancestor is believed to have returned.

### Burial

Corpses are buried at the local cemetery. In the case that a man with social standing has died, a funeral ceremony called *lubi mom* is performed, involving the beating of large victory drums



Photo 10: Sham fight and dancing during a funerary ceremony

(*diime*) and performing mock battles.

After the husband's death, the widow stays in the homestead for about two months; she never ventures outside, fetching water, cooking meals or brewing beer is done by relatives of the deceased, i.e. from the husband's clan.

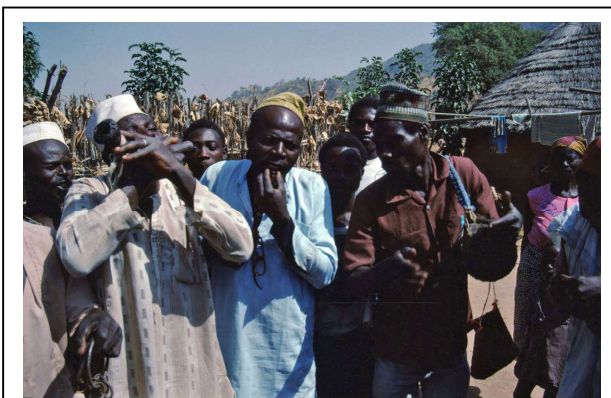


Photo 11: Musicians playing at a funeral

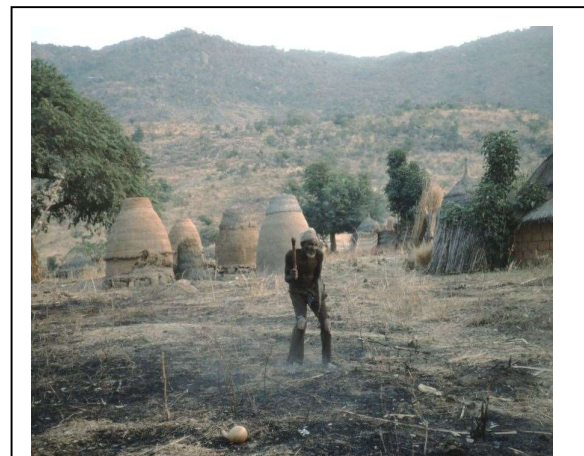


Photo 12: Sham fight to commemorate his deceased age mate

<sup>16</sup> See also Kleinwillinghöfer 1995 for the avoidance of names.



### Village

In a census conducted among 89 compounds in the Shemnyam, Tidi and Loovogbere (Sabon Layi) wards of Tiire/Burak, 738 inhabitants were counted in total, of which 363 were males and

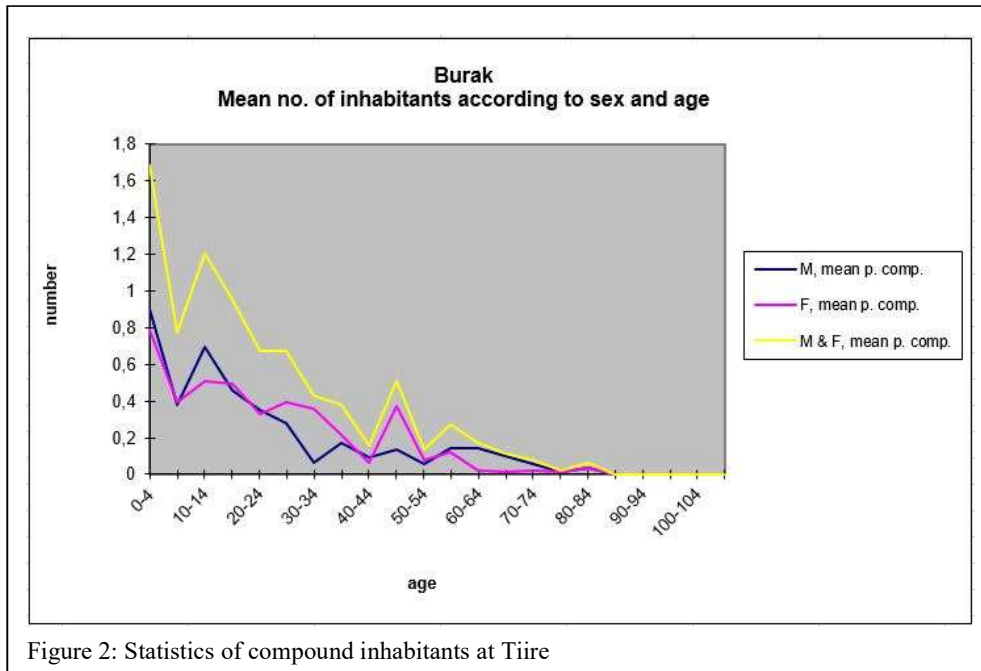


Figure 2: Statistics of compound inhabitants at Tiire

375 females. The mean number of persons living in a compound was 8.3, with slightly more females (4.2) than males (4.0).

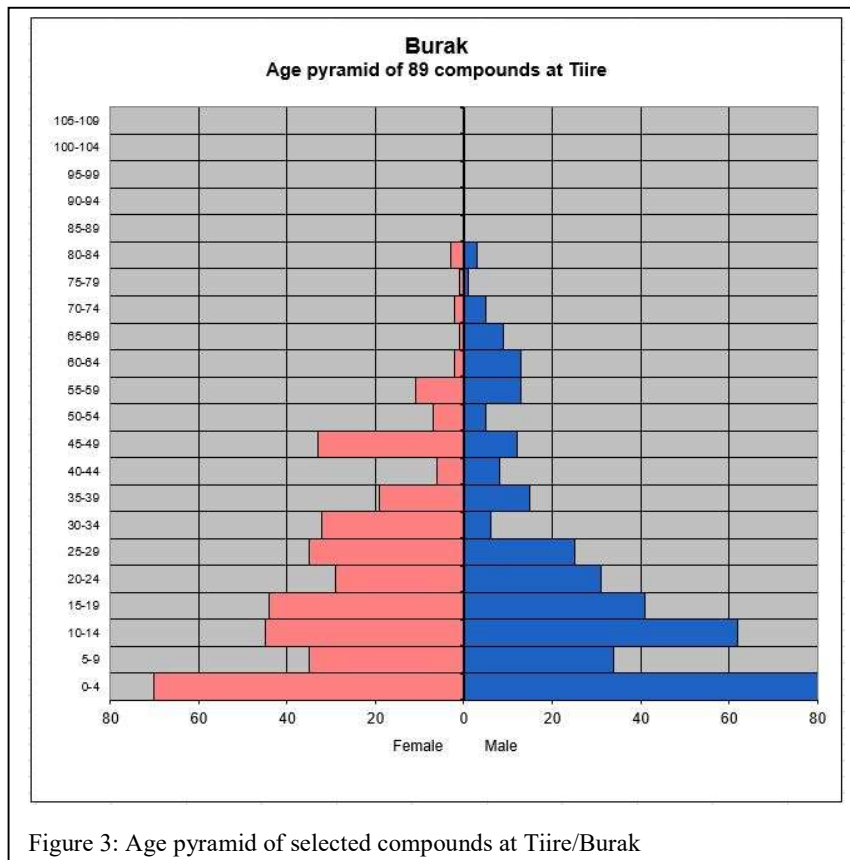


Figure 3: Age pyramid of selected compounds at Tiire/Burak

## Age groups

Age groups (*lóónáájim*) are rather informal groupings uniting men who were born within a six-month period in a year. There are three recognised age categories: the youngest consists of men up to 30 years of age, the middle group consists of men up to about 50 years of age and the oldest consists of men up to 80-90 years of age. The age groups play a role during communal hunts or collective agricultural activities, as these may be organised on an age group basis, and during festivities where age mates celebrate together. *Daaliimdu* is an annual festivity taking place in the period of January to April when the different age groups celebrate with beer and dancing.

## Political organisation

### Village Head

In pre-colonial times, the chief of the Burak in political, as well as ritual, matters was the *gùb taldit* and was provided by the Waawo clan. The *gub taldit* was responsible for settling disputes over land or conflicts between family groups. He did not, however, lead his people in war. The title of Village Head (VH) was introduced by the British colonial administration when they arrived in 1909 and since then ritual matters are not anymore handled by the VH but by the Yambang as chief ritual expert.

The first *gub taldit* is said to have been Gbamal, followed by Sankang (Shangang), then Lowiri who was in charge at the times when the British arrived in the area. They appointed him as Village Head and his title became *gub baduuri* (in Burak). All the following Village Heads were either from the descendants of Sankang (Waawo daadit Shangang) or Lowiri (Waawo daadit Lowiri).

In the ms "History of Origin and Culture of Burak", a list of 8 Village Heads and the dates of their rule is given:

1. Loviri (from Waawo-Lowiri; 1912 -1920)
2. Mai (from Waawo-Lowiri; 1920 -1924)
3. Juwabi (from Waawo-Lowiri; 1924 -1937)
4. Bhente (from Waawo-Lowiri; 1937-1941)
5. Ganyi (from Waawo-Shangang; 1941-1943)
6. Muina Maichibi (from Waawo-Shangang; 1943 -1968)
7. Adamu Maina (from Waawo-Shangang; 14/7/1970 – 9/10/1986)
8. Gondak Garba (from Waawo-Shangang; since 2/5/1987)

The village area is administered by the Village Head (or *sarki* in Hausa), who is represented by a number of *jawro* (Fulbe) or *mai anguwa* (Hausa) in the different wards and hamlets. The deputy of the VH is the *waziri* who is in charge during the absence of the VH and assists in tax collection. The *magajin gari* allocates the house building plots, he is also the deputy of the *waziri* and can collect taxes in the wards. All title holders are appointed by the VH. The VH is elected by the taxpayers (adult males over 18), after the election he is confirmed by the State Government.

## ***Economic activities***

A market is held at Burak on Saturdays. The crafts practised by the Burak include mat weaving,



Photo 13: Women at Burak market selling food

wood carving, blacksmithing, calabash making and leatherworking, all of which are done by men.

Salt was obtained from the soil along the banks of the Tole Loodara stream. Iron was procured from the Jukun of Gwana in the past.



Photo 14: Burak man preparing a fence screen

## Division of labour

Table 3: Gender specific division of labour among the Burak (m: male, f: female)

Activity	Gender
clearing	m
sowing	m & f
weeding	m & f
harvesting	m & f
irrigating	m
threshing	f
prepare threshing ground	f
winnowing	f
build house walls	m
build house roof	m
prepare house floor	m
cut wooden poles	m
cut firewood	f
collect firewood	f
build well	m
build terraces	m & f
build fence	m
weave food cover	m & f
weave mats	m
weave baskets	m
make ropes	m
fetch water	f
pounding	f
grinding	f
cooking	f
brewing beer	f
clean house	f
make pots	f
weaving cotton	-
spinning	m & f
tailoring	m & f
blacksmithing	m
wood carving	m
butchering	m
hunting	m
collect honey	m
produce salt	f



## Agriculture

The rainy season (May - October) is called *daadu*, the dry season (November - February) *jene*; the period for clearing and preparing the fields is called *nyigela* and lasts from March to April, at the end of *nyigela* the sowing starts.

The Burak cultivate guinea corn (*nyaa*), millet, finger millet (*kerke*), maize (*nyaboo*)<sup>17</sup>, various va-



Photo 15: Bundles of guinea corn on a drying platform

rieties of sesame (*bwiini*, *funul* (brown), *yuwa* (white), *gbili* (black)), beans (*bele*), groundnuts (*bwere*), Bambara nuts (*gberewan*), cotton (*lana*), tobacco, yam (*wiital*), melons (*tiya*), pumpkin (*gbala*), gourds (*dfe*) as well as vegetables such as tomatoes, garden eggs (*denden*) and pepper (*shibid*). Field boundaries are demarcated by stones, grasses, bushes or trees. When culti-

vating on sloping fields, terraces are built with dry-stone walls.

When clearing a field, the following useful trees are not cut down and left standing:

Burak	Hausa	English	Latin name	Uses
<i>bakto</i>	?	sp. tree	?	shade
<i>bèné</i>	<i>madaaci</i>	mahogany tree	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	leaves are fodder for cattle; wood for rafters; oil extracted from seeds, which is used as a wound healing agent
<i>berimi</i>	<i>kanya</i>	West African ebony	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>	fruit edible
<i>bwashima</i>	<i>markee</i>	chewstick tree	<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>	shade
<i>dòm</i>	<i>kadanya</i>	shea tree	<i>Vitellaria paradoxa</i>	fruit edible; oil extracted from seeds, used for roasting and as embrocation
<i>dwaana</i>	<i>gurjiyaa</i>	red-flowered silk-cotton tree	<i>Bombax buonopozense</i>	fruit used for sauce; wood for rafters
<i>fulung</i>	<i>riimii</i>	silk-cotton tree	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>	fruit used for cushion fillings; seeds to prepare <i>daddawa</i> (H., black locust bean cakes)
<i>jùù</i>	<i>zoogale</i>	horseradish tree	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	leaves used for sauce
<i>kótórò</i>	<i>kuuka</i>	baobab	<i>Adansonia digitata</i>	fruit and leaves for sauce; bark for ropes; fruit for <i>daddawa</i>
<i>kúng</i>	<i>aduwaa</i>	desert date	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i>	fruit edible
<i>líí</i>	<i>dīnyaa</i>	black plum tree	<i>Vitex doniana</i>	fruit edible; leaves for sauce; wood for drums
<i>méshè</i>	<i>doorawa</i>	locust tree	<i>Parkia biglobosa</i>	seeds for <i>daddawa</i> ; drink prepared from mashed fruit; leaves as signs of success in hunting and fighting

<sup>17</sup> *nyaboo* means 'corn of evil spirit', the explanations given are a) that its yield is so high that an evil spirit is interfering, b) if eating too much of it one develops a fever.

Burak	Hausa	English	Latin name	Uses
<i>shii</i>	<i>kiryá</i>	false locust tree	<i>Prosopis africana</i>	seeds sold to other groups who prepare <i>daddawa</i> from it; wood used for mortars and other objects
<i>tak</i>	<i>tauraa</i>	tallow tree	<i>Detarium senegalense</i>	fruit edible
<i>wiiri</i>	<i>tsaamiyaa</i>	tamarind	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	shade; fruit used as ingredient for <i>kunnu</i> (a non-alcoholic beverage)

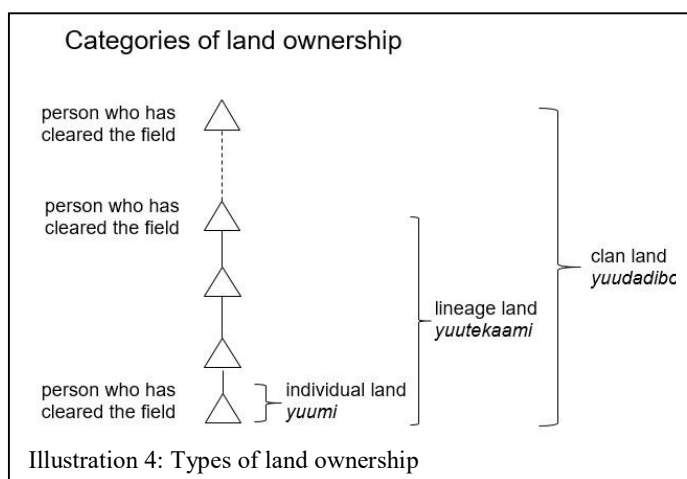
Baobabs, locust trees, silk-cotton trees and mango trees are planted intentionally.

Useful shrubs are: *taabel* (*gwandar jeeji* H., wild custard apple), the fruits are edible and the leaves are useful against skin diseases; *shenge* (*magariyaa* H., jujube), the fruits are edible. Cactus (*koŋkor*) is used for fencing.

Gamba grass (*kaakashisha*) is used for preparing *zaanaa*-mats and for roofing: the first layer of a roof is made from the strong *kaakashisha* grass, the second layer from the *kaadit* and *pil* grasses (both *shibcii* in Hausa). Other useful grasses are *bau* (used for weaving baskets), *vel* (also a kind of gamba grass), *wàk*, *palmaŋ dee* and *dééré*.

More demanding and time-critical agricultural activities such as sowing, weeding and harvesting are usually performed by work-parties. Such work-parties are either organised on the basis of clan membership or on the basis of age groups. There are two types of work-parties: small ones with only few participants based mainly on reciprocity, and large ones with many participants who are provided amounts of beer and food serving as remuneration.

A field that has been cleared from virgin bushland becomes the property of the farmer. Further, there is land belonging to a lineage or a clan when this has once been cleared by an ancestor of that kin group. Members of the lineage/clan are entitled to cultivate there. Such land collectively owned is not for sale, but usufruct rights may be given to persons who are not members of the kin group if the other members agree. Property rights of plots owned individually are passed to male descendants on the death of the owner, or to collateral patrilineal relatives if there are no male descendants. As such, a woman may own a field which she has cleared herself from the bush, but she cannot pass it on to her daughters, only to her sons. In the past, shifting cultivation was practised: cultivated land remains the property of the owner, no matter how long it lies fallow.



Individually owned land (*yúúmi*) is inherited from Ego to his male descendants, lineage land (*yuutekaami*) belongs to the patrilineal male descendants of the lineage founder, clan land (*yuudadibo*) belongs to the patrilineal descendants of a distant ancestor. For instance, the *yuudadibo* clan land belonging to the Nyuaatolo clan is called *yuute yele nyuaatolo* = "land of the Nyuwatolo".

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A woman may clear and cultivate land, but after her death it becomes the property of her husband if she has one, otherwise it goes to her brothers, especially if she is living in her brother's house when she dies, he inherits from her.

If a divorced woman acquires property, her brother will inherit it, both on her death and in the event of a re-marriage, in which case she does not bring it into the new union but it becomes the property of the brother. In general, when a woman marries, her property passes to her father, if he is still alive, or to her brothers; she enters the union without property. Only what she acquires during the union passes to her husband on her death. If a woman cannot buy land but wants a field of her own, she will ask her husband for the right to use a plot of his land. If he does not have enough land, she will ask her father, who will then inform the husband that he is making land available to his daughter, but that the land belongs to him.

Ethnic Group: **Burak**

Table: **Annual Agricultural Cycle**

Crop	Jan.	Feb.	March	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Comments
guinea corn (late) <i>nyanyini, nyagolgot</i>							1.	2.	3.				clay & loamy soil
guinea corn (early) <i>yadadu, kolowa</i>						1.	2.	<i>yadadu</i>	3.	<i>kolowa</i>			<i>yadadu</i> : sandy & loamy <i>kolowa</i> : loamy & clay
millet (early) <i>modo</i>						1.	2.						sandy soil, after harvest, beans planted
millet (late) <i>mutum</i>						1.		2.					sandy & loamy soil, with beans
beans (wake H.) <i>beele</i>						1.	2.		3.				all soils, with g/com & sesame
beans (kadanade H.) <i>gololong</i>								1.	2.	3.			all soils, with g/com & sesame
maize <i>yaboo</i>						1.	2.	red maize					clay & loamy soils, with cotton & beans
									white maize				
cotton					on clay soils		1.	2.	3.				clay & loamy soils, with beans, okra, sesame
				on loamy soils			1.	2.	3.				
groundnut							1.	2.					sandy & loamy soils, with Bambara, <i>bwini</i> & <i>yaakuwa</i>
Bambara nut													sandy & loamy soils, with groundnuts
sesame <i>funul, gbeeli, yuwa</i>													clay & loamy soils
tobacco									transplanting				clay soils & on river banks
rice <i>gaba</i>						1.		2.					on <i>fadama</i>
sweet potatoes <i>sitang kyau</i>													on <i>fadama</i>
yam					(2 years later)								loamy soil, near house
cassava									(1 year later)				loamy & sandy soils, in fenced gardens
cocoyam <i>fan</i>						1.		2.					loamy soils, on <i>fadama</i> , near compound
pepper <i>shebet</i>	(if irrigated)												loamy soils, in shady places
garden egg					nursing	transplanting							on clay soils & on <i>fadama</i>

planting: \_\_\_\_\_  
weeding: \_\_\_\_\_  
harvesting: \_\_\_\_\_

## Animal husbandry

The Burak keep cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks, donkeys and dogs as domestic animals. Hardly any Burak entrusts his cattle to a Fulani herder. Traditionally, the Burak just had dwarf goats and sheep, dogs and chickens. Donkeys and horses are said to have been introduced by the Hausa, cattle by the Fulani. When a chicken is given away (sold or given as a gift), a feather is torn out and placed in the henhouse, symbolically leaving the chicken there.

Table 4: Domestic animals and their uses (m: male, f: female)

animal	kept by	uses	comments
cattle	m	meat, milk, leather	no cattle in the past
dwarf cattle	-	-	-
horse	m	meat, riding, horsehair used for special objects	used by the chief only
pony	-	-	-
donkey	m	riding, beast of burden, meat, leather	no donkeys in the past
goat	m & f	meat, leather	had dwarf goats in the past
sheep	m & f	meat, leather	
pig	m & f	meat, leather	no pigs in the past
dog	m & f	meat, leather, guardian, assisting in hunting	in the past, only men consumed the meat
chicken	m & f	meat, eggs, feathers	in the past, women ate no chickens or eggs
duck	m & f	eggs, meat, feathers	consumed by men and women
guinea fowl	m	eggs, meat, feathers	consumed by men and women
pigeon	m	eggs, meat	consumed by men and women
cat	m & f	meat, fur used for children's garment, protection against rats	women do not eat cats

In a census of 25 households at Burak, the following numbers of domestic animals were determined:

Table 5: Burak - Domestic animals kept by 25 households

	Cattle	Donkeys	Goats	Sheep	Pigs	Dogs	Chickens	Ducks	Guinea Fowl	Pigeons	Cats
total	49	3	110	10	9	23	364	86	38	26	3
mean no.	2	0.1	4.4	0.4	0.4	0.9	14.6	3.4	1.5	1	0.1
median no.	2	1	6	5	1.5	1.5	15	9	19	13	1.5

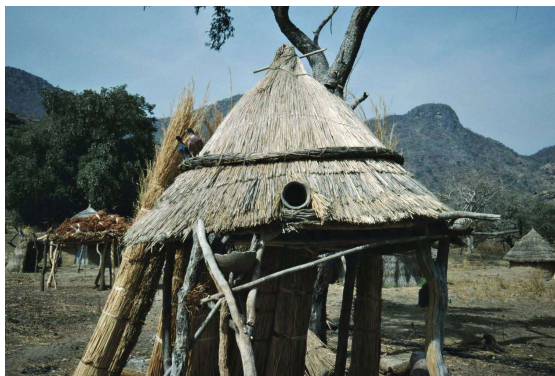


Photo 16: A dovecote

## Hunting

Hunting is either done individually or collectively. During a collective hunt, the hunter who hits the animal first with his weapon is entitled to the animal, but he must give a leg to the one who hits second, the neck to the one who hits third and the hide to the one who hits fourth. If the bag is a leopard, the one who hits third gets the tail instead of the neck. There is a ritual called *mom* intended to make the spears strong for hunting and fighting.

When the hunting season commences in the dry season in February, there are collective hunts

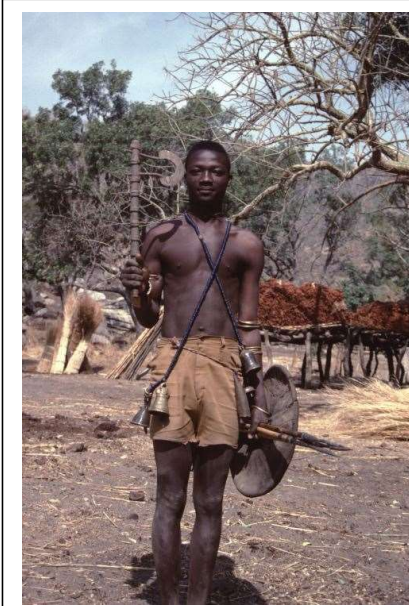


Photo 17: Burak warrior displaying his weapons

organised on a clan basis on three consecutive days, marking the opening of the season.

The hunt on the first day is called *kebe tara*, the Waawo-Lowiri lineage takes the lead and a priest prays to the collective ancestors (*bweng*) as well as to the mountain spirits *limi tal* (spirit of Damgok Mountain) and *limi lookwii* (spirits of all the mountains) for good success while the hunters sit according to clan affiliation. Afterwards, the groups move to the west for hunting. If a bushpig, (or some other defined animal), is killed during this hunt, only the head belongs to the clan of the successful hunter, but if another animal is killed it is shared as described above. In the case of the bag being a bushpig, it is butchered violently and quickly, without skinning, and shared between the Shangang, Lowiri and Shaalo kin-groups; the person who hit it is only entitled to the head. No one from another clan is allowed to join in,

otherwise a fight may break out. As other animals treated in this manner *jii* (*gwanki* H., antelope), *shuwat* (*bauna* H., buffalo) *luu* (duiker?), *gorong* (?) and *gááshàr* (wart-hog) are mentioned, but some of these cannot be identified with certainty.

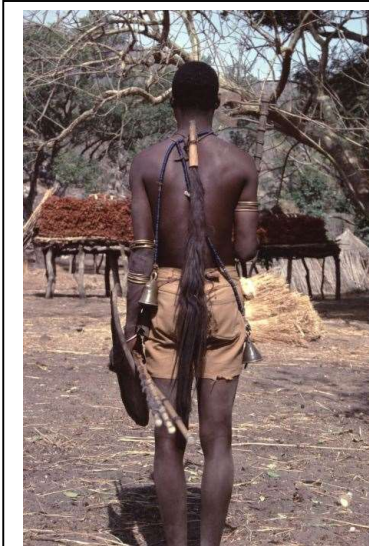


Photo 18: Burak warrior, rear view

The hunt on the second day is called *kebe boro*, now another lineage is in the lead, namely the Waawo-Shangang-Ngenen, and the hunt goes to the south-east.

On the third day, the hunt is called *kaashak*, with the Shaalo clan in the lead. The young men are particularly active on this day and try to prove themselves. These three days open the hunting season, which lasts until the farm work begins, at which time people only go hunting either individually or in small teams.

The Burak also fish in the streams.



## Material culture

The Burak have spears with a variety of tips. *móm/mwóm*: meaning spear in general, according to



Photo 19: Burak spear types (left to right): *léébé*, *léébé káti*, *móm káti shúmó*, *móm lòò kòḡ*, *kaci bóò*



Photo 20: Burak spears, full view.



Photo 21: Burak spears (left to right): *móm*, *móm lòò*, *léébé*

the tip the designation changes, *léébé* is used for a broad bladed spear (see illustrations).

*bàràṅṅàṅ*: hatchet or battle axe, *tóóló*: dagger, swords are *tóóló kánùrí* (big knife) or *tóóló kágbèné*



Photo 22: Left to right: shield (*kotoḡ*), whip (*bátám*), flute (*píilàà*), fan (*píḡte*) and battle axe (*baràṅṅàṅ*)

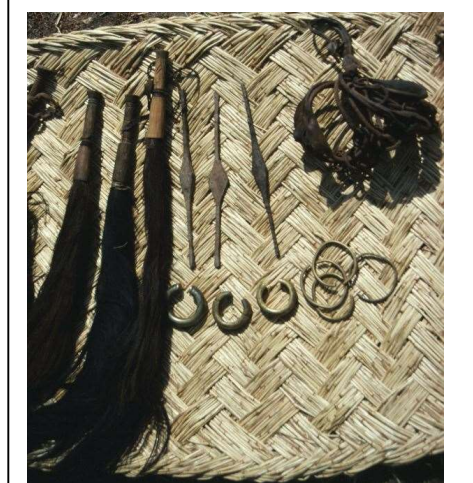


Photo 23: Fans (*píḡte*), iron money (*bit*), iron rattles (*shangmi*), brass bangles (*widí*)

(long knife), *bit*: traditional iron money used to pay the bride-price (usually 50 pieces), *shángmì/ sàkmì*: iron rattle worn on the ankle, *píḡté* or *wín nùṅṅ*: horsehair fan, *widí*: brass bangle.





Photo 24: Cudgel (*bwa't*), spear (*m'om*), shield (*k'ot'oh*)



Photo 25: Dagger (*t'ol'ol'*), iron money (*bit*), shield

*g'et'um*: special blade said to have been used for cutting off heads;

*bwa't*: cudgel, club, *k'ot'oh*: shield.



Photo 26: Cutting blade *g'et'um* (handle is lost on that item).

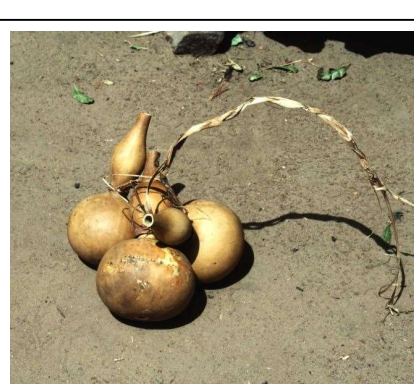


Photo 27: Bottle gourds used for sowing (*jaare'ebet*)

Farming implements: *f'et'ém'lè*: sickle used for cutting grass or rice, *d'um*: axe, *j'ùè s'ùk'a*: hoe, *d'èè'nà*: broad bladed hoe used on sandy soil/soil without stones.



Photo 28: Burak farming implements (left to right): *f'et'ém'lè*, *d'um*, *j'ùè s'ùk'a*, *d'èè'nà* (2x).



Photo 29: Iron rattles (*shangmi*) worn on ankle

Flutes, which are played in ritual contexts, are: *gogo*, *duuro*, *juejule*, and *miego*; *píllàà* is also a flute. *núng dòorí*: bugle, used for signalling, made of antelope horn.



Photo 30: Signal horn (*nung doori*).



Photo 31: Blowing the signal horn.



Photo 32: A *danggò* drum.



Photo 33: Drums (*dilan*) used for *mam gabra*.

Like other ethnic groups in the area, the Burak also have victory drums which are played at certain important occasions, for example, after a successful big game hunt or a victorious battle, but also at *lubi mom*, the funeral ceremony for an important man, such as the traditional chief (*gub taldit*). There are three drums of different size: the largest one is called *dímè*, it is beaten when an enemy has been killed in a fight or large game, e.g. a leopard, has been killed in a hunt, *pírki-dik* is the second largest and *jòmjòm* the smallest drum. There are two types of *kalangu* drum: *danggò* and *naadan*; *danggò* is played in connection with rituals addressing *mam kandit*. There are three different kinds of drum in connection with the cult of *mam gabra* (*boori*). *Dilang/jilang* is a standing drum, beaten with the hands and kept in the house of the *avung* or the *kaashi*, (title holders in the context of the cult); the *ganga* drum is covered with skins on both ends, it is beaten with sticks and kept by the drum owner; the *dan kadau* (in Burak, *kajau* in the *boori* lan-



guage) drum is held under the arm and played with the hands, it is kept by the drum owner. The *dilarj* is the dedicated *boori* drum and is purchased collectively by the members of the cult, the other drums are also played on other occasions. At the occasion of a *mam gabra* celebration, the

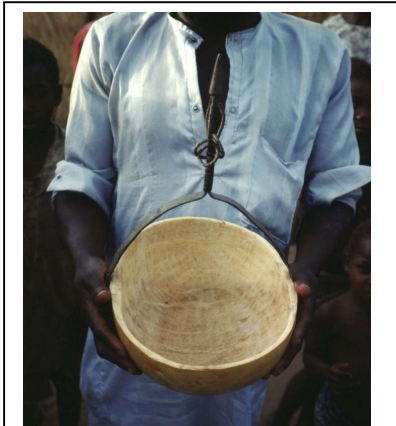


Photo 34: Calabash with decorated iron handle



Photo 35: Assortment of wooden stools

sons of the cult leader carry the *dilarj* drum to the place where the festivity takes place.

The Burak use a variety of clay pots for different purposes: *kènnúng*: pot for fetching water and

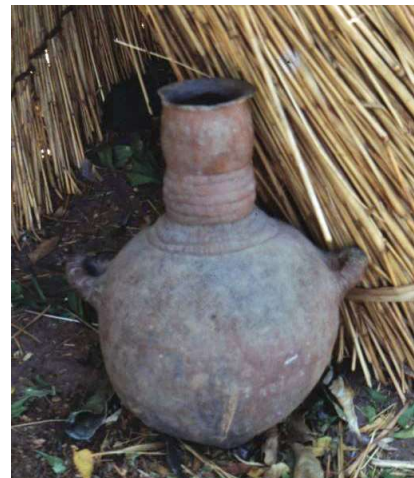


Photo 36: A *kenung* pot

storing beer, *téng*: small earthenware pot used to eat from, *temshua*: for storing beer or water, *bitim*: for fetching water and storing beer, *yukening*: for fetching water and storing beer, *dulrab*: for fetching water and storing beer, *jwili*: for fetching water and storing beer, *kuurum*: for fetching water and storing beer, *temyogong*: for cooking gruel, *yuvet*: for cooking soup, *tomlolua*: for preparing the local millet beer known as *burkutu* (H.) or *pito* (H.).



Photo 37: Burak clay pots (left to right): *temshua*, *bitim*, *yukenung*, *dulrab*, *jwili*, *kuurum* (its neck has broken off)



Photo 38: Beer kitchen with pots in which the mash is boiled when brewing millet beer



Photo 39: Small clay pot

### Scarification/cicatrisation, bodily ornamentation

Males as well as females wore horizontal plugs through the nasal septum, made from the teeth of

the wart-hog (*gááshàr*). Women may also have the stylised lizard on both upper arms.

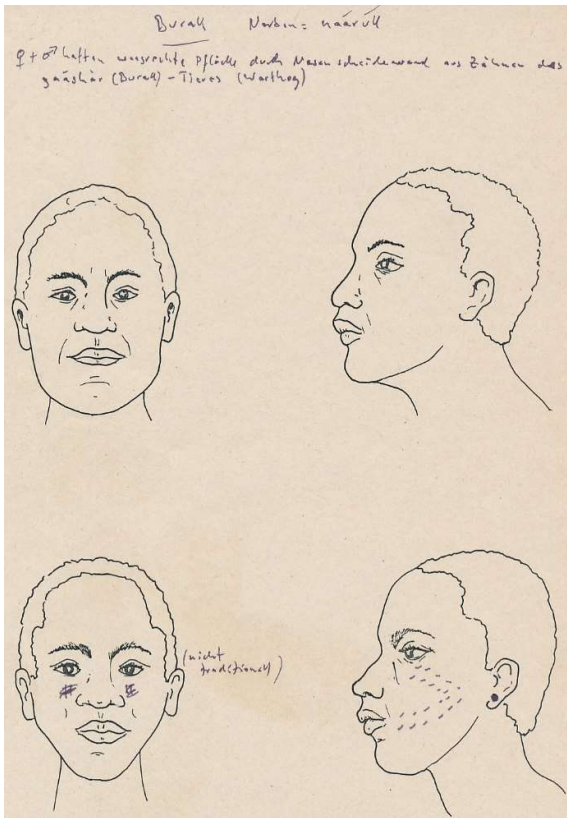
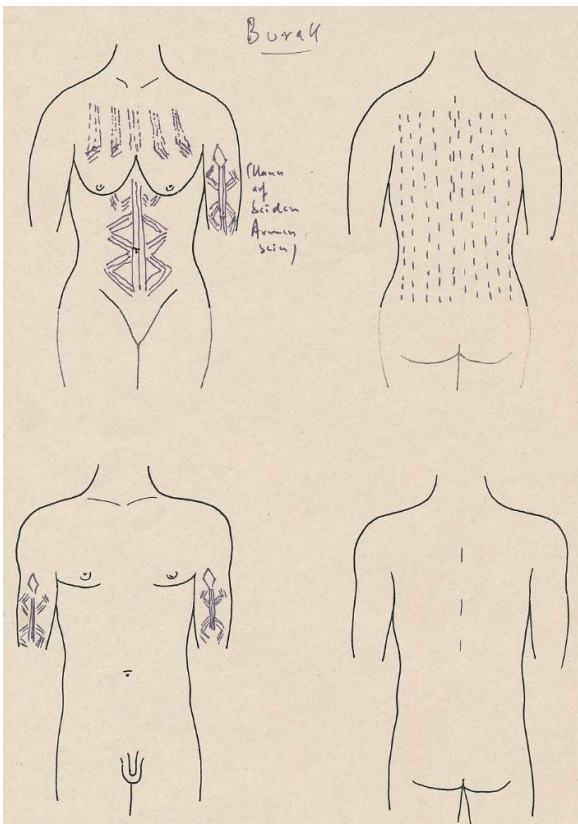


Photo 40: Burak man with straw nose plug.





## ***Rituals and religion***

### **Spirits and associated rituals<sup>18</sup>**

Quite a number of Burak have converted to Islam or Christianity, but there are still adherents of the traditional religion. In the traditional religious belief, *yama* is the creator god, but *yama* is too far removed from the sphere of humans and other spirits/deities have a more active role.

*Mam kandit* and *limi* are the two most powerful benevolent deities of the Burak. *Mam kandit* is associated with farming activities, fertility and rain and the first grains from a harvest must be offered to it. *Mam kandit* is incarnated in multiple spirits, the highest of which is Awen. *Mam kandit* is considered to be female and *limi* considered to be male. Thus, while *limi* is powerful, there is also some ambiguity in its nature, as it must be approached in a proper way, otherwise it may act harmfully and, for instance, strike the priest (*gúb limi*) with madness. *Limi* is considered to have introduced guinea corn to the Burak.

The priests (*gub mam*) of *mam kandit* are provided by the Shaalo clan, because it was a man from this clan who became possessed first by this spirit.

If there is need of rain, ritual experts (*yeleloomεε* = rain maker) from the Shaalo clan (lineage of Shang) perform a ritual involving offerings of millet beer at Nuaakori, a ritual site at Nyuaalimi-Yub, asking Awen to bring rain. The priest in charge is the *gub mam*.

The Ngenen/Lando lineage of the Waawo-Shangang clan is in charge of *limi* and provides the priests; they are the first to sow guinea corn in April-May.

Heads taken from enemies during inter-ethnic fightings were prepared and then placed at a certain site associated with their most important deity *limi*.<sup>19</sup>

The cult of *mam kandit* is also suitable for females, they are allowed to enter his shrine house and

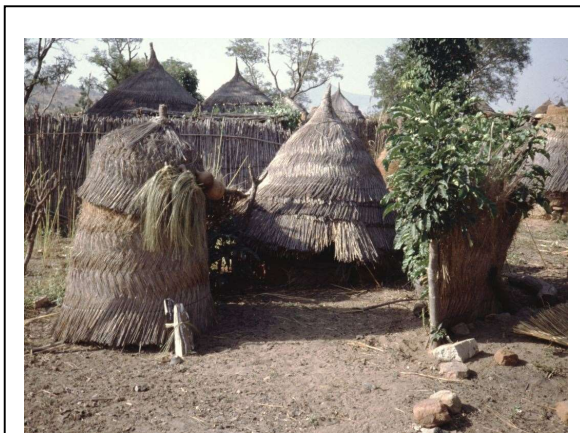


Photo 41: Shrine of *mam kandit*.

take part in the celebrations associated with it. It is said that the equivalent to *mam kandit* of the Burak is called *dambang* among the Pero. The connection of the Shaalo clan with *mam kandit* is explained in a tradition: once a hunter of the Shaalo killed a Reed buck (*kwanta rafi* H.) and became possessed by *mam kandit*. The hunter speared the animal and it fell dead, but so did he too. The hunter and the animal were brought to the village, the animal was consumed and the dead man remained unburied for three days for the cause of his death

was unknown. The people consulted a healer (*yele yuwu*), but he found nothing. A man from the

<sup>18</sup> See also CAPRO 1995: 93-98 for some information on rituals and traditional beliefs among the Burak.

<sup>19</sup> After inter-ethnic fighting, the heads of killed enemies were cut off or, if there was not enough time or the risk was too high, the ears were cut off and served as a sign of bravery.

Meyi clan examined the body, noted that there was no sign of decomposition, and said it was probably the work of *mam*, when suddenly the hunter stood up and called out the name Awen. This spirit had come from the river Benue and been in the Reed buck, then passed to the Shaalo man.

*Bweng* represent the collective ancestors of a clan. It seems that the Burak took over aspects of their ancestor veneration cult from the Pero and they say that it corresponds with the *kinnima* of the Pero. In cases of infertility of women and for taking an oath in cases of conflict, *bweng* can be consulted. Further it may be addressed if there is lack of rain or too many people start dying.

*Bweng* is not manifested in any object but only a voice that may be heard in the night.

There are other similar cults (*bwiyáng*) that have been imported from the Loo several years ago.

*boo* is the evil soul of a deceased person, returning to the living for haunting and killing people.

There is also another kind of *boo* that harms and may even kill certain people on the orders of a witch. Adherents of the *mam gabra* cult have the power to deal with these evil spirits and ward them off or neutralise them.

*Limidaame* are evil spirits living in ponds and stagnant water in general, they may be harmful or even fatal for humans, the traditional healer (*yeleyuwu*) can help in these cases.



Photo 42: *Boori* dancers at Burak.

*Nungbwere* is a cult with masquerades with yoke or vertical masks, associated with rain, crops, women's health and fertility in general.<sup>20</sup> It is also linked to the realm of the ancestors and ancestral spirits. According to the belief, if a person has committed an offence against the *nungbwere*, after having died the person will not return from the realm of the dead and be reborn, but will instead remain with the ancestors. The *Nungbwere* was taken over from the neighbouring Loo.



Photo 43: *Boori* drummers performing.

*Mam gabra* (*boori* in Hausa), also known as arm-slashing cult<sup>21</sup>, is a possession cult and the celebrations have a bacchanalian character. It is widespread in the region; during the colonial era it was banned by the authorities.<sup>22</sup> It is popular among the Burak. I was told that here are different categories of the cult which differ in the rules which the members have to observe, the kind of offerings they make and from which ethnic group the cult was adopted: 1. *baashwe* (regarded as male and

<sup>20</sup> On vertical masks in the region see Berns 2011, also Adelberger 2011

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Meek 1934: 263.

<sup>22</sup> NAK YolaProf 5640 – Report on Wurkum District by A.D.O Brierly, p. 7-8.



wicked) 2. *taashindo* (regarded as female), 3. *wurbou* (regarded as female), 4. *wadda* (regarded as female), 5. *ḥaya* (regarded as female). There are the types *baashwe*, *taashindo* and *wadda* present among the Burak. Only men, who have to be at least 13-15 years old, are allowed to become members of the cult. *Mam gabra/boori* is a ubiquitous spirit that gives the cult members strength and may possess them at the times of the celebration. Members declare that the spirit gives them the stamina to survive even snake bites. The *mam gabra/boori* spirit is manifested in an object (*bitóma*) consisting of a pointed iron rod on which feathers from a bird are fixed (in one case these feathers were from the *jalbe* (?) bird, but this is not obligatory). In the shrine house, the *bitoma* is placed next to a clay pot that is used for offerings of millet beer (*burkututu* H.). The spirit moves to the river Benue<sup>23</sup> and returns, because it is connected with the river. The *mam gabra* sites are always fenced in using a certain tree species (*kadafi* H.)<sup>24</sup>, which is an obligatory element of the cult.

All members of the cult help each other on the farm as well as non-members if asked by that person, he must then offer beer, chickens and goats in return. They always celebrate, dance and drink together.

There are seven functionaries within a cult group:

1. *àvung* head
2. *kàshí* cares for the sacrifices
3. *kàsó* distributes the food
4. *kàwó* cares for preparation of millet beer, announcer of festivities
5. *kànéy* keeps order during the festivities and dances
6. *yómà* carries the *bitoma* object and is responsible for the spirit *yumam* connected with it
7. *bánjúwè* cleans and takes care of the *mam gabra* site/shrine.



Photo 44: The sacred *bitoma* object carried around during the festivity.

If a boy wants to become a member of the cult, he should inform his parents, brothers or friends and then address the head of the cult group (*àvung*) who will tell the novice to come to the *mam gabra* house in the night. The novice sleeps there, becomes possessed by the spirit and faints. In the early morning the cult members gather outside and play drums, the novice is carried outside the house, a powder prepared from a certain plant<sup>25</sup> is blown into his nose by the *avung* and the

<sup>23</sup> *Wúúmà* in Burak language.

<sup>24</sup> I could not identify this tree.

<sup>25</sup> Probably alligator pepper (*Aframomum melegueta*). According to Meek (1934: 263), seeds of the *azakami* (?) plant are used.

*kashi*, the novice will become intoxicated and move unsteadily, he is carried back into the house and the sign of the *boori* is cut on his left upper arm (for left-handed novices it is the right arm). He will not know who has made the cutting. With this he becomes a member of the cult; the membership fee is five Naira, twenty pots or more of millet beer and two chickens. The new member is taught the rules and regulations for three days after his initiation.



Photo 45: Participant handling the *bitooma* object.

Members of *mam gabra* avoid menstruating women, as well as women until one month postpartum, they do not eat or drink with them or take food or drinks from them. If this avoidance is not observed, the woman will not stop bleeding and the man will become impure, so that his membership will be terminated until he has performed some sacrifices. A menstruating woman may also not come near the shrine enclosure. As a fine she has to prepare food, (porridge with

sauce) and millet beer. The serpent *tumpel* (*tandara* H.) may not be killed or eaten by members of *mam gabra*. Before entering the shrine enclosure, common members must remove their shoes and expose their stomach (this does not apply to the functionaries), otherwise they have to pay a fine.

Members of one *mam gabra* cult group will not marry the divorced wife of another member, (the daughter of a member may, however, be married). One of the cult groups at Burak broke up because such a case happened; the man whose divorced wife was married by co-member became angry, he took the *bitoma* of the group away and hid it, resulting in the abandonment of their *boori* site.

It is an advantage to be a member of a *mam gabra* cult group, for instance, if a wife is barren or has other problems, then the senior members of the *boori* can be consulted. They are able to find out if the infertility is caused by spirits and act accordingly by making sacrifices to the spirits. A child that is born after such treatment receives its name in the house of the *boori*. The spirits they call upon are the mountain spirit (*mom lookwii*), the universal spirit (*limi looshuwa*), the ancestral spirits (*bweng*) and their cult spirit *Yumam*. *Yumam* is in the earth where the spear-like object *bitooma* is placed, it is connected with the object. The titleholder *yooma* is responsible for the *Yumam* spirit, which protects and takes care of the *boori* members.

On the day of a *mam gabra* festivity, members do not eat food flavoured with pepper or bring such food into the *boori* house, because pepper makes the spirit blind and the act would be regarded as an attack on him. Further, on a feast day, no *burkutu* (millet beer) is offered to the spirit, only *kunnu* (a non-alcoholic beverage made from corn), because otherwise the spirit becomes angry. Festivities at Burak are also attended by cult adherents from other ethnic groups like the Loo, Gomu or Leemak. During a festival, *boori* dancers tie grass around their head and attach

feathers in the hair to show that the spirit has taken possession of the person; drawings with chalk on the face or body also indicate possession, as well as the fact that the person no longer speaks his own language but that of the *boori*. Dancers also carry objects in their hands such as a hoe, axe or knife. The climax of a *boori* dance is reached when participants injure themselves with the *bitoma* object by slashing their arm. Depending on which category of *boori* a member belongs to, they behave differently. Members of *baashwe*, (who are considered to be the most adept), drink beer from holes in the ground during a festival, they can drink their own blood from a wound and eat lizards. Members of *wadda* can drink millet beer, which was in the house of a menstruating woman, but it must not have been prepared by her, on normal days, (not on the day of the festival). A pot containing such a beer is marked with charcoal with a cross, and only *wadda* members can drink from it.

Table 6: Religious concepts and their material expression

<b>Burak</b>		
<b>Concept</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Manifestation / Comments</b>
<b>high god</b>	<i>yámà</i>	creator god
<b>ancestors</b>	<i>bweŋ</i>	
<b>water spirit</b>	<i>limi daame, mam kandit</i>	
<b>bush spirit</b>	<i>naakutuk, limiyuu, boo</i>	<i>naakutuk</i> brings smallpox, <i>limiyuu</i> causes madness & takes souls, <i>boo</i> brings fever
<b>protecting spirit</b>	<i>limi dit, mom</i>	<i>limi dit</i> protects farms & crops; <i>mom</i> protects property
<b>material expression:</b>		
<b>gunki (wooden idol)</b>	<i>kabgunul, nuŋbwere</i>	<i>kabgunul</i> are not generally common among the Burak ( <i>gunul</i> is the spirit inherent in the figurine); <i>nuŋbwere</i> are vertical masks, cult taken over from the Loo
<b>dodo (masked dancer, masquerade)</b>	said to be non existent	can be found among the Gomu (Shongmu), Leemak, Jen, Munga (Nyem), Bam-bur
<b>drums</b>	<i>diime, kalangu</i>	
<b>clay pot</b>	<i>juli</i>	

## Water sources

There are several water sources around the old settlement of Dakudit on Damgok Mountain:

*mεε bidwiini* (close to the settlement, moderate amount of water, sometimes it dries up, then there will be offerings to *mam kandit* or *diime*)

*mεε nyenŋsheŋ* (close to the settlement, has lots of water)

*mεε gok* (close to the settlement (about 10 minutes by foot for a round trip), lots of water)

*mεε daajen* (close to the settlement (about 10 minutes by foot for a round trip), lots of water)

*mεε volit* (at the foot of the mountain where they first settled, the Shaalo clan was in charge of it and performed sacrifices when it dried up)

*mεε dā* (close to the settlement, on the slope, lots of water)

*mεε bala* (far away, about two hours by foot for a round trip, lots of water)

*mεε nyek* (far away in the northern range, lots of water)

*mεε datwaana* (close to the settlement, one had to dig to get to the water. Meeri, Loviri's brother, was in charge and was always the first to dig)

*mεε gat* (was hardly used because its water is salty).

Anyone is allowed to fetch water from the sources. Usually, offerings were made at the sources by the *gub* on behalf of all Burak, with the exception of *mεε volit* because the Shaalo clan is in charge of it. If someone fetching water there complained on the spot about the water not being enough, it began to bubble and flood, and only someone from the Shaalo clan could appease the water spirit.

Waterholes at the hamlet of Diyele Tal:

*mεε vogoo* (close to the settlement, has little water)

*mεε daaboki* (close to the settlement, has little water)

*mεε tiire* (approximately a one hour round trip by foot, the stream is halfway to the pass, lots of water)

*mεε bene* (approximately a one hour round trip by foot, had lots of water in the past, but nowadays only a little)

Inhabitants of the Tiire ward use the borehole and the *mεε tiire* and *mεε daaboki* water points.

In particular, water may not be fetched from the *mεε volit* spring with a decorated calabash or wearing a red dress.<sup>26</sup> Otherwise the water will swell, drowning everyone and flushing people to the river Benue.

The flow of water in springs is ensured by pythons (*nun̄da taldit* or *kem̄lemda taldit*) living there. Turtles and frogs may also live there, but are not considered to bring the water. People may not anger the python and the snake is never killed, as it also does not harm people. When the python comes out of the water, it is preceded by a light. Sometimes the snake goes down to the river Benue to drink and then one cannot breathe the air around it without dying.

## Ritual calendar

The following annual rituals/celebrations with a link to agricultural activities were elicited, but further research is necessary. The festivities *min mam jene*, *min dweng* and *min mam daadu* address the spirit *mam kandit* and are subsumed under the term *kaɗau* rituals.

*mín mām jene*: January – February, marking the end of harvest time. Another account says that it takes place at harvest time, but before the general harvest has commenced. Beer is brewed from the first millet and a *mam kandit* festival (*mín mām jene*) is performed with drumming and dancing, women may be possessed by spirits. This is probably identical with *min mam kaɗau* mentioned in the ms “Historical Origin of Burak...” (1989) which takes place after the harvest has been brought in around February to March.

<sup>26</sup> Using a thermodynamic code, the colour red as well as the decorated calabash – which was decorated by using a hot iron – represent heat (see also Adelberger 1997).

*mín dwéng*, also called *min lubimom* (display of spears): March - April, starts after the guinea corn, millet and maize harvests have been completed, it marks the hunting season and involves display of spears (ms "Historical Origin of Burak..." 1989).

*mam lookwii* is celebrated after *mindweng*, it is a ritual for the hunting season intended to ensure success in hunting.

*min bobeyaa*: takes place March – April, masquerades with yoke or vertical masks (*nungbwere*) play a role in the celebration, only members of that cult (*bwiyang?*) are involved.

		<b>Burak</b> Annual festivities											
Name of festivity		Jan.	Feb.	March	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
<i>kadau</i>	<i>min mam jene</i>		—										
	<i>min dweng</i>				—								
	<i>min mam daadu</i>								—				
	<i>mam gabra</i>				—							—	
	<i>min bobeyaa</i>				—								
	<i>min limi/ minti limi</i>					—							
	<i>min pala nyuwalimti nungbwere</i>							—					
	<i>bobedit</i>												—

*mín límì*, also called *minti limi*: takes place in April – May: a basket is placed in each ward, where the inhabitants put guinea corn from their harvest. The collected grain is then brought by the elders of each clan up the mountain to Dikadit where the shrine of *limi*, their most powerful deity, is situated. The priest of *limi* is called *ere lo limi* and comes from lineage of Gam of the Ngeneng clan. The elders form a circle and a small pot (*juli*) is placed in their centre. Each clan elder strikes the opening of the pot with his hand; with one of the elders the pot does not fall over but remains standing: this is the sign that *limi* has allowed them that the cultivation of guinea corn may be commenced. Then they fetch a white rooster and smash its head on the stone shrine (*tál nyùwá tùró*), which consists of three upright stones within the shrine house. The cock is then roasted and consumed by the participants. During the ritual, the high god Yama is also addressed. On their return, the brewing of millet beer begins and after seven days, the beer is consumed and dances take place at Dikadit. Afterwards, the sowing of guinea corn may commence. The first one to sow is a title holder called *èrè lóyá* (the present one is Zerma). People from each clan clear his field from remaining stalks, in return he will provide them with millet beer. The *èrè lóyá* takes from the collected grain supply for sowing. He can sow before the rain. Only then may the others clear their fields and start cultivating. This is still

practised today.

A somewhat different account is given in the ms "Historical Origin of Burak..." (1989) where it is related that everybody contributes grain from his harvest and beer is cooked from that collected grain. A measure of this liquid is taken one day before the beer will be ready and put into a container; the elders will take from the liquid with their fingers until they reach the bottom; if they touch grain then this is a sign of a bumper harvest.

*mam gabra* takes place twice a year, in March-April and in November. It was imported from the Gomu several years ago by a man named Kong who also imported the *bwiyang* cult from the Loo.

*min pala nyuwalimti nungbwere*: takes place in June, masquerades with yoke or vertical masks (*nungbwere*) play a role in the celebration, only involves members of that cult.

*mín mām dààdùù*: takes place August-September, when groundnuts are about to be harvested, is said to ensure a good outcome of the farming season and that the harvest will be plentiful.

*bobedit*: takes place in November and allows the consumption of the new guinea corn. First an offering of new guinea corn is made to the deity *mam kandit*, only then may people start to consume the new grain. Traditional priests (*yele loobalaya*) prepare a mixture of water and new guinea corn and then sprinkle the houses with this mixture in the early morning, using a head of guinea corn dipped in the liquid. Furthermore, the mixture is sprinkled on weapons and farming implements as well as on the breasts of females and the right arms of males. The Waawo clan is the first to perform the ritual (ms "Historical Origin of Burak..." 1989).

## Miscellanea

A menstruating woman, or woman up to three or four months after having given birth, will not fetch water or cook for her husband and she sleeps alone; she also does not grind flour for 7-8 days after her menstruation. It is believed that otherwise the husband gets weak legs preventing him from hunting and he can hardly walk; generally, men fear the smell of blood. But these ideas are gradually disappearing.

According to the traditional belief of the Burak, the human being consists of the soul (*umele*, also meaning "breath"), the body (*kume*) and the spirit (*shiling*), the latter can be captured by a witch. Guinea corn is considered to have a soul (*shiling*) like a human being; therefore, when a guinea corn field burns down, condolences are expressed as if it were a human death.

It is believed that illnesses are caused by witches. In order to prove whether the accused person is a witch or not, a trial by ordeal is practised. Experts from the lineage Waawo-Shangang-Kalkamu prepare a potion from a certain plant called *jùmnùm bwíí* (meaning 'medicine for cannibals') which the accused person has to drink. If he vomits, he is innocent, but if nothing happens to him, he is guilty and will be beaten to death.

## Taboos

Lions may not be killed by the Burak, other animals that are also not killed are the python, Fennec fox and the jackal (*wuok*). The jackal is considered to be an ally of the Burak, and will give a call when the prospect of inter-tribal conflict is imminent. The Burak react by subsequently mentioning the names of various ethnic groups, when the animal becomes silent, the Burak are aware that the danger is emanating from this group. Further, bats (*idik*) as well as the *kalanɗunɗme* (? , *kala-laka* in Hausa) bird may not be killed, but that prohibition is nowadays partly no longer observed. Members of the Shaalo clan are not allowed to kill the *bàngè* snake (puff adder). However, if a Shaalo person is careless, the snake will still kill him.

The black plum tree (*lifi*) is not cut down by the Burak, nor the *korong-korong* (?), *nyángéni-nyángéni* (?) and baobab (*kotoro*) trees.<sup>27</sup> One of the reasons for that prohibition is that the victory drums (*diime*), played in ritual contexts, are made from the wood of (fallen) black plum trees. The drums are stored in the *nyángéni-nyángéni* and the babobab tree. The wood, as well as the leaves of the locust tree (*Parkia biglobosa*), are taboo for the Shaalo clan, and the Shaalo make no use of tamarind trees during the time of planting and harvesting (ms Simon Magaji 1992). There are certain regulations regarding food: animals with hoofs may be consumed by males and females, but only men may eat animals with paws. Chickens are suitable for women, while dogs are only acceptable for men. It is said that men and women consumed the meat of killed enemies in the pre-colonial past.

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<sup>27</sup> I could not identify these trees: Kleinewillinghöfer (n.d.) in his unpublished list of Burak trees gives *yaɗní yaɗní* as possibly being *hanjin raagoo* (H.), *Oxystelma bornouense*, which is not a tree but a climbing sub-shrub.



## Glossary<sup>28</sup>

<b>Burak</b>	<b>gloss</b>	<b>comment</b>
<i>aba nyuwa mam</i>	<i>boori</i> -festival in January-February	
<i>bàṅè</i>	puff adder	also <i>káisá</i>
<i>bárá</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> marriage of a girl	
<i>bàràṅtàn</i>	battle axe, hatchet	
<i>bát</i>	female goat	
<i>bèrènáà</i>	sp. workparty: 1st workparty for parents-in-law	
<i>béreté</i>	small feast after bride moved into the home of her husband	
<i>beshi</i>	foolish	
<i>bit</i>	traditional iron money	also used for iron in general
<i>bitóma</i>	symbol of <i>mam gabra/boori</i> , consisting of an iron rod with feathers	
<i>boo</i>	evil soul of a deceased person haunting the living	
<i>brikidik</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> largest victory drum	
<i>bwát</i>	cudgel, club	
<i>bweṅ</i>	ancestral spirits, also a cult	
<i>bwíyán</i>	name for idols taken over from the Loo	
<i>dààdit</i>	clan	lit. 'inside house'
<i>dáádù</i>	rainy season (May-October)	
<i>daagoṅ</i>	dead or fallen tree	
<i>daṅ kadau</i>	sp. drum of <i>boori</i> cult	<i>kajau</i> in <i>boori</i> language
<i>dáṅgòò</i>	sp. drum for <i>mam kandit</i> cult	
<i>daashak</i>	open field	
<i>déénà</i>	large hoe	used for soil without stones
<i>déétól</i>	decorated iron handle for calabash	
<i>dilaṅ/jilaṅ</i>	sp. drum of <i>boori</i> cult	
<i>díímè</i>	victory drum	
<i>dùù</i>	friend	
<i>dùm</i>	axe	
<i>èrè lóyá</i>	ritual expert who begins the guinea corn sowing process	
<i>fétémè</i>	sickle	
<i>folishuwashilishee</i>	sp. ritual after miscarriage	
<i>ganga</i>	sp. drum, played with sticks	
<i>gááshàr</i>	wart-hog	<i>gadu</i> (H.)
<i>gétùm</i>	knife for cutting off head	

<sup>28</sup> H. = Hausa term.

<b>Burak</b>	<b>gloss</b>	<b>comment</b>
<i>gònjó</i>	sp. workparty, 3 <sup>rd</sup> workparty for parents-in-law	
<i>goroŋ</i>	sp. animal	
<i>gùb</i>	chief	<i>sarki</i> (H.)
<i>gúb limi</i>	priest of <i>limi</i>	
<i>gúb mam</i>	priest of <i>mam</i>	
<i>gub taldit</i>	traditional chief	
<i>gúnùl</i>	wooden idol	<i>gunki</i> (H.)
<i>góù</i>	sp. calabash containing oil for body care	
<i>idik</i>	(fruit) bat	
<i>jàarèbét</i>	calabash/bottle gourd used for sowing	
<i>jalbe</i>	sp. bird	
<i>jènè</i>	dry season (November-February)	
<i>jii</i>	sp. animal, addax?	<i>gonki</i> (H.)
<i>jòmjàòm</i>	smallest victory drum	
<i>jùe sùká</i>	hoe	
<i>jùli</i>	small clay pot	
<i>jùli tén</i>	small clay pot made at a twin birth	
<i>kalaŋtuŋme</i>	sp. bird	<i>kalalaka</i> (H.)
<i>kaashak</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> day of hunting festival in February	
<i>kebe boro</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> day of hunting festival in February	
<i>kebe tara</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> day of hunting festival in February	
<i>kènnúŋ</i>	clay pot for fetching water and storing beer	
<i>kòtóŋ</i>	shield	
<i>léébé</i>	broad bladed spear	
<i>limbara</i>	dwelling of a wife	
<i>limi</i>	one of the most powerful deities of the Burak	
<i>limi daame</i>	(evil) spirit of water	
<i>limi lookwii</i>	spirits of the mountains	
<i>limi tal</i>	spirit of mountain	
<i>líshédákòngdit</i>	widow	
<i>lónájim</i>	age group	
<i>lubi mom</i>	funeral ceremony for a person of standing	
<i>luu</i>	sp. animal, duiker?	
<i>mám gábrà</i>	<i>boori</i> cult, ultimately originating from the Wurbo	
<i>mam kandit</i>	cult of the Burak	
<i>mam kaŋau</i>	annual celebration in August	
<i>minbamamlim</i>	annual festival in November	

<b>Burak</b>	<b>gloss</b>	<b>comment</b>
<i>míndùen/míndwéng</i>	annual celebration of <i>mam kandit</i> in March - May	
<i>mínám dáàdùù</i>	annual celebration of <i>mam kandit</i> in August - September, to ensure a good harvest	
<i>mínám jene</i>	annual celebration of <i>mam kandit</i> in January - February with beer from new harvest?	
<i>míntilími</i>	annual celebration of <i>mam kandit</i> in May - June, for good rains and fertility	
<i>móm/ mwóm</i>	spear	
<i>mom</i>	a ritual to strengthen spears for hunting and fighting	
<i>mwómlòò</i>	spear with broad blade	
<i>nùmígbàn</i>	gifts of the grandparents for the bride	
<i>nún dòorí</i>	bugle made of antelope horn	
<i>nyigela</i>	farm clearing season (March-April)	
<i>nyimang</i>	children	
<i>nyuwatolo</i>	people living at mouth of river	
<i>pélmè</i>	antelope	
<i>pígté</i>	fan made with horsehair	see also <i>win nung</i>
<i>píllàà</i>	flute	
<i>sàkmi</i>	iron ankle rattle	see also <i>shanjmi</i>
<i>sárájùmà</i>	divorced woman	
<i>shanjmi</i>	iron ankle rattle	see also sakmi
<i>shuwat</i>	African buffalo	<i>bauna</i> (H.)
<i>tájèrè</i>	spindle	
<i>tál nyùwá tùró</i>	sacred site with three standing stones	
<i>tam</i>	drying platform made from tree trunks and strong branches	
<i>téng</i>	small clay pot for eating	
<i>tóóló</i>	knife	
<i>tóóló kágbènè</i>	long knife, sword	
<i>tóóló kánùrí</i>	big knife, sword	
<i>tumpel</i>	small harmless snake	<i>tandara</i> (H.)
<i>tùrò</i>	sp. hut inside the <i>boori</i> -shrine	
<i>wídí</i>	brass bangle	
<i>wíiri</i>	heap of guinea corn	
<i>wín nún</i>	fan made with horsehair	see also <i>pigte</i>
<i>wòòkédáá</i>	sp. feast during marriage celebrations	
<i>wówò</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> workparty for parents-in-law	
<i>wúúmà</i>	river Benue	
<i>wuok</i>	jackal	
<i>yélé</i>	people inhabiting a homestead	
<i>yeleloobalaya</i>	priest of annual <i>bobedit</i> celebration	

Burak	gloss	comment		
<i>yeloomεε</i>	rain maker			
<i>yelenun̄bwεεε</i>	secret society, lit. "people of eye of death"			
<i>yélewúù/ yelewuwu</i>	healer, soothsayer, divinator			
<b>Plants:</b>				
Burak	Hausa	English	scientific name	comment
<i>bakto</i>	?	sp. tree	?	
<i>batul</i>	<i>kubeewaa</i>	okra	<i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i>	
<i>bau</i>	?	sp. grass	?	used for basket weaving
<i>bayuk</i>	<i>karkashii</i>	false sesame leaves	<i>Ceratotherca sesamoides</i>	
<i>beelee</i>	<i>waakee</i>	beans, cow pea	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>	straight variety
<i>bénè</i>	<i>madaaci</i>	mahogany tree	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	
<i>berimi</i>	<i>kanya</i>	West African ebony	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>	
<i>bwashima</i>	<i>markee</i>	chewstick tree	<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>	
<i>bwere</i>	<i>gyadaa</i>	groundnut	<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>	
<i>bwiini</i>	<i>riidii</i>	sesame	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>	brown seeds
<i>dee</i>	<i>kwaryaa</i>	bottle gourd	<i>Lagenaria siceraria</i>	
<i>dfenden</i>	<i>gautaa</i>	garden-egg	<i>Solanum incanum</i>	
<i>dééré</i>	?	sp. grass	?	
<i>dom</i>	<i>kadanya</i>	shea tree	<i>Vitellaria paradoxa</i>	
<i>duli</i>	<i>yaakuwaa</i>	roselle	<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa</i>	
<i>dwaana</i>	<i>gurjiyaa</i>	red-flowered silk-cotton tree	<i>Bombax buonopozense</i>	
<i>fán</i>	<i>gwaazaa</i>	cocoyam	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>	
<i>fulun̄</i>	<i>riimii</i>	silk-cotton tree	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>	
<i>funul</i>	<i>riidii</i>	sesame	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>	brown seeds
<i>gaba</i>	<i>shinkaafar</i>	rice	<i>Oryza sp.</i>	
<i>gak</i>	?	sp. tuber crop	?	
<i>gbala / kpala</i>	<i>kabeewaa</i>	pumpkin	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>	
<i>gbeeli / gbiili</i>	<i>riidii</i>	sesame	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>	black seeds
<i>gberewang</i>	<i>gujiyaa</i>	Bambara nut	<i>Vigna subterranea</i>	
<i>giyem / tiya</i>	<i>guna</i>	melon	<i>Citrullus lanatus</i>	
<i>gololong</i>	<i>kadanade</i>	beans	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>	curved variety
<i>jare</i>	<i>boota</i>	?	?	<i>buta wuta</i> : <i>Merremia aegyptiaca</i> , <i>Ipomoea aitonii</i> , <i>Vigna luteola</i>
<i>júù</i>	<i>zoogale</i>	horseradish tree	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	
<i>káádit</i>	<i>shibcii</i>	sp. grass	<i>Andropogon sp.</i>	
<i>kaakashisha</i>	<i>gamba</i>	gamba grass	<i>Andropogon gayanus</i>	
<i>kerke</i>	<i>tamba</i>	finger millet	<i>Eleusine coracana</i>	

Burak	Hausa	English	scientific name	comment
<i>kolowa</i>	<i>daawaa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	early white variety
<i>koŋkoŋ</i>	?	cactus	?	
<i>korong-korong</i>	?	sp. tree	?	
<i>kótórò</i>	<i>kuuka</i>	Baobab	<i>Adansonia digitata</i>	
<i>kúng</i>	<i>aduuwaa</i>	desert date	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i>	
<i>kwabwa</i>		guava		
<i>lana</i>	<i>audugaa</i>	cotton	<i>Gossypium sp.</i>	
<i>líí</i>	<i>dínyaa</i>	black plum tree	<i>Vitex doniana</i>	
<i>méshè</i>	<i>doorawa</i>	locust tree	<i>Parkia biglobosa</i>	
<i>modo</i>	<i>geeroo</i>	pearl millet	<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>	early variety
<i>mútùm</i>	<i>maiwaa</i>	pearl millet	<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>	late variety
<i>nunjo tal</i>	?	sp. grass	?	used for covering granaries
<i>nya golgot</i>	<i>daawaa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	late variety
<i>nya nyini</i>	<i>daawaa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	late red variety
<i>nyá vùùrm</i>	<i>fafaraa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	early white variety
<i>nyá yiini</i>	<i>daawaa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	late red variety
<i>nyábóò</i>	<i>masaraa</i>	maize	<i>Zea mays</i>	"corn of evil spirit"
<i>nyángéni-nyángéni</i>	?	sp. tree	?	Kleinewillinghöfer (n.d.) lists <i>yaŋní</i> <i>yaŋní</i> as <i>hanjin raa-goo</i> (H.), <i>Oxystelma bornouense</i> , that is, however, not a tree
<i>palmaal dee</i>	?	sp. grass	?	used for zana-mats
<i>pil</i>	<i>shibcii</i>	sp. grass	<i>Andropogon sp.</i>	
<i>shebet/ shibit</i>	<i>barkoonoo</i>	pepper	<i>Capsicum sp.</i>	
<i>shenge</i>	<i>magariyaa</i>	jujube	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>	fruit edible
<i>shíi</i>	<i>kiryaa</i>	false locust tree	<i>Prosopis africana</i>	
<i>sitaŋ kyau</i>	<i>dankalii</i>	sweet potato	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>	
<i>taabel</i>	<i>gwandar jeeji</i>	wild custard apple	<i>Annona senegalensis</i>	fruit edible; leaves used against skin diseases
<i>tak</i>	<i>tauraa</i>	tallow tree	<i>Detarium senegalense</i>	
<i>tiŋtiŋ</i>	<i>acca</i>	fonio	<i>Digitaria exilis</i>	
<i>vel</i>	<i>gamba</i>	sp. grass	<i>Andropogon sp.</i>	used for zana-mats
<i>wák</i>	<i>kaba</i>	dum palm	<i>Hyphaene thebaica</i>	leaves of palm
<i>wiiri</i>	<i>tzaamiiyaa</i>	tamarind	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	
<i>wiital</i>	<i>dooya</i>	yam	<i>Dioscorea spp.</i>	
<i>wikuma</i>	<i>roogoo</i>	cassava	<i>Manihot esculenta</i>	
<i>yadadu</i>	<i>daawaa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	early red variety
<i>yílèŋ</i>	?	sp. grass	?	used for covering granaries



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<b>Burak</b>	<b>Hausa</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>scientific name</b>	<b>comment</b>
<i>yuwa</i>	<i>riidii</i>	sesame	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>	white seeds

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