

Keynote Address

**Chadic linguistics in the 21st century:
Attempting a state-of-the-art account**

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Abstract

The presentation aims at providing a survey of where Chadic linguistics, once a thriving and leading sub-field of African linguistics with a remarkable international community of scholars involved, currently stands in terms of institutional and individual representation. This account will be based on personal experience as much as on available extensive bibliographies and the proceedings of the *Biennial International Colloquium in the Chadic languages* (BICCL), which took over from previous non-coordinated networks of Chadic linguistics in 2001.

In its first part, the presentation will address the state of the art of descriptive Chadic linguistics vis-à-vis the fact that Chadic forms the largest family within Afroasiatic with 193 individual languages (*Ethnologue* 2019), in terms of language documentation, availability of full grammatical descriptions and dictionaries.

In the second part, the presentation will look at issues touching on the postulated genetic classification of Chadic within Afroasiatic. It then raises the question of how Chadic historical linguistics could possibly provide challenging insights or disturbing questions for comparative Afroasiatic as a whole.

In the third part, achievements of Chadic historical-comparative linguistics will be looked at in some more detail in terms of application of advances towards phonological, lexical and grammatical reconstructions. This will allow to add more flesh to the question raised in the second part, namely how Chadic could possibly contribute to a better understanding of Afroasiatic language histories.

In the fourth and final part, and if time allows, the position of Chadic in the wider linguistic convergence area south of the Sahara ('Macro-Sudan belt' acc. to Güldemann 2008) will be illuminated.