

# AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONSONANT SYSTEM OF GĀ

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1. The consonants of Gā may be displayed as follows:

	LABIAL			POST-DENTAL		VELAR	
	bilab.	lab.- dent.	lab. vel.	alv.	pal.	lab.- pal.	vel.      lab'd vel.
Stop							
voiceless	p		kp̄	t			k      kw
voiced	b		gb̄	d			g      gw
Affricate							
voiceless					tʃ	tʃw	
voiced					dʒ	dʒw	
Fricative							
voiceless		f		s	ʃ	ʃw	h      hw
voiced		v		z			
Approximant							
nasal	m		ŋm̄	n	ɲ		ŋ      ŋw
oral-open	w			ɹ	j	jw	
lateral				l			

REMARKS:

1. All of these sounds contrast phonemically, except for the lateral and retroflexed oral approximants. [l], which is clear, occurs initially in the morpheme. A nasal variant [ɲ] occurs between nasal vowels. [ɹ], which has no friction except after t and d, occurs in every other position but in stylistic alternation with [l]. Therefore there is only one alveolar oral approximant phoneme, r. The articulatory difference between r and j parallels that between s and ʃ. The oral series of approximants may be rewritten as follows:

Labial	Post-Dental		
	alveolar	palatal	labio-palatal
w	r	j	jw

2. jw and w are very nearly in complementary distribution, since jw occurs mainly before i and w never does. But both occasionally occur before ε.

3. Nasal consonants tend to have a plosive release before oral vowels.

4. The labial velars seem to combine two air streams, probably the velaric ingressive and pulmonic ingressive, therein resembling Yoruba rather than the geographically much closer Late and Anum.<sup>1</sup> These consonants seem to be related to the bilabials, both in the synchronic system described here and in their historical development, and not the velars. In this language they might therefore be termed 'velarized labials'.

<sup>1</sup> See P. Ladefoged, A PHONETIC STUDY OF WEST AFRICAN LANGUAGES, 1964, p. 9.

