

# THE HAMITOSEMITIC PRESENT-HABITATIVE VERB STEM IN RON AND MUBI<sup>1</sup>

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## I

Geographically speaking, Ron and Mubi may be considered the western and eastern outposts of the so-called Chad or Chadohamitic languages, i.e. the Central Sudanic branch of Hamitosemitic (Afroasiatic). The Ron group, comprising at least five languages, namely Fyer, Bokkos, Daffo-Butura, Sha and Kulere, is found in the south-western corner of the Northern Nigerian Plateau adjacent to languages of the Benue-Congo stock like Mama and Mada. On the other side, Mubi belongs to the eastern section of the Chad languages which cover parts of the Chad Republic.

While information on the Ron languages has increased during the last few years,<sup>2</sup> our knowledge of Mubi is still limited to what J. Lukas has observed and collected in 1933.<sup>3</sup> Our main basis of operation in this discussion will therefore be Ron. On the other hand, the structural resemblance between Ron and Mubi, at least for the case in question, is so striking that a first comparative treatment shall be attempted.

## II

The Ron languages of today may be historically considered to have been dialects of one single language. Thus, each of them displays a mixture of common Ron heritage and the results of dialectally peculiar development. Whether the one or the other of these two components became predominant depended upon various factors among which external influence exercised by a different linguistic surrounding upon the respective dialect/language plays an important role. Fyer, therefore, having been isolated from the main block of the Ron dialects/languages, is the only one among them that has lost an essential feature of Common Ron, namely the internal formation of the habitative or present verb stem. A reason for this change may be that Fyer—located in the neighbourhood of Pankshin—is a tiny enclave within the Angas-speaking majority, the more so since the kind of change reminds one vividly of the respective structural feature in Angas-Sura, where most tenses are formed by modifying or extending the subject pronoun (and/or the tone of the verb stem), only leaving the verb stem otherwise unaltered.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we have in Fyer the following opposite forms:

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<sup>2</sup> The materials on Ron will appear within the series of *AFRIKANISTISCHE FORSCHUNGEN* (Hamburg).

<sup>3</sup> Published in *ZENTRALSUDANISCHE STUDIEN* (Hamburg, 1937), pp. 155-91.

<sup>4</sup> See H. Jungraithmayr, 'Texte und Sprichwörter im Angas von Kabwir (Nordnigerien)', *AFRIKA UND ÜBERSEE*, vol. XLVIII, pp. 17-35, 114-27.

