

## **Inter-Group Marriages on the Jos Plateau and Language Endangerment: The Rukuba-Tariya Example from 1900 to Present**

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### **Abstract**

Contracts between groups or individuals of distinct cultural and linguistic identities have characterized the life of man from antiquity. In the process, some of them have either been absorbed as clans by the larger and relatively more influential ones, or have survived to conduct relationships on a reciprocal basis, characterized by mutual cooperation, competition or antagonism, sometimes leading to conflict. On the Jos Plateau, the Kishi section of Rukuba and the Tariya ethnic group have lived together in a common geographical environment since the pre-colonial times, not however, devoid of conflicts. Today, there are obvious indications suggesting that the Tariya are fast losing their language to the growing linguistic influence of their Rukuba neighbours. Reports of interviews conducted in the area reveal that inter-ethnic marriages between the Rukuba and Tariya have become a threat to the survival of the language of the latter. This is a curious ethnographic phenomenon, triggering the fundamental question: how and why marriages between the Rukuba and Tariya now endanger the existence of the Tariya language. This is the focus of this paper. The fear arising from this trend is that the loss of a language suggests strongly the loss of its speakers. It is hoped that by this revelation, the attention of scholars (ethnographic, linguistics, historians) and policy-makers will be drawn and effort made for a possible halt of the trend.

**Keywords:** *language contact, Rukuba, Tariya, endangerment, inter-ethnic marriage*

### **Introduction**

Movements, whether of groups or individuals have characterized the life of man on the surface of the earth. In the course of these movements people have come into contact with others of different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Compatibility and compromise have most often determined the nature and extent of co-habitation between the interacting groups. Where such contacts were marked by hostilities, peaceful interaction became impossible, resulting to separation. On the other hand, groups have come into contact, lived and interacted peacefully together in a common territory, though maintaining their separate socio-cultural and linguistic identities. In the course of time however, certain factors, especially cultural and numerical strength of one group most often gave her advantage over and above the other. A preliminary survey of the relationship between the Kishi of Rukuba and Tariya, both in the present Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State, from the Pre-colonial period to the present, has shown that the socio-cultural elements of the former have penetrated (and to some extent tended to dominate) those of the latter, with language as the greatest victim, threatened with extinction. This is indeed, a curious ethnological phenomenon, owing to the small number of Kishi settlers, relative to their Tariya hosts. The main section of the Rukuba is contiguous to their Tariya neighbours, both situated between Latitudes 9°53' - 10°07' and Longitudes 8°36' - 8°50'. Although the Kishi section of Rukuba had settled among the Tariya, they have derived a substantial socio-cultural and linguistic strength from their main section till this day: a factor which (as will be examined in due course) has given the Kishi settlers advantage over their Tariya hosts. Both the Rukuba and Tariya inhabit the zone of transition from higher to lower plains on the north (some eight kilometers) of the present Jos town.

The focus of this paper is to examine the nature and contents of relationships which have existed between the Kishi of Rukuba and their Tariya hosts, and the process through which the language of the latter has become endangered by the steady infiltration of that of the former.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Language is probably one of the most critical elements by which the identity of an ethnic group is characterized. Thus, a threat to or endangerment of a language is a threat to the identity of the ethnic group. It is therefore, not surprising that the phenomenon has attracted the attention of scholars and policy-makers in the recent times. The attempt to understand the why, how and when of a language endangerment has yielded various definitions and interpretations, resulting to the emergence of various ideas about the phenomenon. According to UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of

Disappearing: “a language is considered endangered if it is not learned by at least 30 percent of the children in the community”<sup>2</sup>

A cursory glance at the two groups involved in this study shows clearly the marked difference between the two in terms of population and geographical areas. While the Rukuba by the first half of the twentieth century were the largest in the whole of the present Bassa Local Government Area, the Tariya were among the least three of the more than ten different ethnic groups in the area.<sup>3</sup>

This observation validates the H.M. Batibo’s factor or indices by which the status of a language is classified. According to him, small numbers of speakers are often characterized by low status and absence of public functions.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that there is a direct relationship between the population of an ethnic group and the status of its language. If this hypothesis is relevant, then we are beginning to create a chain of possibilities (awaiting validation in due course) that the Tariya language is endangered because their population is very small, relative to their Rukuba neighbours.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the concept of endangerment is relative, and a language can be said to be endangered only based on the following: 1. The number of speakers currently living 2. The mean age of native and/or fluent speakers 3. The percentage of the youngest generation acquiring fluency with the language in question.<sup>6</sup>

It is however observed that: “In contrast (to the above) a language with only 100 speakers might be considered very much alive if it is the primary language of the community, and is the first (or only) language of all children in that community.”<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this is not the case with the Tariya who interact with their Kishi (Rukuba) settlers on daily basis: speaking Rukuba language, attending Rukuba socio-cultural occasions such as dance, hunting festivals and marriage ceremonies. Back home, the Tariya children are busy speaking Rukuba language with their Rukuba mothers now married into the Tariya household.

A preliminary survey of the pre-colonial relationships between the Kishi of Rukuba and their neighbours has shown that the Rukuba engaged in hostilities with the Irigwe and Tariya (often leading to pitched battles). However, there were moments of peaceful intercourse among the three. But while intercourse between the Rukuba and Irigwe often took reciprocal form (i.e mutual exchanges), that with the Tariya was often practically unequal, with the Tariya at the receiving end. Although these writers have said nothing directly about the Rukuba-Tariya relations (especially where it affects the language of the latter), a lot of insight into the complex nature of inter-group relations can be derived from them. Thus, we may now begin to examine, with a clearer focus, how a peaceful relationship between two groups can gradually lead to the infiltration of the language of one into the socio-cultural territory of the other, and subsequently gain favour and acceptability over and above the host language. After all, languages are like human beings; no language can insulate itself against the influence of another.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Rukuba-Tariya Relations to 1900**

It would be recalled that following the fall of Turu, the inhabitants dispersed to various directions where they established the nucleus of new settlements, not quite far away from Turu. In this process, the Du of Berom, Kishi of Rukuba and Anambi of Anaguta established their settlement at Kabong, around GadaBiyu, in the present Jos town<sup>9</sup>. This is buttressed by Mr. E.H.M. counsel (Assistant District Officer, A.D.O.) who, during his study of the area for the colonial political-cum administrative reorganization stated that “the Rukuba once lived at Kabong, together with the Anambi clan of Anaguta and the Berom of Du. The three point to the north<sup>10</sup>, obviously, the direction of Turu. Similar references are made by Gunn, Meek, C.G. Ames, etc. with regard to these groups. The movement of these groups together and their subsequent settlement at a common location further confirms their claim of autochthony. For instance, while the rest of the Anaguta distance themselves from the Berom “the Anambi clan regards the Berom of Du as uncles (begwasa)”. They both used to go back to Turu site for religious ceremonies. Gunn observes:

For very many years, the Da-Gwom (Berom chief of Du) and a few other elders or hamlet - heads have visited Buji district annually taking with them representatives of Gwong (Anaguta tribe) to carry out... religious rites there.<sup>11</sup>

Kishi of Rukuba used to attend the said ceremonies, but was never represented at the occasion referred to. Oral accounts from Kishi claim that they were not represented because they were not told or invited<sup>12</sup>. However, it is strongly suggested in the traditions that the circumstances which led to the dispersal of the three from Kabong did not guarantee continued peaceful contact between them.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, when they left Kabong, some of the Du elements of Berom remained and continued to relate with the Anambi of Anaguta, who had also moved but not quite far away from Kabong. But Kishi,

apart from moving further away from Kabong, decided to settle among the Tariya at Kepop. This was the earliest and the beginning of mutual contact between the Rukuba and Tariya, which (as will be examined in due course) took different forms in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At Kepop, the Rukuba settled at two locations, Kiponti and Iba, a little distance from the Tariya locations -Tega and Dogon-Dutse. Here, the two of them lived peacefully, taking active part in each other's socio-cultural and economic activities. However, at this initial stage, marriage between them was hindered by what the Rukuba men described as abnormal shape of the mouth of the Tariya women<sup>14</sup>. It would be recalled that the Tariya women had their lips fastened together by means of lip-plugs. Thus apart from making it difficult for them to talk with men, the Tariya women were disfigured and unattractive to the neighbouring ethnic groups. Having disfigured their women, who now looked ugly even to them, the Tariya men began to admire the women of their neighbours whose lips were not fasten together. This fact was demonstrated when some Tariya men assaulted a Rukuba woman who had gone to fetch water at a near-by stream. Her water-pot fell off and broke to pieces. She started crying and shouting and attracted a large crowd of both the Rukuba and Tariya. On seeing the miserable condition of their wife, the Rukuba people decide to teach their Tariya hosts a lesson. A fight ensued, using sticks and stones, and before long, more lethal weapons (bows and arrows, swords, etc) had been introduced.<sup>15</sup>

It is not clear, in the traditions whether the Rukuba woman was actually raped, and how long the fight lasted. This notwithstanding, the fleeing Kishi people were pursued by the Tariya warriors into the territory of the main section of the Rukuba. The Rukuba warriors came out on horse-back and engaged the Tariya at Kuva-attu, literally meaning, "where heads littered"; a place about two kilometers south of the present Bassa Local Government Secretariat. It is recounted that both the Rukuba and Tariya employed maximum cruelty. The accounts place emphasis on the use of charms, which served as protection against flying arrows, and the mysterious turning of the warriors into invisible or some flying creatures, and for the disappearance from the battle-field as the need to do so arose.<sup>16</sup>

What really followed, as to how an affray developed into full-scale war, characterized by fierce battle, in which so many lives were lost is not clear in the accounts. This is an indication that both sides, having re-established good relationship after a long time (as will be examined in due course), do not want the memory of that battle. This battle destroyed the initial peaceful relationship between Kishi and Tariya, resulting to the movement of the later farther west, where they joined their main section at Upara, at the foot of the Uro Hills. It would be recalled that (except probably the Du of Berom) most of the autochthonous groups were relatively fewer in numbers and were therefore subjected to various forms of humiliations, ranging from absorption to discrimination (as they were regarded by the dominant sections as illegitimate). Thus, even after leaving Tariya and joining their main section at Upara, the Kishi people remained unsettled, uncomfortable and denied ownership of land for more than a century. They were eventually compelled to return to Tariya. In 1934, Mr. Counsell, while touring Rukubaland for subsequent political reorganization of the area, gathered that: Some fifty or more years before the arrival of our administration (i.e 1904), Kishi, in particular suffered greatly from Ujja (Upara) raids on their farms. Sometimes their crops destroyed or looted. The Utu (Chief of) Kishi fled with his family to Tariya, where his descendants still live.<sup>17</sup>

This was indeed the irony of "friendship in enmity" – a relationship which over the years transformed the erstwhile enemies to friends, and artificial kinship to near-biological kinship. Although both the Rukuba and Tariya share a common place of origin, it is not clear in the oral accounts what nature or status of relationship existed between them at the Turu ancient settlement. Thus, it may be reasonably safer to describe the basis of their relationship in terms of a common place of origin rather than a common ancestry. Although today such claims of Kinship status as "father", "Uncles", "brothers", etc exist among most of the autochthonous groups in this area, without any concrete evidence, a beneficial network of relationships among them today is traceable to such distant bases of contacts. This has also helped to keep the "foot - prints" of the history of these societies fresh.

### **The Return of Kishi and the Changing Cultural and Linguistic Contents of the Tariya Society**

The nature and contents of relationship between the Rukuba and Tariya during the second stage of their contact revealed some cultural influences of the former upon the later traceable to the period of their early contact. It was probably during this period that the processes of the changing ethnic identity of the Tariya began. For instance, as observed earlier, the system of tattooing on the stomach and breast, and a series of dotted marks extending in parallel lines from the breast to the stomach was copied from the Rukuba,

who had settled among them in the distant past (after leaving Kabong). It is not stated in the oral accounts whether Kishi people witnessed some cold reception on their return to Tariya, suggesting some lingering memories of the early hostilities. However, it can be rationalized that both the Rukuba and Tariya did not want the continued reference to their rather scandalous past, and so allowed that part of their history to fade away. This notwithstanding, the second coming of the Rukuba to Tariya land marked a significant phase in their relationship with one another. Probably most strange of the features of this second contact was the inter-marriages - a practice which was unthinkable between the two, during their early contact. Although the names of the pioneer “mixed” couples are not stated in the traditions, the shock and anxiety created by this erstwhile unthinkable union have remained fresh in the minds of the few surviving old men in the society. While the Rukuba women waited curiously to see if their sister’s lips were fastened together with lip-plugs, the Tariya women waited anxiously to see if their wife (the Rukuba woman) retained her free lips. The two societies were witnessing the beginning of a new era. No questions were asked as to why the Rukuba woman, married into the Tariya household was not using the characteristic lip-plugs of her husband’s society.<sup>18</sup> This was in deed, the first case of marriage between the Rukuba and any of their neighbours, and a practical show of compatibility of the two. However, the traditions from Tariya lament that it had become obvious that the Tariya had already begun to compromise their cultural identity, when most of the procedures and rituals associated with their culture were put aside in favour of the way the Rukuba celebrated their marriage.<sup>19</sup>

As was probably expected, the Rukuba woman lived among her Tariya counterparts with her lips free. The traditions are divided on the response of the Tariya society on this development. Some versions say that the Tariya women grumbled, suggesting that the Rukuba woman’s lips should be fastened.<sup>20</sup> Others argue that the said Tariya man (husband to the Rukuba woman) was not in actual sense, Tariya by birth. He was the son of one of the few Rukuba who remained behind after the war had forced Kishi to leave. These few Rukuba were subsequently absorbed into the Tariya society. After the death of his parents, he spent the rest of his childhood, and part of his adulthood in a Tariya household, and was regarded by many as a Tariya man.<sup>21</sup>

The second argument sounds rather ridiculous, and untenable. To suppose that after a battle between two different ethnic groups who, before the war, were living together, members of one of the ethnic groups moved, leaving behind a few of their members to live among the supposed enemies may sound unbelievable. However, from the antecedent of the relationships between the Rukuba and their neighbours, during the pre-colonial period, such situations abound. For instance, during the protracted war between the Rukuba and their Irigwe neighbours, during the last half of the nineteenth century, some elements from both sides were busy exchanging friendly visits, spending several nights in each other’s house and adopting each other’s names.<sup>22</sup> A recent event which deepened this paradox of “friendship in enmity” was demonstrated during the war between them (the Rukuba and Irigwe), between April and May, 2014. As both sides were busy thrashing it out at the “battle of Gunni”, a location some five kilometers, west of the Rukuba Army Barracks (a border village), a marriage was simultaneously being effected between a Rukuba man and Irigwe woman, with members of both sides taking active part in the celebration at the Jos Township Stadium.

These arguments notwithstanding, it is expected that having lived in a Tariya household, and taking active part in the socio-cultural activities of the Tariya, the Rukuba “orphan” ought to have integrated culturally into the Tariya society and his marriage and all other festivities were expected to reflect his adopted culture and traditions. It can be observed here that the foregoing suggests that probably the earliest victims of this “mixed marriage” were the basic cultural elements of the Tariya society. This is probably contrary to W. Scitdt’s proposition that “people can change their language without giving up the essence of their culture”.<sup>23</sup> The assumption here is that though language and culture operate side-by-side, they are nevertheless independent of each other. But, in the case in question, as will be examined in due course, both language and culture unite to define identity, and the changing content of one affects the elemental form of the other.

As more and more Tariya men married Rukuba women, who did not fasten their lips, their Tariya counterparts also abandoned the culture of lip-plugs. By the end of the nineteenth century, the lip-plugs have ceased to be a cultural characteristic associated with the Tariya. Similarly, most of the rituals (dances, music, procedures, etc) associated with marriage ceremony began to “take the back-seat”, in favour of the Rukuba culture. These too, lost their place in defining the Tariya ethnic identity.

### New Forms of Internal Relations and the Travails of Tariya Language

It would be recalled that peace had been re-established between the Rukuba and Tariya more than fifty years ago before the British conquest and subsequent colonization of the area. The return of Kishi to Tariya, and the first marriage between them opened a new phase in their relationship which was subsequently to transform the entire socio-cultural life of the Tariya people. The culture of lip-plugs had started to disappear among the Tariya women, as more inter-marriages were contracted. The Tariya oral accounts lament the refusal of the Tariya women to put lip-plugs. Our young men were compelled to relax the practice of lip-plugs to avoid losing their women to the Rukuba men. It was only when this culture was relaxed that the Rukuba women also began to marry our young men, who, according to them were more loving and caring than their Rukuba counterparts.<sup>24</sup>

As stated earlier, the first marriage between the Tariya and Rukuba ethnic groups had resulted in the loss of some of the cultural elements of the former in favour of the culture of the latter. This trend continued, and as more Tariya men married Rukuba women, the Tariya language became the next victim. The Tariya, being relatively fewer in number, seemed to have been more inclined towards the Rukuba women who, as earlier stated, admired the Tariya for the low-headedness and care, as against their Rukuba counterparts. The study conducted in the area shows that by 1900, there was at least one Rukuba woman in each of the two Tariya wards or villages.

Meanwhile, a strong avenue for inter-ethnic contact was being opened, in the western education system, which provided for the coming together of children from different ethnic groups. The Sudan interior Mission (S.I.M) Primary School at Zagun-Rukuba had developed to a Senior Primary School, with standard one to seven, making it the only senior Primary School in the whole of the present Bassa Local Government Area, and with provisions for both day and boarding pupils. Children from all the ethnic groups in the area of this study (including Tariya) came to Zagun, after class three, to complete their primary education. Below is a table, showing a few examples of the pupils, cutting across the different ethnic groups in the area, between 1956 and 1966.

**Table 1: Cross-Cultural Population of Pupils, 1956 – 1966**

Date	Name	Sex	Ethnic Group
1956 – 1962	Yohana Agoldo	Male	Buji
1957 – 1959	Bitrus Sarkin Ruga	Male	Buji
1959 – 1961	Balarabe Kwaja	Male	Buji
1962 – 1964	Soja Jamaika	Male	Buji
1962 – 1964	Dawa Audu	Male	Irigwe
1962 – 1964	Moses Agara	Male	Irigwe
1962 – 1964	Audu Gye	Male	Irigwe
1962 – 1964	Moses Achinge	Male	Irigwe
1963 – 1965	Guniya Nabauda	Female	Buji
1964 – 1966	Umaru Sambo	Male	Janji
1964 – 1966	Izi Azinga	Male	Janji
1964 – 1966	Talatu Aginda	Female	Tariya
1964 – 1966	Hawa Kibauda	Female	Tariya
1964 – 1966	Bulus Nakuza	Male	Tariya
1964 – 1966	Ayuba Imba	Male	Tariya
1964 – 1966	Tumen	Male	Ribam

Sources: i. Zagun S.I.M. Transfer certificates (Duplicates), 1953; ii. Zagun S.I.M. Primary School Log Book, 1950 – 1965  
 iii. Zagun S.I.M. Primary School (Senior), Registrar, 1960; iv. Zagun Senior Primary School class Registrar, 1964

Although almost all the non-ethnic children were able to acquire some rudiments of the Rukuba language, after a period of about four years, the case of the Tariya children (pupils) was exceptional. All of them were able to communicate in Rukuba language as fluent as their Rukuba counterparts. There are two versions explaining this. The first version claims that most of the Tariya children sent to Rukuba to complete their primary education were from Rukuba mothers, who had introduced them to the language earlier during childhood before coming to Rukubaland.<sup>25</sup> The second version laments that, even before these children left for Rubaland, the Rukuba language had already started to dominate the Tariya language as a “household” language.<sup>26</sup> All these arguments notwithstanding, there is the fact that both the Rukuba and Tariya belong to two different population categories – the Rukuba being the most populous in the whole area while the Tariya being the least. It is probably natural that when populations of

such extreme character come into contact there is the likelihood of some elemental responses, most often characterized by the tilting and shifting socio-cultural positions of preference. Probably the quickest to respond to such mix is language. Most linguists argue that:

There is often a historical legacy of domination by the dominant languages. Such historical experiences tend to make the speakers feel inferior to those who speak the widely used languages. They often lack self-esteem and readily abandon their language, culture and even self-identity in favour of the more widely used languages.<sup>27</sup>

Although Batibo may be referring to such majority languages often considered (in some context) as national languages, his assertion also fits in with the Rukuba and Tariya societies. Although both belong to the minority languages of the Jos Plateau, when further reduced to the local government area (Bassa) where they both belong, the Rukuba are the largest and therefore the greater the number of its speakers. On the other hand, the Tariya constitutes the least in the local government area and therefore the smaller the number of its speakers.

The construction of the North-East railway line to Jos, passing through Tashan Tariya in the Tariya territory, during the second decade of the 20th century pulled local labourers from both the Tariya and Rukuba sections of the area. At the construction site, according to oral accounts the official language between the labourers and their employers (mainly Hausa) was the Hausa language, while the general language of communication among the labourers was Rukuba language.<sup>28</sup> This now brought the Tariya language under a three - pronged attack- inter-marriages, the school and the railway construction.

However, the traditions argue that unlike marriages between the Tariya and Rukuba, all other forms of contact between the Tariya and external influences did not have any serious impact on the Tariya language. The data in table 4 below is a sample picture of Tariya society by the end of the twentieth century.

**Table 2: Sample Population of Tariya by the End of 20th Century**

Ethnic Group	Ward	No. of Households	No. of Rukuba Women	No. of Tariya Women	Total No. of Children 10-15 years
Tariya	Tega	10	6	-	30
	D/ Dutse	10	4	-	20
Kishi (Rukuba)	Kipanti	10	-	6	30
	Iba	10	-	4	20
Total		40	10	10	100

Source: From Field Interview, 10th – 12th, June, 2014

The table 2 above is a sample survey of 20 households from each of the ethnic groups; with 50 children from 10 women in each of the groups. Thus, our subsequent analysis of the behaviour of data in this table is based on the total number of children (100) from 20 women in 40 households. Oral accounts from both groups explain that a few years before the departure of the colonialists, the desire of the Tariya young men for Rukuba women had reached a rather curious proportion with members of the higher social class on the lead.

As soon as the Chief (Farum) of Tariya married a Rukuba woman, a class dimension was added to the trend, and to marry a Rukuba woman became something akin to status symbol. Some of the prominent Tariya immediately took up this challenge. These included, among others, the Ward-Heads of Tega and Dogon-Dutse, the first qualified indigenous primary school teacher and Head - Master, and the first indigenous Pastor. All of them married Rukuba women.<sup>29</sup>

This trend continued, assuming the level of almost undeclared policy that “one must marry a Rukuba girl to be recognized”. This, no doubt, placed a standard on the Rukuba girls and above their Tariya counterparts, and the Rukuba language above the Tariya language.

By the end of the twentieth century, the number of Rukuba women in Tariya households had risen to forty-six, while the number of Tariya women in Rukuba households had risen to thirty.<sup>29</sup> It was becoming increasingly difficult to identify a young Tariya man or woman by language and even by name, as most of them bear Rukuba names and Bible names. The table 3, below shows the phenomenal growth (spread) of Rukuba language relative to the shrinking rate of Tariya language in Tariyaland.

Table 3: The Spread of Rukuba Language in Tariya Society

Ethnic Group	Ward	NRW	NTW	TNC	NSRL	NSTL	NSBL	NSOM
Tariya	Tega	6	-	30	20	6	4	3
	D/ Dutse	4	-	20	10	4	6	2
Kishi (Rukuba)	Kipanti	-	6	30	24	2	4	-
	Iba	-	4	20	12	3	5	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: Field Interview, 10th – 12th, June, 2014

In table 3, the number of Rukuba women (NRW) in Tariya households is 10. The number of Tariya women (NTW) in Rukuba households is 10, and the total number of children (TNC) from both Rukuba and Tariya women is 100. The number speaking Rukuba language (NSRL) is 66. The number speaking Tariya language (NSTL) is 15, while the number speaking both languages (NSBL) is 19, and the number of surviving old men (NSOM) of 70+ is 5.

From the number of surviving old men in Tariya society, a bleak picture is already in focus. The number is too small to sustain the Tariya language in the face of such formidable forces of change. This is coupled with the fact that children no longer sit by the fire-side in the evening with grandparents to listen to their “Tales by Moonlight”.

Considering these figures in percentage shows that 66% speak Rukuba language, 15% speak Tariya language, while 19% speak both languages. This suggests that even if the number speaking both languages is added to Tariya language only, they will still remain far less significant to reverse the trend. There is a greater possibility for the number speaking Tariya language to abandon the language as their scope of interaction widen at the adult stage. This is further worsened when some of them marry Rukuba women. This is obviously, a clear case of language endangerment, and therefore a possible loss of ethnic identity.

### Conclusion

This study has demonstrated three fundamental points. Firstly, the study has proved the antiquity of some of the ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau. For instance, the autochthonous groups (including the Tariya ethnic group and Kishi section of Rukuba) do not trace their ancestry from outside their present locations. Secondly, the study has shown that while sections of some ethnic groups had lived on the Jos Plateau for centuries, they were joined much later and absorbed by their larger (main) sections. This has (partly) provided the basis for claims of autochthony by these later waves of larger or main sections of such aboriginal groups. Thirdly, it would be recalled that while most of the autochthonous groups were subsequently absorbed as clans by the in-coming waves of later migrants, others survived, and became the nucleus of new settlements which have grown to positions of cultural significance. Still others survived but only much later to experience a gradual process of extinction through contact with relatively more dominant socio-cultural influences. Among such groups are the Tariya whose language and culture (and therefore ethnic identity) are fast losing out as they marry the Rukuba girls, whose language now dominates the Tariya society.

Our main concern here is that some of the few surviving autochthonous groups (including the Tariya) have provided, in addition to the pillar on which the cultural history of the northern Jos Plateau is anchored, a suitable basis for the periodization of the existence of the Jos Plateau (generally) as a cultural society. Thus, losing the Tariya language and culture (and therefore their ethnic identity) is to the Jos Plateau societies what it means to the explorer to lose his compass. The Tariya, among the few others, represent a critical starting point for the study of the formation of cultural groups in the area of this study, as well as the Jos Plateau in general.

### Endnotes

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14. Oral Interview: Musa Ayama, Kishi 62 years, farmer, 15/09/13
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16. Kudu: "The Rukuba...", p.149
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19. Oral Interview: Ayama..., 2/03/92
20. TGI: 15/6/13
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25. TGI: 10/07/13
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28. Oral Interview: IdopAtuba, Kishi, 72 years, Farmer, 11/11/13
29. Oral Interview: BitrusIdop, Kishi, 64 years, Rtd Civil Servant