

FIOT(E)

An innovation of Kongoleses societies most integrated into the Atlantic slave trade, the Geviya attestation suggests a derivation from the older Bantu root *-pi- ‘black, darkness, blackness’ (BLR 3 6406) with vowel assimilation and the tentative affix -at-, which emphasizes the active, adhesive, contactive nature of the quality of blackness or darkening. The root yielded a form nearly homophonous with other terms in circulation, some of which were borrowed into Kongoleses languages. The first, a diminutive, might derive from a central African root, *-tòd- ‘be undersized’ (BLR3 6970), lexicalized with the diminutive noun class prefix *pi-. But, in this formulation, the term would have had to undergo the expected middle syllable shortening in the interior contact zone (Vansina 1990) to yield the two forms attested on the coast: f(i/y)ot(i/e) and f(i/y)o(d/l)(i/e). The former demonstrates either voicing of the final consonant /d/ under the influence of the voiced fricative /f/ or metathesis of the original consonants in the root. The variation in the C2 position in coastal attestations supports this possible derivation, but the root needs further study in the interior with attention to tone. More likely, the diminutive term is a either a lexicalization of the diminutive noun class prefix *pi- combined with the tentative extension and vowel assimilation or with the old common root *-jót- ‘warm oneself’ with the sense that warming shrinks or withers (BLR3 3579). The second homophone derives from a root, *-pip ‘to suck’ in the central African variant form *-piont- (BLR3 2583, 6446). Attestations of central African forms on the coast evince indirect connections between savanna societies in the interior by way of the interior contact zone and the Malebo Pool.

ATTESTATIONS

KONGO LANGUAGE CLUSTER

West Kongo Languages

H12 CIVILI SOUTH

Ussel 1888: Ba fiote be suama mu bititi. Les noirs se cachent dans les herbes (42)

Marichelle 1902: fiota être noir, noircir (53); fiote les noirs. Sous ce nom les indigènes désignent les noirs de toutes races (53); fiote ki langue des noirs (53)

ILALOK 2008: Fiöt’ (ku): être de couleur noire; s’assombrir, en parlant du ciel (55); fiöti (tshi-) la langue, telle qu’on la parle et telle qu’elle devrait être comprise; fiöti (n’): l’homme noire (55); fiotisi (ku): rendre noir (55)

H16b KIYOMBE

Bittremieux 1922: Mfiote (bafiote) nw. neger, zwarte. Fr. Nègre (393)

H16 KAKONGO (later KIZOBE)

Anon. 1772 [cited from Drieghe 2014 transcription]: affricain. u m’fioté pl.: ba fioté (6)

Carrie 1888: noir, noire m’fiote, pl. ba.; etre noir fiota (100)

South Kongo Languages

H16a KISOLONGO

Visseque 1890: Fiot, nom de plusieurs tribus du Bas-Congo. – Iandi nfiote: il est fiot. Letou a-fiote: nous sommes fiots. Mou-ana fiote: petit fiot. N-kentou a fiote: femme fiote. – Nsi a-fiote: terre, pays des Fiots. – I-fou ia-fiote: coutumes des fiots. – Mpova a-fiote: langue, idiome fiot. – Kifiote, sm. : fiot. – Vova kifiote: parler fiot (43-44)

Central Kongo Contact Zone

H16 KIMANYANA

Laman 1964 [1936]: fyòta de fyò, ê., devenir noir; noircir, s’obscurcir... (183); fyò, s. ki-, noirceur; c. adj., noir (182)

OTHER BANTU

B301 GEVIYA

Van der Veen and Bodinga-bwa-Bodinga 2002: fiɔ noir (131); fyɔ noir, sombre, crasseux (133)

REGIONAL (NEAR) HOMOPHONES

***pijót-, *piat-, or *pitòd- or ‘Small, Little’**

KONGO LANGUAGE CLUSTER

North Kongo Languages

H16f CHILAADI

Jacquot 1982: fiò diminuant, fiò:tí jeune, petit, peu; fiò:tèsé diminuer (tr.); fiò:tó diminuant, diminué; fiò:toká diminuer (intr.); fiò:témá être diminué (53)

West Kongo Languages

H16b KIYOMBE

De Grauwe 2009: fyoódi var. fyoóte un peu (39)

De Clercq 1907/1908: Peu: fiafini, fiafiòle, fiòte (779)

De Clercq 1921: mua p’apa, fiote, diminutive en mue, pour une petite quantité (66)

Bittremieux 1922: fiode, fiole. Zie fiote; fionze (vvgl. Fi-) Zie fiote; Fiote (vvgl. Fi-) nw. ‘n beetje, een weinig. Fr. Un peu; fifiote: ‘n klein beetje.

South Kongo Languages

H16a KISOLONGO

Visseque 1890: fiote: adv. : peu, en petite quantité, pas beaucoup. – Vana fiote: donner peau. – Vova fiote: parler peau; ms. Peau de chose; -- fiote a vinou: un peu de vin; fiote va fiote: peu à peu, loc. Adv. lentement, insensiblement (43)

H16a KISIKONGO

Brusciotto 1659 [trans. Guinness 1882]: little, fiole (34)

Central Kongo Contact Zone

H16 KIMANYANA

Laman 1964 [1936]: fyóti, s. fi-, petitesse; c. adv. un peu... (183)

***-piont- ‘Insulting Whistle or Speech’**

KONGO LANGUAGE CLUSTER

North Kongo Languages

H16f CHILAADI

Jacquot 1982: fiò injuriant, injurié par un claquement de lèvres; mfió:ntò injure (bruit de lèvres); fiò:ntónó injure (bruit de lèvres); fiò:ntóné faire un bruit injurieux avec les lèvres (53)

West Kongo Languages

H12 CIVILI SOUTH (Loango / Pointe Noire, DRC)

ILALOK 2008: fiöti (bu): emploué dans un sens péjoratif, désigne souvent le fait de faire prévue d’étroitesse d’esprit; li fiöti: une rancune rentrée, une regret, une insatisfaction...; fiotun’ (ku) émettre un sifflement plus ou moins discret pour manifester son mécontentement, sa mauvaise humeur, son impatience, ou pour insulter celui qui vous cause de la contrariété (55)

H16b KIYOMBE

Bittremieux 1922: Ook fiole, fiode, fionze; fiotuka ww. Uitgefloten worden. Fr. être sifflé; fiotuna ww. Uitfluiten (d. i. lucht ophalende, lichtjes door de tanden fluiten ten teeken van misprijzen) (165)

Central Kongo Contact Zone

H16 Kimanyana

Laman 1964 [1936]: fyó, na ~ onomat. Pour claquement des lèvres; baiser; sucer... (182-3).

CONSIDER ALSO

Attestations underlying *-pioto ‘obscene insult’ and *-piotod ‘beat woman obscenely’ (BLR-3 6413, 6414); L31a TSHILUBA: De Clercq 1936/1960: -fio.tola vt. Imiter la manière de parler de qqn en le ridiculisant (77)

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(for all four rootwords)

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