

MIDALA'S PRAYER AT ZOKU
11 September 1996

Zoku is the annual ceremony and feast of purification and is held in September or October. The following prayer is offered after a ritual campaign to drive evil out of Sukur towards the Kapsiki.

Midala, the ritual war leader, standing with a calabash of watery beer outside the enclosing wall of the chief's house, starts by speaking to the chief on the other side of the wall. Midala has removed a stone from the wall, and the chief may have done the same on his side. (Any resemblance to Pyramus and Thisbe is coincidental.). Midala starts by speaking to the chief.

This is Markus Ezra's interpretation of the words (Tape 96-2A: 001-017) and my transliteration and construal. Sakun checked against tape 031215.

Goeyva nda is (baya)

Look-at person eye (now).

Look me straight in the eye.

Fë riy tam

Put hands then

Put your hands (in the hole in the wall).

Tam is generally an intensifier, I think.

Da jukw të, da fa të

Thing patriline his, thing father his

This ritual is something that descends in the chief's patriline, that he has from his father.

Ma nday haram të a ca dza tlama da të pë vuwax.

If person evil his then he go catch thing his on leaves.

If anyone that harbors evil thoughts towards the chief, let him catch his (evil) thing on leaves

This refers to the practice when sacrificing a bull of letting the first blood run onto leaves or straws. These absorb any evil and are discarded. The implication is that any evil will return to harm the evildoer. I think *ma ... a* has the sense 'if (or when) ... then,' but *a* was described as a *future* marker by Markus. But can *a* at the start of a sentence indicate the past, as it definitely does, and *a* in the middle the future?

At about this stage Midala throws the contents of the calabash into the hole in the wall to wet and wash the hands of the chief.

Ma day pë ghur ya xidi akka ngëba ma ngwa.*

If things on farm come? chief, should+be+like replant up+on mountain.

Let all that grows on Sukur farms be replanted with double abundance.

ya xidi apparently refers in the manner of a synecdoche to the whole of Sukur. *Akka* is singular and I think composed of *a* like and *ka* hers (and its?). *Atta*, the plural version, appears in the last line. The preposition ‘ma’ is used because the observer is below the mountain.

If any crops were broken by storms, let them recover.

Ma hay a mbaharavë (mbaharava) mi'd akka fu ma ngwa.

If something ptm break (break) storm should+be+like put-back up+on mountain.

Markus' reading included the second (*mbaharava*)

May the children of Sukur be as healthy and as prudent as butterflies.

Vërishin sakun ha mëdlëpërpër atta

Children Sukur as butterflies should-be-like

Butterflies are always healthy and fly away at the least sign of trouble.