The two Kabiye orthographies: a sociolinguistic and linguistic comparison

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Abstract

Two orthographies have been developed for Kabiye, a Gur language spoken mainly in Togo. The first aim of this paper is to provide an accurate historical summary concerning their development, teasing out some of the sociolinguistic issues which led to their separate evolution. Following this, I present the results of a comparative analysis, based on a text sample. I demonstrate five major types of difference: level of representation (shallow or deep), degree of consistency, dialect choice, diacritical tone marking and word boundaries. For each of these I explain by what criteria each party arrived at its decisions. Locally, I hope that this analysis will contribute to well-informed choices should the Kabiye orthography ever be rectified in the future. But beyond this, the Kabiye experience will be of interest to anyone developing orthographies in other languages. With access to a varied stock of case studies such as this one, we will be in a better position to refine the existing principles of orthography development which can then be applied cross-linguistically.

1 Introduction

Field linguists and development workers frequently lament the evolution of two parallel orthographies for the same minority language. It is seen, quite rightly, as a waste of precious resources and a source of potential social division within the community.

Kabiye, a Gur language spoken mainly in Togo, has two parallel orthographies, one used by Protestants, the other by Catholics. However, it would be simplistic to suggest that this usage has evolved simply as a result of denominational divisions within the Christian community. One of the aims of this article is to provide an accurate historical summary, teasing out some of the sociolinguistic issues behind the facts. Following this, I examine a sample of text data closely, cataloguing it in a way which demonstrates the major differences between the two orthographies. By this means, I arrive at my second aim: to establish by what criteria each party arrived at its decisions.

I am writing this article with two kinds of reader in mind. Firstly, at the local level, I hope that this analysis will contribute to well-informed choices should the Kabiye orthography ever be rectified in the future. Secondly, I hope that this account of the Kabiye experience may interest those developing orthographies in other languages across the continent. With access to a varied stock of case studies such as this one, we will be in a better position to refine the existing principles of orthography development which can then be applied cross-linguistically.

2 The sociolinguistic context

In 1975, the government of Togo launched an education reform, and Kabiye, along with Ewe, was formally accorded the statute of a "national" language (Lange, 1991). One of the immediate and most concrete outcomes of the reform was the creation of the Comité de Langue Nationale Kabiyè (henceforth CLNK). Working under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, it was given the mandate to develop a written form of the language (henceforth "the Standard Orthography"). In this paper, my reference point for this Standard Orthography is the Kabiyè-French dictionary jointly published by the CLNK and SIL (Marmor, 1999).

The government placed a Protestant pastor and a Catholic priest at the head of the committee as president and vice-president respectively, in recognition of the fact that, from the very beginning of Kabiye language development as far back as the 1930s, by far the most powerful social forces for the advancement of mother-tongue literacy in the community were the churches. Beyond that, from its inception, the CLNK had an entirely secular status.

Orthography standardisation was the CLNK's main preoccupation in the first decade of its life (1976-1985). But in those early days, there were no trained linguists amongst their ranks. (At this stage, Dr Aritiba Adji and Dr Lébikaza Kéziyé were still enrolled in doctoral programmes abroad. They joined the CLNK on their return from Paris in 1989 and Berlin in 1991 respectively). To remedy this lack, the then vice-president, Rev. Adjola Raphaël, participated in a six month university-level introduction to African linguistics in Paris, the aim of which was to provide the tools Africans needed to develop the written forms of their own mother-tongues. Adjola was not the only one to benefit from this kind opportunity; other committee members had studied in Nice under the Africanist Gabriel Manessy.

However, sometime after his return, Adjola withdrew from the CLNK. From then on he began tirelessly promoting the cause of Kabiye literacy within the Catholic church, producing an orthography manual,[2] the New Testament, the Missal, a collection of Bible stories for young people and the whole Bible (Adjola, 1982, 1987a, 1987b, 1997; Adjola et Tiguila, 1993). Even now, this octogenarian remains vigorously active, recently publishing a Grammar (Adjola, 2005), with a Weekly Missal and a Primer currently in press (Adjola, to appear-a, to appear-b). His rallying cry to the CLNK had always been "Don't just decree: produce!" (Simtaro Dadja, personal communication), and he has certainly measured up to his own advice. However undesirable single-handed language development may be, such a prodigious output can only be lauded as the life's work of a visionary. And it is worth noting that Adjola's interest in Kabiye literacy does indeed span a lifetime. At the age of six, even before beginning French

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[2] Earlier versions of this publication had already appeared in 1972 and 1978.

school, he had learned to read and write Kabiye from Rev. Antoine Brungard, the SMA missionary priest who produced the first Kabiye primer (Brungard, 1932).

Neither did Adjola's withdrawal leave the CLNK entirely devoid of Catholic representation. There had always been, and there remain to this day, committee members who are lay Catholics. But Adjola was never replaced as an ecclesiastic authority, and this fact is not insignificant, particularly when it concerns the Catholic church with its hierarchical structure. Perhaps inevitably, over time, the Catholics were perceived as distancing themselves from the work of the CLNK. Active efforts to recruit a replacement Catholic priest never bore fruit, and in the end the CLNK had little choice but to look to Protestants if it wanted to ensure official church representation at all. They found this most strongly in the Eglise Evangélique Présbytérienne du Togo (EEPT), the dominant Protestant denomination. They, along with all the other mainstream Protestant denominations, chose to align themselves with the Standard Orthography, encouraged in this direction by two major promoters of church-based use of the mother-tongue, Alliance Biblique du Togo (ABT) and SIL.

In the meantime, Adjola was developing his own orthography (henceforth "The Adjola Orthography") and promoting its use amongst Catholics through his numerous publications. Since his translations were the only ones authorised for use in the Catholic parishes, the orthography he used became known informally as the "Catholic orthography". It gained widespread usage partly because of the high emphasis on written liturgy in the Catholic tradition, and a certain degree of loyalty to it grew amongst users. This kind of allegiance is probably inevitable. It certainly echoes the Lugandan experience where, whichever option writers chose –

> "...they committed themselves unmistakably to an affiliation with either the Catholics or the Protestants... the two alphabets distinguished, if not religious affiliation, at very least, religious training." (Dewees, 1977: 125)

However, one important fact should not be overlooked. Although Adjola's publications have been officially recognised by the Catholic authorities, his orthography never has. Catholic leaders were concerned with content but were, for the most part, neither qualified nor motivated to immerse themselves the niceties of the orthography debate.

It would not be outside the realms of possibility, for instance, for future editions of the Missal to be published in Standard Orthography.

All this is to demonstrate that in the Kabiye context, it is not entirely accurate to refer to a "Protestant orthography" and a "Catholic orthography". Rather, on the one hand there is a *Standard Orthography*, which was achieved through consensus of diverse group of secular and religious authorities. This is the orthography which crucially (given the heady atmosphere of language politics nurtured by the Kabiye head of state, Eyadèma Gnassingbé) carries the political sanction of the Togolese government. On the other hand there is a *non-Standard Orthography*, developed by one highly motivated individual who chose to operate unilaterally, and whose institutional framework happens to be the Catholic church. This is the intriguing socio-linguistic background which sets the stage for the detailed comparison of the two orthographies which follows.

3   Two orthographies: A linguistic comparison

3.1   Methodology

The data I present is extracted from a detailed study of 270 pages of the Kabiye missal (Adjola, 1987b; 341-611). I chose this publication because it is by far the most widely used of Adjola's publications. First, two mother-tongue research assistants,[3] both familiar with both standard and Adjola orthographies, combed through the text listing all the divergent spellings. Then they wrote the equivalent in Standard Orthography in a parallel column. Finally we discussed the results together and catalogued them by type. This article does not seek to be exhaustive, but presents the differences which I consider to be the most interesting.

There are occasions where I need to cite examples which are not attested in the corpus. In these cases, I deduced what the Adjola Orthography would be by analogy with the rest of the corpus and by personal knowledge of the two systems, and then checked each item with Adjola himself. As well as ensuring accuracy, these discussions enabled me to gain a better understanding of his position. He himself admits that his views have

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changed considerably since the publication of the Missal, sometimes veering towards the Standard Orthography, sometimes away from it. Whenever this is the case, I eliminated the item from the corpus.

First, I plot the phoneme inventory against the grapheme inventories for the two systems. Then I objectively examine the various points of divergence between the Standard Orthography and the Adjola Orthography, seeking to discern upon what criteria each party based its choices. I also enumerate, impartially I hope, what I consider to be the linguistic advantages and disadvantages of each choice.

Orthographic data is reproduced between vertical bars in the text and is left unbracketed in the data tables. Asterisks indicate unattested forms. Phonetic data is reproduced in square brackets. H tone is marked with an acute accent [á] and L tone with absence of an accent [a]. Non-automatic downstep is marked with a superscript downward pointing arrow [$^\downarrow$] Phonemic data is represented between slashes.

3.2 Phoneme ~ grapheme correspondence

In this article, I use the term "phoneme", as it is often employed in orthography studies, to mean merely the smallest distinctive sound unit in a speech utterance (Catach, 1988; Coulmas, 2003; Ducard et al., 1995; Jaffré, 2001). This definition recognises the possibility of allophones, but does not seek to establish the kind of abstract underlying forms common to generative phonology which, in a language with a complex morphophonology, can often be exceedingly distant from the surface form.

3.2.1 Consonants

Table 1: Inventory of consonant phonemes

		labial	labio-dental	dental	retroflex	alveolo-palatal	palatal	velar	labio-velar	glottal
+ Obstruent	voiceless	/p/	/f/	/t/	/ɛ/	/s/	/c/	/k/	/kp/	
	voiced			/d/		/z/				
- Obstruent				/l/			/j/[4]		/w/	/h/
Nasal		/m/		/n/			/ɲ/	/N/		

Table 2: Inventory of consonant graphemes in the Standard and Adjola Orthographies

		labial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	retroflex	alveolo-palatal	palatal	velar	labio-velar	glottal
+ Obstruent	voiceless	p	f	t			s	c	k	kp	
	voiced	b	(v)	d	r[5]	ɖ[6]	z	j	g	gb[7]	
-Obstruent				l				y		w	h
Nasal		m		n				ñ	ŋ		

In table 2, the letter |v| is placed in brackets because it is absent in the Adjola orthography. This is the only point at which the basic consonant inventory differs between the two orthographies.

A comparison between table 1 and 2 shows a surprising amount of obstruent over-representation. The degree of over-representation differs between the two orthographies, and this is an interesting point to which we will return further on.

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[4] That is, the voiced palatal approximant, which is often transcribed as [y] in the Africanist literature.
[5] In both orthographies, the letter |r| is reserved for borrowed words and foreign proper nouns.
[6] In both orthographies, the upper-case form of this letter is |Đ|. All other upper-case letters are either the same as in French or, in the case of special characters, a larger form of the lower-case letter.
[7] The graphem |gb| was a latecomer to the Standard Orthography, only being introduced in 1983 (CLNK 1983-1996: 11-22 July 1983).

3.2.2 Short vowels

Table 3: Inventory of short vowel phonemes

	Front		Back	
	[+ATR]	[-ATR]	[+ATR]	[-ATR]
Closed	/i/	/ɪ/	/u/	/ʊ/
Half-open	/e/	/ɛ/	/o/	/ɔ/
Open	/a/ [8]			

Table 4: Inventory of short vowel graphemes in the Standard and Adjola orthographies

	Front		Back	
	[+ATR]	[-ATR]	[+ATR]	[-ATR]
Closed	i	ɪ	u	ʊ
Half-open	e	ɛ	o	ɔ
Open	a			

These two tables demonstrate a one to one grapheme to phoneme correspondence in both orthographies. Kabiye is a language with contrastive vowel length, and in both orthographies, long vowels are simply written by doubling the letter.

3.2.3 Long back unrounded vowels

Tableau 5: Inventory of long back unrounded vowel phonemes [9]

	Back	
	[+ATR]	[-ATR]
Closed	/ɯː/	/ɯ̙ː/
Half-open	/ɤː/	/ʌː/
Open	/ɑː/	

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[8] The ATR quality of the vowel /a/ is unspecified.
[9] These vowels have a number of dialect variants. My research is based on the dialect of the canton of Lama.

Table 6: Inventory of long back unrounded digraphs in the Standard and Adjola Orthographies[10]

	Back	
	[+ATR]	[-ATR]
Closed	iɣ	ɪɣ
Half-open	eɣ	ɛɣ
Open	aɣ	

This set of digraphs is also common to both orthographies, each maintaining a one to one correspondence when mapped against the phoneme chart. However, I now turn to my analysis, and I begin with a case in which Adjola uses the letter |ɣ| for other purposes.

3.3 Level of representation: Deep or shallow ?

3.3.1 The letter gamma |ɣ|

The Adjola Orthography employs the gamma more freely than the Standard Orthography, combining it with three of the four back rounded vowels to form the digraphs |ɔɣ, ʊɣ, uɣ|. Adjola never employs the fourth possible combination |oɣ|, but in my discussions with him, he pointed out that this is simply because no words in the language require it. My own research confirms this.

The CLNK debated introducing this series of graphemes, but decided against it, opting to maintain a one to one grapheme ~ phoneme correspondence. Adjola is partly driven in this direction by a desire to do justice to the morphology. This concerns two environments, one in the noun system, the other in the verb system.

Firstly, in the noun system, Adjola chooses a morphonographic representation of the kA noun class suffix |ɣ|, irrespective of whether the root contains a front or a back vowel:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
1	[nɔɔ]	nɔɔ	nɔɣ	*mouth n.kA*
2	[pɔɔ]	pɔɔ	pɔɣ	*river n.kA*
3	[hAA]	haɣ	haɣ	*dog n.kA*

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[10] The letter gama |ɣ| was admitted into the Standard Orthography in 1983.

This convention makes the kA noun class immediately distinguishable from the similar nouns in the kI class, which Adjola always writes using the long vowel digraphs |ɔɔ, ʋʋ, uu| as does the Standard Orthography:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	*Adjola	
4	[cʋʋ]	cʋʋ	cʋʋ	*cʋɣ	*clay n.kI*
5	[pʋʋ]	pʋʋ	pʋʋ	*pʋɣ	*mountain n.kI*
6	[suu]	suu	suu	*suɣ	*tail n.kI*
7	[ñʋʋ]	ñʋʋ	ñʋʋ	*ñʋɣ	*head n.kI*

Adjola's orthography of some other nouns in this class is less easy to justify. He adds a letter |a| in final position:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
8	[pɪn??]	pɪnaɣ	pɪnaɣa	*year n.kA*
9	[ñan??]	ñanaɣ	ñanaɣa	*basin n.kA*
10	[tɪn??]	tɪnaɣ	tɪnaɣa	*hip n.kA*
11	[ḍan??]	ḍanaɣ	ḍanaɣa	*evening n.kA*

Adjola justifies his choice here on the basis of auditory perception, claiming a difference of vowel length between, for example, |pɪnaɣ| *it sees* and |pɪnaɣa| *year*, and also a difference in vowel quality between each of the three pairs of digraphs |ɔɔ ~ ɔɣ, ʋʋ ~ ʋɣ, uu ~ uɣ|. Nothing in my own research confirms this.

Secondly, in the verb system, Adjola maintains a velar presence at the morpheme boundary, |k| or |ɣ|, whenever it is present in the underlying form of the root. The Standard Orthography, as usual, represents the surface form:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
	tɔk-			
12	[tɔ́ɔ]	tɔɔ	tɔɣ	*eat AOR*
13	[tɔ́kɪ]	tɔkɪ	tɔkɪ	*eat IPR*
14	[tɔwá]	tɔwa	tɔɣa	*eat ACC*
15	[tɔɔ́ʋ]	tɔɔʋ	tɔɣʋ	*eat INF*
16	[tɔɔnáɑ]	tɔɔnaɣ	tɔɣnaɣ	*food n.kA*
	sʋk-			
17	[sʋ́ʋ]	sʋʋ	sʋɣ	*load AOR*
18	[sʋ́kɪ]	sʋkɪ	sʋkɪ	*load IPR*
19	[sʋ́wa]	sʋwa	sʋɣa	*load ACC*
20	[sʋʋ́ʋ]	sʋʋʋ	sʋɣʋ	*load INF*
21	[sʋʋ́tʋ]	sʋʋtʋ	sʋɣtʋ	*load n.tI*
	tuk-			
22	[túu]	tuu	tuɣ	*speak in proverbs AOR*
23	[túki]	tuki	tuki	*speak in proverbs IPR*
24	[tuwá]	tuwa	tuɣa	*speak in proverbs ACC*
25	[tuúu]	tuuu	tuɣu	*speak in proverbs INF*
26	[etuúye]	etuuye	etuɣye	*proverb n.ɖI*

By way of contrast, Adjola does not employ the gamma digraphs in verbs when the sequence in question is not at the morpheme boundary:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	*Adjola	
27	[yɔɔdɪ]	yɔɔdɪ	yɔɔdɪ	*yɔɣdɪ	*speak AOR*
28	[sɔɔlɪ]	sɔɔlɪ	sɔɔlɪ	*sɔɣlɪ	*love AOR*

To summarise, then, Adjola represents each of three long back rounded vowel phonemes with two different sets of digraphs. His choice is always determined by the morphological context:

Standard:	ɔɔ		ʋʋ		uu	
Phoneme:	/ɔː/		/ʋː/		/uː/	
Adjola:	ɔɔ	ɔɣ	ʋʋ	ʋɣ	uu	uɣ
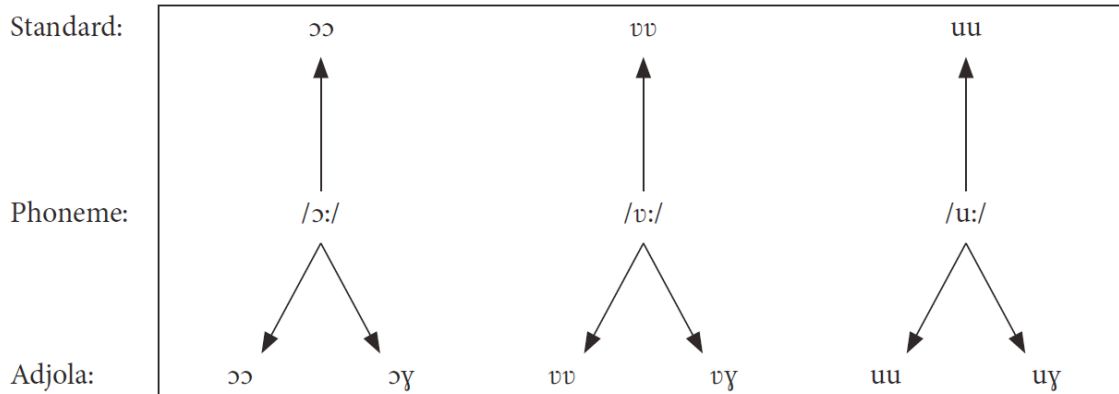
3.3.2 Voiced and voicless obstruents

Kabìỳ voiced and voiceless obstruents are one of the richest and most challenging parts of the phonology, so it is not entirely surprising that the two orthographies often diverge at this point. Their written form has been the subject of long debate in the CLNK. Adjola writes consistently less voiced obstruents than the Standard Orthography, but there is a reticence on both sides to abandon them entirely. To understand why, let us first of all look at their phonemic status and the corresponding choice of graphic representation. For this purpose, I divide the obstruents into three groups.

1. Beginning with the two pairs of alveolar obstruents /t ~ d/ and /s ~ z/, it is clear that there is contrast between the voiceless and voiced pairs, albeit with an extremely light functional load. Both orthographies recognise the contrast: [11]

|	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
29	[mɛɛtʋʋ]	mɛɛtʋʋ	mɛɛtʋʋ	*to be multicoloured*
30	[mɛɛdʋʋ]	mɛɛdʋʋ	mɛɛdʋʋ	*to knead*
31	[pɪsʋʋ]	pɪsʋʋ	pɪsʋʋ	*to return*
32	[pɪzʋʋ]	pɪzʋʋ	pɪzʋʋ	*to be able*

In addition, when the voiceless phonemes /t/ and /s/ appear in word medial position, they are realised as voiced allophones, so the nature of the underlying phoneme is not

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[11] These examples are from Lébikaza 1999: 96, 108.

always clear. In these cases, Adjola is more likely to choose the voiceless grapheme than is the Standard Orthography:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
33	[lídaʊ]	lidaʊ	litau	*hope n.kI*
34	[tendené]	tendene	tentene	*terrace n.ɖI*
35	[pínzɪ]	pɪnzɪ	pɪnsɪ	*years n.sI*
36	[sɔ́nzɪ]	sɔnzɪ	sɔnsɪ	*ceremonies n.sI*

I summarise this as follows (representing with dotted lines Adjola's reluctance to represent the phonemes /t/ and /s/ with voiced graphemes |d| and |z| word medially):
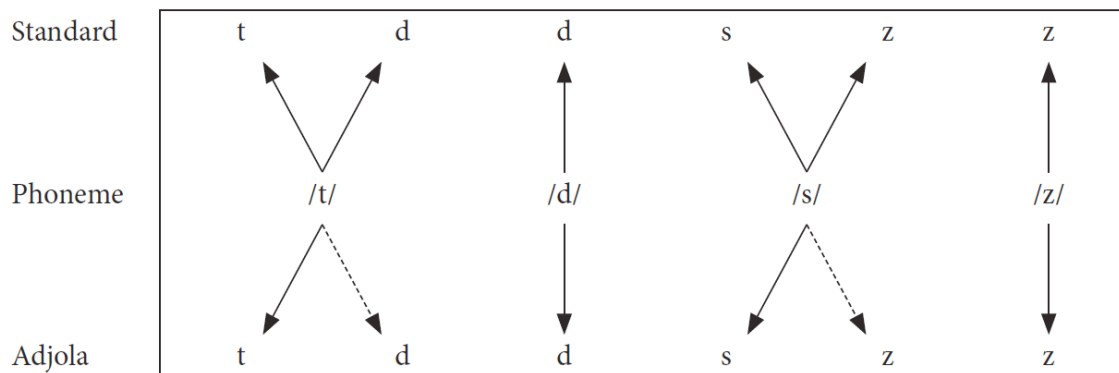
2. The five obstruents /p, f, c, k, kp/ have no phonemic voiced counterparts. When they appear in word medial position, they are often realised as voiced allophones. I qualify my statement with the word 'often', because it depends on a complex interaction between voicing, vowel length, tone and position with relation to the morpheme boundary. It is beyond the scope of this article to explain this phenomenon in detail and it has already received some treatment elsewhere (Lébikaza, 1989, 1999: 135-140). For our purposes, it is enough to note that Adjola consistently writes many less voiced obstruents than the Standard Orthography:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
37	[kɪbam]	kɪbam	kɪpam	*good ADJ pI*
38	[nɛmbɛla]	nɛmbɛla	nɛmpɛla	*knees n.a*
39	[ŋga]	ŋga	ŋka	*REL kA*
40	[ŋgbɛyɛ]	ŋgbɛyɛ	ŋkpɛyɛ	*community n.ɖI*

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Yet the only one of the series which Adjola entirely abandons is the letter |v| (corresponding to the phoneme /f/ word medially), which has a near zero frequency count even in the Standard Orthography:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
41	[evebu]	evebu	efepu	*boy n.E*
42	[evelu]	evalu	efalu	*male initiate n.E*

Otherwise, he occasionally employs voiced obstruent graphemes in word medial position, particularly [b] and [gb] :

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	*Adjola	
43	[yabʊ]	yabʊ	yabʊ	*yapʊ	*to buy*
44	[labʊ]	labʊ	labʊ	*lapʊ	*to do*
45	[ɛgbamɪyɛ]	ɛgbamɪyɛ	ɛgbamɪyɛ	*ɛkpamɪyɛ	*unique n.ɖI*
46	[kpaagbaa]	kpaagbaa	kpaagbaa	*kpaakpaa	*straight away ADV*

And he employs [j] as liberally as does the Standard Orthography :

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	*Adjola	
47	[ɛjaɖɛ]	ɛjaɖɛ	ɛjaɖɛ	*ɛcaɖɛ	*country n.ɖI*
48	[cɛjɛwiye]	cɛjɛwiye	cɛjɛwiye	*cɛcɛwiye	*ancestral home*

Again, I summarise these obstruent phonemes as follows, using dotted lines to show a grapheme ~ phoneme relationship which exists, but is seldom employed:

Standard	p	b	f	v	c	j	k	g	kp	gb
Phoneme		/p/		/f/		/c/		/k/		/kp/
Adjola	p	b	f		c	j	k	g	kp	gb
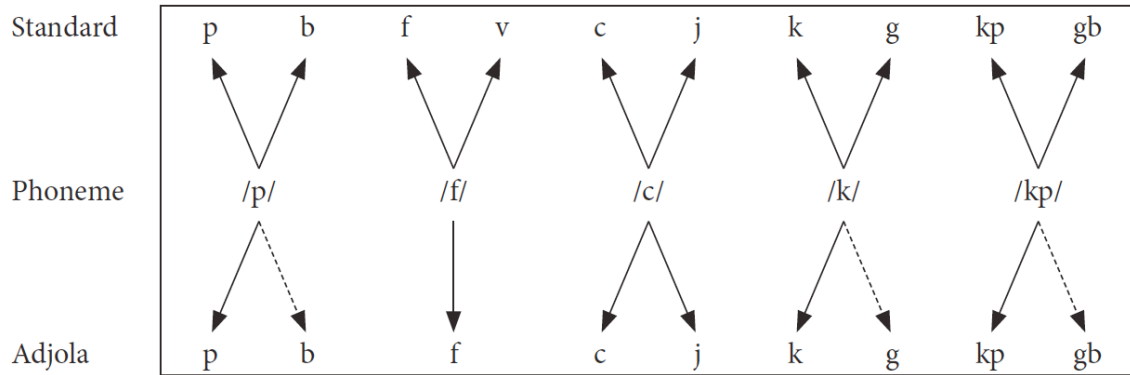
3. That leaves one more obstruent phoneme to examine, the retroflex /ʈ/. Phonologically, nothing prevents it from being classed with all the other non-alveolar obstruent phonemes, because there is no contrast between voiced and voiceless retroflex obstruents. The voicing in medial position is an allophonic variant:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
49	[ʈenɖe]	ɖenɖe	ɖɪnɖɪ	*where*
50	[ʈalʊ]	ɖalʊ	ɖalʊ	*elder brother n.E*
51	[manɖikʉʉ]	manɖikiɣ	menɖikiɣ	*I taste IPR*

But orthographically, the retroflex obstruent is the odd man out, because it is the only one which both the standard and Adjola orthographies represent with one single grapheme:

Standard	ɖ
Phonème	/ʈ/
Adjola	ɖ
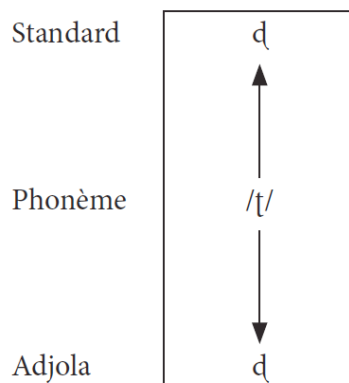
To summarise then, the Standard Orthography tends towards a surface representation of obstruents, whereas Adjola tends towards a deep representation. But neither entirely

abandons the voiced obstruent graphemes, even in the cases when there is no phonemic contrast. There are at least three reasons why this is the case.

Influence of French. The decision makers on both sides have had many years of exposure to French phonology through their formal education. This means that they are sensitised to surface differences which are not phonemically pertinent in Kabiye, and they make orthographic concessions accordingly. The level of over-representation is much greater in the Standard Orthography, but even Adjola admits that for purely practical purposes it would be expecting too much to abandon the entire series of five voiced graphemes. Their presence places a heavy burden on unschooled new readers, because they have to learn five symbols which are not necessary from a strictly phonemic point of view. But on the other hand, it may be no bad thing, given that the influence of French on Kabiye society is only going to increase as the years go by. The best proof of this French influence is its absence in the single case of an obstruent phoneme which does not occur in French. Neither the CLNK nor Adjola ever considered representing the phoneme /ʈ/ with two graphemes.

Dialect variants. The speakers of the Kidjang dialect tend to devoice obstruents word medially. This is not taken into account in either the Standard Orthography or the Adjola Orthography, because they are not based on this dialect. We will return to the dialect question later in the article, but it is worth pointing out here that the voiced obstruent overrepresentation places a heavy burden on learners who speak the Kidjang variant.

Word-medial conditioning. Whether consciously or subconsciously, the complex interplay between voicing, vowel length, tone and position with relation to the morpheme boundary undoubtedly influence orthography choices. The Standard Orthography veers towards the surface, and Adjola to a deeper representation. It should also be noted that, as long as both orthographies choose not to represent tone phonemically with diacritics, there is good reason for keeping these five "uneccesary" obstruent graphemes, because they may unwittingly help the reader to navigate the tonal level.

3.4   Level of integrity: Consistent or inconsistent?

An optimal orthography should be as integrated as possible, aiming for coherence across the entire system. Choices made in one area of the orthography should concur with choices made elsewhere. I will explore two examples. In the first, the Standard Orthography shows a greater degree of coherence, in the second the Adjola Orthography does.

3.4.1 Skeletal structure

Adjola favours the juxtaposition of front vowels where the Standard Orthography inserts the letter y between them:

	Standard	Adjola	
	Standard	Adjola	
52	pʊwayɩlɛ	pʊwaɩlɛ	*later on*
53	weyi	wei	*REL-E*
54	fɛyɩ	fɛɩ	*there is not*
55	man-ciyam	man-ciam	*my soul*
56	payɩ	paɩ	*really*

A comparison with the verb system demonstrates the logic behind the Standard Orthography. The most common verb root structure in Kabiye is CVC-. The second C slot supports a wide range of consonants, including /y/. Obviously, it would be inconsistent not to represent it graphically along with all the others, and both orthographies do so:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
57	[pɛdɩ]	pɛdɩ	pɛdɩ	*sell - AOR*
58	[mɛlɩ]	mɛlɩ	mɛlɩ	*hide - AOR*
59	[heyi]	heyi	heyi	*say - AOR*

Moreover, the consonant [y] is clearly audible when it appears between high unrounded vowels, and both orthographies recognise this:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
60	[piyi]	piyi	piyi	*be dirty – AOR*
61	[cɪyɪ]	cɪyɪ	cɪyɪ	*rip – AOR*

Now if the letter y is necessary and unavoidable in the verb system, it is reasonable to include it, as the Standard Orthography does, when writing other words which have the same CV structure, as in examples 52 to 56.

3.4.2 Epenthetic nasal

In the 1st person subject and possessive pronouns, a phonetic epenthetic nasal is inserted at the morpheme boundary if the root begins with an obstruent. The pronunciation of this nasal is always place-homorganic to that of following consonant. In both orthographies it is graphically invariable, but the Standard Orthography uses the grapheme |n|, whilst Adjola opts for |ŋ|:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
62	[mɔndɔɔ]	mɔntɔɔ	mɔŋtɔɣ	*I eat-AOR*
63	[maɲjaa]	man-caa	maŋ-caa	*my father*
64	[meɲjiyam]	men-ciyam	miŋ-ciam	*my soul*
65	[mambɪyalʊ]	man-pɪyalʊ	maŋ-pɪyalʊ	*my son*

Adjola's choice is clearly defensible by analogy with the 2nd person subject pronoun. This pronoun is a syllabic nasal /N/, which is also realised place-homorganic to the following consonant. Both orthographies write this pronoun as |ŋ|:

	Pronunciation	Standard	Adjola	
66	[mbɛdɪɣ]	ŋpɛdɪɣ	ŋpɛdɪɣ	*you buy*
67	[ndɔkɪ]	ŋtɔkɪ	ŋtɔkɪ	*you eat*
68	[ɲjakɪ]	ŋcakɪ	ŋcakɪ	*you sit*
69	[ŋgɔŋ]	ŋkɔŋ	ŋkɔŋ	*you come*

So the Adjola Orthography is consistent in its treatment of homorganicity of the two pronouns, whilst the Standard Orthography is not. However, since this epenthesis is an entirely surface phenomenon, and since it does not occur at all in the Kidjang dialect, a strong case could be made for its suppression in both orthographies.

3.5 Reference dialect: Yadè or Piya ?

Adjola is often influenced by his own dialect of Yadè, whereas the CLNK, strongly politicised, adopted the speech variety of the President's canton as the reference dialect. A comparative study yields numerous differences in both consonants and vowels.

3.5.1 Consonants

The differences between the consonants of the Adjola Orthography and those of the Standard Orthography can be grouped into three types: insertion, omission and alternance. In each case, the orthography reflects the choice of reference dialect.

Insertion: Sometimes Adjola includes letters which the Standard Orthography omits:

	Standard	Adjola	
70	ḍoo taa	ḍohotaa	*by night*

In example 70, Adjola considers the presence of the letter |h| to be justified for two reasons. Firstly, because certain dialects pronounce this word [ahoo] night; secondly, because it disambiguates it from the homograph [ḍoo] mother.

Omission: On other occasions, Adjola omits letters which the Standard Orthography includes:

	Standard	Adjola	
71	kɪyakʋ	kaakʋ	*day n.kI*
72	naŋgbaŋʋʋ	naŋgbaaʋ	*ear n.kI*
73	nesi	nee	*hands n.sI*

Alternance: the Adjola Orthography sometimes writes |y| where the Standard Orthography writes |ɖ|:

	Standard	Adjola	
74	ɖeke	yeke	*only*
75	ρeeɖe	ρeeye	*there*

3.5.2 Vowels

The differences between the vowels of the Adjola Orthography and those of the Standard Orthography can be grouped into three types: length, quality and harmony. Again, both orthographies are influenced by choice of reference dialect.

Vowel length: Adjola very frequently writes short vowels where the Standard Orthography writes them as long (as they are in the Lama dialect which I have studied):

	Standard	Adjola	
76	kʊwɛɛkɪm	kʊwɛkɪm	*sin n.pI*
77	lɛlɛɛyɔ	lɛlɛyɔ	*now*
78	liidiye	lidiye	*money n.ɖI*
79	alɪwaatʊ	alɪwatʊ	*moment n.tI*
80	sɔɔjanaa	sɔjanaa	*soldiers n.pA*

Vowel quality: The Adjola Orthography frequently writes words with higher vowels than the Standard Orthography:

	Standard	Adjola	
81	ɖenɖe	ɖɪnɖɪ	*where*
82	se	sɪ	*that*
83	ñe-kewiyaɣ	ñi-kiwiyaɣ	*your kingdom*
84	men-ciyam	miŋ-ciam	*my soul*

In the cases of long unrounded vowels, Adjola sometimes writes them as front, where the Standard Orthography writes them as back:

	Standard	Adjola	
85	aseɣɖe	aseeɖe	*witness n.ɖI*
86	heɣlim	heelim	*wind n.pI*

Vowel harmony: Adjola often registers a greater degree of labial vowel harmony than does the Standard Orthography:

	Standard	Adjola	
87	ɛnʊ	ʊnʊ	*DEM cl. E*
88	mintʊsʊŋ	mʊntʊsʊŋ	*flames n.kI*
89	mɩ-cɔlə	mʊ-cɔlə	*beside you (pl)*
90	ɖɩdəkʊʊ	ɖʊdəkʊʊ	*we taste*

3.6 Representation of tone: Targetted or zero marking ?

In Kabiye, tone plays an important grammatical role. The imperative mood is signaled by a high tone on the subject pronoun. Not surprisingly, these are extremely frequent in a corpus which contains many prayers. Adjola targets this grammatical construction (and only this one) with an acute accent, deftly avoiding a host of homographic tonal minimal pairs. Of all the differences between the two orthographies, this simple addition of the acute accent is by far the most common, so I have only listed a small sample of those attested. In contrast, the Standard Orthography has zero tone marking, though the CLNK are keenly aware of the problem and are currently debating how to resolve it.

	Standard	Adjola	
91	ŋkpeɣ-ɖʊ	ŋ́kpeɣ-ɖʊ	*Pardon us!*
92	taayele nɛ pɩcɛzɩ-ɖʊ	taayele nɛ pɩ́cɛzɩ-ɖʊ	*Do not let us be tempted!*
93	ɖɩlʊ	ɖɩ́lʊ	*Let us come out!*
94	ɛsɩna-ɖʊ	ɛ́sɩna-ɖʊ	*May he help us!*
95	ɛtaalɩzɩ	ɛ́taalɩzɩ	*May he not bring out!*

3.7 Word boundaries: Joined or split?

The Standard Orthography tends to split, whereas Adjola has a strong preference for joining. His choices can be divided into four groups:

3.7.1 Associative noun phrases

In associative noun phrase, Adjola often joins the head noun to the dependent noun:

	Standard	Adjola	
96	ñʊʊ yabʊtʊ	ñʊʊyabʊtʊ	*salvation (lit. head's buying)*
97	ñʊʊ yaɖʊ	ñʊʊyaɖʊ	*Saviour (lit. head's buyer)*
98	ɛsɔ tɔɔnaɣ	ɛsɔtɔɣnaɣ	*consecrated host (lit. God's food)*
99	kıwɛɛkım laɖaa	kıwɛkımlaɖaa	*sinners (lit. sin's doers)*
100	tɔm piye	tɔmpiye	*word (lit. speech's seed)*

3.7.2 Postpositional morphemes

Likewise, he often joins postpositional morphemes to the nouns to which they refer:

	Standard	Adjola	
101	ɖoo taa	ɖohotaa	*by night*
102	taŋaŋ tɛɛ	taŋaŋtɛɛ	*in the morning*
103	Krıstʊ tʊ	Krıstʊtʊ	*Christian (lit. Christ-belonger)*
104	ɖoŋ tʊ	ɖoŋtu	*almighty (lit. strength belonger)*
105	koboyaɣ tınaa	koboyaɣtınaa	*blessd ones (lit. Kingdom belongers)*

The fact that it is possible for other elements to intervene between the noun and the agentive morpheme is one strong reason for separating them. But Adjola responds to this by simply compounding the three elements:

	Standard	Adjola	
106	caanaʊ taa tʊ	caanaʊtaatʊ	*ancestor (lit. father-see in belonging)*

3.7.3 Pronouns and complements

Both orthographies use the hyphen to join the simple object pronoun to the verb:

	Standard	Adjola	
107	ɛla-ɖı	ɛla-ɖı	*he did it (work)*
108	ısɔɔlı-wɛ	ısɔɔlı-wɛ	*love them !*
109	elisi-kɛ	elisi-kɛ	*he lost him (child)*

110	iyebina-m	iyebina-m	*he let me*

But Adjola applies this convention liberally to numerous other kinds of complement too:

	Standard	Adjola	
	Standard	*Adjola*	
111	ɛla mbʋ	ela-mpʋ	*he did like that*
112	ɪsɔɔlɪ ɖama	ɪsɔɔlɪ-ɖama	*love one another*
113	elisi pɪtɪŋa	elisi-pɪtɪŋa	*he lost everything*
114	iyebina weyi	iyebina-weyi	*he let the one whoɣ*

Using the same logic, Adjola not only joins the simple subject pronoun, but also the demonstrative pronoun, to the verb in word initial position:

	Standard	Adjola	
	Standard	*Adjola*	
115	ɛnʋ labɪ	ʋnʋlabɪ	*this one did*
116	ɛnʋ cɛlɪ	ʋnʋcɛlɪ	*this one gave back*
117	ɛnʋ cɛɣɪsɪɣ	ʋnʋcɛɣɪsɪɣ	*this one reinforces*

3.7.4 Ideophones

Adjola always writes reduplicating ideophones as joined words:

	Standard	Adjola	
	Standard	*Adjola*	
118	kele kele	kelekele	*holy*
119	tam tam	tamtam	*for ever*
120	lɛɛ lɛɛ	lɛɛlɛɛ	*quickly*

4   Conclusion

In this detailed comparison of the two orthographic systems I have sought to demonstrate the subtle and often conflicting interplay between strictly linguistic influences and sociolinguistic ones. It is worth asking how persuasive each of those two levels of argument are in favour of the Adjola Orthography. Any discussion of this kind must, of course, be set against the backdrop of the clear political support which the

Standard Orthography has always enjoyed. Nevertheless, there are three positive aspects of the Adjola Orthography which I believe to be linguistically sound and also sociolinguistically practicable.

Firstly, Adjola often favours a deeper representation, while the Standard Orthography almost always opts for a shallower approach. I by no means believe that it would be wise to embrace all the deep representations which Adjola advocates. But the current over-representation of obstruents in the Standard Orthography is certainly a cause for concern. Adjola's approach, if not entirely consistent, has some merit. If the CLNK were ever to debate this point again, it would be advisable not to treat all five obstruents /p, f, c, k, kp/ together as a set. The grapheme |b| is extremely frequent, and even Adjola cannot bring himself to eliminate it entirely. At the other extreme, the grapheme |v| has a near zero frequency level, and could easily be eliminated from the Standard Orthography without serious visual compromise.

	Pronunciation	Adjola	
121	[evebú]	efepu	*boy n.E*
122	[ɛvalʊ́]	ɛfalʊ	*young male initiate n.E*

Secondly, Adjola addresses the issue of grammatical tone, signalling the H tone of the jussive mood with an acute accent on the subject pronoun. This is by no means the only point of ambiguity generated by the tone system, but it is a major one, and extremely frequent in texts. The CLNK has not yet come to any firm conclusions on this point, and would do well to adopt this simple diacritic convention.

	Adjola	
123	ŋ́kpeɣ-ɖʋ	*Pardon us!*
124	taayele nɛ pícɛzɪ-ɖʋ	*Do not let us be tempted!*
125	ɖílʊ	*Let us come out!*
126	ɛ́sɪna-ɖʋ	*May he help us!*
127	ɛ́taalɪzɪ	*May he not bring out!*

Thirdly, Adjola sometimes employs what appear to be arbitrary spelling rules to distinguish homographs. When examined more closely they often turn out to be etymologically driven. Since the CLNK is currently concerned about the level of homographs in the language, but is also reluctant to mark individual tonal minimal pairs using diacritics, this might be a way forward. For example:

	Prononciation	Adjola	
128	[ɖoo]	ɖoo	*mother*
129	[ɖoó]	ɖoho	*night*

A word about the choice of reference dialect is in order. Adjola naturally inclined towards his own dialect of Yadè, whereas the CLNK, strongly politicised, adopted the President's dialect of Piya-bas. Neither approach has been entirely satisfactory. A reference dialect is chosen to encourage group identity and social cohesion, but the reality is that Kabiye is far from being a homogenous language. The only way to avoid some cantons feeling alienated by the choice of reference dialect is to tolerate other graphic forms. The political mood is already softening, and the Kabiye-French dictionary (Marmor, 1999) reflects this. Although it always opts for one Piya-based standard, it also tolerates numerous dialect variants, Yadè along with the others, as sub-entries.

It is also necessary to return briefly to the realm of sociolinguistics in order to present a rounded, up to date picture. Firstly, the Catholic church has recently given its backing for an ecumenical Bible translation project, which has been underway since 2005. This translation will eventually be published using the Standard Orthography. This represents a level of inter-denominational co-operation which would have been unimaginable even as recently as ten years ago. Secondly, the CLNK, still composed of many of the original members who had hammered out the orthography in the 1980s, has embarked on an active process of rejuvenation, inviting new, younger members to join them. So the CLNK is turning a new chapter and using the opportunity to ensure that Catholics are better represented around the table.

Thirdly, and most gratifyingly for the author, the writing of this article in itself turned out to be a catalyst for change. It prompted certain Catholic stakeholders, including Adjola himself, to meet with the CLNK for the first time in over 20 years. The meeting took place in Kara on 15th October 2007. They used this article as a basis for their discussions, examining each and every data item in detail. Even though the meeting had no decision making authority, it certainly achieved greater mutual comprehension and opened the door for future dialogue. This turn of evens demonstrates the extent to which a linguist can have a role in orthography development by simply documenting the facts. Comparative studies of this kind represent a potent strategy for promoting unity in contexts where two or more orthographies have developed side by side.

It will have been clear from this analysis that the differences between the two systems are numerous, and because they often concern high frequency words, the graphic impact on the printed page is considerable. But I close with an anecdote which puts these concerns into perspective and brings us back to grassroots realities.

The data for this article was collected in part by M. Pakoubètè Essowè Noël, who provides an interesting case study in his own right. He is a Catholic catechist and a volunteer literacy teacher in a local secondary school. This places him in the unusual position of having to publicly read the Adjola Orthography every Sunday morning at church, then teaching the Standard Orthography on Monday morning in school. Indeed, it is this dual function as catechist and schoolteacher which makes him an ideal data-collector for this kind of cross-orthography comparison.

It has been interesting to observe firsthand how little difficulty Pakouɓtè has moving from one orthography to the other. The differences between the two, apparently, are not so great as to provide an insurmountable barrier. Of course, it should be borne in mind that Pakoubètè has far more exposure to Kabiye texts than the average Kabiye literate. But still, his performance would seem to indicate that, although the existence of two parallel orthographies is far from desirable, the outcome is not so much of a block to literacy promotion as might sometimes appear.

Jacques Delord, the Protestant pastor whose grammar (1976) the CLNK has always considered to be the cornerstone of Kabiye orthography development, always maintained that writers should never be discourage from generating literature even if

they don't conform to Standard Orthography (Pastor Alou Kpatcha, personal communication). Adjola is one such writer, and his influence is widespread. But this need not be a cause for conflict. The essential point is the maintenance and development of the written form of Kabiye in a globalised world where all minority languages are under threat (Crystal, 2000). In the face of such an urgent challenge, it would be petty and ultimately counterproductive to discourage one highly motivated individual from publishing simply because he writes in an orthography other than the standard.

Abbreviations

ADJ   *Adjective*

AOR   *Aorist*

ATR   *Advanced tongue root*

BP   *Bound perfective*

CNLK   *Comit de langue nationale kabiỳ*

DEM   *Demonstrative pronoun*

IMP   *Imperative*

INF   *Infinitive*

n.E   *noun of class E (and likewise for all the classes)*

P   *Plural*

REL   *Relative pronoun*

S   *Singular*

UP   *Unbound perfective*

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