

THE TATA TAMBERMA: A SOCIOTERMINOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF A PEOPLE IN TOGO AND BENIN

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Abstract:

The African architectural heritage is immense and varies from one country to another. Even within a single country, homogeneity is not the rule because of the diversity of the peoples/ethnic groups that make it up. In Togo and Benin, the Tamberma people are known for their unique architecture. It has moreover allowed it to be classified as a UNESCO world heritage site. The present reflection aims not only to review the history and socio-cultural implications of this architecture but also and above all to reveal its terminology, which is quite illustrative of the field. From the documentary research and the data collected in the field, a rather rich lexicon emerges, marked by endogenous neological and stylistic processes such as composition, derivation, metaphor, synecdoche, etc.

Keyword: terminology, architecture, takiêta, tamberma, socioterminology.

Résumé :

Le patrimoine architectural africain est immense et varie d'un pays à un autre. Même à l'intérieur d'un même pays, l'homogénéité n'est pas de mise en raison de la diversité des peuples/ethnies qui le composent. Au Togo et au Bénin, le peuple Tamberma s'illustre par son architecture qui est lui unique. Elle lui a d'ailleurs permis d'être classé au patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO. La présente réflexion vise, non seulement à passer en revue l'historique et les implications socioculturelles de cette architecture mais aussi et surtout à révéler sa terminologie assez illustrative du domaine. De la recherche documentaire et des données collectées sur le terrain se dégage un lexique assez riche, marqué par des procédés néologiques et stylistiques endogènes comme la composition, la dérivation, la métaphore, la synecdoche, etc.

Mot clés : terminologie, architecture, takiêta, tamberma, socioterminologie.

Introduction

Architecture is recognized as the art of building. Whether traditional or contemporary, it includes spatial planning and construction of buildings following construction rules, aesthetic concepts and taking into account social and environmental aspects. It is, therefore, an expression of the endogenous knowledge and culture of a people. The takiêta or tata tamberma, castle-fortresses of Kutãmããku (Batamariba country) reveal not only the art of building but also and above all a way of life of the Tamberma people living in the North of Togo and Benin. If several peoples, especially in the capital and secondary cities in Togo are bending under the weight of urbanization policies with several projects of expropriation of land¹, therefore living spaces, heritages for public utility, the Kutãmããku, spatial frame of our study is one of the few spaces not to experience this fate due to the fact that it is protected and listed as a UNESCO world heritage. As discussed by Tublu K. N. Fôga² (2008: 1), the Kutãmããku

Constitutes an exceptional living cultural landscape of a settlement system subject to traditional practices and in harmony with the surrounding natural resources, beliefs and rituals of the society. The site has several components including: the traditional castle-like dwellings, the natural environment (forest, trees, mountains, rivers), the developed territory (fields, quarry, sacred groves), the movable elements and the Otammari man with his beliefs and philosophy of life.

It is this very particular architecture in symbiosis with the spatial framework of life of this people which drew our attention with the objective of studying the terminology which intervenes in its global description. Terminology, it should be remembered, is a polysemous term. But in this work, we conceive it as the whole of the terms specific to a field or a group of individuals. The aim is to question the terminology used in the naming of notions related to the construction of castles as well as to the life of the people living there. There is no need for us to get the speakers to create terms for new realities that are being introduced into their environment or to create terms for them, but to let them express the notions of architecture as they are used to. It is therefore necessary to observe the *in vivo* functioning of terms

¹ Expropriation for public utility was first instituted in 1937 by the French colonial administration and then revised by decree n°45-2016 of September 1, 1945 with the application order of September 24, 1945. To date, the land and property regime in Togo is governed by Ordinance No. 12 of 6 February 1974.

² https://www.icomos.org/quebec2008/cd/toindex/78_pdf/78-vMTW-72.pdf

already created by society and to standardize them. We want, in this respect, to answer the following questions: What does the Tamberma living environment look like? What are the terms used by the speakers to denote the different aspects of their living environment? What are the processes used in the formation of lexical units?

We start from the assumption that there is a terminology of *takiẽta*, formed by a diversity of lexical and stylistic processes, related to the societal functioning of the Tamberma people. It is taken into account the sociolinguistic aspects in the communication and circulation of terms thus privileging the discursive practice of native speakers. This paper is structured in three parts: first, the theoretical and methodological framework of the study, then the presentation of the space of *Kutãmããku* and its inhabitants, and finally the processes of term formation. It lays the foundation for a future Ditamari-French or French-Ditamari lexicon.

1. Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on socioterminology, one of the approved theoretical approaches in terminology. It is defined by Loubier Christiane (2006: 459) as "the study of specialized terminologies in their relationship to the concrete sociolinguistic practices that take place within the various spheres of social activity targeted by terminology planning. Gaudin François, the leader of socioterminology, mentions four major factors that led to the birth of this theory: theoretical sociolinguistics, field sociolinguistics, general linguistics and corpus linguistics. Theoretical sociolinguistics allowed the integration of the notion of covariance and the consideration of verbal interactions which had been excluded from the general theory of terminology. Field sociolinguistics has led to "enrichments in language policy" (Gaudin François 2005: 80). General linguistics, for its part, has made it possible to "rethink the status of the term as a sign and to question the link between terms and referents" (Gaudin François, *ibid.*). Finally, corpus linguistics has "imposed a reform of methods and conceptions due to the development of computerized management of writings and the appearance of new language tools" (*ibid.*).

Socioterminology obeys several principles: the linguistic approach to terms, perceived above all as linguistic signs; the place attributed above all to speakers; the concern for a terminology that is aware of the social functioning of specialized languages; the plurality and polyphony of specialized discourses. Socioterminology has brought about the taking into account of the conceptual and methodological achievements of sociolinguistics on the one hand, to

integrate the social aspect in a confrontation with the field and to observe a descriptive and non-prescriptive approach on the other. The notions of covariance and verbal interactions have made it possible to consider terms in their linguistic behavior and to act on terminology policies.

1.2. Methodological Framework

The methodology observed flows from the orientations of socioterminology, mainly with regard to the factors to be taken into account during data collection. Thus, we took into account the linguistic factor, letting the speakers express the different notions directly in their languages without any prior orientation, and the socio-professional factor, whereby only speakers who master the terminological field are interviewed. The data were collected in Nadoba, the district of Tamberma land, and Warengo, one of Nadoba's neighboring villages. To do this, we followed several presentations of *takiēta*, the environment, and cultural and religious practices by four families, two in each of the aforementioned villages. During these presentations, we were able to identify 35 specified terms and 30 specifiable terms of Tamberma architecture. However, it seemed necessary to constitute a corpus of texts composed of a few written texts, songs and proverbs for a second phase of data collection which was done with resource persons. There were three resource persons, including a historian, a traditional chief and a tourist guide, all of whom were originally from the locality and had a good command of the language and culture. With these resource persons, the terminology questions were in the following format:

- What is the French equivalent of the term *litankpanri*?
- How do you render the idea of *takiēta* in French?
- What could be the meaning of *bubuo* in French?
- What is the *ditammari* equivalent of the "master of knowledge"?

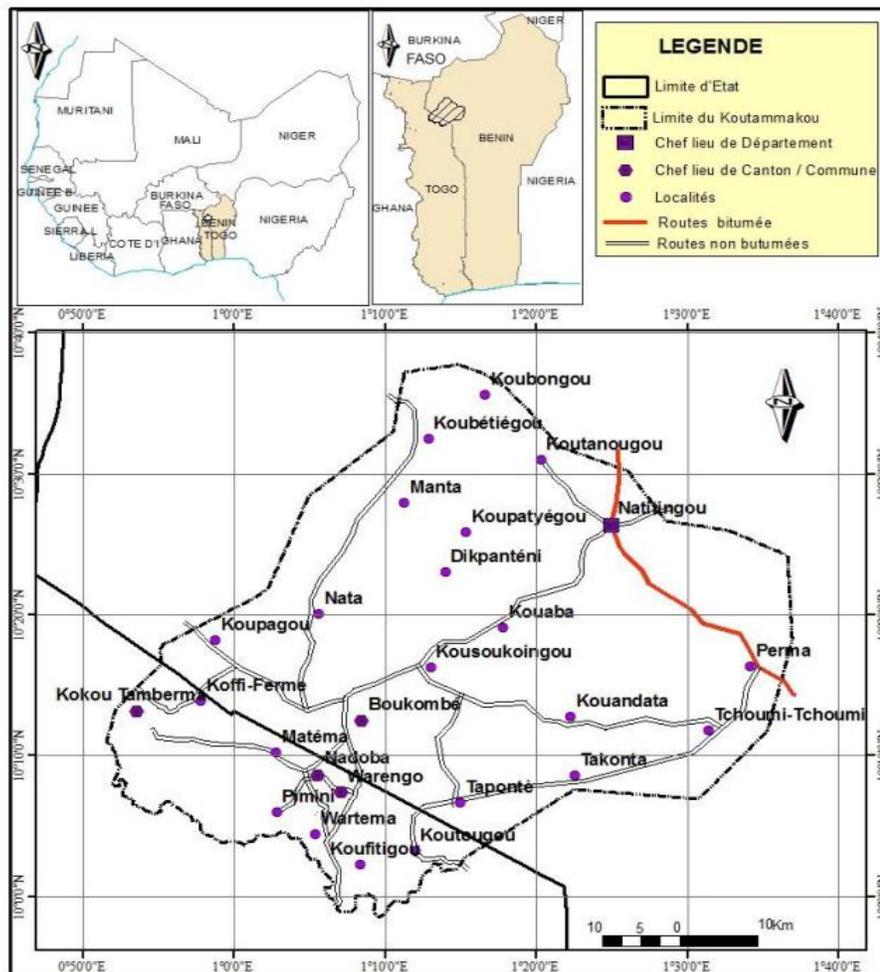
From the questions above, which relate to the theoretical and methodological foundations of this study, it is crucial to briefly explore the Tamberma localities and inhabitants in order to better understand the sociolinguistic aspect of these areas.

2. Localities, tenants, and architecture of *takiēta*

2.1. Localities and tenants of *Kutāmāāku*

As the map below indicates, *Kutāmāāku*, the area or land inhabited by the sons and daughters who share the *Tata*, is located on either side of the border that separates Togo and Benin between 9°58 and 10°10 North latitude and 0°52 and 1°35 East longitude.

According to Koussey K. Noël (1977: 5), the area in Benin encompasses the entire district of Boukombé and three-quarters of the district of Natitingou. In Togo and as N'Dati N'Dah (2015: 11) states, the Kutãmmããku corresponds to the "country of the Batãmmãriba to the east of the prefecture of Kéran, that is, six villages in the township of Akpontè and the townships of Koutougou, Nadoba and Warengo. From north to south, we have about 60 km and from east to west, 80 km." The Kutãmmããku, located in the heart of the Atacora Mountains, covers an area of about 5,000 km² (Sewane Dominique, 1999: 5).



Source : N. N'Dati, 2014.

All over the 5,000 km², there are fortress-houses or castles called takiéta entirely built in clay with a rather particular engineering.

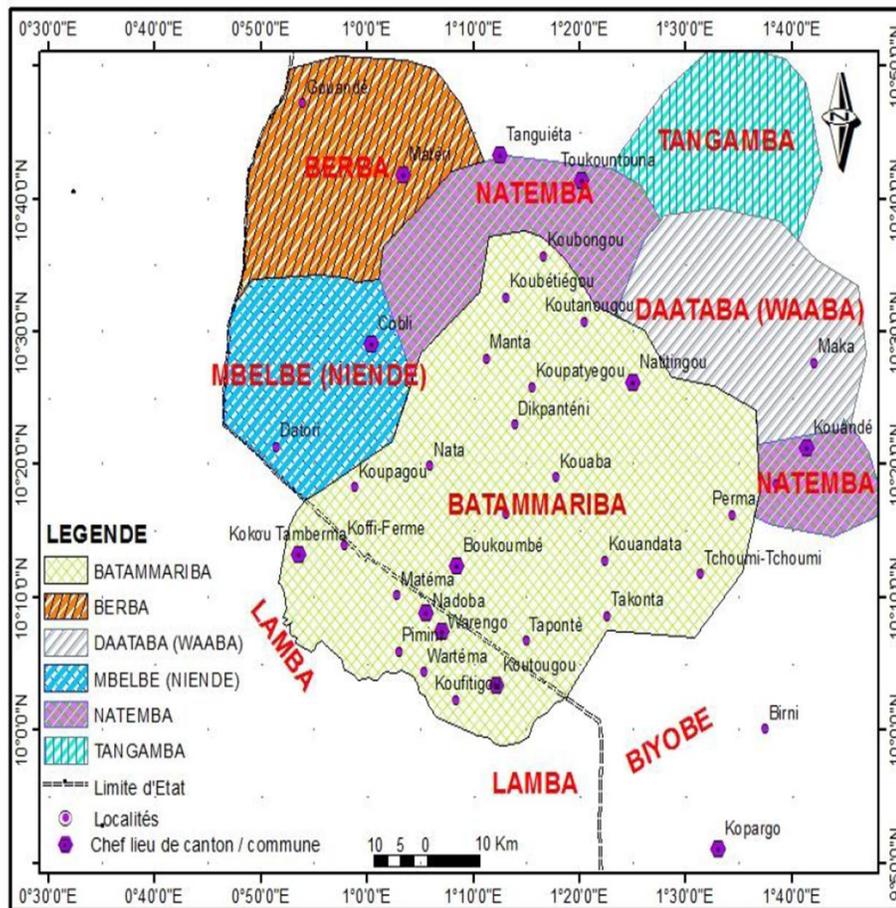


Source: From myself (during data collection in Warengo)

The *takiêta* reflect the social structure, philosophy and skills of the *Batâmãriiba*. Their forms and the techniques used in their construction reflect an old tradition that goes back to their settlement in the area between the 13th and 15th centuries. According to N'Dati N'Dah (2015: 21), "Tamberma would mean one who builds houses with kneaded earth. The emphasis here is on architecture; a man who knows how to build multi-story houses, or at least in contradistinction to the dwellings of other peoples in the region." The ethnonym used to designate this population derives from its architecture. The latter, which is characterized by fortified constructions called *takiêta* (*tata*) and which is compared to the castles of the European Middle Ages, met a need for defense. Thus, the name Tamberma derives from the deformation of *Batâmmãriiba*. N. N'dati goes further to comment that "*batâmmãriiba* whose singular is *otammari* means "the specialist", the one who, by his skill manipulates kneaded earth, in other words the "mason", the architect".

The sons and daughters inhabiting all the localities previously indicated are called *Batâmãriiba*. Coming from the north, they are said to have first settled in Koubongou, a locality south of Tanguiéta, in

Benin, before beginning their dispersal over the geographical area they occupy today. In Togo, they are located in the Kéran prefecture where they are known by the ethnonym "tamberma. This socio-cultural group borders several other peoples: Dataaba, Lamba, Mbèlbè, Waaba, Natemba and Biyobè. The last four groups are said to have similar traditions to the Tamberma.



Source : N. N'Dati, 2014.

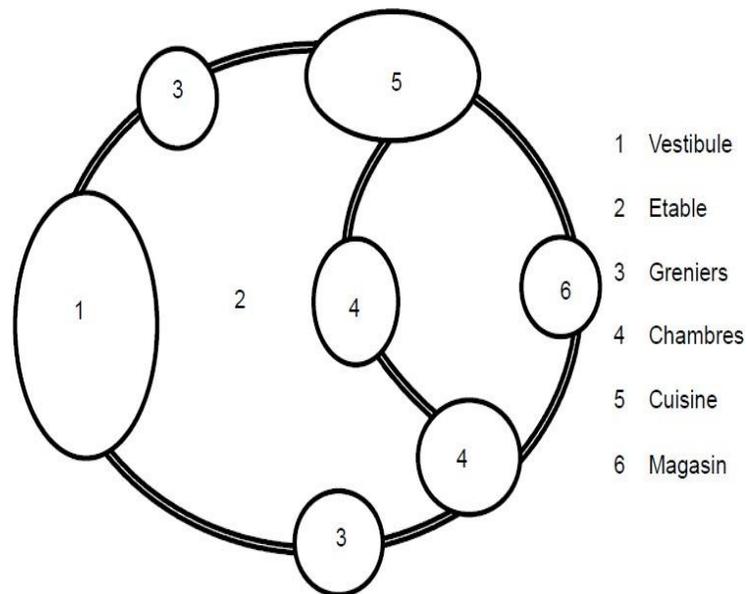
For N'dati N'dah (2015: 126)

The Tammari society is composed of a set of united families, equal in right, but hierarchical. This hierarchy is the concentric form whose core is the restricted family. The individual is defined in relation to his paternal and maternal parents, to whom he owes great respect. The takiêta includes the father, mother and children, married or not.

The authority in this entity is held by the father, who is legally binding and acts as the religious leader.

2.2. Architecture of takiĕta

The takiĕta has almost all the functional and symbolic elements of the Tamberma people: rooms, turrets, kitchens, granaries, stables, chicken coops, shower, terrace, drying room, altars, etc. The façade or main entrance of the dwelling is always oriented towards the West, considered by themselves to be the village-paradise of *Kuyé* (God, the Creator).



Source : N. N'Dati, 2015.

This orientation not only protects the house from bad weather but is also loaded with meaning. The East is considered to be the direction of the dead while the West is that of the living, the one that brings only happiness. There is also another symbolic division between the upper and first floors, the two levels of the takiĕta. The first floor is considered a temple because it is inhabited not only by the living but also by the ancestors. The living therefore inhabits the upper floor and the first floor is reserved for the dead (the ancestors) or those close to death (the elderly). Similarly, animals destined for sacrifice are put on the first floor.

The takiĕta is composed of *lipun* "small base elevation" which can be considered as the foundation or base on which the whole castle rests. It has several *likwetoo* "chicken coops" in general, including *tatāpiete* "chicken coop" buried in the perimeter of the foundation. On it rests the *liboto* "turrets, granary supports" and the *kunamūgu* "stable" in which is distinguished the *lipeto* (stable for sheep) from the *liĕkantouo* (stable for goats) and the *libotobori* (stable for pigs).

The *kunamūgu* forms with the other constituent elements the first floor consisting of:

- *wābori*: gateway to the *takiēta*
- *kunamūgu*: master bedroom
- *kunāfā*: corner considered as the old man's room
- *likakaa*: kitchen which is made from *kadāka* (hearth), *ikari* (a stand in the form of a table for depositing meals), *mmandje* (place for depositing the old man's meal), *litengētuo* (mortar used for pounding), *kuteroḍoo* (pestle), *linaāñíga* (millstone used for grinding) and *lideni* (dryer, above the kitchen)
- *tanáwata* (shower)

It is on the above-mentioned constituent elements that the floor is posed. The ground floor and the first floor are connected by both the *kubodieti* (ladder) allowing to go up to the first floor and the *lināku* (intermediate terrace). The first floor has:

- *kudiégu*: room of the first wife
- *taḍaata*: room of the second wife
- *kunākpāgu*: room of the third wife
- *tadāta*: intermediate terrace considered as the balcony, used mainly by the first wife
- *tidiēni*: terrace of rest for the man
- *támunta*: terrace of the second room
- *tíboete*: a visual opening in the middle of the main terrace through which an intrusion can be seen
- *liboa*: attic in general
- *liboḍáa*: male granary which is located on the north turret
- *liniiri*: female attic located on the south turret
- *tícaramúti*: straw for covering granaries
- *kudueti*: wall connecting all the rooms and attics on the first floor. Its name varies from place to place. For example, the wall between the attic and the second bedroom is called *tícaḍuāgu*; the wall connecting the second bedroom and the first bedroom is called *tamāḍaḍueti*. The wall connecting the female attic and the children's room is called *kuduetiḍāgu*, and then the one between the male attic and the children's room *kuduetiniēgu*. Finally, the wall connecting the male attic and the third wife's room is called *litakaridueti*.
- *iyanga*: dryer
- *licánuāgu*: rainwater drain hole
- *ekpākpāye*: trio of clods of earth representing the life of the father and the following generations
- *linākuo*: shower for children

Before entering the *takiēta*, there is the *disimpo* (the altar on which the various sacrifices are made).



3. Behavior of the *Takiēta* terms.

This part is devoted to the analysis of terminology from a descriptivist perspective. It takes into account the description of the linguistic universe and the semantic processes of creation *in vivo* observed.

3.1. Terminism and Linguistic Universe

An examination of the terms used by the Batāmāriba to account for the architecture of the *takiēta* allows to appreciate a socio-discursive universe involving a diversity of social categories. These include the *bacirba* (deities or ancestors whether male or female) and the *bafobe* (living men, women, youth and children). In the *takiēta*, the *bacirba* are on the ground floor while the *bafobe* are on the first floor. As Mercier (1968: 221), points out, "The conceptions that the *Somba* have of their dwelling make the upper floor the place of the living, the ground floor that of the dead, of those who are close to death and of the livestock that is above all intended for them." As far as the deities are concerned, it is *disimpokotri*, the altar of the mother, which commands the most respect and unanimity within the community or the *kunadakwa* (large family).

But all *bacirba* deserve respect overall according to their role as watchman and protector.

The corpus involves a division of certain parts of the *takiēta* between men and women. In particular, we note the *kulítiqaa* "male wall", the *liboqaa* "male attic", the *kunamūgu* "husband's room" which belong to men. Other parts such as *liniiri* "female attic", *libooto niiri* "turtle-dove support of the female attic", *kudiégu* "room of the first wife", *taqaata* "room of the second wife", *kudidiégu kunākpāgu* "room of the third wife" belong to women.

3.2. Semantic and Stylistic Procedures

Socioterminology defends the consideration of the notions of covariance and verbal interactions in the study of terms. As such, it incorporates issues of borrowing and variation of terms. In the terminology of *takiēta* architecture, no borrowing was observed. These were entirely creative processes internal to the language, thus proving a very ancient ancestral practice specific to the Tamberma people. Still on the lexical level, we note two linguistic variations: orthographic and the dialectal variations. Thus, the terms *takiēta*, *takienta*, *tacienta* or *takiyenta* are written to designate the fortress-house. Similarly, *kuboqaa* and *kubodaagu* are used to refer to the attic roof. There is a difference in usage between the language of Warengo district and Nadoba township.

<i>Dialectal variation</i>		
Nadoba dialect	Warengo dialect	Glosis
<i>likoto</i>	<i>likwetoo</i>	"chicken coop"
<i>libori</i>	<i>wanbori</i>	" <i>takiēta</i> entrance"
<i>kudieti</i>	<i>kubodieti</i>	"scale"
<i>libwasato</i>	<i>lidekātuo</i>	"goat house".
<i>lipesato</i>	<i>lipeto</i>	"sheepfold"
<i>taboté</i>	<i>taboeti</i>	"visual orifice"

The observation of the data in this table allows to note a dialectal variation of phonological and morphological type. We also note some semantic and/or stylistic devices in Tamberma architectural terminology. We are interested in metaphor, polysemy, metonymy and synonymy.

3.2.1. Metaphor

According to Kleiber Georges (1983, 91), we speak of metaphor when "there is always a term or group of terms that refers to a referent

that is not part of the referential class normally determined by the meaning of that term or group of terms". This implies that the metaphorical interpretation will only intervene if the meaning that derives from the situation of enunciation is different from the proper meaning of the term or the statement. This interpretation will require the interlocutor to use analogical procedures or similarity mechanisms.

In the corpus of the architecture of the tata tamberma, cases of metaphor are observable. There is, for example, *tabóte* which literally means "eye of the enemy" which is used to designate the "murder hole" or "defense hole". Similarly, *ifā* is literally "free/empty corner" but used to denote "storage room".

3.2.2. Polysemy

In terminology in general, polysemy does not come into play since, according to the general theory of terminology and more particularly in Eugen Wüster's onomasiological approach (1974), polysemy is excluded and monosemy is the rule. But in socioterminology, it has its place as soon as one starts from real situations of use. Polysemy constitutes only 2.8% of all the 72 specific and specifiable terms collected through usage. This is the case for *kudiégu* which means both "second wife's room" and "central hut". Similarly, *kunamūgu* means "first floor", "main room" and "stable" at the same time. These terms only have true meaning in real communication situations.

3.2.3. Synonymy

Synonymy occurs when two or more terms with the same functional value are interchangeable in different contexts. Specifically, and as Murphy Lynne (2018) notes³, "Synonymy is a relation between individual senses of words, so that a single word typically has different sets of synonyms for each of its senses." Since there is no perfect synonymy, this implies that the individual meaning of each of the words can be adapted to the communication situation or context in which it is used.

In the corpus submitted for analysis, *timuti*, *tipīpīti*, and *ticaramuti* designate straw and, thus that used to cover the granaries and rooms. To designate the sheepfold, the terms *lipeto* and *mankuo* are used. The terms *taqaata* and *digaa* are substitutable in a context that evokes the bedroom of the second wife.

³ [https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199772810/obo-9780199772810-0220.xml#:~:text=Synonymy%20is%20a%20relation%20between,\(e.g.%2C%20layer\).](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199772810/obo-9780199772810-0220.xml#:~:text=Synonymy%20is%20a%20relation%20between,(e.g.%2C%20layer).)

Conclusion

Contemporary architecture, whether African or not, uses a terminology that is not necessarily identical to traditional architecture, even if the links of filiation between them are attested. In this paper devoted to the socioterminological study of takiêta architecture among the Tamberma, a particular terminology was revealed whose linguistic universe is closely related to the socio-cultural, religious and environmental realities of the milieu. From the set of specific and specifiable terms constituted from the different situations of communication around this architecture, it is revealed that the lexical stock of the tata Tamberma terminology does not register any newly created words at the formal level. The terminology of the Kutãmãäku is characterized by an ancient lexical background whose use is only perceptible in the areas inhabited by the Batãmãriba. Yet, there is a double linguistic variation: orthographic and dialectal. This terminology is further characterized by a variety of semantic and stylistic devices. The examination of the corpus has allowed to go through metaphor, polysemy and synonymy. While all of these important results have been achieved, the link between the tata tamberma terminology and other domains such as the environment remains to be demonstrated. We intend to explore this further in our next reflections while analyzing other stylistic devices such as synecdoche and periphrasis that are generally used in the conversations of this people.

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