

## **Class RE in the class system of Loŋto and its historical significance**

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*Among the Central Adamawa languages which have preserved a noun class system, Loŋto (Voko) spoken in Cameroon deserves special attention from a comparative point of view. Outstanding above all are the number of genders and the form of the class morphemes and suffixes, which appear to have been preserved in an archaic form. Almost all classes, genders and class morphemes clearly correspond with reconstructed proto-systems of Gur (or rather North Volta-Congo). An enigma is, however, the status of the singular class RE of Loŋto which is clearly distinct from class 5 \*<I (= LE in Loŋto). Class RE is the singular of two genders, namely gender RE/TO and gender RE/YE. While RE/TO contains a comparatively large number of nouns, RE/YE has only very few members which are nevertheless nouns from the basic vocabulary. A corresponding singular class is also known in class systems of languages of the Koma group.*

*The paper examines the function of class RE in the Loŋto class system, and discusses whether or not RE could be a retention of an ancient North Volta-Congo singular class lost in most subgroups.*