

Food concepts and food items in the western Lake Chad area

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The Lake Chad area is inhabited by different ethnic groups who speak languages that belong to different language phylae. In the western area largely part of today's Nigeria Kanuri, Chadic speaking groups, Shuwa and Fulbe are found apart from diverse immigrant groups that had entered the area at a later stage. Despite the fact that basic food items – due to similar geographic and climatic environment - are more or less identical, ethnic preferences as regards menu and daily nutrition do exist.

Chadic speaking people, for which Hausa may serve as example, call 'food' either abíncí (thing for eating) or túwo; Kanuri who migrated into the area approx. in the 11th century call 'food' kəmbû (VN of the verb búkin 'eat') or bəri. In both languages the second term denotes not only the staple food of Northern Nigeria i.e. the stiff porridge made from various cereals, traditionally millet or guinea corn, but as well food as generic term. In times of globalization the ethnic differentiation, in culinary as well as in linguistic terms is levelled with items like maggi (any cube for preparation of soup /sauce), taliya (noodles) as well as tomato paste.

The names of basic food items as well as food concepts, arranged chronologically from "traditional" to "modern" will be explored in different languages in order to divide areal concepts from ethnic / linguistic peculiarities.