

**Granaries and fostering: What can loanwords tell us about domestic relationships in precolonial Uganda?**

Rhiannon Stephens

University of London - UK

*This paper examines what loanwords might be able to tell us about the nature of cultural exchange at the domestic level between speech communities. While the specific focus is precolonial east-central Uganda, the paper raises wider theoretical issues about the use of linguistic data, and of loanwords in particular, to write history. Here I examine in particular loanwords from Nilo-Saharan languages that have been borrowed into North Nyanza languages. North Nyanza is an offspring of West Nyanza and is composed of Ganda, Gwere, Shana and Soga. The data for this paper were collected during fieldwork in Uganda (2004-2005, 2008) and in extant published and archival sources.*

*I focus on two loanwords in particular – \*-piita ‘to foster in/adopt’ and \*-deero (7/8) ‘granary’ – but in a broader context of several loanwords relating to the domestic sphere. This enables me to address why it was that these communities adopted foreign words for practices or objects that already existed and what this tells us about the kinds of relationships that existed between the speech communities and who the main protagonists in such cultural exchange were likely to have been. This paper argues, in contrast to historical work which has emphasized politico-cultural exchange among elites in the wider region (Cohen 1972; Oliver 1955; Wrigley 1996), that such loanwords demonstrate the ways in which people negotiated interactions with ‘other’ people on a quotidian level.*