

## **Pregnant pauses: consonant length in Cicipu**

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Cicipu (Benue-Congo, northwest Nigeria) has twenty-eight consonants, each of which have short and long counterparts. Lexically, geminates are usually found root-initially (and also word-initially) in nouns, although they also occur root-medially in verbs. Consonant length usually has a grammatical function, however, and noun class prefixes, gender agreement prefixes, and person agreement affixes can all consist simply of a unit of consonantal weight C-, the application of which results in the lengthening of the first stem consonant (e.g. n-naha = you left, t-ta'a = you want). A comparison of the Cicipu data with the related languages Central Kambari (Hoffman, 1963, De Wolf 1971, Crozier 1984) and Tsva'di suggests a diachronic process explaining the present-day distribution of geminates.