

# The conceptualization of 'head' among the Hausa based on verbal and nonverbal representation.

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The word *kai* 'head' in Hausa (Chadic, Afroasiatic) has a locative meaning 'top/upper part of something' (e.g. *kan aki* 'roof; lit. the head of the hut') but also became a source of grammatical spatial marker 'at, on (top of) something' (e.g. *kan kujera* 'on the chair'). Because the location of the head varies (from top to front) according to the creature (human being or animal), *kai* may also mean the front part of something and by extension the beginning of something. Being one of the most important parts of the body it is extended by metonymy to the whole person and corresponds to the meaning of the pronoun 'oneself'. It also signifies the most important part of an object. However, expressions containing the lexeme *kai* which refers to a thinking process are suspiciously missing. What seems to be quite common in many cultures where the head is a symbol of creativity and thinking (e.g. Polish expression *rusz głową!* 'think! (lit. move with your head)' or English 'hit the nail on the head') does not find the confirmation in Hausa language data. Instead, there is linguistic evidence that *zuciya* 'heart' is conceptualized as a processing organ. The evidence that the head is associated with cognition comes from the descriptions (not metaphorical) of people's behavior (e.g. *ta daga kai tamkar tunani* 'she lifted the head as if [she were] thinking') and from another modality: gestures, both independent and co-speech gestures used while a person talks about thinking (e.g. raising a hand to the head).

word count: 252