Webservice:
http://www.connecting-africa.net

JSTOR:
http://www.jstor.org
http://www.aluka.org
Both: free access from Africa (Africa Initiative):
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/participate/new/fees/africanAccess.jsp

Africa (Journal of the International Africa Institute)
http://www.eupjournals.com/journal/afr

Lists of e-journals:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_studies_journals
http://africa.msu.edu/AEJP/
http://ezb.uni-regensburg.de/fl_vifa?&lang=en&&vifa=ViFaAfrika
http://www.ascleiden.nl/Library/Journals.aspx

Lists of all journals:
http://www.ulrichsweb.com
http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/about.phtml

Google Book Initiative:
http://books.google.com

The Internet Archive
http://www.archive.org

Notes

1. Paper given as part of the panel on "African Studies on the web – new possibilities and new services for academic research", 3rd European Conference on African Studies, Leipzig 4 June 2009.
2. http://www.ulrichsweb.com
3. http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/about.phtml
4. Keynote address of Ismael Serageldin, director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina at the BioVision Conference, Alexandria 14 April 2008 in which he stated: 'the world risks "scientific apartheid" between rich and poor countries unless research and technology is better used to benefit the poor.'
5. http://www.plos.org/
6. http://www.slideshare.net/naypinya/reflections-on-the-google-book-search-settlement-by-pamela-samuelson

AT THE MARGIN – AFRICAN ENDANGERED LANGUAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL ENDANGERMENT DISCOURSES[1]

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1. Introduction

According to estimates, Africa hosts about 2,000 of the approximately 6,000 languages of the world. This number makes the continent one of the hotspots of linguistic diversity. Essential description (i.e. grammars, dictionaries) and documentation (i.e. audio and video speech data and their annotations) is not even available for some of the largest among them. The overwhelming majority of African languages, irrespective of their endangerment status, have received only very little or no linguistic attention to date, despite the fact that many of them are spoken by millions as a first or second language. In addition, a large number of African languages are spoken by small-scale rural communities and can be classified as endangered on diverse grounds, ranging from displacement due to wars or climate change to rural exodus for socioeconomic reasons. In this context it seems paradoxical that African linguistics has not assumed a leading role in establishing the research agenda for the documentation of endangered languages, that only relatively few African languages have been documented in this new framework, and that there is almost no activism in favour of their maintenance by speakers.

This paper aims at highlighting and explaining the neglected status of African languages, both within linguistic description and documentation (LDD) and endangered languages research (ELR). Drawing on two case studies, it points to a number of factors that distinguish the sociolinguistic contexts of these languages from those of languages more influential in shaping global discourses on language endangerment. In addition, it discusses differences in research traditions and priorities that may contribute to hindering advances in the description and documentation of African languages. The paper concludes with some thoughts on how African languages might influence and alter some of the dominant narratives of language endangerment in order to arrive at a more rounded picture of linguistic diversity and its threats.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 attempts an overview of the motivations of endangered languages research and its global assumptions. Section 3 and 4 contrast this view with two different West African endangerment situations that do not match the global picture in all respects. Section 5 attempts to generalise those characteristics of African endangered

and minority languages that are common to almost the entire continent and advocates their recognition as factors of language endangerment.

2. What is driving endangered languages research?

It is customary to regard the 1992 annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America as a deciding moment in the charting of a research agenda for the description, documentation and conservation of endangered languages (cf. the special issue on endangered languages, *Language* 68, 1992). In the following decade, technological advances and newly created funding possibilities such as the VW foundation DoBeS programme[2], the Arcadia-funded Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project with the grant-giving Endangered Languages Documentation Project (ELDP), as well as grant programmes of several national research councils and smaller funding agencies followed and helped to create the new field of language documentation. Jointly, they are providing the technical and financial framework for the creation of records of endangered languages before they are lost forever. Although scholars of African languages quickly joined the academic discourse on language endangerment (Batibo, 2005, Brenzinger, 1992, 1998, Dimmendaal, 2008, Mous, 2003, Vigouroux and Mufwene, 2008) the dominant agenda of the field is driven by the traumatic loss of languages experienced by the aboriginal populations of Australia and the Americas, and it is on these continents that most languages documentation programmes are located. One of the two major documentation programmes, DoBeS, for instance, has funded 40 projects to date. Of these, 16 are located in the Americas, 12 in Australia, South East Asia and Oceania, 9 in Eurasia, and only 3 in Africa. This distribution does not reflect at all the linguistic diversity ratio in any of these areas, nor does it do justice to African endangered languages. Sister fund ELDP fares slightly better by supporting the documentation of 8 African languages in 2008 alone, but its numbers are less comparable since the size of grants varies drastically from up to £6,000 for pilot projects to ca. £150,000 for major documentation projects. The 1st International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC) in March 2009 at the University of Hawaii counted only five presentations on African languages among the 100 scheduled talks. Overall it can safely be stated that Africa as a continent is only marginally represented in the LDD of endangered languages.

In order to elucidate the reason for the neglected status of African languages, I will start by summarising what is commonly understood as an endangered language. In acknowledging a multitude of different scenarios, most scholars shy away from a hard-and-fast definition of endangered languages. Generally, a number of criteria are given, often ordered on a scale measuring the degree of endangerment. A policy-determining example of a list of factors for assessing linguistic vitality has been developed by a group of linguists for

UNESCO (UNESCO 2003). Each of the factors listed below (except 2) can be ranked on a scale from 0-5:

1. Intergenerational language transmission
2. Absolute number of speakers
3. Proportion of speakers within the local population
4. Trends in existing language domains
5. Response to new domains and media
6. Materials for language education and literacy
7. Governmental and institutional language policies, including official status and use
8. Community members' attitudes towards their own language
9. Amount and quality of documentation

I will now contrast these intentionally universal assumptions with two West African case studies of endangered languages and assess how they fare with respect to this catalogue of criteria.

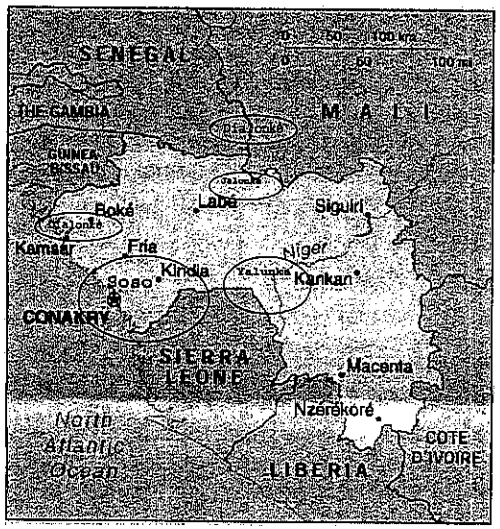
3. Jalonke: It's dying, so what?

3.1 An introduction to the language

Jalonke is a variety of the Mande language Yalunka. The language is dispersed over a vast territory in four different West African countries and is known under slightly different names. The language is called 'Jalonke' in the whole region where my field site took place, the Futa Jalon in Guinea (see map 1). In this mountainous region dominated by Fula, some isolated pockets of Jalonke speaking communities remain. The same denomination, sometimes with the different spellings Dialonké or Diallonké, is used for other Northern varieties. These varieties are those spoken in and around Faléya in Mali, in the Balaki district of Guinea,[3] stretching into Senegal, and near to Koumbia in Guinea. The Southern varieties spoken around Faranah in Guinea and in the neighboring country Sierra Leone[4] are generally referred to as Yalunka. The term Yalunka has been adopted as a cover term for all the varieties (Kastenholz, 1996).

The different dialect areas of Yalunka are not contiguous to each other, but separated by large areas of predominantly Fula speaking communities. Not much is known about the exact number of speakers of the language in the different regions. Sources cite the numbers of 113,000 speakers of Yalunka for all areas (Platiel, 1978), or of 87,000 for Guinea (Gordon, 2005), but in the absence of reliable and recent census data, these numbers are not to be trusted too much. The numbers given in Platiel (1978) are based on old colonial census data given in Westermann & Bryan (1952) and de Lavergne de Tressan (1953), modified by adding an estimated population growth rate. The numbers appearing in the Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005) are almost identical to colonial census data from 1950, given in de Lavergne de Tressan (1953) as 87,875. As to

the status of the language, it is at least known that it is a minor language and that the majority of speakers are bilingual. This is even true for the enclaves still constituting homogeneous Yalunka areas. In the Northern areas – with the exception of Mali where Bambara is taking over (Denis Creissels, p.c.) – Fula is the dominating language. In the Southern areas two different Mande languages, Maninka and Koranko, are concurring with Yalunka.



Map 1: Guinea and extension of Soso and Yalunka language areas

Soso is the sister language of Yalunka, as also attested by earlier classifications (Dwyer, 1989, Welmers, 1971). The two languages are reported to be very close to each other; sometimes they are even regarded as a dialect continuum (Kastenholz, 1996). They are, however, not in contact – as for the different Yalunka varieties, several hundreds of kilometers of Fula populated areas lie between Yalunka and Soso areas. While the lexica of both languages are almost identical, several independent grammatical innovations have decreased mutual intelligibility to an important degree. Speakers of the two languages assume a common origin, but asked about their ethnic and/or linguistic identity, consider themselves as distinct from each other.

The available linguistic information on Yalunka is limited. My own research focuses on verbal argument structure in the Northern variety Jalonke (Lüpke, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d, 2009). For one of the other Northern varieties, the Dialonké spoken in Faléya in South Western Mali (presumably identical to the variety spoken on the Guinean side of the border) an unpublished word list (Creissels, ms.) exists. For the same variety, four articles treat aspects of nominal and verbal morphology (Keita 1987/1988, Keita 1989a), syllable

structure (Creissels, 1989), and tonal characteristics (Keita, 1989b) respectively. As for the Southern varieties, only one isolated source is available: an article on the definite marker of the Yalunka of Sierra Leone (Harrigan, 1963). Apart from these limited resources, no linguistic material on Yalunka is known to me. The research tradition for Soso, in stark contrast to Yalunka, leads back to the beginning of the 19th century. From then on, missionaries started translating catechisms (Brunton, 1802a, 1801, Raimbault, 1885b), compiling wordlists (Clarke, 1848 (1972), Koelle, 1963), and writing grammars and dictionaries (Brunton, 1802b, Duport and Rawle, 1869, 1915, Lacan, 1942, Raimbault, 1885a). The wealth of early documents reflects the first settlements of Europeans along the Guinean coast, in Soso dominated territories. Contemporary linguistic studies comprise a grammar (Houis, 1963) and a manual (Friedländer, 1992) as well as articles on the language.

Saare Kindia, the village where my fieldwork was conducted, is located in the department of Koubia, in the Missira subdivision. Its population consists of Jalonke, Fula, and some civil servants of different linguistic affiliation. The exact number of inhabitants and the distribution of languages are unknown due to the absence of any statistical data, but my impression is that Jalonke speakers are the majority of the population in the village. Saare Kindia is one of at best a handful of villages where Jalonke still survives in the Futa Jalon. In some villages listed in colonial and postcolonial sources (de Lavergne de Tressan, 1953, anonymous undated map, University of Conakry) like Loumbutaa, Ganfataa and neighbouring villages, Jalonke is on the decline.[6] Together with the nearby village Heeriko, Saare Kindia so far resists the growing pressure of Fula. Elsewhere in Africa a minority language, the Pulaar variety of Fula is the *lingua franca* of the Futa Jalon. It is spoken by ca. 40% of the Guinean population (Friedländer, 1975). Fula was one of the national languages employed in primary schools during the reign of Sékou Touré, the first president of the country after independence in 1958. All speakers of Jalonke are bilingual in Fula, while the inverse does not hold for speakers of Fula.

3.2 History and language situation

The Jalonke and Soso are the first known inhabitants of the Futa Jalon. Portuguese sources (cited in Bühnen, 1994) from the mid-fifteenth to the late seventeenth century report that this area constituted a kingdom, Jalo, that was inhabited by Soso, Jalonke, and Fula. Soso and Jalonke seem to have referred interchangeably to one single ethnic and linguistic group at that time.

According to oral history of the Jalonke, their origins lie in the East, probably in present-day Mali. Nothing is known about their settlement in the Futa Jalon and its causes. During the 15th century, a first wave of immigration occurred, consisting of non-islamised Fula speaking people (Pulli) who came from the Futa Toro (in present-day Senegal) and the Macina (in present-day Mali) (Houis, 1953, Levtzion, 1973). As stated by historical narratives, these

newcomers were given ground and coexisted peacefully with the autochthones. The situation changed in the 17th century, when new Fula immigrants, this time fleeing the Sudan after the breakdown of the Songhai empire and the Futa Toro, arrived, bringing Islam with them. After a period of infiltration and secret practising of their religion, the newcomers set out to conquer the country, waging a *jihad* against the indigenous pagan population, Jalonke and Pulli. Many Jalonke and Soso fled to the coast, where they merged with earlier Jalonke emigrants from the Futa Jalon, and where their language developed independently from the Jalonke of the Futa Jalon. These refugees ultimately adopted the name Soso. Those non-Islamic Pulli, Jalonke and Soso (today known under the name Jalonke) who remained in the Futa Jalon lost their status of free people.

The Fula created a hierarchical society, consisting of slaves, people of caste, commoners and nobles (Dupire, 1994). While only Fula had access to the status of nobles, citizens converted to Islam belonged to the mass of commoners. For non-converted pagans, there was no choice; they were inevitably assigned to the group of slaves. Still, there were differentiations regarding the status of slaves; those slaves that had been captured during wars or razzias were treated like prisoners and could be resold. In contrast, those slaves attached to a family, mostly islamised Pulli and Jalonke, couldn't be exchanged or resold and underwent a process of Fulanisation. They adopted their masters's clan names and could even be liberated.

Not surprisingly, today, very few Jalonke remain in the Futa Jalon. In Saare Kindia, older people declare that before the independence, Jalonke and Fula lived as free people, but in strict segregation. Probably, the Jalonke speaking population of the village consists of the descendents of liberated slaves, since all the Jalonke have Fula clan names. For some families, it is still known that they used to be slaves in the past. It is left to speculation why these Islamised and, to an important degree, Fulanised people retained their Jalonke ethnic and linguistic identity. According to the local history, Saare Kindia was the first Jalonke settlement in the Futa Jalon when the Jalonke immigrated. The hut of the village founder, Maama Kindia, although lying in ruins, is still a holy place. Thus it is maybe the consciousness of being at the beginning of the history of a people and the importance of preserving its vestiges that made the Jalonke in some places keep an identity separate from that of the conquerors. The degrees of contact between Jalonke and Fula have changed since the independence of the country in 1958. The political change brought new social models conveying more equality, and a new elite of mobile dignitaries, gradually infiltrating the old system. As a result, the importance of the old caste structure is decreasing, and social exchange through marriage between people of different ethnic and social status, unthinkable fifty years ago, has become a concomitant fact of living together. The influence of new social developments like interethnic marriage on language attitudes is tangible. In mixed marriages, Jalonke tends not to be transmitted to the children, even

more so if the mother is Fula. In the public sphere, Jalonke is losing more and more ground; at the mosque, at the market, and at public gatherings it is not heard anymore. Since only very few Fula master any Jalonke, Fula is the language of choice whenever a Fula speaker is present. But even in the absence of Fula speakers, codeswitching is pervasive. Compared to the role of Fula, the impact of French on linguistic behavior is negligible. The older generation of men and the quasi-totality of adult women do not speak it.[6] Among younger, formally educated people, codeswitching to French occurs, but is unimportant compared to Fula.

3.3 Linguistic and ethnic identities

Jalonke in Saare Kindia generally affirm their ethnic and linguistic identity, in particular when talking to a linguist interested in the language. Still, this identity is much of an 'internal' affiliation that can easily be altered when leaving the village context. Jalonke living outside their language areas are invisible as such – if they ended up in a town in the Futa Jalon, they assume a Fula identity. Since they have full command of Fula, and since their family names are those of their former masters, i.e. Fularised, they successfully melt into the majority. This is equally true for Conakry, the capital, where large homogeneous Fula quarters exist. Only few Jalonke adopt an alternative strategy: mainly those who have gone in their youth to Soso-populated areas, i.e. some neighborhoods of Conakry and surroundings, switch to Soso instead. It is assumed that this pattern is secondary because the Fula language enjoys much prestige in Guinea, but also because tuning into Soso demands more effort. Instead of adjusting one's ethnic identity to a linguistic identity that is already there, the taking on of a Soso identity is tied to an active learning of a close, but distinct language.

Life in the village is only marginally touched by 'modern' life. Maybe the biggest influence of the Guinean state is present in the school system. Saare Kindia has a primary school and a middle school, and although the schooling rates are low,[7] schooling has an important impact on society: the school is the only place where the official language French is spoken and taught. Moreover, the mobility of civil servants, especially teachers, creates the only natural context for the use of French, unless a common African language is available for communication. Outside official contexts, French plays practically no role in written communication. This does not entail, contrary to popular beliefs, that Africa is essentially an oral continent when colonial languages are disregarded (Olson and Torrance, 2001), that Jalonke and Fula societies have an exclusively oral culture. Almost all boys and a smaller number of girls acquire knowledge of the Arabic alphabet at the Koranic schools. Generally they do not learn Arabic, but are merely trained to read suras whose sense remains obscure to them. But the introduction of the Arabic alphabet has led to an adapted version of it, the Ajami alphabet, used to write Fula and other African languages located in the sphere of influence of Islam (Lüpke, 2004). This Arabic-based script is mastered by large parts of the adult male

population and is used for writing personal messages, tax lists, etc. in Fula. Writing in a contact language with a written tradition, or exographic writing (Lüpke, 2004) is common throughout the African continent . The status of Ajami writing in Fula is threatened, however, by the Latin alphabet associated with French which is transmitted in school. Ajami writing is also completely ignored by most NGOS engaging in literacy work in Guinean languages, among them Pulaar, a language with one of the most important and persistent Ajami writing traditions (Salvaing and Hunwick, 2003, Salvaing, 2004). As a consequence, different generations employ different scripts and/or different languages in writing: Although the old Latin-based language materials for the national languages introduced into primary education under Sékou Touré are out of use, and only few 'old timers' are able to write some words in their native language in these scripts, they have found a successor. Literacy campaigns for adults – in this region exclusively in Fula – employ an adapted Latin script, featuring IPA-symbols for sounds not representable by the standard alphabet. To top the complexity of systems, a non-alphabetic script baptised "batôn-calebasse" (stick-calabash) after the two symbols it is composed of is also sporadically taught in adult literacy classes.

Of course, any attempt at a language revival based on written language materials and the use of the language in adult alphabetisation must remain hopeless in view of this complicated situation. On my suggestion that I might teach Jalonke literacy classes, I was urged to teach English instead, a clear indication that the Jalonke population will not actively ask for any language program involving their language, because of its low sociolinguistic status. Moreover, a locally isolated effort would be disproportional to the weight of the language in the Futa Jalon. If anything were to be done for a revitalisation of Jalonke, it should be aimed at the language in all its varieties – something not feasible in the near future in the absence of a linguistic survey of the different dialects and a subsequent standardisation.

3.4 The place of Jalonke on the UNESCO endangerment scale

How can the Jalonke language situation be mapped onto the UNESCO endangerment scale? In terms of the first criterion, intergenerational language transmission, Jalonke would score as sufficiently endangered, since children of mixed marriages tend not to learn Jalonke. Regarding criterion two, the absolute number of speakers, no reliable information is available, and it is doubtful that even a new census would yield unequivocal data, since many speakers of Jalonke do not have a single ethnic and linguistic identity but shift according to context between several available repertoires and identities. The proportion of speakers in the local population is decreasing, so in this respect Jalonke fulfils one of the conditions to be classified as endangered, and the same holds for trends in existing language domains. Regarding most of the remaining criteria – response to new domains and media, materials for language education and literacy as well as governmental and institutional language policies, and amount and quality of documentation – the situation could not be worse, but this dire fact has barely any significance for African languages (South Africa notwithstanding), as will be argued in more detail in section 5. The attitude of speakers towards the language is, at least as far as my informal observations suggest, mainly positive. This does not mean, however, that its loss would be perceived as traumatic, since the main contact language Fula offers an alternative identity already in place.

Before the significance of the Jalonke language situation for the endangerment profile of African languages in general and for ELR is explored, a second case study offers a close-up of another West African language based on my own field research.

4. Baïnouk: a language losing its habitat

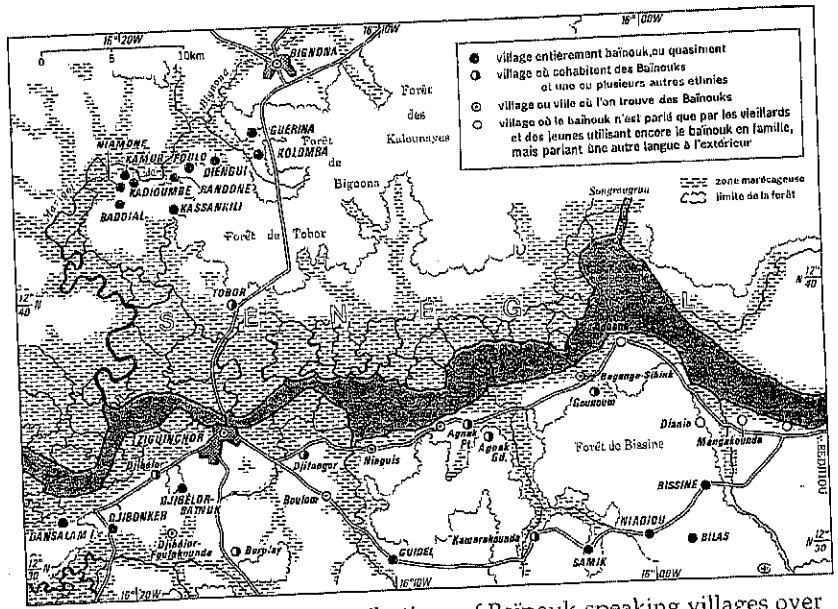
Baïnouk is the cover term for a cluster of related languages of the Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo language phylum. It is spoken in the Casamance area of Senegal. Rather than a group of closely related dialects, as in the case of Yalunka and its varieties, Baïnouk is a group of endangered languages for which no comprehensive linguistic description and no documentation at all is available. In the view of the speech community as expressed by the influential cultural organisation BOREPAB[8], the cluster consists of three main varieties – Gunyaamolo (spoken in and around Niamone and in the neighbouring country Gambia), Gubaher (spoken in Djibonker), and Gujaher (spoken in and around Samik) – which are not or only partly mutually intelligible. The different varieties in turn have different dialects. Numbers of speakers are inconclusive and differ widely according to the source, just as for Jalonke. De Lavergne de Tressan (1953) offers the number of 7,219 for the French territories and of 267 on Portuguese territory (present-day Guinea Bissau), based on colonial census data from 1950. Sauvageot (1987a) estimates speakers of all varieties as about 20,000, without motivating this number. The Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005) gives an estimated number of 5,635 speakers for Gunyaamolo. A distinct Baïnouk language with the name Gunyuno is enumerated there with 8,170 speakers, but it is unclear which variety is meant, since no clear indication of its location is given. For the speakers, the term Gunyun refers to the language as a whole.[9] It is not impossible that the Ethnologue label Baïnouk Gunyuno corresponds to Baïnouk Gubaher, but in that case the speaker numbers are not at all accurate, since Baïnouk Gubaher is spoken in one single village with much less than 8,000 inhabitants (Friederike Lüpke, fieldwork 2008). A third Baïnouk language listed by the Ethnologue is Baïnouk-Samik (1,685 speakers), which probably corresponds to Baïnouk Gujaher, since this variety is spoken in and around the village of Samik. The Ethnologue speaker numbers seem very high, and their provenance as well as the justification of the nomenclature used is unclear. In the following, I will use the labels used by BOREPAB since they correspond to the self terms used by the respective speech communities. Only Baïnouk

Gunyaamolo has received some linguistic attention to date, with publications on aspects of its grammar (Sauvageot, 1975, 1987a, 1987b, 2004a, 2004b). Differently for Jalonke, for which there is no ongoing local research at the University of Conakry, there is also important research activity, mainly on Baïnouk Gunyaamolo, but recently also on the other varieties, at the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar. A number of MA, MPhil and PhD theses, three alone on nominal classification in Baïnouk Gunyaamolo, have been defended there. Unfortunately, this research is entirely cut off from linguistic sources and ignores the published research on Baïnouk and related languages, and even earlier Senegalese theses. So, for instance, three theses each claim to be the first account of the Baïnouk Gunyaamolo noun class system.

4.2 History and language situation

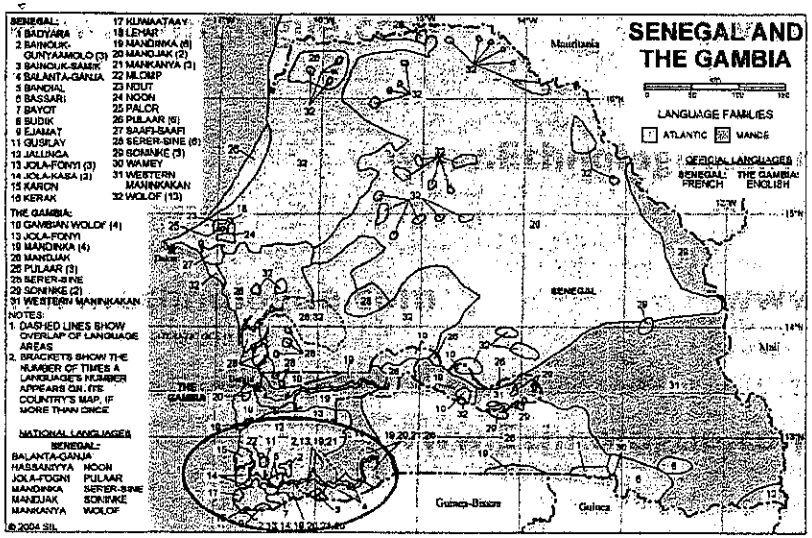
According to historical research (Bühnen, 1992, 1994a, de Lespinay, 1987, 1996, 1997), the Baïnouk and related, almost extinct, Kasanga are to be regarded as the autochthones of Casamance. For centuries, they received settlers of different ethnolinguistic groups and, adhering to elaborate landlord-stranger relationships, gave them ground to cultivate. This custom encouraged further influx of populations speaking Joola languages and Mandinka and resulted not only in a drastic diminution of the Baïnouk territory but also in the linguistic assimilation of the majority of Baïnouk speakers. In contrast to the Fula society in the Futa Jalon, however, the newcomers did not create a centralised state. Although the Mandinka have a strongly hierarchical social structure resulting in a highly stratified society, the Joola peoples, like the Baïnouk, are not organised in larger state formation but constitute relatively egalitarian societies organised in different lineages, each with a king as its head, but without a central government. In addition, speakers of Baïnouk were among the most affected victims of the slave trade (Rodney, 1969), which further contributed to their decimation. As a consequence, today, the Baïnouk languages are only spoken in isolated pockets by small communities which are not in contact with each other in rural settings. Sauvageot (1973) presents a map based on fieldwork on Gunyaamolo in the same year that shows the distributions of Baïnouk-speaking villages over the Casamance territory.

Recent fieldwork (Friederike Lüpke 2008) shows that the map, although still valid in essential, needs to be partially redrawn. In the northern language area around Niamone, the number of villages dominated by speakers of Baïnouk has decreased. In the south-west, Baïnouk Gubaher is now only spoken in one single village, Djibonker. No new data on the south-eastern Gujaher variety are available, but it is probable that the same trend is observable there.



Map 2 – Sauvageot (1973): distributions of Baïnouk-speaking villages over the Casamance territory

Due to the long cohabitation with other ethnolinguistic groups, the Baïnouk language area is characterised by a complex multilingual situation, and the different varieties are partly in contact with different languages. Depending on their location, rural speakers use two distinct varieties of the Atlantic language cluster Joola (Joola Fogny and Joola Kasa) and/or the Mande language Mandinka. All of them are also fluent to some extent in the national *lingua franca* Wolof, an Atlantic language, and many speak the official language French. In addition, a Portuguese-based Creole has left traces in the language. As a consequence, the Baïnouk communities exhibit extensive multilingualism as a systematic trait not just of individuals, but of entire speech communities. A high linguistic diversity and societal multilingualism is characteristic for the entire Casamance, as illustrated by map 3, which also shows the distribution of majority languages in this area.



Map 3: Languages of Senegal according to the Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005), with Casamance is circled

Political factors add to the uncertain situation of Baïnouk languages. The Casamance area, separated from the rest of Senegal through the embedded country Gambia (see map 2 above), is climatically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the northern part of the country. In 1990, long-present resentment against northern dominance culminated in the demand for independence, and a civil war led by the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) broke out and has been waged since then. Although the conflict has had a low intensity for a number of years, one preferred strategy of the MFDC has been to kidnap villagers and foreign visitors. Therefore, hardly any research has been conducted in Casamance during the past 20 years. While at the moment access is possible, the MFDC is still operating from Guinea Bissau, and the areas close to its border (partly including possible Baïnouk Gujaher language areas) are inaccessible to visitors. The experience of conflicts in Guinea Bissau as well as in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea has shown that agreements between fighting parties can be overturned any time. A new escalation of the Casamance conflict could, in the worst scenario, lead to the eradication of Baïnouk villages or even entire communities, or to their massive displacement and consequent rapid language loss. Indirect consequences of an unresolved and continuing conflict, such as material insecurity, and geographical isolation, certainly have increased, and continue to do so, the flux of migration, also weakening the Baïnouk languages further. Therefore, the risk of their loss or dramatic attrition due to a number of external factors cannot be underestimated.

4.3 Ethnic and linguistic identities

According to speakers of Baïnouk themselves and confirmed by my observations, it is not the coexistence with communities speaking larger languages that threatens the survival of Baïnouk at this time. The majority of Baïnouk speakers affirm that the long-established multilingualism in Joola languages and Mandinka is part of their identity, priding themselves on being able to communicate with all major linguistic groups in Casamance and beyond. Rather, the factors at play in endangering Baïnouk in present-day Senegal are mainly of a socioeconomic nature and affect all rural communities, but of course have a much more dramatic impact on communities already of an extremely small size. Due to the possibilities of salaried employment and educational and economic advancement, there is considerable rural exodus, with the regional capital Ziguinchor and the national capital Dakar being the most important destinations. Until recently, men migrated to work as seasonal labourers during the dry season, when the agricultural activities are very reduced, and returned in the rainy season. Currently, the exodus becomes more frequent and often permanent, and many villages see their male population between 20 and 50 years of age drastically reduced (with the exception of salaried civil servants often coming from other regions of the country and not speaking Baïnouk). In addition, it has become very lucrative for young women to migrate to cities in order to gain employment as domestic workers. Consequently, the villages are depleted of younger community members, whereas in the cities, important Diasporas came into existence. A detailed sociolinguistic study (Lüpke, in prep.) conducted in two Baïnouk Gunyaamolo villages reveals that all interviewees in these villages are of the opinion that their language would survive in the rural speech communities. At the same time, they stress their concerns about migration and the future of the language in the Diasporas which are gaining more and more weight at the expense of the rural population. In addition to shifting numbers of speakers from villages to cities, the increased migration and attraction of Wolof as the language of the national elite also has repercussions on the multilingual profile of rural speakers. The demographic profile of the community shows that 100% of Baïnouk Gunyaamolo speakers over 46 years of age speak a Joola language, 75% of them speak Mandinka, and 75% speak Wolof. Among the youngest generation interviewed, a clear shift to Wolof as a vehicular language is recognisable. Thus, among the 14-18 year olds only 62.5% speak Joola Fogny and 37.5% speak Mandinka, the two most important *linguae francae* of Casamance. No interviewed Baïnouk Gunyaamolo speaker at all spoke Creole, the old vehicular language of interreligious communication and urban contexts (Juillard, 1995). Rather, 87.5% of young speakers declared speaking Wolof, a significant increase of this language, which is rapidly turning into the de facto national language of Senegal (McLaughlin, 2008). The use of French, the official language of colonial inheritance has also risen from 62.5% among the older generation to 100% of the young generation. Nevertheless, it can be safely stated that French, unlike colonial languages in

most endangerment contexts worldwide, is not the language posing the largest threat to Baïnouk (Batibo, 2005, Brenzinger, 1992, 1998, Mous, 2003). The use of French is limited to a number of clearly delimited contexts such as formal education, print media, television and the majority of radio programmes as well as government offices. It is the gradual bleeding out of the villages that disrupts the delicate equilibrium of languages that for centuries has determined the complex linguistic and cultural identity of Baïnouk speakers. Forced to seek improved living conditions in cities, speakers find that the contexts for the use of Baïnouk, which in the villages comprise the home, the fields, village gatherings, the religious and cultural context and traditional crafts, are extremely reduced. For the generations of speakers born in the Diasporas, there is little incentive to learn Baïnouk, since it is exclusively used in the home (and even there only in the case of intra-group marriages). Therefore, BOREPAB is extremely concerned about the lack of transmission to children in the Diasporas. The existence of a generation of 'lost speakers' causes further disruption of the linguistic practices in the villages, since their return for holidays and ceremonies forces the Baïnouk-speaking rural community members to switch to a vehicular language in order to communicate with them. It is not unusual to find children conversing in Wolof among themselves in the villages, a clear indicator of Baïnouk losing ground.

Regarding literacy, my expectation before fieldwork was that literacy in Baïnouk would be either non-existent or marginal. (Most African countries only use the official languages for formal education and only major languages in informal literacy.) With the exception of two villages of the Gunyaamolo variety of Baïnouk, in which missionaries ran literacy classes for a number of years, this finding is true for all remaining Baïnouk language areas, comprising ca. twenty villages. Despite this limited scope it is worthwhile to pause and look at the impact of the NTM missionaries, not only on literacy in Baïnouk Gunyaamolo but on Baïnouk identity in general. In the two villages where a literacy campaign was run, only a fifth of the population has (mainly rudimentary) literacy skills in Baïnouk. Yet, 97% of Baïnouk Gunyaamolo speakers consulted regard writing Baïnouk as positive, and believed that writing Baïnouk was instrumental in keeping the language alive. This attitude is not matched by practice, though, since only 22% participated in Gunyaamolo literacy classes while they were offered. In one Gunyaamolo village, where literacy classes were offered in Baïnouk and Mandinka, the Bainouk classes were deserted when the NGO offering Mandinka literacy classes started remunerating participants with oil and rice, thus making the real need for literacy Baïnouk questionable. The perceived importance of literacy given in attitudinal statements corresponds to the priorities of the missionaries, who, in order to proselytise, rely on the translation of the bible and an audience able to read it. The preparatory linguistic and literacy work of the missionaries fell on fertile ground with BOREPAB, who had been lobbying since the 1980s for the preservation of Baïnouk cultural and linguistic

heritage. It is very plausible that BOREPAB has been influenced by global discourse on language endangerment since early on, most likely through the presence of the American missionaries, since they show an awareness most unusual in this area of Africa of global language endangerment (see figure 1).

PROCESSUS DE DISPARITION D'UNE LANGUE

LES LANGUES FRAGILISEES

Dans la famille, les enfants ne la parlent plus, mais que le père et la mère connaissent et pratiquent la langue.

LES LANGUES MENACEES OU EN VOIE D'EXTINCTION

Seules les générations des grands- parents, parlent couramment. Ces vieilles personnes qui sont les seuls locuteurs, se comptent et qu'elles ne trouvent plus d'interlocuteurs (fils et petits fils etc.)

Les mots ont glissé dans **l'oubli**, faute d'avoir été prononcés pendant des années

Cameroun 8
Centre Afrique 1
Ethiopie 2
Guinée 2
Kenya 2
Nigéria 12
Tchad 5
Somalie 1
Sierra- Leone 1
Soudan .....

BOREPAB

Figure 1 (part 1) : BOREPAB flyer explaining language death

LE DEVOIR DE PRESERVER, QUESTION DE VOLONTE

➢ Une langue peut disparaître, sans que le groupe ethnique ait disparu.

➢ Une langue meurt parce que son groupe cesse de la pratiquer.

➢ Lors qu'une langue disparait, c'est une série d'expériences individuelles ou des modes de vie collectifs qui s'efface.

➢ La survie ou la mort d'une langue se situe à deux niveaux :

Au sein de la famille ; les enfants sont privés de parler la langue, par **négligence** des parents, à cause de **l'environnement** ou le choix des **couples mixtes**.

Le choix des décideurs publics accordant un statut officiel à un nombre réduit de langues au détriment d'autres laissées en rade.

➢ Plus une langue est valorisée **politiquement**, plus elle a la chance d'être écoutée à la radio- télévision et dans les relations commerciales

BUREAU DE RECHERCHE ET D'ETUDE SUR LE PATRIMOINE BAYNUNK

BOREPAB

Figure 1 (part 2) : BOREPAB flyer explaining language death

NTM and BOREPAB formed an alliance in order to achieve the recognition of Baïnouk as a national language of Senegal, a status reached in 2005. This status is conditional on 'codification', which means the existence of an alphabet and language standardisation. While the missionaries in their work excluded all the other Baïnouk languages, BOREPAB has been assuming an annexing stance with respect to the internal diversity of the language cluster. Presumably in order to gain more weight by creating a larger speech community speaking in one voice the association went as far as integrating Buy (Cobiana), a language without any mutual intelligibility with Baïnouk languages, into the Baïnouk cluster. The missionaries' Gunyaamolo alphabet, with few adaptations to the official alphabet for national languages of Senegal, is the main output of the codification. Standardisation consists of a list of correspondences for some lexemes and morphemes and a short text given in the three varieties, with a translation into French, which is reproduced in figure 2.

The different Baïnouk versions of the text illustrate the amplitude of the task at hand before one can envisage a true standardisation of Baïnouk. Yet, a common written standard language is the wish not only of BOREPAB and NTM but of all the members of the different speech communities I talked to, and it is the only scenario that seems realistic if Baïnouk literacy is to be introduced. The different varieties each have maybe 2,000 speakers or less. It would be entirely unrealistic to expect successful literacy campaigns in such a situation. In the absence of LDD for all varieties except Gunyaamolo and the considerable distance between the different Baïnouk languages, the attempt of creating a Baïnouk linguistic identity can at best be seen as a long-term goal, not achievable in the near future. Therefore, the official recognition of Baïnouk had no practical consequences so far, and communication within BOREPAB as well as public activities of the association are still taking place in French, as they were in 1982 (figure 3). In light of the almost mythical perceived importance of writing for language maintenance and revitalisation (Lüpke, accepted), it remains an open question whether alternative ways of strengthening the use and prestige of Bainouk can be found.

VI- TEXTE D'ILLUSTRATION

Texte en guñuun

(guñaamool)

guyoxla abukooku maamam facat

Abó, iñaaten ba butékukën maró iput miput hóbun a bukooro. Maamamankoo asuumenisuum naŋ faka anfegne mint maró ni idékenimne gukëñinkinin doho facato..
Imbi honj-honj. Maamam anéerneer mint monoon-monoon gulëfulum. Gunaam awurwur ka menuh. Maamam ayeeji : « gucum indekinemiŋ jëlëfulo.» Asomkum Umi ingi udimankum Raabi andekihiine gubina ba butedaŋo
Agumixila han « karaaŋ kanlódu digó anakiino amukne ? ». Itekunten maró adétdet. Kanda guñoono gudukó jëdi, gudinem jaŋeer Aji juhuno aniroy iñaañtakuno.
Ramuram badimo nip.

(gujaahër)

gunuumula abukooku maamam facat

Aba, man ñaañi tifi maxën butaxën këfi ngóxu mbërniminiŋ nambun a bukoor. Maamamëŋ këme aŋ bëyahi buwul hëminiŋ fak maxën bulahiin kënegtëŋ doho facat.
Nini honjó-honj. Maamam ananni wurówur gubic. Gunaam anëjji ingi aminiki. Maamam ayejji « jukum ndëkkódoŋ janaaf. ». Asom hëme Umi ingi udóon hëme umu dikaam Raabi andëkkó guyikka maxën butëdda
A gumiixla këfi « te gulëd a dig a nakiin dëtti ?». Man taxën kóofi ngóxu adëtti. Kanda rankas gubid guduk jëdi gudinëm jadump. Abaciid juun man ñaañi dëkó fi
Man ranió badiim.

(gubëcher)

gubala abukoka maamaŋ fasaat

Bëeb, me gixec tuxo buyenken idelinimin xobun abukoor. Ñambos xum inceni antiyaxi buwulhamin maraxa bulahinkenen doho fasaat. Baxan ñimeni honja-honj. Bëeb aceni anëeri wurówur gubic. Gunam anéji anga aminix Bëeb aceni aani: « gucum idëxërëmin janaaf ». Asom kum Umi anga ulina xum Rabi andëxërëx gubina maraxa gulikina. Ni umineh: « kati gulód xa kona anakin amuki ?»
Minoŋ buhenken amuki bare gudóŋ gufit guruk jaritaay gudinem jëñéer. Ixecre kuruxó juuñ gaciri.
Uramram budim mes.

Traduction en français

En vacance chez grand père au village

Papa, je t'écris pour t'informer que nous sommes bien arrivés au village. Mes grands-parents sont contents de nous revoir parce que nous allons les aider dans les travaux champêtres. Tout se passe bien. Grand-père a donné à chacun un « kadiandu ». Le mien est long et lourd. Grand-père a dit : « demain nous irons cultiver ». ma tante Oumy et ma sœur Raby iront chercher du bois pour la cuisine.
A ta question : « est-ce que la construction de la deuxième maison est terminée ? ».Je te fais savoir que c'est fini mais une partie du toit est en paille et l'autre en feuilles de rônier. Je t'écrirai à la fin du mois.
Mes salutations à toute la famille.

Figure 2: Text in the three main Baïnouk varieties published by BOREPAB as one of the documents for the standardisation of the language

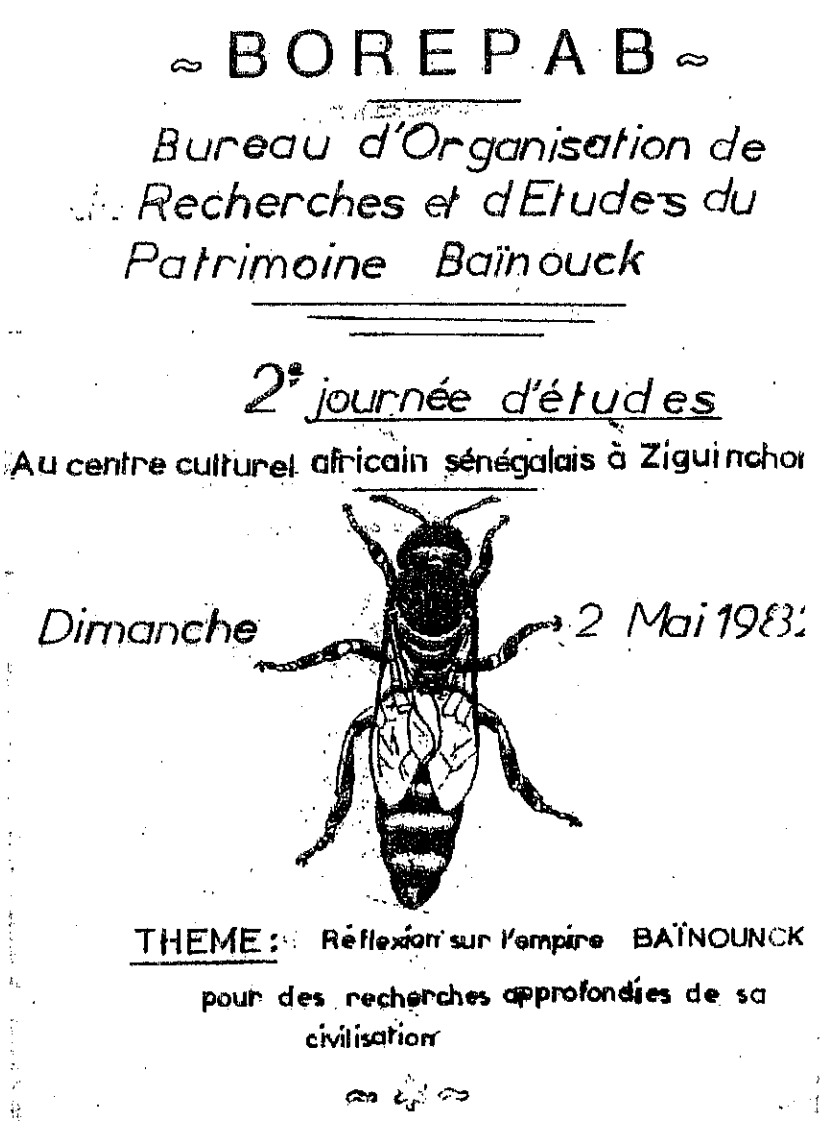


Figure 3: BOREPAB flyer from 1982 advertising a study day on the Baïnouk empire

4.4 The place of Baïnouk on the UNESCO endangerment scale

In many respects, the position of Baïnouk is, on non-trivial grounds (see section 5) similar to that of Jalonke. As for Jalonke, there are no exact numbers of speakers available. As for Jalonke, the proportion of Baïnouk speakers in the local population is decreasing, albeit for different reasons – lack of intergenerational language transmission in the case of Jalonke, migration to cities in the case of Baïnouk. Like Jalonke, Baïnouk is not used, or only very marginally represented, in new domains and media, education and literacy, and by governmental and institutional policies, and there is little description and no documentation available. The main difference lies in the attitude of speakers towards their language: whereas speakers of Jalonke, despite their positive attitudes towards the language, show no evidence for language activism, Baïnouk is one of the extremely rare African cases of a speech community lobbying for language maintenance and revitalisation.

What about these two situations is typical for Subsaharan Africa in general? And to what extent are African endangerment situations taken into account in the formulation of endangerment criteria and the development of field of LDD and ELR? The final section of this paper will attempt an answer to these questions.

5. Factors that make African endangered languages different

It has been pointed out before (Brenzinger, 1992, 1998, Mous, 2003) that African languages are different from the accepted prototype of an endangered language – their loss is rarely felt a tragic one by their speech communities, since in most cases the language that replaces them already belongs to the multilingual repertoire and belongs to a very similar culture. Therefore, the clash between indigenous endangered and imported dominant languages is irrelevant for African endangerment situations. It is most likely that the general absence of language maintenance and revitalisation efforts stems from this markedly different situation. Baïnouk is one of the very few exceptions, and it seems that the attitude of its speakers has been influenced by the presence of American missionaries familiar with endangerment discourses.

African endangered languages, except for the moribund among them which only have a handful of elderly speakers left, and which are with the exception of some well-documented areas entirely unknown to Western academics, have difficulties to even pass as endangered languages according to mainstream definitions. There is too little or too unreliable information available on numbers of speakers, and the significance of these numbers is disputable in light of the often multiple and changeable identities that prevail. Where there are estimates, the numbers are often too big for the languages to qualify as endangered in competition with other areas of the world. But in Africa, the risk of a language dying because of external causes is extremely high,

regardless of absolute speaker numbers. The kind of detailed sociolinguistic information necessary to assess the status and domains of use of languages is likewise generally unavailable. Therefore, it is simply impossible to assess the linguistic vitality of next to all African languages.

Even major African languages receive little governmental and institutional support, and all compete with the (almost exclusively ex-colonial) official languages for resources. There is a strong need to invest in these languages, independently of the need to engage in empirical and applied research on endangered African languages.

This means that at least three UNESCO criteria for language endangerment are not applicable to African languages. In addition, criteria that essentially contribute to the endangerment of African languages do not feature in the catalogue. So, for instance, the fact that the languages are often dispersed over large area and several countries, due to arbitrary colonial borders, is not taken into account. The important role of external factors in wiping out languages due to wars, disease and climate change is not formalised as a UNESCO endangerment criterion, although it has been mentioned in the literature (Crystal, 2000, Nettle and Romaine, 2000).

In other areas, African languages are being penalised because the information on them is so rudimentary. Regarding criteria such as intergenerational language transmission and speaker attitude, there is little or no information available prior to externally funded research, due to the disastrous absence of comprehensive LDD for the overwhelming majority of African languages. However, researchers are faced with the paradox that this information is often a prerequisite for obtaining funding to do this very research.

On the other hand, multilingualism, which is an integral part of the identity of many speakers of African endangered languages, and is mainly perceived as positive, is almost exclusively seen as negative and threatening by the UNESCO list and similar ones. This is in direct contradiction to other UNESCO initiatives promoting the value of multilingualism.

Although funding agencies are aware of many of these issues, they still have to make a selection on what research to fund. In light of the growing 'commodification' (Dobrin et al., 2007) of endangered languages it is often the case that projects on African languages lose out, because a language with, e.g. 20 elderly speakers receives priority instead of a vaguely endangered African language for which no alarming numbers exist. In addition, Africanist researchers often feel that the languages they work on do not qualify as proper endangered languages according to mainstream definitions and hence do not participate in research activities of the field. But is it really the case that African endangered languages do not fit the model of endangered languages, or is it the model that fails them?

Could it be the case that hegemonic discourses on language endangerment

now dominate the documentation agenda and that these discourses marginalise African endangered languages? I would like to argue that the latter is the case, and that this negligence is not incidental but mirrored in all aspects of Western dealings with the continent. It is distressing that language endangerment research and the documentation and description of endangered languages follow this attitude.

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Notes

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2. DoBeS stands for *Dokumentation bedrohter Sprachen*, documentation of endangered languages.

3. This variety is sometimes referred to as the Sangalan dialect, probably after the name of the administrative centre under French administration (de Lavergne de Tressan, 1953).

4. Here again, an alternative designation makes use of the colonial administrative centre in which the language was located by calling it Solima-Yalunka (de Lavergne de Tressan, 1953).

5. I encountered a number of speakers from these places, invited as representatives of their communities for a Jalonke sacrifice taking place in Saare Kindia, and they communicated with their fellow Jalonke in Fula, although they are still able to conduct basic conversations in Jalonke.

6. According to the Millennium indicators of the United Nations Statistics Division for Guinea, in 1995 78% of the population older than 15 years were illiterate. For women, the ratio of illiterates is 64.1%, for men 50%. 'Illiterate' here should better be understood as 'having no formal education, i.e. not speaking and writing French', since not all of the adults without access to formal education are actually illiterate.

7. According to the Millennium indicators given by the United Nations Statistics Division, in 1996 the total enrolment ratio for the primary level in Guinea was 42%. 50% of the boys and 33% of the girls were enrolled at primary school. Given that these numbers are UNESCO estimations, and taking into account that enrolment ratios in rural areas generally are lower, in a village like Saare Kindia they are probably inferior.

8. *Bureau d'Organisation, de Recherche et d'Etude du Patrimoine Baïnouk*, Bureau for the Organisation, Research, and Studies of the Bainouk Heritage.

9. The term Baïnouk probably was not a self-term originally but is likely to stem from the Mandinka word *bainuke* for the Gunyun-speaking population of Casamance, since *–ke* is a locative suffix in Mandinka. Today, Baïnouk, as it is spelled in the official language of Senegal, French, is the most frequently used term to refer to the language Gunyun and the one adopted by BOREPAB. Therefore, it is the one retained here.