Strategic reification: Heritage creation as an agentive strategy

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Multiple sites of heritage creation

The Kankurang

The Bainounk languages

46. Le Bainounk accepte sans complexe le nom d’attribution de “Soninké”, parce qu’il se considère gardien farouche de la tradition qui refuse toute nouvelle croissance.

47. Le Bainounk se déclare lui-même “Ouliskhbeur” (u jamxer) qui signifie dans sa langue : “accueillent - hospitalier”.

ORIGINE

48. Nous avons appris que le Bainounk vient du Levant pour le Couchant.

49. Ainsi l’origine de son Bainounk provient du mot “yagnoune” (yagnoun) qui désigne le couchant dont les habitants s’appellent “yagnoun” (i yagnoun) et le territoire “yagnouna” (yagnoun) d’où Bainounk.

50. Ceci rejoint la thèse du savant sénégalais Cheikh Anta DIOP qui affirme que les peuples de l’Afrique de l’Ouest viennent de l’Est.

51. Ce déplacement est la conséquence du départ des juifs de l’Egypte car Moïse retirant son peuple des territoires des pharaons, aboutissait la tâche des peuples qui resteraient en Egypte, le patriarche Bainounk voyant cela quitte l’Egypte pour s’installer à Tombouctou.
Localist language naming strategies

- Its affiliation with an (ethnic) group
- Its language
- A place

Baïnounk-Jóola

Baïnounk

Gu-bëeher

Ji-bëeher

U-/Ñan-bëeher

Important: patrimonial deixis.
Language as patrimony

- Dominic’s great-grandfather, an Ujaher, founded the village.
- Therefore, it is an Ujaher village associated with Baïnounk ethnicity.
- The family of the founding clan issues the village chief and controls land rights.
- ‘Latecomers’ maintain the identity links to their place of origin.

The late Dominic Mané from Agnack Grand
Patrimonial identity based on contrast

Dualism defines domain in which the contrast is evoked.

In other domains, this identity remains invisible and inaudible.
The Kankurang as patrimony

- Claimed for and by Mandinka
- Regulated by notables of all official ethnic stakeholders of Ziguinchor
- Attested throughout Casamance in various guises and with different roles all related to social control
Power of the Kankurang based on contrast

Dualism defines domain in which Kankurang unfolds its power.

Social deixis and a contract of secrecy are central.
Reification as “strategic essentialism”
Different planes of identity creation

Polyglossic multilingualism & ethnic federalism

Symbolic and strategic essentialism governs ideologies

Nationally

Locally

Small-scale Frontier setting

Dualism between insiders/firstcomers and outsiders/strangers governs ideologies
The symbolic power of writing

- Wolof and French dominate the national linguistic marketplace.
- Speakers of other languages symbolically fight for the recognition of their languages as discrete codes in this polyglossic arena.

Baïnounk orthography workshop introducing the standard orthography based on Wolof
... that can’t and doesn’t need to reify (in) the language itself

Comme les autres langues que la transcription a libérées à tout jeu de l'anathème jeté sur elles depuis toujours par les langues écrites, pour OREPAB, la transcription de la langue Bainounck sera un complément nécessaire, lui permettant de se codifier, de se stabiliser, d'enrichir ou de s'en ir au contact des autres langues.
The symbolic power of folklore

A Kankurang “cultural dance” in the Gambia
Two regimes

Regime of revelation

Requires invisibility

Regime of recognition

Requires visibility

(de Jong 2007) for the Kankurang
Power and powerlessness of heritage
(and the archive)
Loss of spirituality in carnivalesque performances
Creative reappropriation
Playful mimesis

Performers at a Kankurang festival playing journalists (de Jong 2007: 180)
Language and cultural heritage are imaginary reference points.

Langugaging and heritaging happen in practice.
Bonus materials
Fluid practice

Jóola Banjal
‘to hit’
‘to hunt’

Baïnounk Gubëeher

Jóola Kujireray

[ɛ-tɛx]
[ɪa-saw]
[ɛ-tɛh]
[ka-saw]

[ɛ-tɛh]
[ɛ-tɛh]
[ɛ-tɛh]
[bu-deg]
[ɡʊ-saw]
[ɡa-saw]

JS giving forms in Jóola Banjal

Data from Abbie Hantgan
Boundaries evoked by standard language culture...

“No, mélanger ak olof barewul de. Mélanger ak Français, moo bare, mo gëna bare. Mélanger ak olof? No no no no.”

’No, there is not a lot of mixture [of Casamance languages] with Wolof. The mixture with French, it is a lot, it is more. A mixture with Wolof? No no no no.’

Data and photo: Mia Weidl
… languaging in practice

Marie Pierre Biagui [Les brinois Kassoumay]
‘Guys of Brin, hi there.’

Ousseynou Sadio [Les si ñiarou boudji lobé]
‘Hey, the monkeys, what are you saying?’

Christiane Ines Biagui [wa dji reme founah fafou]
‘What have you been drinking that day?’

TheKing Cair [sama gay yi beuge na lene]
‘My guys, I like you.’