From the rivers of Babylon

Re-interpreting the menetekel
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Crossroads Project
SOAS, University of London

Mene mene tekel u-parsin

The road to Babylon
Counted (and found wanting)
= low speaker numbers, decreasing number of languages
Weighed (and found light)
= decreasing number of domains, speech contexts, genres...
Scattered
= no homogeneous language territories, growing migration

Languages are endangered and need to be saved and preserved.

What can be done?
A very British perspective on the issue:
..\Bond and the queen 1.mpg
Language documentation and preservation adopts harmful colonial perspectives (Deumert & Storch forthcoming).

The end

Outline of this talk

• A zoom on the Casamance are in the Upper Guinea Coast of Africa:
  - Settings
  - History
  - Ideologies
  - Language use

From the perspectives of different frameworks, researchers and research participants on conceptualisation of language and language change

Frame: reification vs. fluidity

Changing perspectives
Many thanks to – merci – diina jogehěfi – danke

The Crossroads transcribers
Aime Cesaire Biagu, Alpha Mane, Laurent Manga, Jeremie Sagna, Lina Sagna & David Sagna

The Leverhulme Trust
All research participants in Agnack, Djibonker, Brin & Essil

Anne-Laure Vieillè
Samantha Goodchild
Rachel Watson
Chelsea Krajck
Miriam Weidl
Abbie Hantgan
Alexander Cobbinah
Alain-Christian Bassène

A multilingual area
- Area without large centralised polities or state formations
- Some small polities (grouping around 10 villages)
- Refuge zone at the fringes of states (marshlands, climatic conditions, geographical isolation through rivers...)
- High linguistic diversity
- At the epicentre of globalisation since the 15th century and the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade

A prototypical Frontier society (Kopytoff 1987)
Languages from a genetic perspective

French (Romance)
Kriolu (Portuguese-based)
Mandinka (Mande)
Bambara (Mande)

What’s in a name?

- Jóola Banjal can be used as a hyponym for the languages of the kingdom of Mov Avvi or as a glossonym for the variety of Banjal.
- Within the kingdom, varieties for all the villages it contains can be named (e.g., Gubanjalay, Gusilay...)
Places as ideological home bases for languages

- Its affiliation with an (ethnic) group and/or a code
- Its language
- A place

Baïnounk-Jóola
- Gu-béeher
- Ji-béeher

Baïnounk
- U-/Ñan-béeher

Territorialising a language (Blommaert 2010)

- Ancestral language
  [Woodbury 2005]
- Language of the ancestors of present-day inhabitants

  Ideological home base

- Patrimonial language
  [Lüpke forthcoming]
- Language of the (remembered) founding clan

Patrimonial identity and language in the Lower Casamance

- Landlords:
  - descendants of the (remembered) founding clan
- Strangers

Landlords have land rights and can receive strangers

Patrimonial language associated with landlords of a place; strangers don’t claim this language, even if they speak it. Over time, strangers can become landlords of their new dwellings.

Brooks 1993; Lüpke 2016, forthcoming

Territorialised languages based on selective ideologies

- [Male] descendants of founders
- Strangers (historically including slaves/captives)

- In-married women
- Fostered children

Many inhabitants of a place are ideologically erased from representing it; others are iconized (Irvine & Gal 2000, Gal 2016, Irvine 2016)
Different scales and perspectives reflected in language names

Exoglossonyms
- Fulup (historical Portuguese sources)
- Ku/abanjal (Kujirelay speakers)
- Diola (French sources from 18th century onwards)
- Gubanjalay (Bayot speakers)

Endoglossonyms
- Gubanjalay (Jóola)
- Jóola

Ethnolinguistic group
- Village/ward
- Polity

Fulup (present day use)

Jóola

Lack of differentiated perspectives and notions of scale and historicity often characterize linguists notions of glossonyms (e.g. Haspelmath 2017)

Isambakon’s Jóola

Banjal and Gusilay v. all Jóolas: loss of root-initial i

Banjal v. all Jóolas: g ~ k

Lexico-grammatical features unique to Banjal

What does it mean to speak a “Jóola“: discourse participants’ and transcribers’ perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Prominent vernacular language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laurent Manga</td>
<td>Bainounk Gubëeher (Djibonker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Bertrand</td>
<td>Jóola Banjal (Mof Avvi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cissé Mbaye</td>
<td>Jóola Kasa (Oussuye)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominique Sagna</td>
<td>Jóola Kasa (Oussuye)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean-Denis Manga</td>
<td>Jóola Kasa (Oussuye)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting: natural speech recorded at the Catholic seminary in Brin with the central participant (Laurent Manga) wearing a clip-on microphone

Majority of utterances tagged as Jóola Kasa by transcribers, language also identified in debriefing of LM.

Watson in prep.
Features associated with codes: the linguist’s perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jóola Kasa</th>
<th>Jóola Kujireray</th>
<th>Jóola Banjal</th>
<th>Jóola Fogny</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>åh</td>
<td>rt</td>
<td>rt</td>
<td>rt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VgV</td>
<td>MgV</td>
<td>VgV</td>
<td>VgV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di: ‘1SG.5’</td>
<td>ni: ‘1SG.5’</td>
<td>ni: ‘1SG.5’</td>
<td>ni: ‘1SG.5’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jak ‘well’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The linguist is Rachel Watson who has worked on Jóola Kujireray since 2009, is very familiar with Jóola Banjal and knows the literature on Jóola Fogny and Kasa. When working with this text, she is particularly interested in finding out why it was tagged as Kasa.

What is Kasa in the conversation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance and translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DS (ven)</td>
<td>‘The other one, I’ve forgotten his name, if I want to call, I’ve forgotten his name.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JM (ven)</td>
<td>‘Why don’t you come the day of the match? You come. Who are you?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB (ven)</td>
<td>‘There he did well.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS (ven)</td>
<td>‘Why not?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Identified as Kasa by the linguist

Different ‘Joolas’ in the conversation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance and translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PB (veh)</td>
<td>‘Do you know me?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM (veh)</td>
<td>‘Ah, yesterday I saw you, it’s your name that escapes me.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM (veh)</td>
<td>‘It’s like that.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM (veh)</td>
<td>‘When I saw you I said ‘hop’!’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Identified as Kasa by the linguist

Which code is the remaining text in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance and translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PB (veh)</td>
<td>‘Do you know me?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM (veh)</td>
<td>‘Ah, yesterday I saw you, it’s your name that escapes me.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM (veh)</td>
<td>‘It’s like that.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM (veh)</td>
<td>‘When I saw you I said ‘hop’!’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Identified as Kasa by the linguist

Identified as not Kasa by the linguist

Similar fluidity in writing

Gay can be analysed as a truncated form of Wolof ɡaŋ (Mia Weidl), or as English guy (Friederike Lüpke). The speaker in question has been noted by Rachel Watson to use a lot of English in his speech.

The writing does not distinguish codes, using French orthography as a lead (Lüpke & Bao Diop 2014).
Languages as prototypes

Depending on their language socialisation and repertoires, linguistic speakers and listeners have different prototypes

Overlaps between prototypes and degree of reification

Perspective and scale determine which features are seen as prototypical and how non-prototypical features are classified

A fully-fledged language as imaginary

Speakers not as code-mixing but as code-creating

Perspectives on mobility and multilingualism
Perspectives of a threatened ancestral language

"The Eegimaa homeland is characterised by societal monolingualism, although nowadays there are more individual multilingual speakers than monolinguals. Monolingual villages of the Casamance are, like the Eegimaa homeland, typically mono-ethnic. Most Jóola villages are of this type (Sagna 2016)" (Sagna forthcoming: 3)

"[...] the language is threatened by the growing decrease in intergenerational transmission among migrants who constitute the majority of Eegimaa speakers." (Sagna forthcoming: 4)

Immigrant families may initially use their language at home, but eventually learn the dominant local language to communicate with other villagers. Women who marry into those villages also eventually learn the local languages. Even if their children have some exposure to their languages, exogamy has an extremely marginal explanatory power on individual multilingualism among Eegimaa speakers. (Sagna forthcoming: 3)

Sagna (forthcoming) states that there are no gender differences in repertoires. He notes the existence of gañaleen, a fertility ritual that causes women to move out of the kingdom repertoires. (Sagna & Bassène 2016).

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“Quelles langues parlez-vous?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sent</th>
<th>Interview text</th>
<th>Goodchild notes that she initially translated “Jóola” in responses into “Jóola Banjal” in her notes, thus obliterating an emic perspective.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Um! Et... vous parlez quelles langues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMT</td>
<td>Jóola!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>C’est le jóola d’ici?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMT</td>
<td>Wéy!</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Wéy!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMT</td>
<td>Lesquels?</td>
<td>Which ones?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Les autres jóola?</td>
<td>Any other Joolas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMT</td>
<td>Wéy!</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Um?</td>
<td>Um?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMT</td>
<td>Toi tu comprends un jóola?</td>
<td>You, do you understand a Joola?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Non?</td>
<td>No?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMT</td>
<td>Tu comprends?</td>
<td>Do you understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Non, pas encore, je vais apprendre.</td>
<td>No, not yet I will learn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perspectives of male speakers/linguist with ancestral ideology and perspective of observer of women’s mobility clash.
Clashing perspectives and competing predictions

In a multilingual and polylectal society, a perspective on bounded codes can only ever see them as threatened. Crucially, it is actual language use that is endangering these codes.

A perspective on social functions of variation for indexicality focuses on the importance of polylectality and multilingualism in a language ecology. Crucially, it is actual, fluid language use that is strengthening complex language ecologies.

Contested spaces and indexical misunderstandings

Settlement history of Djifanghor

- Village founded at the beginning of the 20th century by migrants from Tobor.
- Original settlement close to the river Casamance and the rice fields.
- Ca. 50 years ago village moved close to the road, founding new wards to both sides of it.
- Some districts seen as exclusively or mainly Guñun; others as Jóola and Mankanya.

Depending on how Djifanghor is conceptualised as a space, it will be associated with different patrimonial languages.
Settlement history of Agnack

- Agnack Grand:
  - Founded by the great-grandfather of the current village chief
  - Founder moved from Sangaj, a now abandoned village ca. 20km south-west of Agnack

Agnack Petit:
- Is composed of an older Bainounk settlement called Guriñol and a newer street village
- Street village attracts a cosmopolitan population

Marriage exchange between Gujaher and Gugëcer communities

Known facets of multilingualism in Gujaher and Gugëcer villages
- First Portuguese sources (late 15th century) already mention bond between Gujaher and Gugëcer populations.
- Oral history remembers Gugëcer as givers of women to the Gujaher.
- Marriage exchange is still in place.
- Speakers of Gugëcer state being bilingual in Gujaher, while the inverse doesn’t hold.

Creole is a widespread lingua franca in Guinea Bissau and the eastern part of Lower Casamance, and also an identity language for many Gujaher.

Places where Casamance Creole is “traditionally” spoken, although hardly any “true monolingual speakers”

Scope and limits of indexicality of languages and of linguistic features

Categorical vs. relational indexicality

Indexing and plural without gender exponence in Baïnounk Gujaher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Collective</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allitative</td>
<td>di-toomi di-buni</td>
<td>bu-toomi bu-buni</td>
<td>i-toomi i-buni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC-lemon AGRdi-good</td>
<td>Ncbu—lemon AGRdi-good</td>
<td>NC-lemon AGRI-good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonological</td>
<td>karaafo ko-buni</td>
<td>bottle AGRI-good</td>
<td>karaafo-oq ko-buni-oq bottle-PL AGRI-good-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animate</td>
<td>i-fek o-buni</td>
<td>NCi-pig AGRi-good</td>
<td>i-fek-oq o-buni-oq NCi-pig-PL AGRI-good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Default</td>
<td>caabi a-buni</td>
<td>key AGRI-good</td>
<td>caabi-oq a-buni-oq key-PL AGRI-good-PL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definite article in Bainounk Guñaamolo and Guñun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>si-deen NC=kapok</td>
<td>mu-deen NCmun-kapok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>si-deen-o NC=kapok-DEF</td>
<td>mu-deen-o NCmun-kapok-DEF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples: Guñaamolo

Consonant mutation in Gugëcer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a-diil+a-reena NC=well AG Ri-oone</td>
<td>gò-liin ga-noondi NCgo-well AG Rgo-two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to-kur to-teena NC=to-house AGR=to-one</td>
<td>jo-xur jo-noondi NC=to-house AG R=to-two</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indexing a place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agnack Grand</td>
<td>ji-fëk a-buni NCj=pi SG AG Ri-good</td>
<td>ji-fëk-ëj a-buni NCj=pi-PL AG Ri-good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnack Petit</td>
<td>ji-fëk a-buni NCj=pi SG AG Ri-good</td>
<td>ji-fëk-ëj a-buni-ëg NCj=pi-PL AG Ri-good-PL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suffixed plurals –V(ŋ) and default indexing. Animate indexing has become a second order index in Agnack Grand and Agnack Petit. Local speakers have metapragmatic awareness of the contrast.

It is unclear whether this metapragmatic awareness is shared with people from Djifanghor (“second linguistic relativity” (Hymes 1966).
Indexing social networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Collective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominic Mané 25/1/12</td>
<td>ra-guux a-duka</td>
<td>ran-guux i-nak</td>
<td>ba-guux barumuni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominic Mané 28/1/12 morning</td>
<td>ra-guux ran-duka</td>
<td>ran-guux pa-nak</td>
<td>ba-guux bo-rumuni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierrot Mané 28/1/12 evening</td>
<td>ra-guux a-duka</td>
<td>ran-guux i-nak</td>
<td>ba-guux bo-rumuni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hortense Diandy 28/1/12</td>
<td>ra-guux ran-duka</td>
<td>ran-guux pa-nak</td>
<td>ba-guux bo-rumuni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naby Mané 28/1/12</td>
<td>ra-guux a-duka</td>
<td>ra-guuxië a-naam-ëj</td>
<td>ba-guux ba-rumuni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Léon Mané, 30/1/12</td>
<td>ra-guux kaduka</td>
<td>ra-guux-ëj i-nak</td>
<td>ra-guux-ëj jemb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Translation ‘one crab’ ‘two crabs’ ‘many crabs’

Extent and patterns of variation

Paired prefixes, alliterative indexing in singular and plural, animate indexing in the collective

Paired prefixes, alliterative indexing, plural suffix and G-indexing in the collective

Singular and collective prefixes, alliterative indexing in the collective, plural suffix, default indexing in singular and plural

Plural suffix in plural and collective, ka-indexing in the singular, animate indexing in the plural, G-indexing in the collective

Variation as a function of the speakers’ social networks

Perspectives on codes privilege boundaries.
Variation is conceptualised through an increased inventory of codes that is not apt at describing language use.

Perspectives on repertoires privilege fluidity.
Language use becomes difficult to describe without reference points.

Perspectives on features privilege the study of variation. Without investigating how features are conceptualised as belonging to a named language, their social functions can't be understood.
We need to allow for polycentric viewpoints (Mbembe 2015) and respect the perspectives of research participants.

Revisiting the menetekel from an ecological perspective

Counted (and found wanting) = low speaker numbers
Weighed (and found light) = limited number of features associated with prototypes
Scattered = no homogeneous language territories

Wonderful definition of organic multilingual societies in which diversity can thrive