



Contact, culture and concordance: towards an understanding of nominal classification in Bainouk

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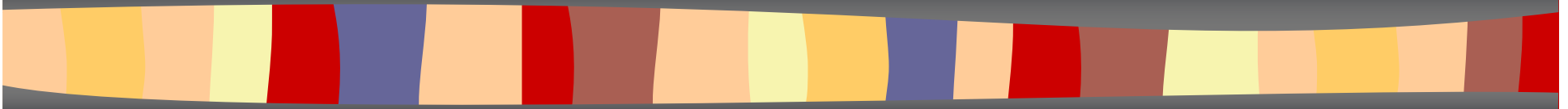


Structure of the talk

Focus: How language contact and language change converge to shape the noun class system of Bāinouk languages.

- Theories of gender and agreement
- Introduction to Bāinouk languages and their contact situation
- Outline of the noun class system and the role of contact and change in it
- Outline of consequences for an integrated approach to nominal classification

Canonical views on the (morpho)syntax and semantics of gender



Gender as a lexical feature of the noun

- “Gender is a lexical feature for nouns in that, like the morphological features discussed earlier, its value has to be available in the lexicon. And as with other lexical features, a given lexical item normally has one value of the feature, and this value may have greater or lesser semantic justification.” (Corbett 2006: 126)

(1) *si-ᵐᵐᵐ*
NC -tree
'a tree'

(2) *m̄ᵐᵐᵐ*
NC-tree
'trees'

(Baïnouk Gunyaamolo)

Agreement as a syntactic relation between controller and target

- “The term agreement commonly refers to some systematic covariance between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another. (Steele 1978: 610)

(3) *jigeen ji*
woman the-near
'this woman'

(4) *xale bi*
child the-near
'this child'

(Wolof)



Genders = agreement classes

- “[t]he existence of gender can be demonstrated only by agreement evidence [...] the presence of markers on the nouns, as prefixes or suffixes, does not of itself indicate that a language has genders (or noun classes)” (Corbett 1991: 146)
- In order to keep the number of genders smaller adopt a minimalist position by identifying:
 - Subgenders
 - Overdifferentiated targets
 - Inquorate genders
 - Defective nouns
 - Consistent agreement patterns
 - Double- and multiple-gender nouns
 - Hybrid nouns
 - Combined gender systems

The big question

- In the case of nonstandardised, oral languages in intense contact situations, as is the case of Bāïnouk, can one free the gender system of “noise”, through eliminating hybrid nouns, inqorate genders, inconsistent agreement patterns etc. ?

**OR is the noise
the data?**

Another gender-myth?

- The quest for a clear, formally consistent system seems reminiscent of the search for a semantically coherent system:

“In fact, claims about a mythical, semantically transparent system assumed to have existed in an ancestor language are commonplace in discussions of noun categorization [...], yet no modern noun class language is attested with such a transparent system. It seems implausible to attribute a property to an ancestral language that is not found in any language of which we have direct knowledge.” (Contini-Morava, in press)

Introduction to the Bainouk languages, its speakers, and the contact situation



The Bainouk

- The Bainouk are the first known inhabitants of the Casamance region of Southern Senegal (de Lespinay 1987, 1996)
- Speakers of all Bainouk varieties live in a complex multilingual context, where they speak between 3 and 6 languages on a daily basis.
- Research was conducted on the Bainouk Gunayaamolo variety in Niamone and Diengui by FL and on the Gubaher variety in Djibonker by AC.



Genealogical affiliation within the Northern branch of Atlantic

A Senegal Languages

1. a. Fula
- b. Serer
2. Wolof

B Cangin Languages

Lehar, Safen, Non, Ndut, (Falor)

C Bak Languages (Lower Casamance)

1. Joola Group: Fogny, Huluf; Gusilay, Karon, Kwaatay; (Bayot)
2. Manjaku; Papel; (Mankanya)
3. Balanta; (Ganja)

D Eastern Senegal Guinea Languages

1. a. Tenda Group: Tanda, Bassari, Bedik
- b. Konyagi
2. Biafada; Pajade
3. a. Kobia [also: Buy], Kassanga
- b. Banhum**

E

- a Nalu
- b Mbulungish [also Baga Foré]
- c Baga Mboteni

Contact languages:
Joola languages,
Bayot, Mandinka,
French, Creole,
Wolof, Mandjak...

A multilingual setting: findings from participant observation and a survey in Niamone



At home: Bainouk (and Wolof)





In the fields: Bainouk, Joola, and Mandinka



On the way to town:
Joola, Mandinka,
Wolof and French



At the market:
Joola,
Mandinka,
Wolof, and
French



Mainly in French

Writing:

CERTIFICAT
d'Études d'Alphabétisation

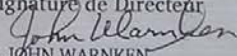
Mission Évangélique
Niamone

Année 2003
No 12 Du Registre De Contrôle

Vu le procès-verbal et écrire de l'examen subit par OUSMAN DIATTA
Vu le certificat en date du 01/06/03 pour le session 2002-2003
attest que M. OUSMAN DIATTA né le 04/06/63
à Diengue a été jugé digne d'obtenir le Certificat d'Enseigner d'Alphabétisation.
Délivré à M. OUSMAN DIATTA LE PRESENT CERTIFICAT D'ENSEIGNER d'Alphabétisation.

L'élève est capable d'enseigner une classe
d'alphabétisation parmi ceux de so peuple.
Il est maintenant un instituteur qualifié

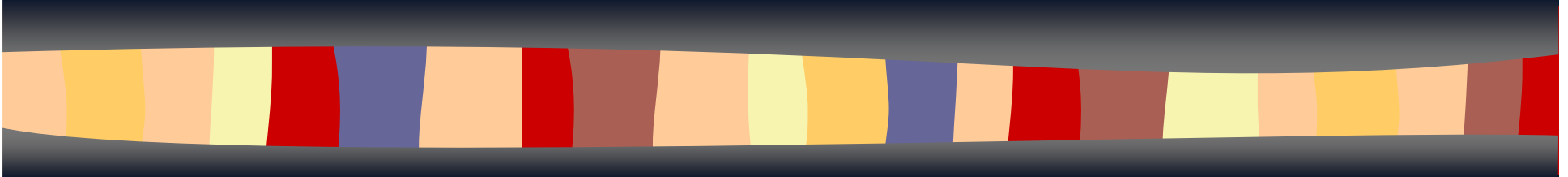
Fait à Niamone le 30 Mai 2003

Signature de Directeur

M. JOHN WARNKEN
DIRECTEUR
ÉCOLE D'ALPHABÉTISATION



.. and to a very limited extent in Bainouk

Historical aspects of identity

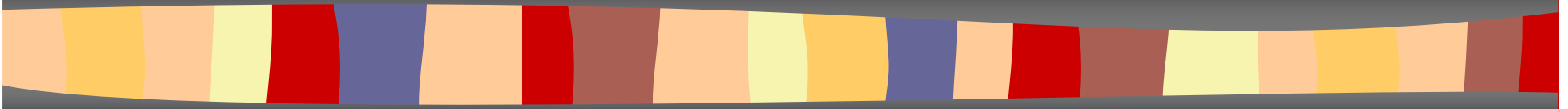


The autochthones of Casamance?

- According to historical research (Bühnen 1992, 1994), the Bainouk are the oldest indigenous population of Casamance.
- However, different Bainouk subgroups have different social structures (kingdom vs. egalitarian society without central hierarchy).
- Oral traditions differ widely between different groups and are only in the course of being homogenised.

Historically, Bainouk could be understood as a cover term for « autochthones ».

« Ethnic » aspects of identity



Kumpo and mask dances

- Kumpo, Kesengo, and horned masks are seen as an emblem of Bainouk identity.
- However, they are also attested in and claimed by Joola groups (Mark 1989, 1992, etc., de Jong 1999, 2002, etc.)



Horned mask performing at a Kumpo ceremony in Niamone.

Sacred groves and initiation rites



Entrance to the sacred grove in Niamone.

- Bāinouk communities have elaborate male initiation rites taking place in sacred groves.
- Similar initiation rites exist in Jola groups, and de Jong (2002) reports a case of a Bāinouk man from Brin (Robert Sagna) being initiated in the Joola village Thionk Essyl.

Wet rice cultivation

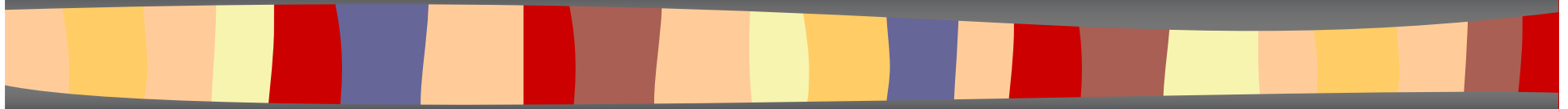
- Bainouk people are famous for the intricate wet rice cultivation methods they developed.
- The same techniques are found throughout Casamance.



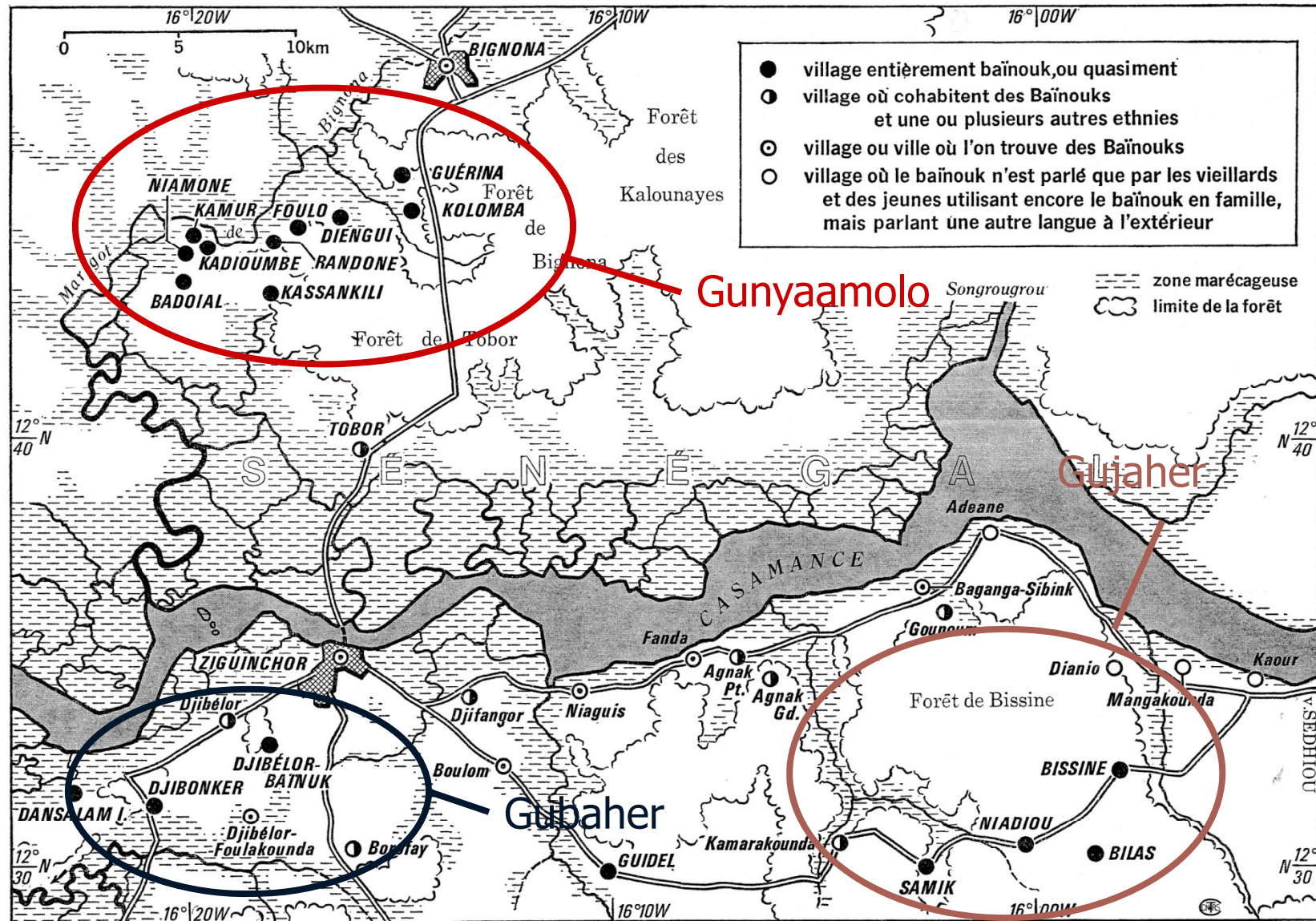
Rice fields in the vicinity of Niamone during the dry season.

There aren't any cultural or « ethnic » aspects that single out the Bainouk as distinct from other groups in Casamance.

No unified language



Three main varieties



At least three different main contact languages

■ Gunyaamolo:

- In contact with Joola Fogny and/or Mandinka, French, and Wolof
- Probably dialect: Gutobor
- Potentially developing independently: Gunyaamolo of Borofay Bainouk (south of Ziguinchor)

■ Gubaher:

- In contact with, Joola Bandial, Joola of Brin (Kujirerai), Joola Fogny, Bayot, French, Creole and Wolof
- Proably dialects: Gubelor and Gufangor

■ Gujaher:

- In contact with Mandinka, Manjak, French and Wolof

There is no or only limited mutual intelligibility between the different Bainouk languages; speakers communicate in a contact language.

BOREPAB: creating a Bainouk identity



- The Bureau d'Organisation, de Recherche et d'Étude sur le Patrimoine Bainouk was founded around 1980.
- Since then, it has been an influential pressure group for a recognition of Bainouk interests.
- The main focus of activities was centered around history.
- More recently, linguistic activism has been added to the BOREPAB agenda.

Endangerment situation

- Like other African languages (see Lüpke 2009, McLaughlin 2009), Bainouk languages are not endangered because of
 - Multilingualism
 - Confinement to the oral sphere
 - The diglossic relationship with the official language French
 - The lack of transmission to children
- They are endangered because of
 - Urbanisation and massive rural exodus
 - Rapid changes in natural environment and way of life resulting in opacity and restructuring of important areas of grammar

The impact of contact on the structure of Bainouk and surrounding languages



An ideal laboratory setting for contact studies

1. The Bāinouk languages undoubtedly share a common genetic origin.
2. There has been no or only little contact between the different communities for at least 200 years.
3. Each of the communities uses different contact languages from partly different genetic families and is characterised by different cultural influences.

(Cobbinah, submitted)

At the same time, no complete picture of the structural properties of these languages can be gained without taking the contact languages into account.

Contact-influences from Bainouk Gubaher onto Joola Kujirerai (Cobbinah, submitted)

Gloss	Gubaher (AC field- RED = Nyuun languages; YELLOW = Joola languages)	Kujirerai (AC field- notes)	Ñuun (Doneux 1990)	Joola Bandial (Seleki, AC fieldnotes)
`wind'	<i>ba-wuc</i>	<i>ba-wuc</i>	<i>*bu-uc</i>	<i>ərus</i>
`wing'	<i>gu-bə:r</i>	<i>kə-bə:r</i>	<i>*gu-bond</i>	<i>ga-bɛs</i>
`ashes'	<i>bu-rɔt</i>	<i>bu-rɔtɔŋ</i>	<i>*-dV(n)t</i>	<i>bu-kugai</i>
`door'	<i>gu- məŋgə:t</i>	<i>ka- məŋgə:t</i>	<i>*gu-bund</i>	<i>ga-negen</i>
`wash clothes'	<i>bə-ŋe:ŋ</i>	<i>bə-ŋe:ŋ</i>	?	<i>ba-ps</i>

Formal properties of the system



Gunyaamolo/Gubaher noun and agreement classes

Type	Singular	Plural
Paired prefixed	<i>si-deen- si-fer</i> NC-boat-NC-white 'a white boat'	<i>mun-deen mu-fer</i> NC-boat 'white boats'
Prefixless plural suffix and alliterative 'agreement'	<i>fajamen fa-fer</i> goat NC-white) 'a white goat'	<i>fajamen-εη fa-fer-εη</i> goat-PL AGR-white-PL 'white goats'
Prefixless with plural suffix and default agreement	<i>sibɔ a-de</i> cat-AGR-big 'a big cat'	<i>sibɔ-η a-de-εη</i> cat-PL AGR-big-P 'big cats'

In this pattern, also circumfix *a- -Vη* attested for some nouns.

Also called literal alliterative concord (LAC, Dobrin 1998)

Paired prefixed noun classes and derivation in Bainouk Gunyaamolo

	Prefix	Stem	Gloss
Singular	<i>si-</i>	<i>mango</i>	'mango tree'
Plural	<i>mu-</i>		'mango trees'
Singular	<i>bu-</i>		'mango fruit'
Plural	<i>di-</i>		'mango fruits'
Diminutive singular	<i>ko-</i>		'small mango'
Diminutive 'plural'	<i>no-</i>		'small mangos'

Ca. 20+ classes paired prefixed classes typical for Niger-Congo languages. Both lexical and productive derivational (diminutive and augmentative) classes.

Prefixless nouns with plural suffix in Bainouk Gunyaamolo

	Prefix	Stem	Suffix	Gloss
Singular	∅	<i>fajamɛn</i>		'goat'
Plural			-ɛŋ	'goats'
Diminutive singular	<i>ko-</i>			'small goat'
Diminutive plural	<i>ko-</i>		-ɛŋ	'small goats'

According to Sauvageot (1967), and confirmed by preliminary lexicon, ca. 30% of the nominal lexicon follow this pattern.

Agreement for prefixed and prefixless nouns in Bainouk Gunyaamolo

	Prefix	Stem	Def.	Dem.	Agr.	Gloss
Sg.	si-	<i>nɔŋ</i>	-ɔ	<i>in</i>	-si	'this tree'
Dim. sg.	<i>ko-</i>				-ko	'this small tree'
Sg.	∅	fa <i>amɛn</i>	-ɔ	<i>in</i>	-fa	'this goat'
Dim. Sg.	<i>ko-</i>				-ko	'this small goat'

What is copied here, a gender feature, or phonological substance (i.e. the first syllable of the noun)?

LAC in need of an explanation

- The first syllable of the noun (e.g. *fə*) cannot be analysed as an NC marker in most cases
- If the first syllable of prefixless nouns is copied:
 - LAC creates a potentially open set of agreement markers (and hence genders).
 - LAC violates the principle of phonology-free syntax (PPFS, Zwicky 1969, Pullum 1986).
- LAC is cross-linguistically extremely rare and has only been postulated for a handful of languages based on very little data (see Dobrin 1995)

However, LAC in Bainouk is not unconstrained. Only a subset of prefixless nouns exhibit it, the other take the agreement affixes *a-/-nɔ* and *(a-)-Vŋɔ*.

Contact as an explanation for LAC?

Yes, but not as we know it....

Sauvageot's explanation: borrowing from Mandinka

- Sauvageot (1967) explains the prefixless nouns with suffixed plurals through borrowing:
 - A high proportion of the concerned nouns are loanwords, many from Mandinka.
 - Mandinka has no noun classes and a plural suffix *-/u*.
- But:
 - Only first syllables containing *[a]*, *[i]*, and *[u]* are copied – these are vowels that occur in Gubaher and Gunyaamolo NC prefixes.
 - Some of the copied syllables are attested as NC prefixes in other Bāinouk varieties and Kobia.
 - There is considerable variation regarding the morphosyntactic status of the copied element.
 - Mainly animate nouns exhibit LAC.

Excursion: strategies of loanword integration in Bainouk

Type	Singular	Plural
1. Prefixless with suffixed plural and alliterative or default agreement	<i>ca:bi a-munduk</i> (GB) key AGR-one 'one key'	<i>ca:bi-εη a-na:k-aη</i> key-PL AGR-two-PL 'two keys'
2. Semantic assignment (examples from Gubaher (GB) (Cobbinah, ms.) and Gunyaamolo (GN))	<i>bu-limo</i> 'orange' (GB, GN) <i>si-limo</i> 'orange tree' <i>sin-fil</i> (cf. sin-kind) 'electric cable'	<i>i-limo</i> 'oranges' <i>mu-limo</i> 'orange trees' <i>ηan-fil</i> (cf. ηan-kind) 'electric cables'
3. Phonological assignment	<i>ka-lerɔn</i> 'cauldron' (GB) <i>ka-ra:fa</i> 'bottle' (GB)	<i>ηa-lerɔη</i> 'cauldrons' <i>ηa-ra:fa</i> 'bottles'
	<i>kabine</i> 'toilet' (GN)	<i>kabin-εη</i> 'toilets'
4. Default assignment to paired class	<i>bu-wεr</i> 'glass' (GB) <i>gu-furʃεt</i> 'fork' (GB)	<i>i-jεr</i> 'glasses' <i>ha-furʃεt</i> 'forks'

An alternative scenario (Cobbinah, ms.)

- Prefixless nouns with suffixed plurals and LAC are gaining importance in all Bāinouk varieties (cf. moribund north-eastern varieties where this is the norm).
- Development of plural suffixes in Bāinouk follows patterns described for South Atlantic (Childs 1983):
 1. Substitution of the original prefix (if any) with the plural prefix
 2. Erosion of the NC marker and/or fusion with the noun stem
 3. Loss of original agreement and shift to default agreement

Hypothesis: contact as the Trojan horse

- The need to integrate loanwords into the noun class system is the Trojan horse through which the balance is tipped:
 - Nouns with semantic criteria that match an existing Bāinouk noun class can be integrated based on semantic criteria cf. *bu-limo* 'orange')
 - Nouns whose original noun class or initial syllable matches an existing Bāinouk noun class can be integrated based on phonological criteria into a singular class (cf. *kabine* 'toilet'), but cannot be integrated easily into a plural class.



If these nouns become very frequent, the symmetry of the class system is broken up, and the road is open for the singular class marker to fuse with the stem. Default agreement follows a little later, so LAC is just an intermediate step.

But: evidence for desperate counter-attempts

- *fajamen* 'goat' in Bainouk Gunyaamolo is a loanword from Joola Fogny:

(5) *e-jaameen*
NC-goat
'a goat'

(6) *si-jaameen*
NC-goat
'goats'

(Joola Fogny, Sapir 1993)

- Other Bainouk languages have an unrelated form for 'goat', with suffixed plural and LAC:

(7) *fe:bi*
goat
'goat'

(8) *fe:bi-εη*
goat-PL
'goats'

(9) *kɔ-fe:bi*
NC-goat
'small goat'

(GB, Cobbinah (submitted))

Where does *fa* come from and what is its status?

■ Scenario 1:

- *fajamɛn* is a blend out of a Joola Fogy stem (*jamɛn*) and an archaic Bainouk prefix *fa-*
- This blend demonstrates an attempt at keeping the NC system intact, at least in the singular, by adding the compatible NC prefix to a borrowed stem and alliterative agreement.

■ But:

- Nouns not recognisable as loanwords from other productive Bainouk NCs can have a plural suffix and default agreement:

(10) *ʝi-fɛk*

NC-pig

'pig'

(11) *ʝi-fɛk-ɛŋ*

NC-pig-PL

'pigs'

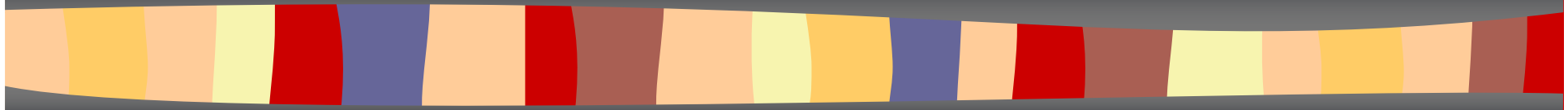
(12) *kɔ-fɛk*

pig

'small pig'

(GB, Cobbinah (submitted))₄₆

Semantic properties of the system



The importance of cultural, usage-based knowledge



si-han
'medicine'
(GN)

Why are the stems homophonous
- can there be any relation
between the two forms?



bi-han
'pot'
(GN)

The importance of cultural, usage-based knowledge

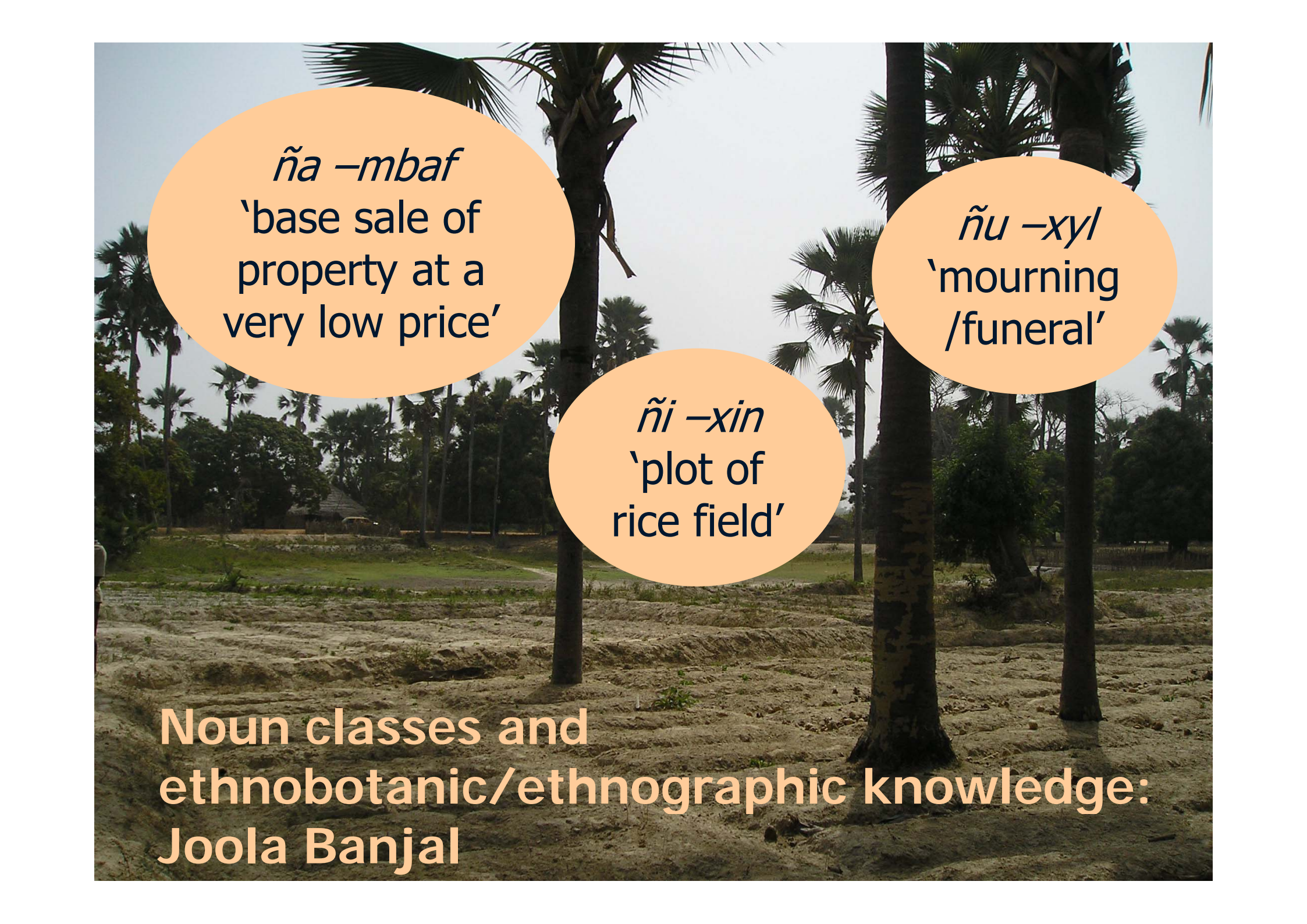


si-han
NC-medicine
(lit.: tree-medicine),
'medicine'
(GN)



bi-han
NC-medicine
lit.: circular-medicine
pot'
(GN)

The link: pots are used to store traditional medicine, made from plants.



ñã –mbaf
'base sale of
property at a
very low price'

ñu –xyl
'mourning
/funeral'

ñi –xin
'plot of
rice field'

**Noun classes and
ethnobotanic/ethnographic knowledge:
Joola Banjal**

Central: the social role of rice fields (Sagna 2008)

- Rice fields are central for social organisation.
- They belong to a clan/lineage and are not generally sold.
- The exception is the sale of rice fields for a low price in order to pay for the cattle/sheep to be sacrificed at funerals.

ñã –mbaf
'base sale of
property at a
very low price'

ñu –xyl
'mourning
/funeral'

ñi –xin
'plot of
rice field'

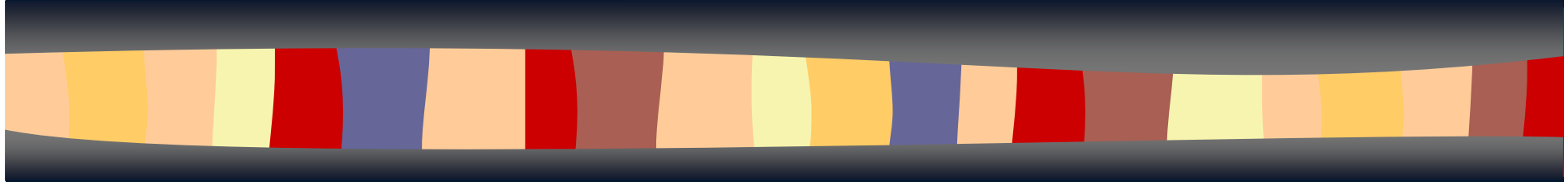
**Noun classes and
ethnobotanic/ethnographic knowledge:
Joola Banjul**

But: limits of semantic explanations

- 'panther' is *ʃi-g:aʃ* in Joola Banjal.
- In this Joola language, *ʃi-* is a productive NC prefix deriving diminutives.
- Sagna (2008) explains the occurrence of 'panther' in the *ʃi*-class through euphemism – a semantic downplaying of its dangerous status.
- However, 'panther' has cognates in Bainouk languages (*ʃigaʃ* in Gubaher) and in Kobiana (*ʃiya:ʒ*, Doneux 1990).
- Other Joola varieties have unrelated forms: *ɛsa:mɛ* in Bayot Ehing (field notes), *i-ta:me* in Bayot Kugere (Diagne 2009), and *a-sa:mai* in Joola Kaasa (AC, field notes).

The key: language contact – phonological assignment of a loanword from Bainouk. Supporting evidence: *ʃi-g:aʃ* takes the plural *su-*, used for many loanwords, not the diminutive plural *mu-*

Conclusion



Nominal classification gone mad?

No!

Les entrelacements complexes de paradigmes [de classes nominales, FL] poussent les locuteurs à dégager de ces croisements toujours plus de sens nouveaux. Ceux qui exploitent le mieux cette possibilité sont les poètes et les enfants, signe infallible que les croisements de paradigmes, dont beaucoup ne sont pas étudiés, méritent l'attention des linguistes. (Pozdniakov 2010: 17)

The limits of purist approaches to nominal classification

- There is no 'coherent' system of nominal classification (i.e. a system assigning nouns to noun classes on one type of or on a consistent number of criteria only) attested in any synchronic African language.
- There are no coherent systems reconstructible to protolanguages.

There is, and always has been, contact and variation. Their study is the key to understanding the creative and multiple mechanisms through which speakers shape their languages.

A holistic approach to nominal classification is needed

- Understanding NC systems like the Bāinouk ones requires taking into account:
 - The full paradigm of markers on nouns and/or in agreement in all numbers
 - The semantic properties of both noun class and agreement markers, taking cultural practices into account
 - The phonological parameters of noun class membership
 - (As far as possible) the noun class systems that are connected vertically (genetically)
 - Noun class systems that are connected horizontally (through contact with different varieties and languages)
 - Variation according to social and multilingual profiles at all levels.

A large, ancient baobab tree with thick, gnarled roots dominates the left side of the image. The roots are massive and spread out across the dry, dusty ground. In the background, there are other trees, some with bare branches, and a few small, simple buildings with thatched roofs. The sky is clear and blue. The text "Thank you!" is overlaid in a large, bold, dark blue font in the center-right of the image.

**Thank
you!**