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TABOO IN LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE

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introducing the volume

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Taboo in language and discourse: introducing the volume

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Every language reflects the practices of those who speak it, their surroundings, and livelihoods, what has to be avoided, and what is plainly forbidden and unmentionable — taboo across various languages and cultures. Taboo in language easily translates into practices of avoidance and secrecy. It also has discursive and performative dimensions. As an object of linguistic analysis, studying and describing that is 'taboo' may be problematic: the information is hard to elicit, and scholarly writing dispassionately turns 'taboo' into a purely academic discussion, while the issues themselves often turn out to be complex and multifaceted. Talking about taboos or bearing witness to taboos in action places both the 'speaker' and the 'linguist' under a strain: the practices themselves may turn out to be potentially dangerous practices, and one has to rely on the metapragmatic and the metalinguistic performance rather on what is being said out loud. What does one say and what has to remain unsaid? How do tabooed language practices play out in multiple contexts and different environments, from the Amazonian jungle and the highlands on Papua New Guinea to urban contexts in Congo and Zimbabwe to tourist hot-spots in Kenya and elsewhere? How is taboo inflicted on those who usually are not in the picture – the linguists who write about it?

Taboo as a way of rationalising complex practice, as embodiment and an experience of the environment, as confrontation and reflection: This is what this volume is about.

The papers within this issue are based on a meeting we organised in Spa, the region of the High Fens in Belgium (30 September – 1 October, 2017). The High Fens — a marshy area about an hour's drive from Cologne — offered a propitious environment for the topic. The misty stretch of the moor was a reminder of the beliefs and taboos many of us grew up with. Under continuous rain, the treacherous paths, lined with withered blackberry bushes, seemed to have hosted a multitude of supernatural phenomena — the unseen presences of the dead and ever-living spirits, where land and water merge and one feels overpowered by Nature's doom and gloom.

The meeting itself was quite unlike a standard average conference, with regular slots and turns. After a brief walk on the moors — to get into the mood for the mysterious, the unseen, and the unmentionable — we sat around a long table and presented brief squibs on the topics that we thought would be of interest and value. Most of these have been written up and have made their way into this issue.

There is an interesting effect in leaving the campus and the seminar room, not for what we usually call our "field sites", but for a place that to some of us resembled childhood environments – where we would spend a weekend's picnic trip – while for others in our group it was exotic and unusual. To meet outside the white cube in which we usually sit and discuss our work made the jaguar spirits of nocturnal forests or the strange and forbidden human body more real and unexotic than these topics of scientific examination usually are in the

Figure 1. The moor of the High Fens (photo AA)

aseptic environment of scholarly research. Perhaps, the presence of the researcher as a more complete person, personal memories weaving into professional experiences, and shared talk that is not rigidly structured by presentation schedules made our topic – taboo in language and discourse – appear more normal, common and average, less exotic and less weird.

And as every language reflects the practices of those who speak it, every scholarly debate on language in its context reflects the practices of those participating in the debate, their positionalities, academic experience, research environment, gender, age, and livelihoods. It seems important to consider taboo in this respect as well: as social and cultural practice that is meaningful for the ways in

which linguists may or may not reveal secret information, speak about taboo language, contribute or not to particular discussions. It is also important to consider the notion of taboo in the context of what is or has been suppressed in linguistics, as a discipline with a complex history, which only now becomes more critically invested in its own heritage.

During our meeting in the moor, much of this translated into stories, or emerged out of them: how we understood that something was secret or forbidden, delicate and touchy, and what this meant for everyday practice. Stories about how knowledge has been achieved, about the alchemy of linguistics, tell much about context and are based on complex intertextual moves: unsaid reference of shared canonical reading and shared discursive spaces, talk about talk, and speech on silence. Nothing of this has been transformed

Figure 2. The alps in the High Fens (photo AS)

into academic texts but resonates in the contributions to the present collection. We assume that this is another interesting effect of leaving the classroom for the wilderness: how this process reveals the power of performance, stage, and image.

This volume contains diverse approaches to taboo as linguistic and discursive practice, behaviour and knowledge. The contributors were free to choose among genres, such as the academic paper, personal reflections from a field diary, or a journalistic essay, so that a collection emerged that offers a more fine-grained understanding of how data on linguistic taboo can be analysed, how ideas about taboo change in the course of time, and how insights into linguistic strategies of talking (or keeping silent) about difficult issues can be obtained. Contributions focus on better-known topics in this field, like name taboo, avoidance language and practices of swearing and insulting, as well as on the dynamics of taboo in new, global settings: linguistic taboo in urban contexts, tourism settings, and the media.

The volume consists of three parts.

Part I opens the field of taboo and secrecy with two contributions that provide an overview of two different linguistic settings: The first contribution is dedicated to taboos in language and social life in Nungon, a language of Papua New Guinea. Hannah Sarvasy discusses taboo concerning the forest, secret codes shared among adolescents and other contexts in which language use indicates difficult topics. A similarly broad perspective characterises the second contribution, Luca Ciucci and the late Gabriella Erica Pia's study on taboo in Ayoreo, a language spoken in Bolivia and Paraguay. Both authors combine what can be found in notes on their own field observations,

materials from missionary archives and ethnographic data, and personal conversations in order to come to an understanding of the complexity of taboo and secrecy in a small and marginalised community.

The chapters in part II take a closer look at particular practices and taboos, which seem to be of special meanings in the respective languages and communities: Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald explores the ways in which the unseen and supernatural can be expressed in Tariana, a language of Brazil that is characterised by its rich evidentials. Katarzyna I. Wojtylak in turn takes a closer look at the language of the nocturnal jungle in Murui, spoken in Colombia and Peru. Shamanism and hunting play an important role here, as well as in the languages discussed in the next chapter, which deals with taboos surrounding dogs and jaguars in languages and societies of the Amazon. Simon E. Overall shows that the introduction of the domestic dog in the colonial era led to the emergence of taboos that highlight notions of intimacy and transgression of private and spiritual borders. Andrea Hollington is interested in taboos concerning intimate relationships as well, but approaches this topic in an entirely different way, namely by turning the gaze to in-law taboo, a "classic" in anthropological linguistics, as she writes. In chiShona, a language of Zimbabwe, in-law taboo involves complex avoidance practices in language and social behaviour. Another form of border-violation is explored by Nico Nassenstein in his study on the practices and indexicalities of poisoning. In Kivu Swahili, a variety of Swahili spoken in the DR Congo, discourse on poison touches upon specific taboos, concerning body politics and fears of witchcraft. Fear turns out to relate to the challenges of daily life experiences in a

postcolonial environment characterised by ruptures and violence, as well as conviviality and continuity. In the following contribution, which explores the intimate aspects of taboo in Wolof, a language spoken in Senegal, Fatou Cisse Kane is interested in fear as well: of social inadequacy and loss of face. In her contribution, the public aspect of private affairs is the focus. In the next chapter, by Asangba Reginald Taluah, everything is public discourse: taboo is a ubiquitous concept, which is referred to in proverbs, forms of ritual communication and swearing alike. In Kasem, spoken in Ghana, taboo and secrecy are closely connected with language-as-art and constitute a part of identity discourses.

Part III consists of contributions that discuss linguistic taboo as an aspect of cultural mobility. Angelika Mietzner and Anne Storch discuss the violation of taboos at a Kenyan beach, where tourists and hosts share difficult encounters that are shaped by neo-colonial dynamics as well as personal biographical experiences. Janine Traber is interested in tourism as a field of intercultural encounters as well, but is not so much writing about talk, but the absence of it. Silence, she argues, is much more than part of elite tourism designs, but also reflects taboos surrounding body and boundary concepts. Sara Zavaree takes a look at a tourism setting where the careful management of boundaries does not seem to play a role, namely package tourism. She turns the gaze at phallic images and objects that are part of the average assortment of cheaply marketed souvenirs. Yet, she argues, this is not simply due to the liminality associated with the tourism space: the penis has complex indexi-

calities in these southern places, referring to coloniality and racist concepts of the Other. The volume is concluded by Helma Pasch's reflections on fieldwork and taboo violation, the inescapable awkwardness that results from the presence of texts of the past, colonial legacy and pain. Her critical and reflexive text on fieldwork on Zande and her cooperation with Congolese colleagues reminds us of the complex and violent historical entanglements that remain relevant and present.

We want to offer a word of thanks to all contributors to this issue, as well as to our colleagues who joined us in the High Fens and contributed to this collection not by writing a chapter but by providing us with a stimulating intellectual exchange. We are equally grateful to all those who bear with us all the time we fail to understand the meanings of taboo and secrecy in their places. Finally, we owe lots of thanks to Frederik Weck and Jan Peters for their great assistance in getting this volume together.

PART 1

Looking at secrecy and taboo
from a holistic perspective

02

Taboo and secrecy in Nungon speech

02

Taboo and secrecy in Nungon speech

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1. Introduction

Nungon is an umbrella term for the four southern, higher-elevation village-lects of a dialect continuum in the Uruwa River valley, Saruwaged Mountains, Papua New Guinea (Sarvasy 2013, 2014, 2015a,b, 2016, 2017a,b,c, 2018; Sarvasy and Ögate, forthcoming). In this oval-shaped continuum with the Uruwa River running through the center, each village community traditionally had its own dialect. The history of use of the term Nungon is

unknown, but no language surveys by non-Papua New Guinean researchers through the 1960s (Hooley and McElhanon 1970: 1084-1085) include the term; in these, the village names serve as language names. It is likely that use of *nungon* 'what' as an exemplar of language and thence as an official language name is related to Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) work in the northern portion of the dialect continuum in 1987-1995; SIL used the form *yaö* 'what' in northern dialects to label the entire continuum. This is the source of the language

name Yau used by *Ethnologue* (<yuw>); more accurately, the continuum could be referred to with the name Uruwa. The grammar of Nungon (Sarvasy 2017a) focuses on the Towet village variety, with comparative notes on the Kotet, Worin and Yawan Nungon dialects, and on the more distant Sagain and Mup "Nuon" dialects (in which there is rampant consonant elision, hence *nuon* for 'what').

Secret language and linguistic taboos are part of Nungon discourse practices. That is, like most speech communities, Nungon speakers censor various aspects of language in particular contexts (Allan and Burridge 2006). Elements of these were observed by the author in the course of nine months of monolingual immersion fieldwork in the period 2011-2013. That fieldwork aimed at full grammatical analysis of Nungon. Secret language and linguistic taboos were not the primary focus, and, indeed, caution about appearing to pry kept me from investigating any aspect of these in depth. At the outset of my fieldwork, the local Councillor instructed the Towet community to share only *maa orog-o* 'speech good-ADJ,' 'good language,' with me, and not to share any *maa moin-no* 'speech bad-ADJ.' This made people somewhat nervous about recording for me; in the first months of my fieldwork, a neighbor might appear in the doorway of the hut as an elderly woman prepared to record a narrative and admonish her to 'only speak good language!' This atmosphere was not one in which I wanted to press people on less-public aspects of language. This chapter is an exhaustive report of my knowledge of these systems, to the extent to which local people have assented to their being shared.

The elements discussed here are: forest avoidance registers, young people's code-speak,

and other linguistic taboos. Much of this is also mentioned briefly in Sarvasy (2017a: 45-50). Although none of these phenomena are unique to Nungon, there are new facets to all of them. One Nungon forest avoidance register seems to be a heretofore undescribed variety in its specificity to landholdings of a particular clan. Description of the Nungon forest avoidance registers also enables a new generalization about the functions of these registers in Papua New Guinea. The young people's code-speak is a very different type of concealed speech; probably faddish rather than traditional, and with the aims of circulating gossip and snide remarks rather than protecting against spirits. This description supports the observation by other fieldworkers that similar games can arise and decline swiftly in small communities. Finally, among the other linguistic taboos such as prohibitions on speaking the names of affines is a linguistic means for averting harm through ingestion.

2. Forest avoidance registers

Special avoidance registers used in the forest or mountains are well-attested in speech communities in the New Guinea Highlands. These include: Kalam (Bulmer 1967, Pawley 1992), Mt. Giluwe region (Franklin 1972), Imbongu (Franklin and Stefaniw 1992), Huli (Franklin 1972, Peter Dwyer, p.c. 2018, Michael Main, p.c. 2018, Goldman 1983), Duna (Franklin 1972), Telefol (Franklin 1972), Edolo (Peter Dwyer, p.c. 2018), Enga (Philip Gibbs, p.c. 2018), Kakoli (Michael Goddard, p.c. 2018), and Bosavi (Bambi Schieffelin p.c. 2018). Beyond the Highlands, accounts exist of a traditional 'mountain talk' register among the Awiakay (Hoenigman 2012). These may be the counter-

parts to avoidance ocean-fishing registers in Micronesia (Michael Lieber, p.c. 2018). Descriptions of forest avoidance registers for the Huon Peninsula region, where Nungon is spoken, are not known to me, but mention of them is likely found in grammar sketches or other materials.

The forest avoidance registers involve at least some lexical substitution: nouns and sometimes entire common clauses, and in some cases, altered grammatical morphemes (Franklin 1972). Most observers relate the registers to local beliefs about avoiding harm at the hands of forest- or mountain-dwelling spirits: this harm could be to themselves, or to the success of their activity.

Some descriptions of these registers depict them as used during particular activities in the forest or mountain region, such as hunting or certain types of gathering. For instance, according to Bambi Schieffelin (p.c. 2018), the Bosavi hunting register meant solely to keep animals from understanding the aims of hunters. But it is sometimes unclear from these accounts whether the avoidance register would also be used during other travel in the forest or mountains. This question remains, for instance, with Bulmer's account of the Kalam "pandanus language" (Bulmer 1967). According to Bulmer, the avoidance register known by local people as 'pandanus language' is used for both cassowary hunting and pandanus nut gathering in higher-elevation regions. Bulmer is silent on whether this avoidance register is used in casual travel in those regions.

Other observers imply that some avoidance registers are used in a certain place regardless of activity. Although, like Bulmer (1967), Franklin (1972) calls the avoidance register used around Mt. Giluwe by the Mbongu, Kewa and Mendi a "pandanus language," he

describes the purpose of it as "to claim to control the magical properties associated with the mountain" (1972: 70). The implication is that the register is named for the pandanus nuts that people gather in the region where it applies, but that the register applies to all activity and travel in the region. Other observers similarly imply that the avoidance register might be obligatory when speakers traverse forest or higher-elevation uninhabited terrain, regardless of their activity (Hoenigman 2012, Peter Dwyer, p.c. 2018). According to Peter Dwyer, for instance, modern Kubo "seismic workers" working on Huli high forest lands in 2013-2014 were instructed by Huli speakers to replace certain terms with others (p.c. 2018). Either this shows that the register is used regardless of activity, or the new "seismic work" was judged by speakers to be close enough to a traditional activity to merit the register's use.

In every account I have read from mainland New Guinea, use of the forest avoidance register takes place in a region locally defined as 'forest' or 'mountain,' opposed in some way(s) to a lower-elevation or more settled area. For instance, Bulmer (1967) interprets the Kalam worldview as maintaining an "antithesis" between the terrain in which taro can be cultivated (up to 6,500 ft) and the lands too high in elevation for taro growing, where cassowary are hunted and the major seasonal crop is pandanus; the avoidance register is used in this latter region.

Franklin (1972: 70) further mentions a relationship, perhaps secondary, between land ownership and the Mt. Giluwe avoidance register: "The ritual language also serves to remind outsiders that certain areas of the mountain are marked off for the exclusive rights of the clans adjacent to the Pandanus area. Without a

knowledge of the ritual language, any outsider would not only be unwise, but also unwilling, to trespass in the area." This statement raises several questions: Is the register used only in the "certain areas" belonging to these clans, or also elsewhere on the mountain? Who are "outsiders" here: members of other clans resident in the Mt. Giluwe region, or just people from elsewhere? How would outsiders learn of the existence of the ritual language, to be "reminded" by it of land ownership? Do "exclusive rights" apply to travel or just to hunting and gathering? Would it be permissible for an outsider with knowledge of the ritual language to traverse the area? Since Franklin writes that the Mt. Giluwe avoidance register is used by three language groups, it would seem that many who do not belong to the clans adjacent to the area do know and use it? Although Franklin does not address these points, he does relate the language-as-warning-for-trespassers to physical markers around the border of the taboo area (1972: 70).

One traditional Nungon forest avoidance register, as I understand it, goes one step beyond Franklin's description in that *every* clan in the region could have historically had its own register for use in its own lands (each village may comprise three or more clans). This would have come about because the spirits who posed a danger to travelers were ancestor spirits who resided on their own clan's lands. This register, described to me for Kotet village, was no longer used in the strongly Seventh-Day Adventist Towet village where my research is based. Kotet village, in the highest reaches of the Uruwa River valley, is generally more socially conservative. This tendency to social conservatism seems to persist even though a number of Kotet villagers have converted to

Seventh-Day Adventism. For instance, a Towet man married to a Kotet woman explained to me that he could not approach or touch his affines in Kotet; this is more extreme than the mere name avoidance practiced in Towet today (see §4, below). It is not clear when the Towet register ceased to be used, if one did exist. There is some evidence that traditional Towet hunting practices involved the avoidance of game animal names: this has been recounted to me and is encoded in the set of traditional hunting dog commands. I consider the Towet hunting avoidance register here first, separately from the more general Kotet forest avoidance register.

By 2011, all but three households in Towet village (which totaled about 130 people) had ceased regular hunting activities. Most people above the age of about twenty-eight, however, had strong memories of hunting expeditions; this was a preferred topic of narratives recorded for me in the course of grammatical research. There were several types of traditional hunting: trap-laying, camouflaged shooting of birds from elevated platforms in trees, group hunts of the *horut* type, and *hap omot*, hunting with dogs (Sarvasy 2017a: 40-42). *Hap omot* 'hunting with dogs' usually involved small parties of family members, often mixed-sex, in which men carried bows and arrows, but dogs were instrumental in running down quarry. This type of hunting targeted mammals of the canopy and the ground. Traditionally, Towet men prepared for hunts with special cleansing regimens, and on departing, were ritually blessed by someone chewing fresh ginger and spitting onto aromatic leaves (Sarvasy 2017a: 21-22).

When hunting, Towet people avoided uttering names of game animals, at least when

they were targeting those animals. As with Bosavi (Bambi Schieffelin, p.c. 2018), this was meant to keep animals from discovering that they were being hunted. This avoidance is encoded in the hunting commands for dogs, and also in certain beliefs about negative consequences if a name was uttered. For instance, if a hunter shot the marsupial called *hiyong* (Plush-coated ringtail, *Pseudochirops corinnae*) and then uttered its name, it would climb back up out of reach into the tree with its intestines dangling! Towet people readily recounted traditional hunting dog commands (a full list is in Sarvasy 2017a: 171). Some of these were specific to the type of game to be pursued, and in each, a term other than the Towet Nungon name of the animal occurs. When it is an echidna that is to be pursued, the term *hor-o-n!* (root-3SG.POSS-LOC, 'at its base') is used; echidnas are ground-dwellers. The command telling a dog to search for a Mountain cuscus (*Phalanger carmelitae*) uses the animal's name, *dumang*, from the Worin village dialect instead of its name in the Towet dialect, *degöm*. I was told that this was expressly done to mislead the animal (implying that the fauna on Towet's landholdings understood only the Towet dialect). For other animals, such as *hewam* 'Huon tree kangaroo' (*Dendrolagus matscheii*), the Towet dog commands use opaque terms like *ori!* that are not parsable in modern Nungon. The Towet village practice of avoiding the names of game animals while hunting belongs to the cohort of New Guinea forest avoidance registers that are specific to particular hunting or gathering activities in the forest. For instance, there would apparently be no negative consequences for a casual traveler to utter the name of the Plush-coated ringtail. This hunting avoidance register thus contrasts with the more general forest avoidance register of Kotet village.

The Kotet village forest avoidance register was explained to me by Manggirai of Kotet as background to an ancestor story he had recorded in Kotet Nungon. He framed the discussion around the name of his *bem* 'ancestor,' which he told me. I will not write or translate the name here, except to describe it as a very common noun referring to a common observable feature of the forest landscape. Manggirai explained that in his own ancestral forest holdings, his ancestor's spirit would be summoned by speaking this common noun (his name). This meant that Manggirai and his family (and, presumably, others in the know) would be able to travel safely through their own forest lands by replacing their ancestor's name with another noun or phrase (approximating the forbidden noun through mimesis) when they needed to describe this common feature of the forest. But it would have been, in effect, a verbal trap for others who trespassed on their lands; those people would be highly likely to unwittingly pronounce the ancestor's name, summoning him. To exemplify this using a different common feature of the landscape, this would be as if every time someone said the word for 'stone' they inadvertently summoned the eponymous ancestral guardian spirit of the land on which they walked.

Beyond the ancestor's name, the Kotet avoidance register seems to have involved further lexical replacements, again, often using mimesis, for other nouns besides ancestors' names. The rationale for these other avoidances is not fully known, nor do I yet know whether the Kotet register also involved replacement of particular verbs or extended phrases. Bulmer (1967) and Pawley (1992) depict the traditional

Kalam perception of the high mountains as being a spiritually dangerous place. The Kotet view of *dungin* 'forest' (the term is *boop* in Towet Nungon) must have been similar; Manggirai told me that in earlier times—and perhaps still for some families—adults tied a protective piece of *kamfang* bunchgrass around a child's pinky on the child's first excursion into the forest.

Manggirai's description of the Kotet Nungon forest avoidance register differs in three ways from many descriptions of similar forest avoidance registers elsewhere in PNG. First, use of the register is not limited to pursuit of a particular activity in the forest, as in the Towet or Bosavi hunting registers (Bambi Schieffelin, p.c. 2018), or the Kalam pandanus register, used for hunting cassowaries and gathering pandanus nuts (Bulmer 1967, Pawley 1992). Second, the terms avoided in the register are not just community-specific, but clan-specific. Related to this is the third special aspect: the land on which each register is used is apparently a patchwork of holdings belonging to a specific clan, rather than a broad swath of land with miscellaneous owners.

The Kotet forest avoidance register, with its apparent ties to clan-specific landholdings, can be considered at least in part a linguistic counterpart to physical markings of off-limit lands (Franklin's "taboo signs," 1972: 70). As I have related elsewhere (Sarvasy 2017a: 41), a taboo sign in the Nungon area may be enforced by hidden traps under the ground beyond the sign; in one instance during my time in the region in 2012, a young woman who had married into the Towet community from Yawan village disregarded the taboo sign along a shortcut to Towet. Shortly after turning onto the forbidden path, she stepped barefoot onto a hidden bamboo spike (*bung* 'spike'). When she fell, her thigh was gored by another hidden spike. In 2015, my adopted mother spent some nights sleeping in a forest hut close to a plot of land she was cultivating; this allowed her to avoid the steep climb down to the village and rest her knees, which were bothering her. Another elderly woman working a nearby plot slept in the same hut. My mother related how her adult son was afraid to visit her in the hut because he knew that the women planted hidden spikes around the hut at night. These would be covered by dry leaves or otherwise hidden, but were sure to be planted in the areas most likely to be tread on by trespassers.

In the case of the Kotet avoidance register, the ancestors' names would seem to be equivalents to such physical traps. Since the ancestors can be eponymous with common features of the landscape, trespassers would be likely to unwittingly speak their names, summoning them.

It is tacitly assumed in all descriptions of Papua New Guinea forest/mountain avoidance registers that they are traditional. Both the Kotet forest avoidance register and the Towet hunting avoidance register indeed seem to have been practiced for at least a few generations. These examples of veiled speech thus contrast with the type described in the following section, which may have only been practiced in the community for a few years. The reasons for the two types are also highly divergent; personal protection as a goal of the forest avoidance register contrasts with conveying gossip and snide remarks as a goal of this second secret speech type.

3. Young people's code-speak

In 2011-2012, I observed some young people aged approximately 11 through 25 occasionally using a phonological imposition-style (Botne and Davis 2000) game to keep their conversations private from others present. In general, they seemed to either be sharing gossip or relaying snide remarks relating to older family members who were present. The code-speak could be interpreted as thus subverting the usual hierarchical social structure in which people aged in their late twenties and older held most power and commanded most respect (a function anticipated by Storch 2017).

We spoke about this modified style as *oesit ketket ton maa* 'girl boy GEN speech,' 'girls' and boys' speech,' but this descriptor may have originated in my own description of the game to others, and it is possible that the code's users had a different term for it that wasn't shared with me. Older people claimed not to understand thus-coded speech, and further denied ever having used or heard of similar code-speak in their own youth in response to my questions about the age of the game and whether it was traditional.

The game involves the insertion of /b/ and a copied vowel after each CV in each word, as seen in (1a,b):

(1a) Standard Towet Nungon:

bög-in   ongo-go-t.
house-LOC   go-RP-1SG
I went home.

(1b) Girls' and boys' code-speak:
böbögibin obongobogobot.

In 2011, I observed Liwensi ("Lyn") daughter of Ögate, then the early-twenties mother of Stesi (about five years old) and my adopted sister and research assistant, using the game occasionally with peers, older preteens, and teenagers, including her niece Sirewen, then about 12. It seemed pointedly aimed at exchanging private, sometimes snide, asides. When Lyn offered to record a short traditional story for my Nungon texts corpus, I asked her to record it twice, once in regular Nungon, and once in altered Nungon using the insertion game. Immediately after telling the 1:44-long story 'Women picking *kugek* fruit and the man-eater,' she easily produced a fluid rendition of the story with /b/ insertion throughout. Unfortunately, Lyn and her mother later approached me and begged me to erase the rendition in code-speak. It had been decided that the girls' and boys' code-speak was 'bad language,' and they did not want to be responsible for its entering my corpus. I complied and erased the recording. I did not observe the girls' and boys' code-speak in use by Lyn or anyone else in 2015 or 2017.

In 2012, missionaries working in the Highlands told me that their son had learned the same /b/-imposition game in Tok Pisin from local children, who called it Long Pidgin. In 2018, Tok Pisin speaker Janet Raphael of Mogi, near Mt. Hagen, confirmed that she knew of Long Pidgin, but implied that the game was outdated and little-used nowadays in the Highlands, having been replaced by a new game in which vowels of Tok Pisin were altered (Jennifer Boer, p.c. 2018). Indeed, Francesca Merlan and Alan Rumsey related their impression of the rise and fall of a similar word game in Ku Waru in the early 1980s as being faddish: generating intense interest and

use for relatively short times, then vanishing (Alan Rumsey, p.c. 2018). It seems likely that the Nungon girls' and boys' code-speak was likewise a passing trend in the Uruwa area.

4. Further linguistic taboos

There are further linguistic taboos and avoidances practiced in Nungon society. These include personal name taboos, restrictions on sharing ancestor stories, and taboos on speaking about certain subjects; there are probably myriad other taboos not addressed here. And as with the Towet and Kotet forest registers, in at least one instance of potential harm through ingestion, harm can be averted by replacing the name of the item consumed with a more generic phrase.

Throughout the Nungon area, affines do not speak each others' names (Sarvasy 2017a: 45). Affines address each other using the appropriate kin term, e.g. *homu* 'same-sex, same-generation in-law of a woman.' In reference to an affine, a speaker can also use a kin term, or may use an epithet such as 'mother/father/wife/husband of X.' Indeed, the most neutral and widespread way to address and refer to parents of children is as 'mother/father of X,' where X is any of their children. This is not restricted by affinal relationships. Some people avoid speaking the names of deceased family members. Although my adopted mother in Towet village did not use a forest avoidance register, she expressed some surprise that Kotet elder Manggirai announced his ancestor's name in a recording for me. Indeed, Manggirai shared his ancestor's name pointedly; this was not done casually. After finishing a story throughout which he called the ancestor *bem-na* 'ancestor-1sg.poss,'

'my ancestor,' Manggirai declared, at high volume, *bem-na maa-no X!* 'ancestor-1sg.poss name-3sg.poss X,' 'My ancestor's name is X!' (I have replaced the name with X.) On hearing this, my mother drily observed: 'He spoke his ancestor's name.'

All Uruwa clans seem to have proprietary *bem hat* 'ancestor story,' 'ancestor stories.' A story seems to belong to a particular clan if it describes adventures of one of their own ancestors and/or takes place on their own lands (of course, there are likely also additional factors to story ownership). Most Towet people recorded their clans' ancestor stories for me with full license for me to transcribe, translate and/or share the recordings elsewhere. (I never asked for ancestor stories in particular; people volunteered them.) But on one of my rare visits to southern Worin village, a Worin father of four young children told me an ancestor story with the stipulation that I not translate it into English. He was happy for me to transcribe it and print it on paper for circulation within the Uruwa area, but told me that the story was *onding-o-na* 'strength-adj-1sg.poss,' 'my strength,' *gesu-na* 'power-1sg.poss,' 'my power.' Incidentally, an elder in Towet had already recorded the same story for me as her own clan's ancestor story, without any such stipulation. I respected the Worin man's wish by not translating either rendition, and not using examples from them in any linguistic papers.

In every society, certain ideas should not be discussed in certain places or at certain times. An old taboo against speaking while planting taro and other crops is no longer observed in the region. Another of the apparently traditional such taboos in the Nungon sphere is discussing plans for the next day at night. When one of my adopted sisters began

to do so, our mother scolded her: 'They don't talk like that at night.' It was explained to me that this was because an *amna unom-ma* 'man bogey-SPEC,' 'bogeyman,' could be lurking outside the hut in the dark. If he overheard someone planning out loud for the next day, he might intercept them in the planned activity.

Finally, harm can befall someone through ingestion. Just as the forest avoidance registers presented in §2 use language to protect against potential harm to a traveler or failure of a hunt, there is at least one case where I was instructed in Towet village to avoid uttering the name of a particular food when eating it. The *usak* tree has edible leaves and nuts; the leaves are rough, but soften when cooked and are prized as accompaniment to the deep red, oily *omop* 'pandanus conoideus' sauce. The nuts are small, hard, dark spheres. These can also be boiled, and are known as nutritious food for pregnant women. People also eat them raw, but they may sting the mouth. It is said that if one utters their name, *usak kowur-o* '*usak* fruit-3SG.POSS,' when eating them, they will sting, but if one instead utters the generic *eep kowur-o* 'tree fruit-3SG.POSS,' one can consume them safely. Clearly, the potency of language persists in the village, as in the forest, and the power of names extends beyond animate beings.

5. Conclusion

The categories of secret speech varieties and linguistic taboos noted briefly here are not unique to Nungon (Storch 2017). Language serves as the means here, as elsewhere, for protecting oneself and promoting the success of one's pursuits, for elevating oneself and one's peers above those who otherwise wield more power, and for showing respect in fragile familial relationships.

The Nungon case enables fine-tuning of the typology of forest/mountain avoidance registers in Papua New Guinea. First, these registers can be divided into two major groups: those used only during certain hunting or gathering activities in the forest or mountains, and those used during all travel and activities in the forest or mountains. The Towet Nungon hunting register, as most evident today in traditional hunting commands, belongs to the first category. Within this second category, the Kotet Nungon avoidance register seems to represent a previously-undescribed subtype: according to my understanding of Manggirai's description, each register would be specific to a particular clan's landholdings within the forest. The Kotet avoidance register allows people to move safely in a terrain in which they otherwise would be subject to the linguistic equivalent of concealed spikes underfoot.

The 'imposition' language game used, possibly fleetingly, by young Nungon speakers to subvert social structures and get the better of their elders is another example of the widespread phenomenon of phonologically-altered code-speech (Laycock 1972, Storch 2017). It seems that the same /b/-imposition game was *au courant* in Tok Pisin in parts of the Highlands at approximately the same time period as in Nungon. It is possible that the Highlands fad spread across the Markham River valley to the Nungon area via Tok Pisin-speaking teachers at the Nungon area primary school or other outside connections. If this were the case, this would be evidence of the ability for a linguistic trend to spread across political, geological, and linguistic boundaries in eastern Papua New Guinea.

Finally, this case study of selected linguistic taboos and secret language in the Nungon speech community is a reminder that harm can occur through ingestion. Just as mammals are liable to react to the uttering of their Nungon names in the Towet Nungon hunting register, the seeds of the *usak* tree similarly will sting the mouth if their name is uttered at the time of ingestion. This could be emblematic of the close relationship between Nungon speakers and plant life in their environment: during an ethnobotanical project where the author and Nungon speakers gathered hundreds of plant tokens for identification, passersby sometimes admired the tokens and addressed them with markers of endearment: 'my dear *songgomon* leaf!'

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person
ADJ	adjective
GEN	genitive
LOC	locative
POSS	possessive
RP	remote past
SG	singular
SPEC	specifiers

Acknowledgments

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03

Linguistic taboos
in Ayoreo

03

Linguistic taboos in Ayoreo

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Figure 1. An Ayoreo woman in the period of the first contact with Western people (1952)

1. Introduction[2]

The present paper will address linguistic taboos in Ayoreo, a Zamucoan language spoken in the Chaco area of southeastern Bolivia and northern Paraguay. According to the 2012 census of the respective countries, there were 2,189 Ayoreo in Bolivia (INE 2015) and 2,461 in Paraguay (DGEEC 2014), a total of 4,650 people, almost all of them fluent in their language. The term Ayoreo is a plural form of the word *ayorei* (M.SG.FF), *ayore* (M.SG. BF; F.SG.BF/FF) 'human being', 'real person', as opposed to outsiders (Ciucci 2016: 33).[3] The Zamucoan family also includes Chamacoco, spoken by about 2,000 people in northern Paraguay, and †Old Zamuco, an extinct language documented by the Jesuits in the 18th century (Chomé 1958 [*ante* 1745]; Ciucci 2018, forthcoming). The Ayoreo had the first stable contact with Western culture in 1947, but were affected by previous contact with Jesuit missionaries. Indeed, a number of their ancestors had lived for a while in the *Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos* in southeastern Bolivia (see Fischermann 1988, 1996; Combès 2009), where Old Zamuco was the second language after Chiquitano, the lingua franca of those missions. Ayoreo and Old Zamuco share most of their lexicon (Kelm 1964), which shows remarkable differences from that of Chamacoco (Bertinetto 2014; Ciucci 2016). Recent research has shown that Ayoreo and Old Zamuco share some cultural similarities (Ciucci 2019), but also that Old Zamuco and Chamacoco have at times common morphological features not found in Ayoreo (Ciucci & Bertinetto 2015; 2017). Existing contributions on the Ayoreo language include dictionaries (Barrios *et al.* 1995; Higham *et al.* 2000)[4] and grammatical sketches (Morarie 1980; Bertinetto 2014). Ciucci (2016) is an analysis of the inflectional morphology of the language. There are many anthropological studies on the Ayoreo. Among them one can mention (without any pretense to be exhaustive): Zanardini 2003; Bórmida 2005; Pia 2006; Bessire 2014 and Otaegui 2014. An ongoing long-term project was the *Diccionario antropológico ayoreo* ('Ayoreo anthropological dictionary') by Erica Pia. This work systematised the data collected over many years of fieldwork by its author. Four volumes have appeared (Pia 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018) before Erica Pia's passing.

In addressing linguistic taboos, one has to distinguish between taboos motivated by religious beliefs (§2-5) and those motivated by social norms (§6-8). In Ayoreo religious

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[2] Conventions. For an explanation of the grammatical features of Ayoreo nominals, see Bertinetto (2014) and Ciucci (2016). We will report the data in the standard Ayoreo orthography. We will not indicate the accent, since its transcription criteria are not uniform in literature. For the linguistic glosses of Ayoreo words, the reader can consult Bertinetto (2014) or Ciucci (2016). For ease of the reader we only mention here that Ayoreo nouns can mark the possessor, while nouns and adjectives have a suffix expressing gender, number and 'form'. Zamucoan nominals distinguish a 'base form', a 'full form' and an 'indeterminate form'. The citation form is generally the full form (FF), which in the singular often coincides with the base form (BF).

[3] Sometimes the Ayoreo are referred to as *Ayoreode*. Both *ayoreo* and *ayoreode* are masculine plural forms. The former is the plural of the so-called base form, the latter the plural of the full form (see fn. 2).

[4] Along with data from fieldwork, these dictionaries have been irreplaceable sources of information. As far as scientific names of plants and animals are concerned, the main reference has been Roskov *et al.* (2018).

view, words themselves can have magic power (Otaegui 2014). For this reason, sacred texts, such as narratives, songs and ritual formulas, are kept secret and regarded as dangerous. The main types of sacred, and thus prohibited, texts are myths, *adode* (M.PL.FF), and ritual formulas, *sarode* (M.PL.FF) (for other subtypes of religious texts, see Otaegui 2014). In this paper we will not address mythological narratives and ritual formulas, which have already been dealt with in Ciucci (2019). When addressing religious prohibitions, we will focus on single words or expressions. Breaking a religious

Figure 2. The small bird which originated from the powerful shaman *Asojna*

Figure 3. *Poji*, the red tegu, once a powerful shaman who can lead people to madness

taboo is considered very dangerous for the individual and it can be dangerous for their community too. The concept of taboo/prohibition is generally expressed by the adjective *puyac* (M.SG.BF), base form of *puyai* (M.SG.FF) 'prohibited, forbidden'.[5] It can refer to both the taboo/prohibition and, in the case of religious taboos, to the dangerous consequences implied by its violation. On the concept of *puyac*, see Otaegui (2011).

A caveat to consider is that Ayoreo culture is now changing dramatically, so that, although we refer to the traditional cultural situation, it would be far-fetched to assume that the current lifestyle of the Ayoreo is still a complete reflection of their traditional culture (the only exception being the few Ayoreo still living in the forest). As of now, many aspects of Ayoreo culture have been almost completely abandoned, and many elements of their traditional knowledge are at risk of getting lost forever.[6]

2. Religious linguistic taboos depending on the period of the year

The nouns of some animals cannot be uttered during the dry season (June-August in southeastern Bolivia), when they disappear. They are: *asojna* (F.SG.BF/FF) 'little nightjar' (*Caprimulgus parvulus*) (Fig. 2), *potatai* (M.SG.FF) 'scissor-tailed nightjar' (*Hydropsalis torquata*),

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[5] Since the noun phrase marked in base form carries out nominal predication, the base form *puyac* can be literally translated as 'it is prohibited/forbidden'.

[6] For more information about the cultural situation of the Ayoreo at present, and the influence exerted by contact with Western people, see Bessire (2011, 2014). Otaegui (2014) offers interesting observations on the current way of life of an Ayoreo community in the Paraguayan Chaco.

potaquero (F.SG.BF/FF) 'rufous nightjar' (*Caprimulgus rufus*) and *poji* (M.SG.BF/FF), which is the black tegu (*Tupinambis teguixin*), or the red tegu (*Salvator rufescens*) (Fig. 3) in the southern part of the Chaco area inhabited by the Ayoreo. *Asojna*, *potatai* and *potaquero* are three nocturnal birds of the family *Caprimulgidae*. They migrate to the North during the dry season, but the Ayoreo believe that they are hiding in the trees. *Poji* is a type of lizard longer than one meter. These animals reappear shortly before the raining season; in particular the song of the *asojna* bird announces that rain will come soon. This taboo has religious motivation and breaking it can be dangerous. Also pronouncing similar words can cause problems: A group of Ayoreo was afraid when a woman referring to the trunk of a tree called *potac* (M.SG.BF) (*Bougainvillea praecox*) (Figs. 4-5) pronounced the compound *potac ero* (*potac + ero* [F.SG.BF/FF] 'trunk'), which has the identical sequence of phonemes as *potaquero* 'rufous nightjar'. A *potaquero* bird sang immediately after, and this was unusual for a nocturnal bird, because it was afternoon. Despite the fact that the woman did not want to refer to the bird, this was considered a sign by the bird, who did not want to be named.

In Ayoreo mythology, almost all non-human entities (natural phenomena, plants, animals and objects) have come from an Ayoreo who, for different reasons, decided to turn into a given entity, and left magic ritual formulas (*sarode*) which can be employed by the Ayoreo (Figs. 6-7). When forms such as *asojna*, *potatai* and *potaquero* are uttered, there can be ambiguity between the common noun of the animal and the proper name of the mythological personage who originated them. Whenever necessary to disambiguate, we capitalise the initial letter of

Figures 4-5. *Potac* (Bougainvillea praecox), a plant of the Gran Chaco

these nouns in order to refer to the mythological character associated with it. Proper nouns are uninflectable and will not be glossed. Both *Asojna* and *Poji* were once powerful shamans (Pia 2014: 113-114), and the ritual formulas they gave the Ayoreo are among the most powerful and dangerous ones (Pia 2015: 47). *Asojna* (Pia 2014: 96-98, 2016: 46-48) was the first female shaman and one of the main figures of Ayoreo mythology. The story is that when she became evil, the community burned her, and dying she turned into an *asojna* bird. In Ayoreo mythology

Asojna was the first Ayoreo who died and turned into a natural entity (Fischermann 1988). In order to avoid the name of *Asojna*, she is often referred to with *chungupẽre* (F.SG.BF/FF) 'small bird', being the small bird par excellence. According to other informants even the word *chungupẽre* cannot be pronounced, and it is better to avoid any reference to *Asojna* during the dry season.

Potatai and *Potaquero* are minor figures, compared to *Asojna* and *Poji*. In mythology they are considered helpers of *Asojna* (Pia 2014: 96), and *Potatai* is sometimes considered her husband (Pia 2014: 58). Pia (2016: 86) mentions a myth which is particularly dangerous to narrate, about a fight between *Asojna* and *Potatai*. The latter was a good shaman, who helped *Poji* to become a powerful shaman (Pia 2018: 20-22).

In this group of animals, the *asojna* bird is the most important for Ayoreo religious beliefs. When the *asojna* bird comes back, it is still taboo to announce it: an old man of the tribe performs this task. This is because taboos weaken and can even disappear after a certain age. Indeed, the Ayoreo think that the danger connected with the violation of a taboo is much diminished for old people, who are destined to die relatively soon. Old men have to be very careful to listen to the first song of the *asojna* bird, but it is dangerous for young people or women to listen to it (Pia 2014: 98). When the *asojna* bird sings for the first time, an old man of the tribe announces:

(1) Eram-i   e   narare

     world-M.SG.FF   already   3.speak

     'The world has already spoken.'

After the appearance of the *asojna* bird, it is allowed to pronounce again the name of the animals considered taboo, and the Ayoreo celebrate *Asojna*'s feast, which takes place during the passage from dry to wet season. It used to be the most important traditional Ayoreo celebration (for a description of it, see Fischermann 1988; Pia 2014: 96-115), until it was forbidden by the missionaries, so that it could only be celebrated in secret.[7]

One is not allowed to see the black or red tegu, *poji*, or pronounce its name during the winter, when this animal hides underground, because it is believed that *Poji* can substitute the soul of the person who is breaking the taboo with its own *Poji* soul, and drive them crazy until they die. The same happens if one discovers the eggs of this animal. In the rare case that someone survives, they can become a shaman. Shamans can heal this mental affliction of soul substitution by sucking the soul of *Poji* out of the person (Pia 2014: 67-68).

In addition to the prohibition of pronouncing the words *asojna*, *potatai*, *potaquero* and *poji*, there are some myths (*adode*) and ritual formulas (*sarode*), such as those referring to agriculture, that are taboo in some parts of the year.

3. The name of God and other religious taboos

The Ayoreo prefer not to pronounce the word *Dupade* 'God', because he is not only considered distant from their world, but is also a powerful and terrible divinity such that no shaman can cope with him, hence pronouncing his name can be dangerous. *Dupade* is considered the

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[7] Since the rufous nightjar, *potaquero*, appears slightly before the *asojna*, according to Fischermann (1988), it can happen that in case of need the feast is celebrated immediately after the first song of a *potaquero*.

creator of the world. The concept of 'God', *Dupade*, is relatively new in Ayoreo culture. The word *Dupade* entered Ayoreo lexicon during contact with the Jesuits in the 18th century (see Combès 2009, Ciucci 2016: 432), and it corresponds to the form *Tupâde* found in Old Zamuco. The word is a borrowing from Old Chiquitano *Tupâs*, which comes from Guaraní *Tûpã̃* (Montoya 1640: 323).

In Ayoreo mythology *Dupade* is frequently identified with *Guede* 'the sun' (Bórmida 2005). Syncretism between *Guede*, an important figure for the Ayoreo, and *Dupade* is possibly due to contact with the Jesuits. When later Evangelical and Catholic missionaries contacted the Ayoreo, they re-used the name *Dupade* to refer to the Christian god, so that now it is no longer a taboo to talk about *Dupade* if one is Christian. However 'believing' in *Dupade* rather than being afraid of him, as the missionaries intended, initially coincided with the breaking of a taboo, which caused some resistance towards Christianity. At the same time, the older Ayoreo regret that the younger generation, owing to the influence of the missionaries, has lost the fear of talking about things which were traditionally forbidden. Before *Dupade*, the main divinity for the Ayoreo was *Asojna* (see §2), who is perceived by the elders as closer to the Ayoreo mentality, and is more vindictive than the Christian god. The taboo concerning 'God' and its evolution over time, like other taboos we will discuss, shows a multilayered complexity derived from social change.

Pujopie (GF.F.SG.BF/FF) is the supernatural power of the shamans (Figs. 6-7). The myth of *Pujopie* is one of the strictest taboos. *Pujopie* was a mysterious being with the skin of a jaguar. It was chased and killed by

Figures 6-7. Samane, an Ayoreo shaman, blowing and reciting ritual formulas *(sarode)* during a healing session

the Ayoreo. The shamanic power originated from the blood spilled when *Pujopie* died. Not only is the myth extremely taboo, but it is also considered very dangerous to name *Pujopie*. Only shamans dare to

Figure 8. On important occasions, leaders used to wear a headband of jaguar skin with lots of feathers

Figure 9. *Pamoi*, a band used by Ayoreo men in order to sit

pronounce this word, since their power comes from *Pujopie*, so that there is no risk for them.

Something similar applies to *sumajningai* (M.SG.FF), which is a sentiment of courage mixed with anger and hostility, proper for a leader (Fig. 8). As is usual in Ayoreo mythology, *Sumajningai* was once a person, and he now gives courage to leaders. In the same way as not everybody can receive the shamanic power from *Pujopie*, not everybody can receive courage from *Sumajningai* in order to became a leader. It is dangerous to pronounce the name of *Sumajningai*: only leaders are not afraid of him.

4. Objects

Some linguistic taboos concern the respectful attitude to be kept for some objects venerated in Ayoreo culture: the sacred stick used during *Asojna*'s feast, and the so-called *pamoi* (Figs. 9 and 12).

Asojna's feast is the main celebration for the Ayoreo. Pia (2014: 96-115) provides a careful description of it. During the feast, the men perform a ritual hunt. When they come back to the camp, an old man hits the buttocks of each of them several times with a stick.[8] This ritual marks the end of the privation associated with the dry season: until this moment the men have to fast and cannot drink during the feast. The moment the stick hits their buttocks also indicates the liberation from the consequences of their bad actions, be they voluntary or not. The stick is a sacred object that liberates the man from the power of *Asojna*, which is transferred to the stick. The stick is called *najnurui* (M.SG. FF), which is morphologically the masculine

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[8] According to other informants, the old man has to scratch the buttocks several times with the stick.

Figure 12. Old Ayoreo man wearing a *pamoi*

Figures 10-11. Fruit and flowers of *Capparis speciosa*

of *najnurua* (F.SG.FF), the plant from which the stick is made (*Capparis speciosa*, see Pia 2014: 57) (Figs. 10-11). It is 30-40 centimeters long, with a diameter of 4 centimeters. An elder scrapes eight to ten scratches horizontally around the stick to create stripes which are then colored alternately in green and white, imitating the tail of a *poji*, i.e. a black or red tegu (see §2).[9] After making it, the stick is hidden under some leaves. At the end of the ritual, the stick is thrown far away from the camp by a young man. Since the stick is a very sacred object, men cannot pronounce bad words in the direction of the stick or make fun of it.

A *pamoi* (GF.M.SG.FF) (Figs. 9 and 12) is a band woven as a closed loop used by men to balance the weight of their body while sitting. Only mature men can make and wear it. Young men and women who use it will face severe pain. One cannot sleep with a *pamoi* under one's head, as if it were a pillow. If this rule is broken, the *pamoi* talks to him in his dreams with taboo words, that curse him and announce serious misfortunes. In this case the 'taboo' act of speech is performed by an object and is caused by an improper behaviour of a human who did not break any linguistic taboo, but is just the involuntary addressee of a taboo message.

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[9] According to other informants, the bark of the tree is not scratched, and an old man only makes some crosses above.

5. Cannibalism

The nomen agentis *gunori* (3.M.SG.FF) 'something, someone who bites, stings, eats' can be normally used, but its compound *ayore gunori* 'cannibal' (*ayore* [M.SG.BF] 'person' + *gunori* 'one who eats') is strongly taboo. According to the witnesses collected by Erica Pia, the Ayoreo used to practice ritual cannibalism (Pia 2014: 59; 2018: 64). Nowadays Ayoreo deny that cannibalism existed and condemn it. Indeed cannibalism is very far from the culture imposed by evangelisation, and even admitting that it used to take place in the past can lead to cultural and political conflicts. In addition, the few people who could have witnessed ritual cannibalism are now very old, considering that all informants who gave information on it were born around 1940 or before. For this reason, it is very difficult to find information on cannibalism, and it took years for Erica Pia to collect some data on it. Cannibalism was not a taboo historically. Indeed, according to the older informants who can remember it, cannibalism was considered a normal practice. It only became a taboo after contact with Western society, owing to the impact of missionaries. Cannibalism was necessary after a battle, because it had the function of avoiding the soul of the enemy to come back and look for revenge. When the enemy was killed, the blood was removed and the meat was roasted along with other food, so that it could be eaten, even up to 20 days later.

According to some informants there was a difference when the person killed was a 'white man', since killing a Westerner was more dangerous than killing an Ayoreo, owing to the risk of reprisals. After the killing of a white man, the Ayoreo drew a silhouette of the dead person on the ground. The weapons used to kill him had to be burned in a turtle shell which represented the head of the dead person. The weapons were indeed considered impure, because they were stained with blood: if this ritual was not performed, the killer could get sick and die. The killer had to stay in the middle of the other men and tell several times how he had killed, and how brave he had been. According to an informant, the killer had to move with cadenced steps along the silhouette of the dead person depicted on the ground (the killed person could simply be represented as a rectangle). Then, the camp was moved to another place, possibly in order not to contract diseases and to avoid reprisals. However, since all informants were young when they saw (or listened to older people talking about) these ceremonies, it is not clear whether the whole ritual or parts of it were also performed after the killing of an Ayoreo. This is because this ceremony was abandoned long ago, so that only a handful of old informants know of its existence.

These rituals after the killing of a man were only for adult men, and were severely prohibited to women and children (Bertinetto, Ciucci & Pia 2010: 124-125). The elderly who know about cannibalism tend to justify it, telling that it was reciprocal among enemies, or that the Ayoreo did not eat the meat but just drank the blood, as in the Catholic mass. Despite the fact that the term for 'cannibal', *ayore gunori*, is taboo, cannibalism used to be a ritual necessity.

In one story collected by Erica Pia, being eaten is a punishment for a very evil person, *Chogaide*, who is condemned to death. He is tied and another Ayoreo group is contacted so that they can come to kill and eat him in the night. Then *Chogaide* manages to escape, with the help

of a friend, and disappears. The interesting fact is that this narrative seems to contain some references to the Jesuits: the character who condemns *Chogaide* could be identified with a Jesuit, while the group of people called to eat him could be the Zamucoan who still resisted evangelisation (from which today's Ayoreo descend). It is impossible to know whether this story originated from a real event, but the fact that it is not set in a mythological past invites the hypothesis that such an extreme form of punishment could have been used in the not too distant past.

6. Taboos related to sex

Other linguistic taboos have social motivations, although they are related to forbidden behaviours which can have dangerous magic consequences, as narrated in many Ayoreo myths (not discussed here). In pre-contact Ayoreo society, there is a great degree of sexual freedom concerning heterosexual relationships before marriage (Fischermann 1988: 82; Pia 2016: 91). People can have many relationships according to their own pleasure. Generally the only rules are that: (i) only women have permission to woo men (not vice versa), (ii) the couple has to hide during sexual intercourse, and (iii) the woman does not have to remain pregnant.[10] Despite such a high degree of freedom, talking about sex is taboo. Men cannot talk with women about sex: mentioning sex is taboo even between husband and wife. A man can only talk about sex with a very close male friend. For this reason we do not have much data on how they express the concept of

Figure 13. The *ayoi* was used by Ayoreo men to cover their genitals

Figure 14. The making of an *ayoi*

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[10] Children were buried alive when they were born from an unmarried woman, or from a married woman, if it was suspected that the husband was not the real father.

'making sex'. In the same way, the man cannot explicitly ask a woman for sex. Among the Ayoreo it must be the woman who looks for the man. Sexual freedom ends with marriage. In the past, the only exception was a feast where married and unmarried people were free to have sexual intercourse with each other. Such a feast was prohibited by missionaries, but is still remembered by the elders, who tell about it with a wealth of detail and with much pleasure.

The Ayoreo cover their genitals, since showing them is taboo (Figs. 13-15). It is also forbidden for a man to look at a naked woman, unless they are married. This taboo is broken in the story of Isede, an evil shaman who was killed because he wanted to see the genitals of a group of women (Pia 2018: 24-25). For all of these reasons, Ayoreo tend to avoid naming sexual organs and private parts, which are referred to by the following words:

(2)   *ajero* (3.F.SG.BF/FF) 'vulva'
        aquedo (F.SG.BF/FF) 'penis'
        gapudi (3.M.SG.FF), *gaput* (3.M.SG.BF) 'penis'[11]
        guite (3.F.SG.BF/FF) 'scrotum'[12]
        uchapie (3.F.SG.BF/FF) 'anus'

Garai (M.SG.FF) is an open space in the woods. It can also refer to the vulva, owing to the fact that Ayoreo women have no pubic hair. When *garai* is used with this meaning, it

Figure 15. Although nudity was taboo, showing their breasts was not taboo for women, cf. Figure 1

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[11] Although some informants consider this word slightly more polite than *aquedo*, it is still regarded as 'vulgar', being a taboo word. In Higham *et al.* (2000) the singular base form *gaput* is not reported, although they always also indicate masculine base forms. This possibly has to do with the social taboo concerning sex and genitalia.

[12] As already noted by Higham *et al.* (2000: 233), the first person singular of *guite* is *yite* (1s) 'my scrotum', similar to the first person singular of 'mother', *ite* (1s) 'my mother'. Contrary to the general rule, *ite* does not take the first person singular prefix *y-*. This permits the distinction of *yite* (1s) 'my scrotum' from *ite* (1s) 'my mother'. As shown by Ciucci & Bertinetto (2017: 309-310) some Zamucoan kinship terms can have prefixless first person singular for historical and pragmatic reasons, however, from a synchronic point of view, linguistic taboo is a clear obstacle to the regularisation of *ite* (1s) 'my mother'.

is clearly taboo. In order to avoid pronouncing these words, in myths sexual organs are often referred to as the 'hidden part', the 'intimate part' and so on, using relational nouns. An example of this is *ajei* (3.m.sg.ff), which means 'stomach, intestine' and also functions as a relational noun meaning 'inside of'. With the latter use, it can refer to a sexual organ. Another euphemism is the use of the relational noun *iquei* (3.m.sg.ff) 'ahead of, before'. This is shown in example (3), which comes from the above mentioned myth of *Isede*.

(3)

Chi	ore	ch-ajire	ore	ique-i
evid	3pl	3-look	3pl	3.ahead_of-m.sg.ff

'They say that he looked at their vulva.'

Other expressions for 'vagina, vulva', which should be considered euphemisms, are:

(i) *disi garani*, from *disi* 'child' (m.sg.bf/ff) and *garani* 'place of origin' (3.m.sg.ff), lit. 'place from where the child comes from';

(ii) *disi iriguidi*, from *disi* 'child' (m.sg.bf/ff) and *iriguidi* (3.m.sg.ff) 'birthplace', lit. 'birthplace of the child'.

Another taboo related to the sexual sphere is menstruation. It is mostly taboo to mention menstruation and there is not even a specific word for this, but the plural of 'blood', *diquiyode* (gf.m.pl.ff), is used. While a woman is menstruating, she is considered unclean and has to remain hidden in the house. In this period the woman cannot have sex, and in case she has a relationship, she has to warn the man, so that he can stay away (4). Blood has to be collected

in a big leaf in order to be hidden and disposed of outside of the camp.

(4)

Y-iy-ode	deji	yu
1sg-blood-m.pl.ff	3.exist	1sg

'I have my period.'

Also 'semen' / 'sperm' lacks a specific term. It is expressed by the plurale tantum *irisode* (m.pl), properly meaning 'milk' or 'sap, resin'. It goes without saying that, unless strictly necessary, it is prohibited to use *irisode* for 'semen, sperm'. Another word for 'semen, sperm' is *adode*, used in the taboo expression for 'ejaculation': *adode* (3.sperm.m.pl) *jno* (3.go), lit. 'the sperm goes'. What is morphologically the singular full form of *adode*, *adi* (3.m.sg.ff), has several meanings, including 'part', 'body part', 'possession', 'property', 'manner', 'way'. A hypothesis is that the sperm is seen as a set of 'parts' or entities 'belonging' to the man. However, the plural form *adode* itself is not taboo: it is the standard term for Ayoreo myths. In this sense, one could speculate that there is a connection between the taboo associated with Ayoreo myths, which must be kept secret, and the one associated with ejaculation. However, so far it has not been possible to find any confirmation for this hypothesis.

Some demonstrations of affections, such as kissing and hugging, are unknown to pre-contact Ayoreo culture. The Ayoreo language has no word for 'to kiss' or 'to hug'. Also oral sex is a new concept learned from Western society. This also has influenced linguistic taboos. The word *ipeyai* (3.m.sg.ff) 'what is sucked, licked' is a deverbal noun from the verb *chipese* (3) 'to suck, to lick'. Neither of these words was considered taboo, and they did not have any connection with sex. The 'introduc-

tion' of oral sex among Ayoreo has turned *ipeyai* into a very vulgar word, which one should never pronounce, alluding to 'what is sucked, licked' during a sexual relationship, that is the genitalia, a linguistic taboo.

During one of her many periods of field-works, Erica Pia met a very religious woman, who attended the church every day, wore long dresses in a tropical climate and would never pronounce a vulgar word. Erica Pia listened to the woman calling her dog "*Ipeyai*, *Ipeyai*, *Ipeyai*!". She was curious about the name of the dog and asked the woman what the meaning was. She replied that she did not know the meaning, because an Ayoreo employee of hers had given this name to the dog. Erica Pia then asked one of her main informants, Dijaide (†), who answered that the name had to do with the act of licking. To Pia, this looked like an appropriate name for a dog and mentioned this fact to a group of young Ayoreo, who laughed a lot, but refused to explain the reason. She again asked her main informant, who was embarrassed and hesitated before providing, after many evasive words, an explanation on how the word had changed meaning turning to be a vulgar and taboo word, since it had to do with oral sex. Indeed, the name *ipeyai*, without any sexual connotation, emerged in a myth collected by Erica Pia. Finally, after some talks with other informants, it became clear that the Ayoreo employee had chosen *ipeyai* out of revenge. In this case, speaking through animals by naming them avoids awkward social interaction, such as open critique. This is a little studied practice also found among Chamacoco speakers, as well as in some East African societies (Anne Storch, p.c.).

6.1 Insults related to sexual taboos

As in many other cultures where sex is a taboo, the sexual behaviour of an individual does affect their judgment by society. If this can lead to marginalisation in the most extreme cases, more often it offers ground for the elaboration of insults.

The fact of being paid for sex was unconceivable in traditional Ayoreo society, since sex must be something pleasant. Prostitution is an activity some Ayoreo began to practice only after contact with Western people. Since prostitution was a taboo, the Ayoreo do not have a proper word for 'prostitute'. A prostitute can be referred to as *cheque* (woman. F.SG.BF/FF) *ducarane* (rejected.F.SG.BF/FF) 'discarded woman', implying that she is a woman rejected by society. More often, the word used is *dibe* (F.SG.BF/FF), properly 'fox'. Like all animals also the fox was once a person in Ayoreo mythology. *Dibe* 'fox' is found in several stories, where she is a woman who steals, deceives and has sex with many men. In some stories she simply liked to have sex with many men, while in others she is raped. The informants are embarrassed to talk about the sexual life of *Dibe*, and the noun *dibe* itself for 'prostitute' is a word normally avoided, both because sex is a taboo, and because the word is used as an insult. Since 'fox' is feminine in Ayoreo, the male of the fox is obtained by adding *choqui* (male.M.SG.BF/FF) to *dibe*: *dibe choqui* 'he-fox'. There is however a specific form for 'male prostitute' clearly related to *dibe*: *dibai* (M.SG.FF), which is also a taboo word.

Children can pay for the sexual misconduct of their parents. The expression *abi bisideque* (3.child.M.SG.FF of_no_value.M.SG.BF) literally 'the child has no value, the child is for fun', means that someone has no father. This is

a serious offence for both the person referred to as 'child' and the mother. Although this expression alludes to some sexual misconduct by the mother, the reason why she had no husband was secondary and she could not have been directly responsible for the lack of a man. A woman who gave birth to a baby in the forest absolutely needed to have a husband, who was necessary in order to look for food. In the past, if a woman had a child, but no husband, the baby was killed. A variant of this insult was *emi* (wind.M.SG.FF) *abi* (3.child.M.SG.FF) 'child of the wind'. The woman without husband is referred to as *cheque* (woman.F.SG.BF/FF) *ca* (NEG), lit. 'woman no...'. The open-ended negation here indicates that the woman has no husband, and this fact itself shows how taboo the lack of a husband is. Pia (2018: 113-114) reports the myth of *Cuco*, a woman who gets pregnant without being married. For this reason, since she is breaking a social taboo and is afraid that her child will be an *emi abi*, a 'child of the wind', which means a terrible loss of her honour, she keeps her pregnancy secret and buries her baby alive after their birth. In this way, after a while, she can marry *Tobejnai*. Despite the baby being killed by the mother in this myth, more often it was a relative who killed the newborn. The lack of a husband was not the only reason for infanticide. Killing newborn babies was not uncommon among the Ayoreo, and, even when the woman was married, doubts about the paternity were solved by killing the baby (Pia 2015: 16-17), without any further implication for the woman. This generally happened with the firstborn, owing to the sexual freedom enjoyed by women before marriage.

Other words of insult concern the lack of sexual power in the man. (5) and (6) refer to an old man, but they are also used with a more offensive meaning, for a young man.

(5) Choquijna-i   que   ch-ibote
     old_man-M.SG.FF   NEG   3-turn_back_and_forth
     d-acote   go
     REFL-wife[F.SG.BF/FF]   at_all
     'The old man cannot have sex with his wife at all.'

(6) Choquijna   cadata-i
     old_man[M.SG.BF]   without_strength-M.SG.FF
     'Old man without strength', also 'impotent.'

7. Taboos related to names

When a child is born, it is generally named after an object or a natural entity, turning a common noun into a proper noun.[13] For instance, *Enojei*, an Ayoreo whose story is mentioned at the end of the present section, was named after *enojei* or *enuei* (M.SG.FF), which is the rope normally used to climb a tree to get honey. *Urui*, the name of *Enojei*'s first son, literally means *urui* (M.SG.FF) 'dust, detritus'. These names refer to an event which has taken place during the pregnancy and the birth, or to a particular episode that occurred in the past to someone in the family. There is not necessarily a direct connection between the event and the child.

The name *Amatai* (Fig. 16), an informant of Erica Pia, means 'heap, what is heaped up' and is the deverbal noun from *chamata* (3) 'to heap up, to pile up, to gather'. This is because a friend of his father had a heap of feathers of

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[13] An exception is the name *Ejei*, derived from the homophonous interjection *ejei* 'quite so'.

Figure 16. Amatai, named after a heap of feathers

different colours from various birds, and the father, admiring it, said that when he should have a child, he would call him *amatai* (3.M.SG. FF) 'heap', in memory of those feathers. Since common nouns in Ayoreo are masculine or feminine, as a general rule, the gender of the baby must correspond with the linguistic gender of the noun. An Ayoreo woman called *Adoi* is a remarkable exception, because her name is an exception to this rule: *adoi* (M.SG. FF) is a masculine noun for a plant (*Marsdenia paraguaiensis*). Giving a girl a masculine name is considered inappropriate. In this very case, the choice of a masculine form had to do with exceptional circumstances: the life of the baby was saved by a missionary, who travelled with the mother of the girl to the camp. Owing to the lack of water at the camp, they were obliged to extract water from the plant called *adoi*. The fact that the missionary accepted to drink something unknown coming from the forest surprised the Ayoreo, and the girl was called *Adoi*. This is, however, an exception which confirms the rule. Another exception is a name which breaks the taboo about sex (§6):

one informant referred Erica Pia to a woman with the unusual Ayoreo name of *Aje(r)o Ca(r) ate*, meaning 'red vulva' = *ajero* (3.F.SG.BF/FF) 'vulva', *carate* (F.SG.BF/FF) 'red'. The informant pointed out that she had also been surprised to hear this name, because *ajero* should be avoided in a normal conversation, and had wondered why such a name had been chosen.

When Ayoreo want to avoid pronouncing the proper name of a person or a dangerous character in stories, they call him *Diseradi* or *Diseadi*. This name comes from *disi* (M.SG.BF/FF) 'child' and *ueradi* (M.SG.FF) 'beautiful, nice'. According to some informants, *Dupade* 'God' called *Diseradi* (lit. 'beautiful child') the people he created. *Diseradi* is used, for instance, instead of the name of a loved one who has died, or instead of the name of *Potatai*, a powerful mythological character, and a dangerous figure who was the husband or companion of *Asojna* (depending on the different version of the story) and turned into a nocturnal bird (see §2).

The traditional Ayoreo life in the Chaco was very dangerous and the death of a loved one was considered a likely occurrence at any moment. After the death of a relative or friend, the Ayoreo mourned for a short time, but then returned to their normal life, apparently forgetting what had happened, but avoiding pronouncing the name of the dead person. The fact that dead people are generally no longer mentioned has an important consequence for Ayoreo onomastics. Indeed the father changes his name after the birth of the first child: the new name consists in the name of the child, plus the teknonymic suffix *-de* (*-ne* depending on nasal harmony or on diatopic variation): e.g. *Caitabi* (proper name of the child) + *-de* → *Caitabide* lit. 'the father of Caitabi'; *Sama* + *-ne* →

Samane lit. 'the father of Sama'.[14] If the first child dies, the father changes his name and assumes the name of the oldest child still living, followed by the usual suffix *-de/-ne*. The taboo concerning the names of dead people is not due to religious prohibition, as there are no dangerous consequences if such a name is pronounced, but these names are avoided so that grief and sorrow are not rekindled. The situation is different when also the parents of the dead have passed away. Around 1943-1944 some Western people were looking for the Ayoreo who had just attacked a local settlement. The attackers escaped, but the Western people thought that they came from an Ayoreo settlement, whose inhabitants actually had no responsibility in the attack. The camp underwent a reprisal in which many Ayoreo were killed. Among them there was *Enojei*, who died along with his daughter, killed by the same bullet, while trying to save her. The episode is well-known among the Ayoreo, and *Enojei* can be referred today as *Ca(r)itabide*, from *Ca(r)itabi*, the name of daughter who died with him, or as *Ejeine*, from the name of his son *Ejei* (who died many decades later). In this case, the temporal distance from the episode and the fact that there are no longer parents suffering for the loss of a son/daughter permits a linguistic use different from the norm. However, before being known as *Ejeine* or *Ca(r)itabi*, *Enojei* had been called after the name of his first son *Urui*, but he had changed his name into *Ejeine* after that *Urui* had been killed by a jaguar.

8. Linguistic purism

The resistance to lexical borrowing is a possible feature of Chaco languages (Campbell & Grondona 2012; Campbell 2013; Epps, forthcoming). This is also the case for Zamucoan. Despite Ciucci (2014) identifying a number of morphological borrowings owing to contact between Zamucoan and its neighbours, only a surprisingly low percentage of borrowed lexicon was ascertained. This is no longer the case in the Ebitoso dialect of Chamacoco, which, owing to the long contact with Spanish, has accepted a massive number of loanwords from Spanish. It is difficult to make a generalisation concerning resistance to lexical borrowing in Ayoreo, because contact with Spanish occurred very recently and could have affected Ayoreo communities located very far from each other in different ways. Contact with Western culture has implied new referents for which new words were necessary, so that in some cases Spanish words were introduced (7). However, as one can see from the glosses of ex. (7), the inflectional morphology of the language is still productive (see Ciucci 2016).[15] By contrast, in the Ebitoso dialect of Chamacoco, Spanish loanwords are also used for referents which already had an indigenous word, and are accompanied with loss of inflectional morphology (Ciucci 2016: 517-566).

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[14] Alternatively, one can also say *Caitabi daye*, or *Sama daye*, where *daye* (3.m.sg.ff) is the term for 'father': this is a possessive noun phrase. The mother and the grandfathers are also referred to as 'the mother/grandfather/grandmother of' their first child/grandchild, but this is expressed by a possessive noun phrase. By contrast, in the case of 'father' the derivational suffix *-de/-ne* forms a new word.

[15] Ayoreo nouns can express the person of the possessor, and always mark gender, number and noun form (see fn. 2).

(7)	a.	*banana*	(F.SG.BF/FF)	'banana'	(Spanish:	*banana*)
	b.	*datorai* or *tractorai*	(M.SG.FF)	'tractor'	(Spanish:	*tractor*)
	c.	*ibentana*	(3.F.SG.BF/FF)	'window'	(Spanish:	*ventana*)
	d.	*icarpai*	(3.M.SG.FF)	'tent'	(Spanish	*carpa*)
	e.	*icomputadora*	(3.F.SG.BF/FF)	'computer'	(Spanish	*computadora*)
	f.	*imesa*	(3.F.SG.BF/FF)	'table'	(Spanish	*mesa*)
	g.	*iplata* or *iparata*	(3.F.SG.BF/FF)	'money'	(Spanish	*plata*)
	h.	*naranja*	(F.SG.BF/FF)	'orange'	(Spanish	*naranja*)
	i.	*trabajadi*	(3.M.SG.FF)	'work'	(Spanish	*trabajo*)

There are however cases in which the Ayoreo use autochthonous forms or create new expressions in order to avoid foreign words. This is mostly observed among old people and is correlated with a high degree of knowledge of Ayoreo cultural tradition. For instance Orone, an old shaman and one of Erica Pia's main informants, rarely uses Spanish loanwords. Indeed the resistance to Spanish borrowing is considered proper of old people, while younger speakers are more prone to use Spanish loanwords. Such a puristic attitude is a reflection of the contrast between the Ayoreo 'the (real) people, the human beings' (cf. §1) and the so called *cojñone* (M.PL.FF), that is the "civilised" people, who do nonsense. The word *cojñoi* (M.SG.FF), *cojñone* (M.PL.FF) is the standard term for non-Ayoreo, but it has a negative connotation, similar to an insult, since *cojñone* are by definition stupid, so that, when the Ayoreo have a close friendship with non-Ayoreo people, the latter are not called *cojñone*, but *ayoreo* (M.PL.BF), *ayoreode* (M.PL.FF), that is they are also included in the set of the 'real people' and 'human beings'. One also has to consider that the elders feel the new Western culture as an imposition and a break of Ayoreo tradition, and during the first contacts many former leaders, as well as other people who are now very old, opposed the missionaries and would have preferred to continue to live in isolation, had this been possible. In older generations, such a cultural attitude linguistically results in an aversion to accept Spanish forms.

In some cases, already extant words are also used to designate a new referent, for instance *ore* (3.F.SG.BF/FF) 'reflection', 'shadow', 'image' is also used to mean 'photography', and *ojnai* (M.SG.FF) 'thorn' for 'barbed wire'. In the Ayoreo spoken in Colonia Peralta (Paraguay) *angoninguini* (3.M.SG.FF) 'ear, ear canal' is used for 'mobile phone', *aoi* (3.M.SG.FF) 'skin' for 'book'. In other cases the diminutive is used with a new meaning: *piogabi* (M.SG.FF) 'match' (stick) is the diminutive of *pioi* (M.SG.FF) 'fire' and *guedabi* (M.SG.FF) 'clock' is the diminutive of *guede* 'sun'. The Ayoreo did not have pillows, but 'pillow' can be referred to by an Ayoreo word, *ugutadi* (3.M.SG.FF), originally meaning 'mortar' (a rectangular wooden bowl for grinding food and tobacco). This is due to the fact that old people used the mortar as a pillow. It was taboo for young people, who were told that they would go deaf and lose their teeth. There is also another form which according to some informants was more recently adopted for

'pillow': *ugutade* (3.F.SG.BF/FF). This is morphologically the feminine of *ugutadi*, but *ugutade* also means 'crutch'. There is an analogy between 'crutch', possibly the original meaning of the word, and 'pillow', because the first is a stick used by old people to lean on, and the second is used to lean the head on.

In other cases, the puristic attitude has produced new formations such as those in (8-10).

From a structural point of view, *etarutepiedie* 'container' and *yote pioi* 'alcoholic drink' (8) can be considered compounds. In (9) there are sequences of possessed plus possessor, while in (10) a sequence of noun plus adjective expresses a new referent. (9d) features 'spermatozoon', as indicated by a speaker with medical formation; it involves the use of *irisode* 'sperm, semen', a taboo word seen in §6.

(8)   a.   *etarutepiedie* (3.F.PL.FF) 'pants, tights' = *etarut* (3.M.SG.BF) 'part of the leg, between hip and knee', *pie* (F.SG.BF/FF) 'container'

       b.   *yote pioi* (M.SG.FF) 'alcoholic drink' = *yote* (M.SG.BF) 'water', *pioi* (M.SG.FF) 'fire'[16]

(9)   a.   *daijnane gachide* 'ambulance' = *daijnane* (M.PL.FF) 'shaman', *gachide* (3.F.SG.BF/FF) 'pet' (lit. 'the pet of the shamans')[17]

       b.   *ejnaretade jnuto* 'ambulance' = *ejnaretade* (M.PL.FF) 'sick', *jnuto* (F.SG.BF/FF) 'carrier' (lit. 'the carrier of the sick')

       c.   *ejnaretade pie* 'ambulance' = *ejnaretade* (M.PL.FF) 'sick', *pie* (F.SG.BF/FF) 'means of transportation' (lit. 'means of transportation of the sick')

       d.   *irisode abidie* 'spermatozoon' = *irisode* (M.PL.FF) 'semen, sperm', *abidie* (3.F.PL) 'female child' (lit. 'the children of the sperm')

       e.   *naijnane iguijnai* 'hospital' = *naijnane* (M.PL.FF) 'shaman', *iguijnai* (3.M.SG.FF) 'house' (lit. 'house of the shamans')[18]

       f.   *ojnane aquesungori* 'pliers' = *ojnane* (M.PL.FF) 'barbed wire', *aquesungori* (M.SG.FF) 'who, what cuts'

       g.   *uguchade pi* 'rucksack' = *uguchade* (3.M.PL.FF) 'thing', *pi* (3.M.SG.BF/FF) 'means of transportation' (lit. 'means of transportation of the things')

(10)   a.   *cucha basui* 'airplane' = *cucha* (GF.M.SG.BF) 'thing', *basui* (M.SG.FF) 'fallen' (lit. 'fallen thing', *scil.* from the sky)

       b.   *guebeque nanganatai* 'gold' = *guebeque* (M.SG.BF) 'metal, iron', *nanganatai* (M.SG.FF) 'brilliant, shiny'

       c.   *guebeque serẽrachui* 'aluminium' = *guebeque* (M.SG.BF) 'metal, iron', *serẽrachui* (M.SG.FF) 'soft'

       d.   *piago ajami* 'window' = *piago* (M.SG.BF) 'door', *ajami* (M.SG.FF) 'small'

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[16] Unlike other neighbouring populations, Ayoreo did not make use of alcoholic drinks, so that this new concept is rendered by a compound. On compounds in Ayoreo, see Bertinetto (2014) and Ciucci (2016).

[17] *Gachide* originally means 'domesticated animal, pet', which can also serve as means of tranportation.

[18] *Daijnane* (9a) and *naijnane* (9e) are the same word, the only difference is the nasalization of the initial consonant, which is not obligatory.

In the documentation available, Ayoreo forms can often alternate with a Spanish loanword, for instance for *piogabi* 'match' (stick), *naijnane iguijnai* 'hospital' (9e) and *guebeque nanganatai* 'gold' (10b) also the Spanish words *fósforo*, *hospital* and *oro*, respectively, are found (Higham *et al.* 2000). As for *uguchade pi* 'rucksack' (9g), the younger speakers already use the Spanish *mochila*. *Piago ajami* 'window' (10d) can alternate with *ibentana* (7c), adaptation of Spanish *ventana*.

Finally, communication can involve social conventions in which the Ayoreo culture differs from that of Spanish speaking people. For instance, it is not considered convenient for young people to use the word *yacaranguipis/ñacarañipis* 'thank you'. Only people older than 40 normally thank someone, and not for small acts of courtesy. Spanish 'thank you' is normally rendered by the deverbal noun *irasi* (3.M.SG.FF) 'what one likes, liking' plus the person to whom one expresses gratitude (11) and the reason why one is grateful, introduced by the preposition *ome*. However, despite the pragmatic uses of (11) corresponding to those of Spanish *gracias* 'thank you', it is translated by the speakers as 'I am happy with you (for...)', because Spanish 'thank you' is considered too strong and is associated with a social taboo on many occasions.

(11) Y-irasique   ua   ome....
      1SG-liking[M.SG.BF] 2SG   for

      'I am happy with you for...', lit. 'You are
       my liking for...'

9 . Conclusions

In this paper, we have analysed the linguistic taboos of the Ayoreo. Some of them originate from religious motivation, and breaking the taboo can be dangerous. For instance, the name of some animals associated with powerful mythological figures cannot be pronounced in the dry season, when these animals disappear (§2). Similarly rooted in religious beliefs is the fear of pronouncing the name of *Dupade* 'God' and *Pujopie* 'the shamanic power' (§3), as well as some taboos concerning specific objects of Ayoreo culture (§4). Nowadays Ayoreo do not practice cannibalism. In the past, however, cannibalism had a religious justification (§5). Such a topic is now so taboo that only old people seem to be aware of it, which is due to the influence of Western culture, where anthropophagy is strongly condemned. Social norms originate taboos concerning sex, onomastics and Spanish loanwords. Ayoreo culture allows remarkable sexual freedom before marriage. This is considered a normal fact of life: it is necessary for young people to vent their sexual desire, because it is believed that in this way there will be no desire for transgression after marriage. Despite the sexual freedom enjoyed by the Ayoreo for a part of their life, talking about sex is always taboo. This possibly has to do with the prohibition to have extra-conjugal relationships after marriage (§6). In this paper we have also shown how contact with Western culture has affected sexual behaviours and related linguistic taboos. Furthermore, we have dealt with some taboos having to do with proper nouns, in particular with the psychological need to forget people who died (§7), which imposes a change of name on the people. Finally, the Ayoreo are very attached to their

culture, which is reflected, at least for the older generations, in the attempt to avoid Spanish borrowings. In §8 we have discussed the mechanism of lexical acculturation in Ayoreo. Even though some Spanish loanwords are now used in the language, particularly among younger generations, the fact that borrowed nouns show all Ayoreo grammatical categories indicates that inflectional morphology still remains productive.

Figure 17. Gabriella Erica Pia with Iquebi, who as a child was the first Ayoreo captured in Paraguay

Figure 18. Women and children in front of the church of Santiago de Chiquitos, Bolivia, immediately after their capture in 1952. All of their men had been killed.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first person, second person, third person
BF	base form
EVID	evidential
EXIST	existential
F	feminine
FF	full form
GF	generic form (for unspecified possessor)
M	masculine
NEG	negation
PL	plural
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular

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PART 2

Focusing on the particular

04

Tenets of the 'unseen':
The preferred information source
for the supernatural in Tariana

04

Tenets of the 'unseen': The preferred information source for the supernatural in Tariana

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Languages deploy various resources to express knowledge — especially the knowledge which correlates with special powers. In quite a few languages of the world, every sentence has to state how information was acquired. This grammatical marking of information source — known as evidentiality — offers a means of expressing knowledge obtained by different means, and accessible to different 'knowers'. The ways in which shamans — who are privy to special powers and special knowledge — will use evidentials are different from those for people who have no access to supranatural means. And the ways in which shamanic experience and practices are talked about by those who do not have the same powers differ from the ways in which ordinary, easily observable, experience is presented (see Storch 2010, on the role of the invisible in religion). The grammatical means of expressing access to what others cannot 'see' is what I would like to touch upon here.

Supernatural experience — the spirits of the jungle, the effect of healers and of various shamans, both benevolent and evil — plays an important role in the stories and in the everyday life of the speakers of Tariana, an Arawak language from the multilingual Vaupés Linguistic Area of north-west Amazonia in Brazil. Fear of spirits' retaliation dictates the taboos. Healers are relied upon for personal well-being, and powerful shamans can inflict damage if offended or not placated enough. The Tariana language has an elaborate system of grammatical marking of evidentiality, with five terms. (Incidentally, four- or five-term evidentiality systems are an areal feature of the Vaupés; however, details vary). The use of evidentials depends on the information source of the speaker and sometimes also of the addressee. It also correlates with the speaker's status — and whether or not they have access to the 'unseen'.

I have been working with speakers of Tariana since 1991, and collected a large corpus of stories of varied genres (c. 35 hours of recordings). Among them were stories about shamanic practices, various types of dreams, taboos, origin myths, travels of ancestors, hunting stories and fairy tales. In 2012, after many of the elders and my original teachers had passed away, I got to work with two remaining older speakers who also had healing powers. We recorded, and then transcribed, a number of stories about traditional 'blessings' with healing powers. The stories were told using non-visual evidential. That the blessing is viewed as dealing with something 'unseen' was brought home to me in the reply, by Jorge, the healer, to my question. Evidentials are in bold throughout this text.

(1) Kwe-**nha**   pi-ni   pi-kale
     how-PRES.VIS.INTERR   2sg-do   2sg-heart

     pi-ñapa?
     2sg-bless

     'How do you do blessing?' (lit. how do you do bless heart)?

(2) Pa-ka-ka-nuku   ne
     IMP-see-SEQ-TOP.NON.A/S   NEG

     hyukade-**mha**
     NOT.BE-PRES.NONVISUAL

     di-daki   sede-**na**
     3sgnf-body   NEG.EXIST-REM.PAST.VISUAL

     hiku-kade-**mha**
     appear-NEG-PRES.NONVISUAL

     'When one looks, there is nothing, there has never been a body, it does not appear'

The non-visual evidential — the preferred choice in the descriptions of healing and shamanic practices — is not used by healers and shamans when they talk about themselves and their own experience (which is obtained visually, since a shaman 'sees' everything).

In §1, I start with a snap-shot of the Tariana evidential system and the preferred evidentials. In §2, I turn to the gamut of meanings of the non-visual evidential, with a focus on discourse about the supernatural powers. In §3, I look at the ways in which taboos and beliefs are phrased.

1. Evidentials in Tariana: an overview

To form a grammatical sentence in Tariana, the speaker has to explicitly state the information source, using a set of morphological markers (all of them clitics which occur on the verb or on any focussed constituent; see Aikhenvald 2003: 287-309).[1]

Evidentials are marked only in main clauses. Visual evidentials are used if the speaker has seen the event, and non-visual evidentials refer to something heard, or smelt, or felt by touch. Inferred evidentials refer to something inferred based on visible results: as one infers that it has rained on the basis of puddles, or that someone has eaten chicken because their hands are greasy (they are also used if the speaker but not the addressee has access). Assumed evidentials will be used if a statement is based on general knowledge (and are used to express knowledge expected to be shared by speaker and addressee). Reported evidentials are employed if the information comes from a speech report. Evidential markers are fused with tense — present (zero-marked), recent past (marked with the suffix -ka), or remote past (suffix -na). No evidentials are distinguished in the future. The inferred and the assumed evidential have no present tense. The semantics of tenses correlates with the time of the happening and the time of when the information was acquired (Aikhenvald 2003: 289-90).

The following examples illustrate real-life situations when evidentials were used to express different information sources for the speaker (from author's fieldwork, 2012).

(3) Nu-nami   karak
     1sg-father's.younger.brother   chicken

     di-merita-**naka**
     3sgnf-fry-PRESENT.VISUAL

     'My younger uncle is frying chicken'
     (I (the speaker) see him)

(4) Nu-nami   karaka
     1sg-father's.younger.brother   chicken

     di-merita-**mha**
     3sgnf-fry-PRESENT.NONVISUAL

     'My younger uncle is frying chicken' (I smell the fried chicken, but cannot see this)

(5) Nu-nami   karaka
     1sg-father's.younger.brother   chicken

     di-merita-**nhi-ka**
     3sgnf-fry-INFERRED-RECENT.PAST

     'My younger uncle has fried chicken' (I see bits of grease stuck on his hands and he smells of fried chicken)

(6) Nu-nami   karaka
     1sg-father's.younger.brother   chicken

     di-merita-**si-ka**
     3sgnf-fry-ASSUMED-RECENT.PAST

     'My younger uncle has fried chicken' (I assume so: he gets so much money he can afford it, and he looks like he has had a nice meal)

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[1] A reduced set of evidentials is used in questions, while imperatives have just one, reported, evidential (meaning 'do something on someone else's order'). The complex evidentiality system in Tariana has been largely calqued from Tucanoan languages (see Aikhenvald 2003). As a consequence, Tariana has the largest system of evidentials of all the Arawak languages. Baniwa of Içana/Kurripako and Piapoco, Tariana's closest relatives, have just one evidential marking reported information.

(7)   Nu-nami   karaka   di-merita-**pida-ka**
      1sg-father's.younger.brother   chicken   3sgnf-fry-REPORTED-RECENT.PAST

'My younger uncle has fried chicken' (I was told recently)

Table 1 summarises the meanings and the uses of evidentials in Tariana (see also Aikhenvald 2003: 294).

Evidential	Use
Visual	1. Information obtained through seeing
	2. Information on events which can be easily observed
	3. To refer to events for which speaker takes full responsibility
	4. Generally known (and observable) facts; the preferred evidential in stories relating personal experience
Nonvisual	1. To report events or states which the speaker has heard, smelt, tasted, or felt but not seen, including negative clauses (e.g. I did not see-nonvisual)
	2. Physical and mental states
	3. Accidental uncontrollable actions for which no responsibility is taken (hence use with verbs of obligation, feeling, illnesses, physical processes), as well as with verbs like 'be lost'; actions in dreams
	4. Descriptions of actions of evil spirits who cannot be seen but can be felt and heard, and descriptions of actions by shamans and healers, and their attributes
Inferred	Information obtained through observing direct evidence of an event or a state
Assumed	1. Information obtained by reasoning or common sense without visual or non-visual experience
	2. Preferred evidential in some traditional stories and translations
Reported	1. Information obtained through repetition of information related by someone else (secondhand and thirdhand)
	2. Preferred evidential in story-telling obtained from someone else

Table 1. The meanings of evidentials in Tariana: a summary

A few further principles account for the use of evidentials. Different types of stories always go together with one kind of evidential, as tokens of a genre. In Tariana (just like in the overwhelming majority of other languages), stories and legends which the speaker heard from someone else are cast in the reported evidential. A story about what happened to the speaker is cast in visual evidential. The assumed evidential is used in traditional legends based on 'signs' known to the Tariana and thus information pertaining to the domain of shared knowledge by the group (see Aikhenvald 2003: 300, and Ramirez 1997: 140, for a similar use of the assumed evidential in Tucano, and Miller 1999: 67, on Desano).

In real life, the speaker will normally have access to more than one information source: what one can see one can often hear, and there is usually enough information for an inference and an assumption. Visually obtained information, if available, is preferred over any other information source. As Janet Barnes (1984: 262) put it for Tuyuca, an East Tucanoan language from the same linguistic area, 'it does not matter what evidence the speaker later sees or what information he receives; if, at any point, he saw or is seeing the state or event he reports it using a visual evidential'. The next preferred choice will be nonvisual evidential, then inferred based on visible results, then reported, and only then the assumed.

These choices reflect the following hierarchy of preferred evidentials in Tuyuca, Tariana and also Tucano (see Barnes 1984: 262-4; also Oswalt 1986 for Kashaya, a Pomoan language). The preferences outlined in Diagram 1 reflect the every-day discourse and choices one has to make if more than one information source is available.

Visual < Non-visual < Inferred < Reported < Assumed

Diagram 1. Hierarchy of Preferred Evidentials in Tuyuca, Tariana, and Tucano

The preference for information source acquired through vision reflects the primary importance of what one sees reflected in words of popular wisdom such as 'seeing is believing', and the evidence of primacy of 'vision' as information source from studies in human cognition and child language acquisition (see Ünal and Papafragou 2018, Fitneva 2018, Courtney 2014 on Quechua, and the discussion of the importance of various senses in ritual by Beek 2010). Visually acquired information is the most reliable one, and in many languages a visual evidential is associated with certainty and generally known and universally accessible facts (see, for instance, Floyd 1999 on Wanka Quechua, and Wiemer 2018 on epistemic meanings of evidentials). In Tariana, one's own non-visual report (which means reporting an event or state that the speaker had heard, smelt or tasted) is preferred to inferred, reported or assumed, in this order.

The assumed evidential (especially in its remote past tense form) combines reference to what the speaker and the addressee both know. Speakers of Tariana — and of many other languages with obligatory marking of information source — are careful in being precise about how they know things: misuse of evidentials may result in speakers' being accused of incompetence, or, worse, sorcery and unwarranted access to knowledge which may betray an act of sorcery (see some examples in Aikhenvald 2003: 309-11). This could account for the 'assumed' evidential being

'the bottom of the pile' (further discussion of preferred evidentials is in Aikhenvald 2004: Chapter 10).[2]

What if the speaker is venturing into the domain beyond human eyes — that of the supernatural? The non-visual evidential will be used to relate the actions of evil spirits which are not 'seen'. The non-visual evidential is prominent in stories about the actions of shamans and healers. This is what we turn to now.

2 . What the 'non-visual' evidential is used for

The non-visual evidential has a gamut of meanings summarised in Table 1. It is used to report events or states which the speaker has heard, smelt, tasted, or felt but not seen, including negative clauses (e.g. I did not see-nonvisual). In (6) the nonvisual evidential refers to the smell of the fried chicken. In (8), LB talks about difficulties concerning his Tuyuca-speaking father-in-law, whose language he did not understand (lit. did not 'hear').

(8)   du-haniri-ne   pa-sape-hyu
        3sgf-father-COMIT   IMP-talk-PURP

        manhina-**mhana**
        be.difficult-REM.P.NONVIS

        naku-nuku
        3pl+speech-TOP.NON.A/S

        mhema-kade-**mhana**
        NEG+listen-NEG-REM.P.NONVIS

'It was hard to talk to her father, (I) didn't understand their language'

The non-visual evidential is used to refer to something that was felt, but not seen, as in (9): RB was bitten by a mucurá rat whom he could not see; he'd thought it was a snake and exclaimed 'A snake bit me (nonvisual)'. This story, about the speaker's hunting experience, is itself cast in visual evidential (remote past, since it happened some time before the story was told).

(9)   nese   nu-na   matsia
        then   1sg-OBJ   well

        nu-kapi-da   i-hwida-na-tuki
        1sg-hand-CL:ROUND   INDF-head-AFF-DIM

        nihwã-**mha**-niki   paí!
        3sgnf+bite-PRES.NONVIS-COMPL   Dad!

        nu-a-**na**   ãpi
        1sg-say-REM.P.VIS   snake

        nihwa-**mha**-nikee
        3sgnf+bite-PRES.NONVIS-COMPL:DISTANCE

'Then it (mucura rat) bit me strongly (lit. well) on the tip of my finger (nonvisual), Dad! I shouted, snake has bitten meee!'

The non-visual evidential can also be used to refer to something seen from a distance, but not quite discernible (comparable to the visual distal evidential in Tatuyo, an East Tucanoan language from the Colombian side of the Vaupés: Stenzel and Gomez-Imbert 2018). We saw some-

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[2] Some authors have attempted to reformulate the idea of preferred evidentials as 'best' evidential. We avoid this term because of its inherently evaluative character. Typological parameters for the study of evidentiality are in Aikhenvald (2004, 2018a), and a bibliography in Aikhenvald (2015).

one walking in front of us at a distance, but could not quite see whether it was Batista Brito or not. One speaker asked *Bati-nha*? (Bati-PRES.VIS.INTERR) 'Is it Batista?'. The other replied *Diha-mha* (he-PRES.NONVIS) '(It is) him (nonvisual)'. When Batista turned around and we saw it was him, she exclaimed *Diha-naka* (he-PRES.VIS) '(It is) him (visual)'.

When used with a first person subject, the non-visual evidential refers to an unintentional action. In (10), the speaker unintentionally cut their finger, and so they use the non-visual evidential:

(10) nu-kapi-da   nu-pisa-**mahka**
      1sg-hand-CL:ROUND   1sg-cut-REC.P.NONVIS

      'I unintentionally cut my finger'

If the action has been done intentionally and in speaker's full view, the visual evidential will be appropriate, as in (11).

(11) karaka   nu-pisa-**ka**
      chicken   1sg-cut-REC.P.VIS

      'I cut up the chicken'

The nonvisual evidential is the preferred choice when talking about one's feelings and physical and emotional states. As a speaker remarked once, 'one cannot see' what one feels. In (12), a speaker is complaining about a headache and a fever.

(12) nu-hwida   kai-**mha**   adaki
      1sg-head   ache-PRES.NONVIS   fever

      di-nu-**mha**   nu-na
      2sgnf-come-PRES.NONVIS   1sg-OBJ

'My head is hurting, fever has come to me (nonvisual)'

In (13), Marino is complaining of feeling miserable, using the non-visual evidential.

(13) kherunikana-tuki   nhua
      miserable/poor-DIM   I

      nu-rena-**mha**
      1sg-feel-PRES.NONVIS

       'I feel miserable'

Some predicates with modal meanings always require the nonvisual evidential — these include 'be necessary', 'be unwilling', 'want', and also 'be difficult' (as in the second line of (8).

The world of the jungle and river depths are inhabited by spirits who can see people and do damage to them; but remain invisible. This is where the nonvisual evidential becomes the preferred choice evidential (see Aikhenvald 1999, 2003 for a list of dangerous spirits). In (14), a spirit has made a storm come up unexpectedly, the hunters saw the earth move (hence the visual evidential) and felt the evil spirit *ñamu* kick them (non-visual evidential). The happening is summarised in the last sentence — the actions of the spirit are cast in non-visual remote past.

(14)a apale   ha-hipita
       differently   DEM-CL:GROUND

       di-ñupiru   di-eku
       3sgnf-move.up.and.down   3sgnf-run

       di-a-na   ɨhmeni-ka   wa-na
       3sgnf-go-REM.P.VIS   say.iiih-SEQ 1pl-OBJ

di-pitita-tha-**mhana**-niki
3sgnf-kick-FRUST-REM.P.NONVIS-FULLY

'The earth was moving up and down quickly, as there was a sound of ı̃ıh, the evil spirit almost kicked us (non-visual)'

(14)b   diha   ñamu   keru-ka   tuki
      he   evil.spirit   angry-SEQ   little

     wa-na   di-hña-tha-**mhana**
     1pl-OBJ   3sgnf-eat-FRUST-REM.P.NOVIS

     wa-na   hi-kayu-**mhana**
     1pl-OBJ   this-like-REM.P.NONVIS

     di-ni   ñamu
     3sgnf-do   evil.spirit

'Being angry, he almost ate us up (non-visual), the evil spirit acted upon us like this'

The non-visual evidential is used to refer to a happening where supernatural powers are supposed to be at play. A crippled boy covered with lesions brings home a lot of fish thanks to the help from his shaman grandfather; his neighbours suspect that he has some extraneous help and say, using the nonvisual evidential.

(15)   puaya-**mha**-pita   hı̃
      differently-PRES.NONVIS-AGAIN   this

     kayu   di-ni-ka
     like   3sgnf-do-DECL

'He is acting in a different way' (nonvisual, since supernatural powers could be involved)

The non-visual evidential is consistently used in the descriptions of practices by shamans and healers. Traditionally, there used to be several types of male shamans (the cover term *mariẽrı̃*) with different degrees of powers depending on their stage of initiation and the snuff they are allowed to use (which would enable them to access visions and thus power; Aikhenvald 1999: 41 contains a list of shamans, their powers and types of snuff they sniff to activate these). In his description of what shamans do, Leonardo, one of the three remaining elders, used the non-visual evidential. An extract is at (16). Here, the non-visual evidential also describes what the shaman 'sees' as part of his actions. This is not how a shaman would talk about himself — see (19).

(16)a   Kayka   diha   matsite   maliẽri
      so   he   bad+NCL:ANIM   shaman

     diha   kwaka   di-ka-**mha**
     he   whatever   3sgnf-see-PRES.NONVIS

     enukwa-se   ka-rena-mi-naku
     sky-LOC   REL-be.sick-NOM-TOP.NON.A/S

     tapuli-se   di-ka-**mha**
     dream-LOC   3sgnf-see-PRES.NONVIS

'So the naughty shaman sees (nonvisual) the one who is sick because of the sky, he sees (them) in the dream (nonvisual),

(16)b   kayu   di-ni-ka   diha
      thus   3sgnf-do-SEQ   he

     dhita-**mha**   di-pusua
     3sgnf+take-PRES.NONVIS   3sgnf-suck

'having done that, he takes and sucks (the illness) (nonvisual)',

(16)c   kayu-ka   na-kawita
        thus-SEQ   3pl-pay

na-yena-naku   diha   irenasi
3pl-exceed-TOP.NON.A/S   he/it sickness

di-yena-**mha**   diha
3sgnf-exceed/pass-PRES.NONVIS   he

maliẽri   diha   wheru   i-minari
shaman   he   snuff   INDF-master

dhita-**mha**   tapuli-se
3sgnf+take-PRES.NONVIS   dream-LOC

'after they have paid a lot, the sickness passes (nonvisual), the shaman, the master of snuff takes (it away) in the dream (nonvisual)'

In present-day Tariana society, there appear to be no men with full shamanic powers. Of the three remaining elders, two have bless-

Figure 1. Jorge Muniz, one of the two healers among the Tariana (photo AA)

ing and healing powers and are referred to as *ka-ñapa* (REL-bless) 'blesser, healer'. One of them is Jorge Muniz, from Periquitos — see Figure 1.

The other one is Leonardo Brito, from Santa Rosa (he currently resides in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, with his son Rafael, an aspiring politician). In Figure 2, he is shown wearing a traditional Tariana headdress *talama* at the Tariana assembly in May 2012.

Figure 2. Leonardo Brito, one of the two healers among the Tariana (photo AA)

Example (17) comes from a description of a blessing as done by a healer.

(17)a   diha   dhita   di-whe
        he   3sgnf+take   3sgnf-fall+CAUS

di-uka   di-ema-**mha**
3sgnf-arrive 3sgnf-stand-PRES.NONVIS

pa-hwanipa-se   di-ñapa-li-se
IMP-place.to.sit-LOC 3sgnf-bless-NOM-LOC

ka-daki-**mha**
REL-body-PRES.NONVIS

'He takes and puts (the patient) on the

bench, the place of blessing (nonvisual), the one with the body (nonvisual)',

(17)b hĩ   hemari   hawaya
    this   cubiu.fruit ingá.fruit

    du-kale   du-dia-ka
    3sgf-heart   3sgf-return-SEQ

    di-ni   di-hwa-**mha**
    3sgnf-do   3sgnf-stay-PRES.NONVIS

    he makes her heart return (with) cubiu fruit, with ingá fruit (nonvisual)…'

The non-visual evidential is consistently used to refer to shamanic attributes, as in (18), an explanation of the meaning of the term *marawati* (a type of *wheru*, snuff).

(18) marawati   wheru-**mha**
    marawati   snuff-PRES.NONVIS

    'Marawati is shamanic snuff'

Only when a shaman talks about himself and his experience, the preferred evidential is visual. In a story about a shaman who turned into a jaguar and took away the heart of a man who was then supposed to die, the shaman is quoted as saying:

(19) hi   matsite-nuku
    this   bad+NCL:ANIM-TOP.NON.A/S

    di-kale   nhuta-**na**
    3sgnf-heart   1sg+take-REM.P.VIS

    deikina   di-ñale-mhade
    afternoon   3sgnf-disappear-FUT

'I took the heart from this bad one, he will die in the afternoon'

A statement about the powers of a known shaman (but not about what they do) can be cast in visual evidential if it is common knowledge. Jesús, a shaman of Wanano origin, visited us in the Tariana village of Santa Rosa; when I asked a Tariana speaker about his powers and his prophetic dreams, I received the following reply:

(20) maliẽri-pu-**naka**   diha   thui
    shaman-AUG-PRES.VIS   he   all

    di-ka-**naka**   mẽda
    3sgnf-see-PRES.VIS   don't.you.know

    'He is a real shaman (lit. very much a shaman, or big shaman), he sees everything'

The non-visual — rather than visual — evidential is the preferred choice for talking about supernatural experience one received 'firsthand', or which is considered a normal state of affairs. Generally known and not observable facts are cast in the non-visual evidential. This offers a limit to the applicability of the hierarchy of preferred evidentials: the type of knowledge and the type of entity that masters it — be it a spirit, or a shaman — dictates the evidential use.

3. Evidentials in beliefs and taboos

There used to be (and still are) numerous taboos concerning men's behaviour in the jungle when they go hunting and before they prepare to go on a hunting expedition. If a hunter wishes to be successful they cannot

have sex or think about women before they go. If they dream of a woman (especially a white woman, or a fish woman, who often appears in the shape of a white woman in a dream), this is a sign of danger — of a failed trip and potential encounter with the evil spirit who will eat him or take his heart away (see Aikhenvald 1999: 35-6, for further examples of taboos).

Common knowledge taboos tend to be cast in future (where no evidentials are distinguished), as in (21) and (22).

(21)   itsiri   dinu-karu   i-peya
          game   3sg+kill-PURP   INDF-before

          ina   tapulisa-ka
          women   dream-SEQ

          ka-hña-kana   di-a-mhade
          REL-eat-PASS   3sgnf-AUX-FUT

          'Having dreamt of women before hunting, he will be eaten (by the evil spirit)'

(22)   kasiri   ipe   pa-hña-ka   thuya
          crocodile meat   IMP-eat-SEQ   all

          pa-mañeta-mhade
          IMP-forget-FUT

          'Having eaten crocodile meat, one will forget everything'

The most common ways of describing what to do and what not to do are cautionary tales, including those about a man who had dreamt of a woman and then went hunting, and how the evil spirit appeared to him and he had a narrow escape. These stories are always cast in reported evidential, and end with (23), presenting the story as told by older people to the speaker.

(23)   kayu   na: na-kalite-**na**
          thus   3pl+say   3pl-tell-REM.P.VIS

          pedalie-pe
          old-pl

          'Thus the old people told'

Instructions about what to do to achieve a desired result can be cast in non-visual evidential if they involve supernatural powers. An example comes from a procedural text about what to do to successfully snare fish through fasting, and avoiding noise and sex, told by GB (the speaker uses the impersonal form throughout; parts of this text were published in Aikhenvald 2018b). In the first line, the process of fasting is introduced using the nonvisual evidential.

(24)a   hindapada-**mha**   mepuku
          any-PRES.NONVIS   snare

          pa-ni-kasu   pa-tañe-nipe
          IMP-do-INT   IMP-fast-NOM

          'This is (nonvisual) the process of fasting in order to make any (fish)snare'

(24)b   walikasu   pheta-**mha**
          beginning   IMP+take.out-PRES.NONVIS

          kwaka   mawi   pheta
          what   paxiuba.nut   IMP+take.out

          da:pi   pheta-hyuna
          vine   IMP+take.out-HABITUAL

'At the beginning one takes (nonvisual) whatever, paxiuba nut, one takes vine, one usually takes (these)',

(24)c diha   pheta-ka   matsia
      he   IMP+take-out-SEQ   well

      pa-tañe-**mha**   ne   syawa
      IMP-fast-PRES.NONVIS   NEG   fire

      ma-kuka-kanade-**mha**
      NEG-light-PASS+NEG-PRES.NONVIS

      'having taken it, one fasts well, the fire is not lit (nonvisual)',

(24)d ne   yanape   khesarakana-wani
      NEG   children   naughty-CL:ABSTRACT

      sede-wani-**mha**-niki
      NEG.EXIST-CL:ABSTRACT-PRES.
      NONVIS-COMPL

      ne   taliwa   pa-phya-ri
      NEG   flute   IMP-blow-NOM

      sede-**mha**
      NEG.EXIST.PRES.NONVIS

      'there is no naughtiness from children (nonvisual), there is no blowing flutes (nonvisual)'

If the instructions what to do not to make the evil spirit angry contain the description of what the evil spirit would do if instructions are not followed, this will be cast in the non-visual evidential. An extract is at (25).

(25)a pha   awakada-se   phamita-ka
      IMP   jungle-LOC   IMP+burn/cook-SEQ
      pa-hña   kewere-peri
      IMP-eat   burnt.food-COLL

      pa-ni-ka
      IMP-do-SEQ

      'If one cooks in the jungle burning food,'

(25)b pa-sieta-ka   ina
      IMP-burn.firewood-SEQ   women

      puima-ma-pe   alia-ka
      menstruate-fem-pl   exist-SEQ

      'if one burns firewood, if there are menstruating women,'

(25)c hape-peri   depiha   pa-hña-ka
      cold-COLL   night.time   IMP-eat-SEQ

      ina   tapulisa-ka   diha
      woman   dream-SEQ   he

      ñamu   ke:ru-**mha**
      evil.spirit   be.angry-PRES.NONVIS

      'if one eats cold food at nighttime, if one dreams of women, the evil spirit is angry (nonvisual)'

(25)d wheru   ka-pusuku-kari   di-na
      snuff   REL-mix-REL.PAST   3sgnf-OBJ

      diha   thuya   kewere-peri
      he/it   all   burnt.food-COLL

      di-thaku   di-hwa
      3sgnf-nose   3sgnf-fall

deru-**mha**
3sgnf+stick-PRES.NONVIS

'to him, the one who had sniffed the wheru snuff, all that burnt food sticks in the nose (nonvisual)',

(25)e   kayumaka   diha   ñamu
thus   he   evil.spirit

dihmeta   keru-**mha**
3sgnf+feel   be.angry-PRES.VIS

diha ñamu   keru-**mha**
he   evil.spirit   be.angry-PRES.NONVIS

di-ni-**mha**
3sgnf-do/act-PRES.NONVIS

'so the evil spirit is angry (nonvisual), the evil spirit is angry (nonvisual), he acts (nonvisual)',

(25)f   walikasu-nuku
beginning-TOP.NON.A/S

iya-**mha**   di-seta
rain-PRES.NONVIS   3sgnf-fall+CAUS

'at the beginning he makes rain fall (nonvisual)',

(25)g   di-pumi   kale   di-pumi
3sgnf-after   wind   3sgnf-after

awakada   kadawa   di-swa-ka
jungle   darkness   3sgnf-stay-SEQ

di-a   di-ni   enu
3sg-go   3sgnf-make   thunder

alia-**mha**
EXIST-PRES.NONVIS

'then wind, then he sets in darkness in the jungle, there is thunder (nonvisual)',

(25)h   diha   kadawa-wani
he/it   darkness-CL:ABSTRACT

yehwe-**mha**   diha   ñamu
middle-PRES.NONVIS   he   evil.spirit

nihña   nawiki-nuku
3sgnf+eat   person-TOP.NON.A/S

'in the middle of the darkness the evil spirit eats the person up (nonvisual)'

Common beliefs can also be cast in reported evidential. Clouds of bees are an ominous sign and predict imminent death:

(26)   mapisi-ka   di-ñami-karu
be.ominous-SEQ   3sgnf-die-PURP

i-peya   mapa   nara
INDF-before   bee   3pl+fly

na-yena-**pidana**
3pl-exceed-REM.P.REP

'When there is an omen, before someone dies, many bees fly around'

No taboos or descriptions of prohibited and undesirable actions are cast in visual, or any of the inferred evidentials — they contain a future projection, or are based on a speech report, or reflect the actions of unseen supernatural power and are cast as 'nonvisual'.

5. To conclude

The world of those with supernatural powers is not accessible to the naked eye. In many languages with evidentials, experience associated with supernatural events is not 'seen' or 'witnessed'. Speakers of Trio and Wayana, North Carib languages, talk about shamanic attacks on them using a non-witnessed evidential. The explanation is that being attacked by a shaman generally 'brings on' or 'causes' an altered state of consciousness in the victim (Carlin 2018). In contrast, shamans themselves talk about their supernatural experience using a witnessed evidential, since what they report 'entails being in an alternate reality whereby the shaman is an active agent' (§3.2.1 of Carlin 2018). A speaker of Dyirbal would use a non-visible marker when they talk about spirits (Dixon 2014).

The nonvisual evidential is used as the preferential choice in Tariana when talking about the actions of spirits of the jungle, shamans and healers. In day-to-day life, the visual evidential is the way of presenting generally known facts. In contrast, things one cannot 'see' — including one's own feelings and physical states, the unseen actions of shamans, healers, and spirits, and the taboos invoking their powers — have to be cast in non-visual evidential.

In Tariana, as in many other languages (see, for instance, Aikhenvald 2004, Friedman 2003), evidentials can be strengthened using lexical reinforcement. Thus, to a visual evidential a speaker can add an explanation 'as I saw' (in case someone wonders). Incidentally, this illustrates the speakers' metalinguistic awareness of the evidential use. When the non-visual evidential is used to refer to something not seen but heard or smelt, a speaker might add, as an aside, an explanation, 'as he/she did not see (it), as he/she was not looking'. A statement about an evil spirit can be accompanied by 'as it is not seen'.

The lexical comments to the nonvisual evidential were cast in a different way, with the verb 'think'. As we were transcribing the text about blessing (17), JB who was helping me commented saying *dihmeta-li-ne di-ni-mha* (3sgnf+think-NOM-INS 3sgnf-do-PRES.VIS) 'he is doing (nonvisual) (it) with his thinking'. Could it be the case that the non-visual evidentials in stories about blessing and healing go beyond the information source of the speaker (who cannot 'see' the doings), and reveal the information source of the shaman and healer himself and their access to the powers of the invisible mind?

Abbreviations:

AFF - affix; AUG - augmentative; AUX - auxiliary; CAUS - causative; CL - classifier; COLL - collective; COMIT - comitative; COMPL - completive; DECL - declarative; DEM - demonstrative; DIM - diminutive; EXIST - existential; fem - feminine; FRUST - frustrative; FUT - future; IMP - impersonal; INDF - indefinite; INS – instrumental; INT - intentional; LOC - locative; NCL:ANIM - noun class 'animate'; NEG - negation; NEG.EXIST - negative existential; NOM - nominalisation; NONVIS - nonvisual; OBJ - object; PASS - passive; pl - plural; PRES - present; PRES.VIS.INTERR - present visual interrogative; PURP - purposive; REC.P.NONVIS - recent past nonvisual; REC.P.VIS - recent past visual; REM.P.VIS - remote past visual; REL - relative; REM.P.NONVIS - remote past nonvisual; REM.P.REP - remote past reported; REM.PAST - remote past; SEQ - sequential; sg - singular; sgf - singular feminine; sngf - singular nonfeminine; TOP.NON.A/S - topical nonsubject; VIS - visual.

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05

Talking to the spirits:
A jungle-at-night register of the Murui
people from the Northwest Amazon

05

Talking to the spirits: A jungle-at-night register of the Murui people from the Northwest Amazon

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1. Introduction

The Murui people are located in southern Colombia (the Putumayo and Amazonas departments, Caraparaná, Igaraparaná, and Caquetá Rivers) and northern Peru (Ampiyacú and Napo Rivers) (see Map 1) (Wojtylak 2017).[1] Murui, with the ethnic population of approximately 2,000, is a dialect of Witoto[2], and it is currently spoken by about 1,000 people. Witoto belongs to the Witotoan language family, one of the smaller linguistic families in the Northwest Amazon, which consists of two other languages from the same geographical area: Ocaina (spoken by about 90 people) and Nonuya (a moribund language with six semi speakers) (Echeverri, Fagua, and Wojtylak forthcoming).

The Witoto people form a part of a cultural area that spans the Caquetá and Putumayo River Basins (hereafter referred to as 'CP')

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[2] In fact, the word *witoto* is an exonym from Karijona (a Carib language spoken to the north), meaning 'enemy', that was employed by early missionaries and rubber traders, cf. Petersen de Piñeros and Patiño Rosselli (2000: 219). See also Agga Calderón 'Kaziya Buinaima', Wojtylak, and Echeverri (2019) on the origin story of the Murui and Minɨka peoples.

(Wojtylak 2018, Aikhenvald forthcoming, Epps forthcoming). In the literature, the CP peoples are also known as the 'People of the Centre', an autonym that makes reference to their common origin — the *Komɨmafo* or the 'Hole of Humanity' (Echeverri 1997, Agga Calderón 'Kaziya Buinaima', Wojtylak, and Echeverri 2019).[3] The CP area is comprised of seven ethnolinguistic groups that belong to three distinct language families (Witotoan—Witoto [with the Murui, Minika, Mika, and Nipode dialects], Ocaina [with Ibo'tsa and Dukaiya dialects], Nonuya; Boran—Bora [with Miraña dialect], Muinane; and Arawak—Resígaro), and the Andoke linguistic isolate. Traditionally, they were hinterland groups who inhabited remote areas away from the banks of major rivers. Having lived in close proximity to each other and being connected through trade networks, these groups have been in close contact for a lengthy period of time. They also display a certain level of cultural homogeneity, relatively different from neighboring groups. This includes shared kinship system, intermarriage, the use of drum communication, as well as common ritual activities, such as consumption of pounded coca and liquid tobacco, which is licked by men but not inhaled like among groups to the north, or smoked as among the
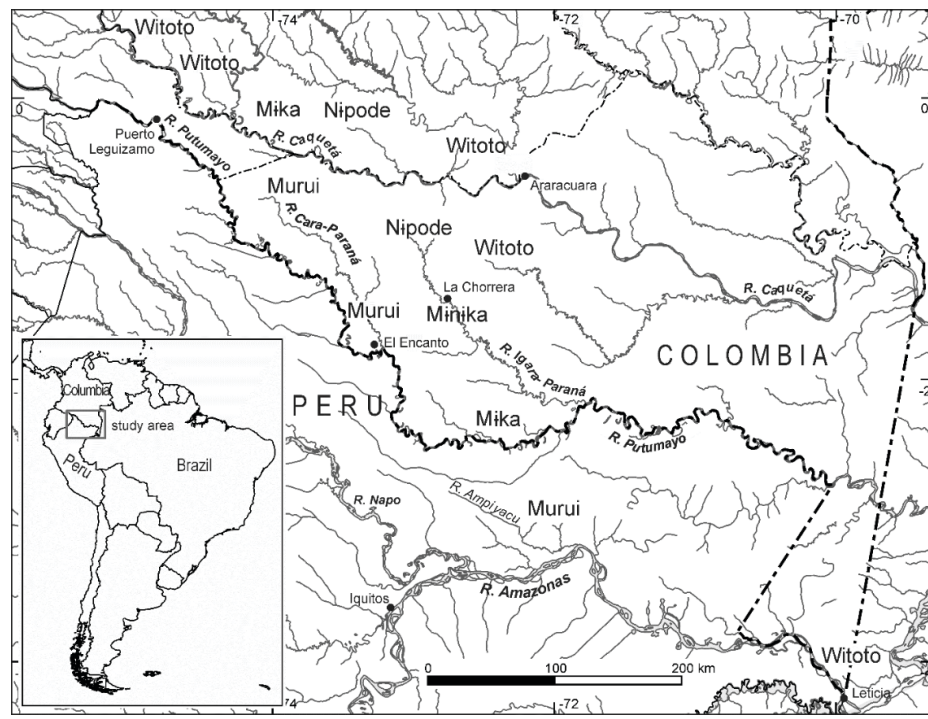
Map 1. Approximate location of the Murui speakers, as well as other Witoto-speaking groups (author's map)

groups to the west, east, and south (Echeverri 1997, Fagua and Seifart 2010, Wojtylak 2018, Wojtylak 2019). They also share avoidance speech styles, such as the Witoto hunting register (Wojtylak 2015).

This paper is structured as follows. In §2, I discuss the worldview of the Witoto, including practices and cultural taboos. In §3, I briefly focus on the intonation patterns found in the Witoto language (specifically, the Murui dialect), which are relevant for the discussion of the jungle-at-night register. §4 is a description of the register itself, including an example of a dialogue exchange. The characteristics of the register in §5. The last section 6 offers conclusions and a brief discussion.

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[3] Central to the origin myth is the secret place referred to as *Komɨmafo* that translates as 'Hole of Humanity'. According to the myth, before the creation, nothing existed on Earth. One day, the omnipotent deity *Juziñamui* (see §2) opened the hole and let all the beings inside come out. *Juziñamui* began to cut their tails off (which later would turn into stems of sugar cane), and the beings, now without tails, became people. By the end of the day not everybody had left the Hole. Those who came out after the sunset, kept their tails and remained monkeys (Agga Calderón 'Kaziya Buinaima', Wojtylak, and Echeverri 2019).

2. The worldview of the Witoto

The Witoto religious worldview was traditionally based on animism, where non-human beings, such as animals, insects, plants, and rocks have agency; in the Witoto mythology[4] they were perceived as animated and alive. Over the last century, Christian ideas replaced much of the Witoto knowledge. Most of 21st century Murui are Catholics and Evangelicals, whose worldview exhibits some elements of the traditional belief systems.[5] The Murui I lived with during my fieldwork in the Putumayo department (Caraparaná River, a tributary of the Putumayo River), were churchgoers who feared forest spirits (called taᵒfue or taᵒfueño in Murui or duende in Spanish).

The Catholic order of Capuchins established a first orphanage in the Witoto (Minika) village of La Chorrera (Igaraparaná) in 1933. There is, however, evidence that Capuchins were present in the Putumayo and Caquetá area already in the 1890s (Davis 1996, Echeverri 1997). In the 1940s, the La Chorrera orphanage founded by Capuchin Father Estanislao de Les Corts became a boarding school and it is now one of the oldest established boarding schools in this part of the Amazon Basin (Echeverri 1997: 87). Between the 1960s and 1980s, Bible translations done by SIL missionaries became widely available for the Witoto, such as the translations of Genesis 1 (Burtch 1974) and the New Testament (Burtch 1978). The belief system of the Witoto of today is characterized by religious syncretism, whereby various elements of Catholicism (e.g. the figures of God the Father and God's Son) became incorporated into the traditional worldview.

2.1 The Witoto world

The Witoto mythological narratives are characterized by nonlinearity, where elements are portrayed out of chronological order. The narrative does not follow the direct causality patterns of the plot-line. The Witoto narratives depicture many protagonists who are mythological heroes (such as the Orphans of the Sun, Jitoma and Kechatoma, children of Monairue Jitoma — Sun of the Dawn, see Candre and Echeverri 2015) or anthropomorphized animals (such as BEETLE-MAN) or objects (such as YUCCA-WOMAN).[6]

In the Witoto worldview, whose elements are still much alive today, supernatural forest beings are the malevolent *taife* who are always active and must not be called upon; invoking the *taife* in any form could cause grave harm to a person. *Taifeño*[7], less powerful than the

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[4] Mythical narratives of this sort belong to the genre of *ɨɨgaɨ* or *jagaɨ* meaning 'basket of ancient times' (Agga Calderón 'Kaziya Buinaima', Wojtylak, and Echeverri 2019).

[5] See for instance Bonilla (1972). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Caquetá-Putumayo area was hit by the excesses of rubber exploitation that drastically reduced the number of indigenous population (Hardenburg 1913), contributing thus greatly to the language and culture decay (Burgos 1994).

[6] Another figure of the Witoto mythology, the deity *BUINAIMA*, the Creator of the people, inhabited the Underworld; his name was associated with water (the verbal root *buui-* means 'to sink, to go under water'). His rival was *JUZIÑAMUI*, the only deity that lived in the Amazonian hills. *JUZIÑAMUI* was believed to have provided the people with the narrations and fire upon their creation. As a fighter, *JUZIÑAMUI* was also 'a cannibal' whose name meant 'the insatiable fighter' (Echeverri 1997: 106). The Catholic missionaries adopted this name to designate the Christian God; *BUINAIMA* was appropriated as the Son of God.

[7] Cf. *taife* followed by the feminine classifier *-ño*.

taife itself, is a term that referred to any malevolent spirit; they are able to materialize and steal women and children. Traditionally, one averted the danger by obeying taboos and adhering to rituals. Today, the Murui of Caraparaná still respect the *taifue* and *taifueño* spirits; for instance, they are never called upon. So are the true names of spirits tabooed; they are not to be uttered. An example of this is *janayari*, the generic name for jaguar, that is conventionally replaced by the word *jiko* meaning 'dog, cat'.

The Witoto fear the power of shamans who exist today, although, admittedly, they have become of healers. There are two major types of shamans: *aima*, a shaman who knows secrets of spirits, and *nimaimaima*, the one who is a 'wise-man' (referred to as *sabedor* in Spanish) and a protector of the tribe against evil spirits. During his lifetime, shaman can transform himself into a jaguar-form and do great harm; when he dies, he returns in the form of a jaguar.

The Witoto have numerous types of prohibitions that traditionally were subject to linguistic taboo. These include personal names (Wojtylak 2017). Even today, when addressing one another, nicknames (describing some characteristics of a person) and kinship terms are used instead, such as *Flaco* (instead of an actual name of the person, making reference to one's body physique, from Spanish *flaco* 'skinny'), *ei* (Witoto for 'mother'), *moo* ('father'), and *uzuma* ('grandfather'). Another instance of this linguistic prohibition is the hunting speech style. When preparing for a hunt, Witoto men use a special vocabulary that is meant to 'disguise' true names of animals that are to be hunted. This avoidance speech style is a system of lexical substitution where animal spirits are 'deceived' provided that they do not 'understand' avoidance names uttered by

the hunters. Pronouncing the 'real' name of an animal would result in an unsuccessful hunt: animal spirits would 'overhear' they are to be hunted and would escape the hunter. Animals are thus renamed: their real names are substituted with words that designate plant-(related) species. For instance, when planning to hunt a *mero* (peccary, a medium-sized pig-like hoofed mammal), a Witoto man would say that he is going to collect an *obedo*—a 'black *umarí* fruit'. This is based on an impressionistic association between the peccary and the *umarí*, whereby the fruit has a specific scent which, like peccaries, attracts mosquitoes (Wojtylak 2015). The transformations between animals and plants found in the hunting speech style appear to have been derived from the Witoto *rafue* discourse — a performative abstract genre that designates the ritual as a whole. *Rafue* talks about the formation of the body, and offers norms and instructions how to live well (Echeverri 1997, Echeverri and Román-Jitdutjaaño 2013). By evoking things in the world, it is a 'Word that becomes a Thing' (Echeverri 1997: 185).

3. Special intonation contours

Witoto Murui (hereafter referred to as Murui) is characterized by two basic types of intonation contour: falling (used for declarative sentences) and rising-falling (used for questions and commands). There is an additional non-canonical rising intonation patterns, characterized by loud speech, with two subtypes:

i) rising intonation, accompanied by vowel rising, lengthening and high pitch on word-ending syllables,

ii) rising intonation, accompanied by syllabi-fication and high pitch on the whole utter-ance, with no vowel rising or lengthening,

Both kinds of the rising intonation contours can be considered special speech-like registers, conditioned phonologically rather than lexi-cally. They are employed in the 'calling-from-a-distance' register (Wojtylak 2017: 96-99).

The first type of the rising intonation con-tour is characterized by normal speech tempo. These forms can be used when calling from a distance (for instance, when calling someone back from far away) but commonly they are employed during festivities (to announce one's arrival or acceptance of gifts and such) — that is, in those situations in which there is no need to disguise one's voice (unlike in the other type of the rising intonation, see further in this section).[8] Characteristic of this speech-register feature are: i) a high pitch over the first syllable of the verbal root (marked as ↗); if the word consists of more than two syllables, low pitch (↘) falls over the second syllable, ii) steep rise in pitch (↗↗) of the word-final syllable that contains either the central vowel /ɨ/ (/i, e, a/ > /ɨ/) or back vowel /u/ (/o/ > /u/, and /u/ remains unchanged). The duration of a syllable with a 'raised' vowel can last up to several seconds. Examples are given in (1-2):

(1) kai-mo_O:RECIPIENT jano-re ↗in↗↗iii!_PRED
1pl-LOC small-ATT give.IMP.CALLING
'Give us a little!' (cf. *kaɨmo janore ine!*)

(2a) ↗jaai-↘ño-↗↗kiii!_PRED
go-IMP-RAPID.CALLING
'Go immediately!' (cf. *jaaiñokai!*)

(2a) ↗Paul↘u-↗↗uuu!_PRED
name-RAPID.CALLING
'Paulu!' (cf. *Paulo!*)

Similar vowel rising techniques have also been reported for other Northwest Amazonian languages, such as Tariana (North Arawak) (Aikhenvald 2003).[9]

The second type of the rising non-canon-ical intonation contour involves a deliberate voice modulation accompanied by: i) slow speech tempo, and ii) high pitch that falls onto every syllable in a phrase. There is no vowel rising. An example of this is given in (3), where *buudɨo?* 'who are you?' has a rising intonation, each syllable bears high pitch, and the phrase is pronounced in a slow manne:

(3) ↗↗buu-↗↗di-↗↗o?
who-LINK-2sg
'Who are you?'

This type of the intonation contour is used for calling-from-a-distance register, when disguising people's voices. This is the topic of the next section..

4. The Murui jungle-at-night register

The jungle, especially at night, is seen by the Murui as extremely dangerous and full of

[8] These are also used as a customary way of ending certain types of traditional songs, such as the ones of the *Muruikɨ* celebrations.
[9] Cross-linguistically, vowel rising and vowel centralization used for calling from a distance is not uncommon. For instance, 'call-at-distance' messages are shouted out among the Nungon speakers of Papua New Guinea (Sarvasy 2017), and are marked by an alternation of the final vowel of an utterance.

threats. At night, when one is away from the safety of their own settlements (e.g. when walking in the forest or paddling on the river), it is imperative to employ a special register when conversing with someone who cannot be seen. Failure to do so can result in falling victim to malevolent spirits (and transformed shamans) who can appear as e.g. a jaguar or a snake. This register does not have a special name in the language but the Murui refer to it as 'the way you speak if you do not know who or what you are talking to'. It is a way to disguise a person's voice in such a manner that evil beings would not recognize it, and thus harm the person.

I witnessed how the jungle-at-night register is used in 2013, quite accidentally, while on the river at night with a Murui woman in the vicinity of the Murui settlement of Tercera India, Caraparaná, Colombia (I refer to her as 'S' in this paper). While paddling down the river in our canoe, we heard a voice-like sound emanating from the forest. S stopped paddling, put the oars away, and started to listen intensively. She made a gesture to stay quiet, after which, S initiated the following dialogue exchange. ('V' stands for S's interlocutor, the unidentified voice from the jungle).

(4)   S: ↗↗uuu!
                INTERJ
                'Hey!'(drawing attention)

(silence)

(5)   V: ↗↗uuu!
                INTERJ
                (responding to S's calling)

(silence)

(6)   S: ↗↗ni-ne   ↗↗jaai-↗↗dɨ-↗↗o?ₚᵣₑ𝒹
                which-LOC:NSP   go-LINK-2sg
                'Where are you going?'

(7)   V: ↗↗a↗↗ri=↗↗dɨ↗↗ne!
                uphill=AT.LOC:NSP
                'Uphill!' (i.e. in the direction of the El Encanto village)

(silence)

(8)   V: ↗↗oo!   ↗↗ni-↗↗ne   ↗↗jaai-↗↗dɨ-↗↗o?ₚᵣₑ𝒹
                2sg   which-LOC:NSP   go-LINK-2sg
                'You! Where are you going?'

(9)   S: ↗↗fui↗↗rɨ=↗↗dɨ↗↗ne!
                  downstream=AT.LOC:NSP
                  'Downstream!'

(silence)

(10)   S: ↗↗ [buu   ↗↗dɨga]   ↗↗jaai-↗↗dɨ-↗↗o?PRED
                  who   with   go-LINK-2sg
                  'Who are you going with?'

(11)   V: ↗↗da-↗↗maS   ↗↗jaai-↗↗dɨ-↗↗kue!PRED
                  one-CLF:DR.M   go-LINK-1sg
                  'I'm going alone.' [10]

(silence)

(12)   S: ↗↗bue-↗↗ñe-↗↗ye   ↗↗jaai-↗↗dɨ-↗↗o?PRED
                  what-do-FUT.EVENT.NMLZ   go-LINK-2sg
                  'Why (lit. to do what) are you going (there)?'

(13)   V: ↗↗ma↗↗ka-↗↗ye-↗↗naPur
                  walk-FUT.EVENT.NMLZ-N.S/A.TOP
                  'To have a look around (lit. to walk around).'

(silence)

(14)   V: ↗↗buu-↗↗dɨ-↗↗o?PRED
                  who-LINK-2sg
                  'Who are you?'

(15)   S: ↗↗ [Ter↗↗ce↗↗ra   ↗↗In↗↗dia   ↗↗i-↗↗ñai↗↗ño]- ↗↗dɨ-↗↗kuePRED
                  Tercera.Sp   India.Sp   ANA.NSP-CLF:PR.F-LINK-1sg
                  'I am a woman of the Tercera India (settlement).

(silence)

(16)   S: ↗↗oo!   ↗↗buu-↗↗dɨ-↗↗o?PRED
                  2sg   who-LINK-2sg
                  'Hey! Who are you?' (lack of response, followed by silence)

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[10] Here, by using the masculine classifier -ma, the interlocutor reveals that he is in fact a male.

(17)   S: ↗↗uuu!
                INTERJ
                'Hey!' (drawing attention back to the conversation)

(18)   V: ↗↗uuu!
                INTERJ
                'Hey!' (responding to S's calling)

(19)   S: ↗↗buu-↗↗di-↗↗o?$_{\text{PRED}}$
                who-LINK-2sg
                'Who are you?'

(silence)

(20)   V: ↗↗ [Ter ↗↗ ce ↗↗ ra   ↗↗In ↗↗ dia   ↗↗i-↗↗mie]
                Tercera.Sp   India.Sp   ANA.NSP-CLF:PR.M
                ' I am a man of the Tercera India (settlement).'

(21)   S: ↗↗nai-↗↗no-↗↗mo$_{\text{LOC}}$ ↗↗bue?
                ANA.SP-CLF:SP.PLACE-LOC   what
                'What is (there)?'

(22)   V: ↗↗gaɨ↗↗ri-↗↗di-ma↗↗kɨ!$_{\text{PRED}}$
                gather-LINK-3pl
                'They are gathering!'

(23)   S: ↗↗ni-↗↗ne?
                which-LOC:NSP
                'Where?'

(24)   V: ↗↗ana↗↗ne-↗↗ko-↗↗mo!
                communal.roundhouse-CLF:COVER-LOC
                'In the communal roundhouse!'

(silence)

(25)   S: ↗↗ni-↗↗ko-↗↗mo?
                which-CLF:COVER-LOC
                'In which one?'

(lack of response, silence)

(26)   S: ↗↗uuu!
               INTERJ
               'Hey!' (drawing attention back to the conversation)

(27)   V: ↗↗ooo!
               INTERJ
               'Hey!' (answering S's calling)

(silence)

(28)   S: ↗↗jaai-↗↗di-↗↗o?_{PRED}
               go-LINK-2sg
               'Are you leaving (lit. going)?'

(29)   V: ↗↗jɨɨ!   ↗↗jai   ↗↗jaai-di-kue_{PRED}
               INTERJ   already go-LINK-1sg
               'Yes! I leave (lit. go) now.' (this is a common way to bid farewell)

(30)   S: ↗↗mai   ↗↗oo   ↗↗jaai!_{PRED}
               well.so   2sg   go.IMP
               'Well, you go!' (a common farewell reply)

(31)   V: ↗↗jɨɨ!
               INTERJ
               'Yes!'

Once the conversation finished, S quickly picked up the oars and started to paddle away. She quietly added in a normal voice:

(32)   S: Kakadɨo   Kata? Eu   izoi   naɨ-a_{PRED}
               hear-LINK-2sg name   name   similar speak-EVENT.NMLZ
               'Did you hear, Kata? (He) spoke like Eu...' (Eu is S's nephew)

5. Features of the jungle-at-night register

In this section, I analyze the dialogue exchange (4-31) in §4 in term of its: A. prosodic patterns, B. information structure patterns, and C. 'clues' used to determine who the interlocutor is.

A. Prosodic patterns:

A1. Rising intonation with high pitch — conversational patterns of the dialogue exchange are characterized by rising intonation and a loud vocalization which is higher by at least half or double of the frequency of a normal pitch. There is neither vowel rising; cf. §3 on the rising intonation pattern type i).

A2. Slow tempo speech — each phrase is pronounced in a slower than usual speech tempo, whereby words are syllabified and the high pitch is assigned to each syllable separately.

B. Information structure patterns:

B1. The length of the interaction — the exchange of information is rather brief and usually includes conventional questions inquiring into one's identity and clan's affinity (but not name), as in (14-20), or the location to/from one is going/coming, as in (6-9).

B2. The use of silence — the dialogue exchange abounds in moments of meaningful silence, as for instance, the moments following (4), (5), (7), and (9).

B3. The use of interjections — the speaker urges the interlocutor to reply by using interjections, such as *uuu!* or *ooo!*, as in (4-5), (17-18), and (26-27).

C. Additional 'clues' determining the interlocutor's identity

C1. The voice of the interlocutor — the interlocutors try to detect the person's identity based on their voice (e.g. whether the person is a female, male, elder, adult, or a child).
.

C2. The knowledge revealed by the interlocutor — what type of information the interlocutor possesses and shares. This included specific knowledge, such as that about the structure of the Tercera India settlement in (22-25), following S inquiry about the communal roundhouse in the village where people gather in.

6. Conclusions and discussion

The Murui, a Witotoan group from Northwest Amazonia, employ a special jungle-at-night register in contexts of potential affinity in situations of danger, when the interlocutor is unknown and cannot be identified.[11] The register is used during conversational exchanges involving (usually) two interlocutors. As the participants are never certain who (or what) they speak with, they 'test' each other to determine their identity. Such dialogue exchanges are not obligatorily initiated, but, frequently, happen, as engaging in a dialogue-at-distance does not cause physical harm. The jungle-at-

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[11] In this sense, it may be comparable ethnologically to mother-in-law or a son-in-law speech styles of some Arawakan groups (such as Piro and Ashaninka), wherein the speech is high-pitched, the eyes are averted, and the tabooed person is never spoken to directly but always through a third person (cf. the affinal civility registers of Kalapalo (Cariban) and Kamaiurá (Tupí-Guaraní) Central and Northern Brazil). In this sense, the jungle-at-night register could be seen as a politeness strategy of sorts combined with an intentionally 'shy' behaviour preferred when the potential encounter is unexpected (Juan Alvaro Echeverri p.c.).

night register allows the interlocutors to gain control over a potentially risky situation, at the same time obeying and respecting a powerful taboo—the malevolent spirits.

The interaction becomes a sort of a back-and-forth game, whereby both interlocutors weigh in and assess what knowledge becomes disclosed, and what they then can reveal to the other in return. They are always at risk of exposing secret information (such as one's name, which, among the Witoto, is traditionally a subject to taboo). To minimize this risk, the exchange is always kept at a minimum and remains vague. The undisclosed information gives the interlocutors the power over one another, and the power is retained as long as the secret is not revealed.

The Murui point out that, even if one's identity is revealed in the course of the interaction, the interlocutor never ceases using the register, as they cannot ever be certain who, or what, the interlocutor really is, and who, or what, can intercept the conversation.

The interaction teems in moments of significant silence. That silence allows both interlocutors to determine one's risk of proceeding with the exchange. The unique voice modulation that accompanies the exchange camouflages interlocutors' voices from revealing their age and sex, and rids it from the fear that one experiences when facing a threat. Peculiar is the lack of vowel rising used for calling-from-a-distance technique, which enables a voice to travel greater distances. It is almost as if the dialogue exchange was to be kept secret between the two interlocutors, providing intimate space for the conversation to occur.

The intonation and the pitch are a form of mimicry — the Murui say that such 'speech' resembles that of the malevolent beings. Thus,

by adopting the register, both interlocutors consciously undergo a transgressive experience, whereby they both transform into the powerful *taɨfues*.

Abbreviations

1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person, ANA anaphoric, AT.LOC locative postposition *at*, ATT attributive, CLF classifier, DR 'derivational', EVENT event, F feminine, FUT future, G generic, INTERJ interjection, IMP imperative, LINK linker, LOC locative, M masculine, NMLZ nominalization, NSP non-specific, N.S/A non-S/A subject, pl plural, O object of transitive clause, PR 'pronominal', PRED predicate, Pur purposive, S subject of intransitive clause, sg singular, SP specific, Sp Spanish, TOP topical

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06

Taming the jaguar:
On the lexical equivalence of 'jaguar' and
'domestic dog' in Amazonian languages

06

Taming the jaguar:
On the lexical equivalence of 'jaguar' and
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1. Introduction

This paper takes as its starting point the frequently observed lexicalization pattern in Amazonian languages whereby 'jaguar' (*Panthera onca*) and 'domestic dog' (C*anis familiaris*) share a root (Schwartz 1997: 164; Adelaar 2013: 124, among others). For an English speaker this lexical overlap is surprising, and likewise from a biological perspective, since it cuts across two sets of carnivores: felids (cat family) and canids (dog family). The discussion seeks to answer the question:

"why should jaguars and dogs be lexically linked?" – and the answer proposed is that while the lexical overlap may have found its initial motivation in the simple homology of two carnivorous predators, it is best explained synchronically as maintaining a symbolic link between the two animals. The jaguar is the archetypal wild forest predator, and the domestic dog is the archetype of domestication – the two animals occupy extremes of a scale of wildness/domestication. The symbolic and lexical link functions both as "calling a dog a jaguar" – imbuing it with desirable

properties that make it better at hunting – and "calling a jaguar a dog", attenuating its inherent threat by symbolically taming it.

The paper does not aim to provide an exhaustive study of the ways of talking about jaguars and dogs throughout the Amazon Basin, and such an undertaking would require much more, and more detailed, data. There remains much work to be done in this area, as the lexical situation tends to be far more complex and nuanced than published dictionaries can do justice to. [1]

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 describes and exemplifies the observed lexical overlap in the context of the semantic field of terms for carnivores. Section 3 describes the cultural importance of the domestic dog in Amazonia, showing its human-like and specifically child-like status. Section 4 describes the cultural importance of the jaguar, in particular its association with shamanism and shape-shifting and addressing the question of verbal taboos and related phenomena. Section 5 brings together the threads of the discussion and provides some concluding comments.

2. Lexicon and etymology

The observed lexical conflation of 'jaguar' and 'dog' is widely assumed to result from a historical extension of an etymon originally referring only to 'jaguar'. This direction of change is assumed in the etymological notes for many languages in the *Languages of Hunter-gatherers and their Neighbors* database (Epps 2018), for example, and is made explicit by Meira & Franchetto (2005):

> Most Cariban languages have only one word for both 'dog' and 'jaguar'. Since the oldest meaning is, of course, 'jaguar' (dogs were introduced by Europeans), it is taken here as basic. (Meira & Franchetto 2005: 179)

While there were certainly domestic dogs in the Americas in pre-Columbian times, they seem to have been absent from lowland Amazonia until colonial times (Gilmore 1950; Schwartz 1997; Dienst & Fleck 2009). There is some evidence of both domestic dogs and tame local canids on the Caribbean coast and the northern margins of Amazonia (Gilmore 1950; Schwartz 1997). [2] Recent genetic evidence, however, shows that "American [domestic] dogs alive today have almost no ancestry from precontact [domestic] dogs" (Goodman & Karlsson 2018: 27), so Amazonian domestic dog populations and their cultural status can be assumed to essentially date from colonial times when European dogs were introduced and spread

[2] While cross-breeding with wild populations of wolves and coyotes may have occurred (Vilà & Wayne 2001; Wayne & Vilà 2001), cross-breeding with other canids is extremely unlikely from a biological standpoint (Schwartz 1997; Gilmore 1950: 424–426). Gilmore (1950) also notes that the crab-eating fox (*Cerdocyon thous*) may be able to interbreed with the domestic dog (see also Schwartz 1997: 40); this animal is not found in lowland Amazonia, but is found on the margins, in particular in the north and on the Caribbean coast (Emmons & Feer 1997: 148).

via the extensive trade networks of indigenous South America (Schwartz 1997; Pache et al. 2016).

The first Spanish invaders arriving in the Caribbean and the coast of modern Mexico brought large dogs which they trained to attack humans, and colonial reports show that indigenous Americans' first encounters with European dogs were violent and terrifying (de Las Casas 2004 [1552]); by contrast, the Aztecs' domestic dogs were small creatures raised for food (Díaz 1963 [1632]). We could hypothesise, then, that the newly encountered European dogs were classified as jaguars on the basis of this experience. Even so, a historical scenario based on first impressions cannot explain the enduring and widespread categorisation of dogs with jaguars in the Amazon region, and the role of dogs in modern Amazonian societies is as the archetype of a domestic animal – "man's best friend" – and the wiry whippets that are raised as hunting dogs are a far cry from the powerful jaguar.

2.1 Amazonian felids

Looking more deeply at the lexical overlap shows that it covers more than simply 'jaguar' and 'dog'. There are a number of felids apart from the jaguar, and the melanistic form of the jaguar itself may be labelled with a distinct term (as in English *black panther*), and often has its own distinct role in myths (as with the *yanapuma* myth referred to below, §4). The puma (*Puma concolor*, also known as *cougar* in English) is a large felid that prefers mountainous terrain, but shares some of its range with the jaguar, and the lowland Amazon basin is home to various smaller felids of the genera *Leopardus* and *Herpailurus*, including the ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*), margay (*Leopardus wiedii*) and oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*). A general term that covers 'jaguar' and 'dog' typically refers to a class including all of the other felids too.

Chicham (formerly known as Jivaroan) languages, for example, use the term *yãwãã* for both jaguar and dog; in practice, the word *yãwãã* on its own is typically interpreted as 'dog', while 'jaguar' is specified with the compound *ikam yãwãã*, literally 'forest jaguar/dog'.[3] A parallel compound *taŋku yãwãã* ('domesticated jaguar/dog') exists for 'dog', but is only rarely used. The compound *ikam yãwãã* is used more broadly as a cover term for all wild felids, all of which (including the black panther) can also be specified with compounds or underived nouns; these differ to some extent amongst the Chicham languages – Wampis, for example, has the term *uun yãwãã* ('large jaguar/dog') for 'jaguar' (Jakway et al. 1987), which Aguaruna does not use. Finally note that there is another term *puwaŋkat* 'jaguar', of unknown etymology, as well as a distinct term *kaish* 'black panther'. It is possible that *puwaŋkat* is an earlier term that was replaced by the loanword *yãwãã* (see §2.3). Table 1 lists a selection of terms for the *yãwãã* category in Aguaruna, and Figure 1 shows the semantic relations between those terms that are polysemous between a hypernym and a specific hyponym. Note that native Amazonian canids are not covered by the term *yãwãã* – see §2.2 below.

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[3] Sources on Chicham languages differ as to whether the final vowel of *yãwãã* is long or short. I transcribe it as long (orthographically doubled) throughout this paper in the interests of consistency.

| TERM	DEFINITION
yãwãã	domestic dog/felid; domestic dog *stricto sensu*
taŋku yãwãã	domestic dog
ikam yãwãã	felid; jaguar *stricto sensu*
hapayua	(< *hapa yãwãã* 'deer jaguar/dog') puma (*Puma concolor*)
puwaŋkat	jaguar (*Panthera onca*)
kaish	black panther (*Panthera onca*)
shiashia	ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)
untucham	oncilla (*Leopardus tigrinus*)

Table 1: Terms and definitions in Aguaruna (Chicham)
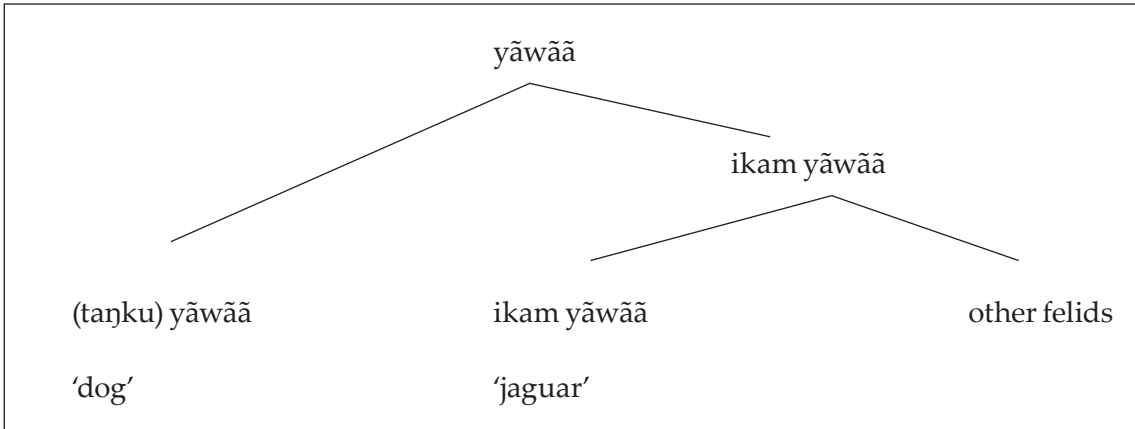
Figure 1: Hypernymy and hyponymy in the Aguaruna category yãwãã

The jaguar/dog polysemy of *yãwãã* is apparently synchronically symmetrical, in that one referent is not treated as a metaphorical extension of the other. Fast et al. (1996) in their dictionary of Achuar-Shiwiar comment that *ikiam yãwãã* 'jaguar' is literally "perro del monte" [dog of the forest], while in the entry for *taŋku yãwãã* 'domestic dog' they comment that this is literally "jaguar domesticado" [domesticated jaguar]. This suggests that for the native speakers who worked with the compilers of the dictionary, the term *yãwãã* evokes both jaguar and domestic dog equally.

For Shipibo (Panoan), Valenzuela notes a similar polysemy, along with the possibility of disambiguating through compounding:

> [T]he term *ino*, translated in the local Spanish as *tigre* 'tiger', includes a variety of wild cats. However, *ino* refers primarily to one kind of wild cat, the jaguar. There is a polysemous relation between the generic *ino* 'jaguar' and the intermediate category *ino* 'wild cats in general', [...] The bimorphemic name *ino-kon* (< *ino* 'jaguar' + *ikon* 'real, genuine') is used when specific reference to 'jaguar' is needed. (Valenzuela 2000: 25)

Da Cruz (2011) describes a similar development for Nheêngatú (Tupí-Guaraní), where *yawara* 'dog' meant 'jaguar' in the precursor language Tupinambá, and was extended to cover 'dog'; the modern Nheêngatú word *yawareté* 'jaguar' developed from *yawara-ete* 'jaguar/dog-GENUINE' (Da Cruz 2011: 241).[4] So a new 'jaguar' term was innovated by altering the old form to avoid ambiguity.

Kawapanan languages also suggest a historical spread of 'jaguar' to 'domestic dog', with the latter sense distinguished by a suffix in the modern languages. For Shawi, Rojas (2013: 32) gives *niʔniʔ* 'jaguar'/'dog' and *niʔni-ra* 'dog', where *-ra* is an unproductive diminutive suffix. Note that the unmarked term covers both 'dog' and 'jaguar', and the suffixed form specifies 'dog'. Shiwilu has *ɲiniʔwa* 'domestic dog', showing the fossilised suffix, but has innovated a new term *amanaʔ* 'jaguar' (of unknown etymology). The unsuffixed Shiwilu form *ɲiniʔ* only appears in compounds, including *tanan-ɲiniʔ* 'bush dog' (cf. *tanan* 'forest') and *kellulu-ɲiniʔ*

'black panther' (it is not clear what the first element means) (Pilar Valenzuela, personal communication; Valenzuela et al. 2013). So the Kawapana data are consistent with a proto-form something like **niʔniʔ* 'jaguar' which was extended to cover 'dog', with the latter meaning later distinguished by incorporation of a diminutive suffix.

In Kandozi-Chapra (isolate) *tumuuʂ* 'jaguar'/'dog' is rarely modified, but in the sense 'jaguar' it may be followed by the word *paweenmash*, which may also appear alone with that meaning, and is perhaps an older term for 'jaguar'.

Still other languages show no overlap. In the northwest of the Amazon basin, in the contact zone that includes Chicham and Kandozi-Chapra, we also find Urarina (isolate) *ɨɽeɽey* 'jaguar' and *ɽe:mae* 'domestic dog' (Olawsky 2011). Further afield, but still in the western Amazon basin, Matsés (Panoan) has *bɨdi* 'jaguar' and *opa* 'dog' (Epps 2018); Yine (also known as Piro; Arawak) has *kewe* 'dog' and *mhenoklɨ* 'jaguar' (Nies 1986). Obviously the conclusions drawn in this paper do not apply to such languages.

2.2 Amazonian canids

While the felids are well-known, the Amazonian canids, the short-eared dog *Atelocynus microtis* and bush dog *Speothos venaticus*, are rarely encountered and have not been domesticated, although there are accounts of tame bush dogs. The short-eared dog is solitary and very rare. The bush dog lives in family groups and is somewhat common in Peru and the Guyanas

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4 Note that Stradelli (1929: 275) transcribes the word for 'jaguar' as *iauareté*, and for 'domestic dog' he gives i*auára-tainha*, where *tainha* means 'child' (Stradelli 1929: 136), another example of specification by compounding.

(Emmons & Feer 1997). Both are quite distinct genetically from the domestic dog (Wayne & Vilà 2001). The bush dog shares a root with the jaguar/dog category in Kawapanan, as shown above, and Waiwai (Carib) has the same term *šaΦari* for 'bush dog' and 'domestic dog', distinct from *kamarači* 'jaguar' (Epps 2018). But this is unusual even among the Carib languages, as shown by the quote from Meira & Franchetto (2005), above, and reflects the unique cultural history of Waiwai domestic dogs and tame canids (Howard 2001; Gilmore 1950). More typically, canids tend to be distinct from the class of felids and domestic dogs.

The bush dog is associated metaphorically with hunting dogs as a symbol of ferocity – Codjia (2017) reports an equivalence of the domestic dog with the bush dog in a Wampis magic song, as does Descola for Achuar, while noting that "[a]lthough the Achuar recognize no genetic kinship between their domesticated dogs and these bush dogs, the latter are regarded as the archetype to which all hunting dogs should approximate" (Descola 1996: 79). At the same time, he notes that comparisons to other animals also appear in the songs, including the tayra (*Eira barbara*), a mustelid known for its cunning in stealing chickens, and female dogs are equated with the tapir (*Tapirus sp.*), a symbol of animal fecundity – so this feature of the bush dog is part of a wider pattern of animal metaphors, and cannot be taken as evidence of an especially close association between the bush dog and domestic dog. In this context, the use of a term that also means 'jaguar' to refer to the domestic dog can be seen as a similar symbolic linking of the dog with the desired qualities of the apex predator.

To summarise, where 'jaguar' and 'dog', share a root this is likely to have its etymological basis in the spread of a term meaning 'jaguar', based on simple homology. Synchronically, however, the terms refer equally to both, reflecting a conceptual equivalence, and they may be modified in various ways in order to specify one or the other sense.

2.3 Words across Amazonia

A further striking lexical phenomenon is that terms for 'jaguar' and 'dog' in contemporary Amazonian languages are frequently identifiable as loanwords, and this is just part of a larger pattern of loanword vocabulary skewed to the semantic fields of flora and fauna (Epps 2015a).

For example, Epps (2015b: 582) follows Payne (1991) in reconstructing **tsini* as 'jaguar' for the Arawak family, but in the northern Arawak languages this root never refers to 'jaguar', only to 'domestic dog'. The form for 'jaguar' in the northern languages is *yawi* or similar, and this form has no obvious cognates in the south (Alexandra Aikhenvald, personal communication). The latter form is similar to the reconstructed Tukanoan **yaʔi* 'jaguar' (Epps 2015b: 582), as well as Makushi (Carib) *dʒawi* and Hodɨ (isolate) *yɛwɨ* (Zamponi 2017: 271). Epps (2018) recognises this form as a *Wanderwort*, a proto-form shared by members of at least three genetically unrelated lineages with no clear basis to assign an ultimate source language. There is also some similarity with Tupi-Guarani **yawar*, but at present there is no basis to say whether or not this is mere coincidence.

Chicham *yāwāã* is most likely a loan from Tupí-Guaraní **yawar*: the loss of /r/ is expected in loans (Overall 2017: 30), and other apparent loans attest to contact with Tupí-Guaraní languages (see also Michael 2014 on Omagua and

Kokama as pre-Columbian contact languages in the Maynas region, near to the historically Chicham-speaking area).

Other languages have taken words for 'domestic dog' from colonial languages, but these do not seem to show the overlap with 'jaguar', e.g. Kari'nja (Carib) *pero, peru* 'dog' < Spanish *perro,* but *kaikusi* 'jaguar' (Courtz 2008); Kaingang (Jê) *kasor* < Portuguese *cachorro,* but *mĩg* /mĩŋ/ 'jaguar' (Wiesemann 2011).

So terms for 'jaguar' and 'dog' are both targets for lexical replacement, often through loanwords, and this is just part of a much wider Amazonian pattern, reflecting the important cultural status of both dogs and jaguars, which is the topic of the next two sections.

3. The domestic dog in Amazonian culture

While domestic dogs may be equated with wild predators in terms of their hunting prowess, their cultural significance lies in their status as the archetypal domesticated animal, which confers them a human-like status. Vander Velden (2016: 63) cites a Karitiana (Tupí) consultant describing dogs as "just like us, because they help people, they kill animals in the hunt for people, they eat the flesh and bones." Dogs may receive personal names, like humans but unlike any other domestic animal. This is the case among Chicham speaking groups (Descola 1996: 83 on Achuar), and the Kwaza (isolate) (Van der Voort 2004: 732–733). Dumont (1977: 91) gives a list of specifically dog names, that have no other meaning, used by speakers of Panare (Carib) and Tuggy (1966: 251) gives a

similar list of dog names of opaque meaning (as are human names) used by speakers of Kandozi-Chapra (isolate).[5]

Dogs are not just human-like, but specifically childlike (Aikhenvald 2012: 15). In keeping with the parental role of bestowing names, a dog's owners are referred to as its *duku* 'mother' and *apa* 'father' in Aguaruna society. Like children, dogs are socialised through training and discipline, including food taboos, and are administered drugs that allow them to connect with the spirit world – Descola describes a type of brugmansia or angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia sp.*) named *yãwãã maikiua* ('dog brugmansia') that is "used to improve the animals' scent, courage and pugnacity" (Descola 1996: 75). Howard (2001: 258) notes that both dogs and parrots are "metaphors of children" for the Waiwai.[6]

Many traditional stories refer to and reinforce the close bond between dogs and humans. A traditional Aguaruna story tells of how the human penis was formerly that of the dog, and consequently human couples would find themselves physically stuck together for some time after coitus. This resulted in adulterous couples being discovered and killed; seeing this, the dog agreed to an exchange of penises with men, making human life easier. Another story tells of a dog and his human mistress falling in love. This results in the dog refusing to go hunting with the cuckolded husband, instead preferring to accompany the wife to her garden where they would have sex. This latter theme is reminiscent of scenes depicted in Mochica ceramics of the north Peruvian

[5] Interestingly, one of the Kandozi-Chapra dog names is *Ptókamá* /ptukam(a)/, cf. Achuar (Chicham) *patukam* 'bush dog' (Descola 1996: 78–79).

[6] Schwartz (1997: 11) notes that women may have played a major role in the original domestication of dogs, essentially "adopting" wolf pups.

coast, and of Mesoamerican myths explaining the origin of humanity in a dog mating with a woman (Pache et al. 2016, citing Latocha 1983).

Both of these stories highlight a preoccupation with the dog's involvement in domestic concerns, a key feature of the dog in Chicham culture, where it stands at the nexus of feminine and masculine spheres. As Descola puts it, while the dog is "placed entirely in the dependence of the women and raised, cared for, fed and trained by them, it is mainly used by the men in one of the most distinctively masculine occupations [i.e. hunting]" (Descola 1996: 83). So the domestic dog is of enormous cultural importance in Amazonian societies, and occupies an ambiguous position as its child-like qualities lead to it being associated with the feminine and domestic, while its hunting role associates it with masculinity and the wild.

4. Jaguars, killers, and shamans

The jaguar is a hugely important figure for religious and mythological traditions throughout its natural range (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975) and even beyond, for example in the iconography of the high Andean Chavín culture. Jaguars feature prominently in motifs of traditional stories shared by widely-dispersed Amazonian groups. Carneiro (1989) recounts a story that he labels "To the Village of the Jaguars" told by the Kuikuro (Carib), and a similar story among the Amahuaca (Panoan) (Carneiro 2009; Chicham and Kandozi-Chapra cultures feature similar myths): a Jaguar takes in and cures a sick woman wandering in the forest, then marries and impregnates her; the woman ends up killing the jaguar husband by putting a hot stone in his mouth, but she then gives

birth to all the forest felids. Gow (2001: 106) notes that although jaguars are solitary creatures, in this myth they live in a family group, adding an extra level of uncanny horror (and also making them more human – social living is an important analogy to humanity in mythological roles of parrots and peccaries, among others, see Overall 2019).

The mythology infuses everyday life: Yine (or Piro; Arawak) parents use the jaguar as a type of bogeyman to discourage children from wandering, while being well aware that the actual likelihood of an encounter is very low (Gow 2001: 105–106). Shepard (2014) points out, however, that while jaguars usually stay well clear of human settlements, old or sick jaguars are sometimes willing to risk living near villages in order to take advantage of the softer and slower-moving prey: chickens, dogs, and even small humans. The Matsigenka (Arawak) consider these to be "were-jaguars" – old or infirm people who have turned into jaguars and come back to haunt the group.

Lévi-Strauss (1970: 66 ff.) relates six versions of an important myth from different Jê groups. The myth concerns the origin of fire, which came from a jaguar. Chicham speakers on the other side of the Amazon basin tell a story that shares some important elements. In the Jê stories, a man and his wife's younger brother go bird-nesting. The younger boy climbs up to the nest but doesn't get any eggs, a quarrel ensues and the older man removes the ladder leaving the young boy trapped. He becomes very thin, and in one version ends up covered in bird droppings. A jaguar passes by and rescues the boy, taking him to his home where the boy encounters fire and cooked meat for the first time (as above, the jaguar is portrayed as human in some way). The boy

ends up stealing fire from the jaguar and bringing it to humankind. In the Aguaruna story, two men are hunting baby oilbirds (*Steatornis caripensis*) in a deep cave, and are trapped there and left for dead by the lover of the wife of one of the brothers. One of the brothers dies in the cave, and the surviving brother (the cuckolded one), sits helplessly in the dark for many days, becoming emaciated and covered in bird droppings. Finally his brother's spirit appears to him in the form of a jaguar and helps him escape, and he is able to take revenge on his unfaithful wife and her murderous lover. The theft of fire does not feature in the Aguaruna story, and is the subject of an unrelated myth. Although these stories are quite distinct, the shared elements are remarkable, including the important role of the jaguar/human figure.

The jaguar has a close association with humans through shape-shifting: as we have just seen, jaguars (as with other forest creatures) appear as humans in mythological contexts, and human spirits can return in the form of a jaguar. Some shamanic traditions allow shamans to shape-shift into the form of a jaguar, a clear symbolic representation of great power (Aikhenvald 1999: 34, 2012: 310; Wright 2013). As Reichel-Dolmatoff (1975) puts it:

> In tropical America, the close association between shamanism and jaguars or jaguar-spirits has long been a well-known phenomenon ... a shaman can turn into a jaguar at will ... [a]fter death, the shaman may turn permanently into a jaguar. (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975: 43)

Beyond the shamanic shape-shifting and were-jaguars, jaguar myths can be read as representing the horrors of colonial oppression and genocide, where the jaguar/human represents the *patrón*, an exploitative trader of European descent. Pau (2014) discusses this in the context of a myth about a black panther that kills a gang of rubber-tappers, told by Kukama elders near Nauta, Peru. He concludes:

> Lo *yanapuma* è così la versione animalesca del *patrón*, che dispone delle persone che lavorano per lui come fossero degli oggetti e che non si pone scrupoli ad abusare di loro e portarli alla morte.
>
> [So the *yanapuma* ('black panther') is the animalistic version of the *patrón*, who uses the people who work for him as if they were objects, and has no compunction in abusing and even killing them.] (Pau 2014: 173)[7]

We have seen, then, that the jaguar is associated with humanity through its role in shamanism, and the jaguar-as-human represents a powerful and dangerous shaman. This contrasts with the dog-as-human, which is conceptualised as a child (§3).

4.1 Taboo and euphemism

A widespread practice in Amazonia is the use of special replacement vocabulary in particular contexts: "ritual wailing" (Beier et al. 2002), shamanic discourse, and hunting. Fleck (2013) describes special replacement lexemes that must be used when preparing curare, and elaborate sets of synonyms for game animals among Panoan groups: "Matses and Kulina of the Curuçá River (and perhaps other Panoan

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[7] The term *yanapuma* is a Quechua compound meaning 'black jaguar', also used in the local Spanish of the Peruvian Amazon.

languages) … have as many as five synonyms for most game animals" (Fleck 2013: 48). Lexical replacement in a hunting context is also reported for Murui (Witotoan; Wojtylak 2015) and Achuar (Chicham; Descola 1996), although not described for other Chicham languages.

Fleck (2013) also describes Panoan mystical languages, for example the language of the Sharanawa shamanic chants is incomprehensible to the uninitiated despite being phonologically and grammatically the same as normal language – "parce qu'il est entièrement organisé autour de substitutions lexicales." [because it is organised entirely around lexical substitutions] (Déléage 2005: 361). Déléage gives the example of the dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*, another animal with strong supernatural associations) referred to as tapir or anteater.

Contextual word taboo has long been recognised as a driver of lexical replacement (Comrie 2000), and Epps (2015a) observes that flora and fauna terminology is disproportionately represented (relative to other parts of the world) in Amazonian loanword repertoires – a phenomenon that Epps also explicitly links to shamanic discourse. It seems likely then that taboo may be a motivation in some of the loanwords for 'jaguar', of the type labelled "religious taboo" by Emeneau (1948: 60). There is little evidence, however, for such lexical replacement of words for 'jaguar' due to taboo.[8] I have come across just two clear examples of this type of avoidance replacement: firstly, the Palikur (Arawak) term for 'jaguar' is *ka-wokwi-ne* (REL-arm-POSS) 'the one with an arm', which originates in an avoidance register formerly used while fishing (Alexandra Aikhenvald, personal communication). And for Kwaza (isolate), Van der Voort (2004: 782) reports that women must avoid the word *yerexwa* 'jaguar'/'dog' (possibly < Tupí-Guaraní **yawar*) when in the forest, instead using the term *ĩtsẽ*, of unknown etymology, and said to be the "private name" of the jaguar.[9]

The apparent lack of religious taboo in the case of the jaguar is explained when we recognise that the lexical overlap with 'dog' has the effect of labelling the jaguar as an archetype of domestication, thereby reducing its threat.

5. Conclusion

At this point we can return to the question asked at the outset, namely, why should the jaguar and the dog be lexically linked? I have shown that to answer this question we must look beyond the homology of jaguars and dogs as carnivorous predators, even though this may have been an initial motivation for the lexical overlap. I have argued that a more salient motivation has its basis in the difference between the two animals, which represent extremes of a scale of wildness/domestication – the lexical link serves to reduce this difference, and this is desirable because it allows humans to control the uncontrollable: it makes the already tame dog more wild, therefore a better hunting companion; and it tames the wild jaguar, making it less dangerous. As noted above for Achuar (§2.1), the lexical overlap allows speakers both to "call a dog a jaguar" and to "call a jaguar a dog".

The link between the jaguar and the dog is so salient and enduring because both creatures

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[8] Epps (2015b: 585) suggests taboo to explain the Nadëb (Nadahup) word for 'jaguar' which appears to be a loan from Tupí-Guaraní, but does not discuss it in detail, nor does she cite the word involved, so I leave this possibility aside.

[9] Another possible example is Matsigenka: the dictionary notes that the term *maniti* is used to refer figuratively to all types of felines so that they won't get angry and come to eat people, but gives no further details (Snell 2008 [1998]: 142).

are closely associated with humanity: the dog-as-human is childlike, cared for by women and needing socialisation and training, while the jaguar-as-human is associated with dangerous shamanic power and shapeshifting. This gives a parallel analogy of the form:

dog : child :: jaguar : shaman

The fear-inspiring jaguar, with its supernatural connections, is symbolically tamed by being referred to with a word which also means 'dog', functionally simulating word taboo. Note, however, that I am not suggesting that a word for 'jaguar' has been replaced by a word for 'dog', simply that this is another motivation for maintaining the lexical overlap, independently of its origin.[10]

Future work on reconstructing the etymological origins of terms for 'jaguar' and 'dog', and the spread of related loanwords, will undoubtedly shed more light on the phenomena discussed here.

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[10] The motivation is thus the same as that of Emeneau's (1948) "religious taboo", but does not necessarily involve lexical replacement of the type Emeneau describes for Dravidian languages' use of a word meaning 'jackal' to refer to 'tiger'.

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07

Muroora – reflections on women and taboo in Zimbabwe

07

Muroora – reflections on women and taboo in Zimbabwe

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1. Introduction[1]

Language taboo in Africa with regard to in-law relationships is a classical topic in anthropological linguistics. This has often been discussed with regard to so-called avoidance languages, where women use a special linguistic register to avoid their in-laws' names and similar sounding words (words that start with the same syllable as the name concerned). There are several well-known cases of this phenomenon in Africa, among them *Hlonipha* and *Ballishsha*. *Hlonipha* ('respect') or *isiHlonipho* is a respectful register used by speakers of Southern African Nguni languages. Similarly, *Ballishsha* is used by Kambaata women in Southern Ethiopia (Treis 2005);[2] it is a linguistic register that provides the women with linguistic strategies and vocabulary to avoid their father- and mother-in-laws' names and words that start with the same syllable.

Scholars such as Treis (2005) and Herbert (1990) have looked at avoidance registers within their cultural and social contexts and

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[2] As Treis (2005: 293) states, the avoidance register is also used by female speakers of other languages in the Southern Ethiopian region.

have described other practices and behavior in these contexts, while the linguistic register has been in the focus. This short contribution aims to add to this thematic by reflecting on other communicative practices, in particular silence, ritual and non-verbal communication. The focus is on women in Zimbabwe, with particular regard to practices and ideologies among the maShona. In chiShona, the term *muroora* 'daughter/sister in law', lit. 'the one that was paid dowry for/the one that was married' is charged with complex conceptualizations that express the prescribed and desired social roles of a wife with regard to her in-laws.[3] While this discussion centers on the *muroora* and her respectful behavior towards her in-laws, it should be highlighted that there are certain taboos and prescribed behavioral norms for the *mukwasha* 'son/brother-in-law' as well; e.g. he will also most likely avoid his parents-in-laws' personal names and is (more or less) obliged to comply with his mother-in-law's requests (i.e. it would be relatively taboo for him to reject her request). The latter custom is applied to the extent that women who are in need of a favor (e.g. the help to carry something) will call a younger male stranger *mukwasha* in order to pledge him to accept her request by creating a fictive in-law relationship.

The present paper will make only a preliminary attempt at broadening the perspective on women, in-laws, avoidance and taboo/respect in Africa beyond the widely discussed context of specific avoidance registers. As cultural and social practice, taboo is always connected and/or complementary to social norms and prescribed behavior (what is taboo <-> what

is expected), silence (what may not be said) as well as ritualized and anticipated (i.e. expected) communicative behavior. The next section will give an overview of women, taboo and in-law relationships in Africa, and in Zimbabwe in particular, before turning to silence, ritual communication and non-verbal communication. It is striking (or maybe not) that many works on taboo, especially with regard to African societies, tend to focus on women's practices and social rules restricting their behavior. While this paper sheds light on this dimension of taboo, too, a short discussion of gender and perspectives in the final section will raise some questions about this view and attempt to invert some of the dominant viewpoints by opening up perspectives for further research.

2. Taboo and in-law relationships

There are many different contexts and implications for taboo, which can be manifested in various cultural, social, political, religious or economic domains. Allan and Burridge define taboo as

> a proscription of behaviour that affects everyday life. […] Taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual's behaviour where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury. […] Infractions of taboos can lead to illness or death, as well as to the lesser penalties of corporal punishment, incarceration, social ostracism or mere disapproval. Even an unintended contravention of taboo risks condemnation and censure; generally, people can and do avoid tabooed behaviour unless they intend to violate a taboo. (Allan and Burridge 2006: 1)

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[3] Pongweni elucidates: "The bachelor represented by the *munyai* [intermediary] has made a decision 'to marry', *ku-roora*, a transitive verb, while the girl has agreed 'to be married', *ku-roorwa*, as passive participant. Further, her parents will, after the success of the negotiations, 'have been married for', *ku-roorerwa*, a verb in the benefactive" (Pongweni 1996: 104).

They specify later that "[t]aboo refers to a proscription of behaviour for a specifiable community of one or more persons, at a specifiable time, in specifiable contexts" (ibid.: 11). Taboo, especially in the context of classical anthropological studies, following the perspective established by James Cook through his experiences in Polynesia, can thus refer to numerous different types of social and communicative behavior. One of the ways in which taboo manifests itself linguistically is through avoidance speech, i.e. a linguistic strategy of dealing with a taboo: "Avoidance speech styles help prevent conflict in relationships that are potentially volatile" (Allan and Burridge 2006: 9). As mentioned above, there are several described cases of in-law avoidance registers in Africa, including Hlonipha in Southern Africa and Ballishsha in Southern Ethiopia. Both of these practices are, however, as the respective authors state, declining and often not practiced by younger women anymore (for a discussion see Treis 2005: 315-18). I anticipate, based on observations of women's respectful behavior towards their in-laws, that while the linguistic avoidance register might disappear, certain taboos and connected practices, such as avoiding calling the in-laws by their given names, will prevail due to the importance of family relationships and the expression of respect in some societies.[4]

The practices around *Hlonipha* and other in-law avoidance practices center on the proscription against using the name of one's father- and/or mother-in-law (Finlayson 1981; Herbert 1990). This is connected to conceptualizations of personal names with regard to identity and power relationships. In fact, while this section focuses on avoidance language and in-laws, it is important to point out that taboo often affects names and naming practices, not only with regard to in-laws. Allan and Burridge write:

> One's name is an inalienable part of one's identity; it is the essence of self and it is a means by which one is known to one's fellows. An assault on one's name is treated as comparable with, or even worse than, an assault on one's body. So names are tabooed in many communities. Calling a name risks malevolence falling on the name-bearer and the caller. […] Inappropriate naming, name-calling and addressing is subject to censoring and censorship. (Allan and Burridge 2006: 125)

Herbert (1990) states that Hlonipha, although it also affects men's behavior and communicative practices to a certain extent, is mostly practiced by women, for whom social regulations are stronger. For instance, while nobody is allowed to call a chief by his name, and children do not use their parents', aunts' and uncles' personal names, a woman must avoid the name of her father-in-law and usually also does not use the names of her mother-in-law and her husband. She also avoids eye contact with her parents-in-law. Other regulations for her include the covering of her head and breasts in the presence of her parents-in-law, restrictions on the places she is allowed to enter and stay in in her father-in-law's homestead, and restrictions on food preparation and consumption (Herbert 1990; see also Finlayson

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[4] With regard to Zimbabwe, for example, some of my interview partners have expressed that while certain cultural practices change and adapt over time through globalization, social change, urbanization etc., the significance of respect among many maShona may even be increasing and becoming significant in new contexts with regard to in-law relations or marriage, for example with regard to current trends in *roora* ('dowry') negotiations.

1981). Allan and Burridge (2006: 129) explain the taboo on the father-in-law's name:

> Note that it is the sound of the name, and of all syllables within it, that must be avoided. This is because calling a name draws attention to the name-bearer, and also to the caller. To use a male in-law's name draws attention to the name-bearer and puts him at risk.

And because the wife (like in other patrilocal societies) gets married into the husband's homestead, she is marked as an outsider:

> Any behaviour that focuses attention on her is disallowed: a wife is not permitted to talk loudly or to call out (to a child, for instance; she has to get another child to do this). The wife must avoid drawing attention to herself. Because she retains allegiance to her birth group and their ancestors, she is an outsider. (ibid.)

A specific linguistic practice connected to this taboo is the use of a special register to avoid the pronunciation of tabooed names and syllables and through that to express respect. In avoidance languages, several strategies are employed to change words or create new ones, in order to avoid the tabooed names of the in-laws. Allan and Burridge (2006: 127-28) mention

> [e]uphemisms […] created by circumlocution, phonological modification, extending the meaning of a near-synonym (thus reintroducing rarely used words into the basic vocabulary), borrowing from another language, or even […] coining a new word.

Women practicing Hlonipha usually do not call their parents-in-law by their names and will not only avoid their father-in-law's name but also words that start with the same syllable. The linguistic register of Hlonipha therefore contains lexemes (borrowed or creatively coined) and paraphrases which replace numerous words, especially nouns (Herbert 1990). Married women in Ethiopia practicing Ballishsha will not utter the names of their (senior) in-laws and also avoid words that start with the same syllable. Treis (2005) describes a number of strategies that make up the Ballishsha register, including a core vocabulary that consists of (not recently) borrowed and coined words ("semantic doublets"), periphrasis and derivation, the use of synonyms and semantically similar words, antonyms, borrowings, and a term denoting 'the unspeakable' (Treis 2005).

In Zimbabwe, no avoidance language or register has been described to date. However, there are taboos and behavioral proscriptions in several domains, including in-law relationships. Among the maShona, many *varoora* will avoid the names of her parents-in-law, and probably also of her brothers- and sisters-in-law (especially when they are older), but above all the name of her father-in-law is highly taboo for her. While there is no avoidance language or register[5], she will use other respectful titles, in particular kinship terms, to address him appropriately. However, while the focus here and in many other discussions is on women and cultural or social norms regulating women's behavior, men are also affected by these taboos concerning in-law relationships (and other social relationships, for instance with regard to social status). For example, there is also a taboo

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[5] At least in a synchronic perspective.

against men calling their mother-in-law by her name; many men will also avoid eye-contact and will use respectful kinship terms and titles to address their (older) in-law family.

The social roles and expectations of the *muroora* are often highlighted and sometimes discussed in family meetings and even in popular media such as music (for a recent example see for instance the song *Type ye mababy* 'type of girls' by the singer Nox) or movies (for example the films *Neria* [1993], based on a novel by Tsitsi Dangarembga, or *Lobola* [2010]). The popularity of "the *muroora*" as a social figure and cultural theme testifies to the significance and value of in-law relationships and of women in general. The complex guidelines that a *muroora* is supposed to follow and fulfill aim at expressing respect to her in-laws and also being respected by them in return. Especially at the beginning of the marriage, when she is still in the complex process of becoming a member of her husband's family, and her parents-in-law do not yet know her very well, her behavior is often monitored and judged. Taboo in this context is a complex matter that involves several different aspects of proscribed behavior and communication. It may involve domains such as addressing, praising, physical movement and positioning in the homestead, food preparation and consumption, among others. It should be highlighted that these cultural practices and social roles are not merely rules to reprimand women, but serve as social strategies for establishing family relationships, constructing identities and negotiating power relations. A *muroora* can and does also play with those social norms and respectful behavior for her own benefit, and can gain social prestige and power through her in-law agency. In the following, we will briefly look at three

aspects that are connected to communication between a *muroora* and her husband, as well as in-laws.

3. Silence

In general, there is an ideal of the virtuous *muroora* as a quiet and pious woman. Hence, while the previous contributions discussed above have focused on linguistic practices, there is also the significant aspect of silence. If a *muroora* practices silence in appropriate contexts (in particular social situations and family conversations) she will usually be respected and even praised by her in-laws. If she is very talkative and voices her opinions in front of her parents-in-law (especially in the first phase of the marriage) she could be regarded as rude and disrespectful. In that regard, there are also issues that she should not mention directly to her parents-in-law or maybe even to her husband in some instances. If she wants to communicate particular things with her in-law family, especially problematic issues, there are social regulations for this: her *tete* (her father's sister) will serve as a mediator between her and the in-laws and is her contact person whenever she wants to discuss marriage issues. The *tete* is in the social position of expressing criticism to her niece's in-laws and assisting in negotiating. Therefore, while silence in general is seen as a virtuous trait, silence in a particular communicative situation can be a strategy to approach a social issue through another communicative channel or mediator.

Silence in this context is not only a social constraint on the *muroora* but can also be used by her as a communicative tool to strengthen family ties and exploit other communicative channels (such as indirect communication and

speaking to other family members, such as younger sisters-in-law). In other words, while one might easily judge silence as a reprimand, it can also be a powerful tool employed by the *muroora* to achieve a certain reaction or effect, for instance to please members of the in-law family, to construct an identity as a modest wife or to actively withdraw from harmful (communicative) situations. In this regard, silence is an agentive means of communication that is meaningful in specific social contexts and that can create different effects in people's lives. Silence can mean so many different things: it can express agreement or disagreement, consent or disapproval; it can signal a thinking process or a refusal to react. In that regard, silence is never non-communication but is employed by the *muroora* as a statement that might be more complex to unpack than actual speech.

4. Ritual communication

Ritual communication can be an important means of constructing social relationships and identity in Zimbabwe (see Hollington forthcoming) and elsewhere. Forms of address and greetings have already been mentioned and fall into this category. A culturally significant form of ritual communication among the maShona (and beyond) is praise poetry. There are different kinds of chiShona praise poetry, the most common one being clan praise poetry, which focuses on the clan's totem (see for instance Hodza & Fortune 1979; Pongweni 1996). These and other praise poems have specific contexts of usage in marriages, where they are often recited by spouses as an expression of gratitude. A *muroora*, in this context, is expected to learn the clan praises of her husband's clan and totem and to be able to recite them in appropriate situations (e.g. when receiving something from her husband). It is often expected especially for a woman to be able to recite the poem of her husband's totem. Building on Hodza's work, Pongweni writes: "the bride who failed to reciprocate poetically was sent back to her people with the label 'inefficiency' for re-education" (Pongweni 1996: 16). In this context, not knowing or not being able to recite the clan praise poem can be regarded as a breaking of taboo. This shows that taboo is not only about refraining from doing or saying something or using alternative linguistic practices (such as avoidance language), but also a lack of knowledge and ability to perform something that is expected.

Apart from clan praise poetry, there is also love and "bedroom" poetry, which married partners use to thank and appreciate each other. This form of poetry draws on images and figurative language for the sexual act, in which "[m]ale DOES female" and "[f]emale is DONE by male" (Chimhundu 1995: 149), which partners use to praise each other. Socially and culturally defined gender roles underlie these kinds of poems. Apart from the sexual act, women in this kind of poetry, as well as in other forms of chiShona literature, are praised for "beauty, fertility, dignity, kindness, generosity, loyalty and hard work" (ibid.: 151). Learning the social roles prescribed for women in maShona societies is part of the socialization process, in which oral literature plays an important role. Likewise, women can also use poetry and forms of verbal art to express personal attitudes and issues. While basically praising the addressee, praise poetry can also offer a space to (indirectly, figuratively and often jokingly)

express criticism in a way that would be taboo in direct communication.

5. Non-verbal communication

There a numerous non-verbal aspects of communication that a *muroora* is expected to perform in an appropriate manner in order to respect her in-laws. They are connected to the concept of taboo in similar ways as the discussed verbal communication. Not fulfilling the expected non-verbal communicative behavior can (especially when it happens repeatedly) be regarded as a breaking of taboo and can be socially punished.

The most widely discussed and already mentioned strategy is the avoidance of eye-contact, which has also been described by Herbert (1990) and Treis (2005) for other African contexts. Eye-contact, in other words, is thus a taboo, especially for the newly married woman. Non-verbal communication in this context is a wide field, as many physical acts of the *muroora*, for instance, where she sits, which rooms she enters, where she eats or how she cooks, can be read as communicative practices. For instance, she is supposed to sit lower down than her father-in-law, especially during meals (e.g. on a smaller chair or stool or on the floor) or eat separately. Moreover, the respectful greetings and terms of address are expected to be used by a muroora, and non-verbally as well as verbally the contact with her in-laws also includes, as mentioned above, avoiding eye-contact (which is usually done by looking down) and names while using respectful greetings. The greetings and terms of address should employ the honorific plural forms of chiShona, such as *makadini*, a commonly used respectful greeting which uses the plural ma- instead of the second person singular *wa-*. The respectful greetings which are part of the verbal communication are accompanied by non-verbal gestures: in particular, the *muroora* might kneel down and clap her hands (*kuwuchira*) while greeting her father-in-law, especially at the beginning of the marriage when she meets her father-in-law for the first times. The clapping of hands is a commonly employed gesture (by men and women) which expresses respect and gratitude. People usually clap during greetings (especially when greeting elders or older family members and in-laws) and when thanks are expressed. With this large set of possibilities, a *muroora* can make conscious choices with regard to forms of non-verbal communication that may be regarded as respectful or disrespectful by her in-laws. Thus, non-verbal communication is an important aspect of in-law relationships and offers a *muroor*a many options to add nuances to her constructions of identity and social relationships. These social rules for communication (verbal and non-verbal) are part of the prescribed behavior of a *muroora* and violating these social norms can lead to social sanctions such as being excluded, reprimanded or ignored. In this regard, it makes sense to widen the scope of taboo by including perspectives on social norms and prescribed (communicative) behavior. Taboo, then, is not only about consequences that follow certain behavior or non-behavior, rule conformity or non-conformity, but it should be seen as a complex and dynamic fabric with many nuances and shapes. As Allan and Burridge (2006) illustrate, taboo is part of culturally and socially rooted practices and hence needs to be investigated with regard to small stories to arrive at a big picture. Non-verbal communication,

in this regard, shows how fine-graded bodily movements and conscious decisions as well as unconscious slippages are linked to taboo.

6. Conclusion: what remains

The discussion in this paper has focused on the *muroora* and her in-law relationships, and has illustrated that not expressing respect through various communicative practices is often regarded as the breaking of taboo and as an offence. This can be sanctioned in various ways by comments, rejection or even by sending the *muroora* home to her parents. On the other hand, we have seen that the communicative means at a *muroora's* disposal are also employed by her for agentive communication, which constructs identity and social relationships and which provides her with tools for negotiating power within the family. While the social norms discussed here are often presented as "traditional" and "handed down from the ancestors" within maShona society, it is necessary to stress that they also change and adapt through the course of time. The practices that mark respectful behavior today may not be employed tomorrow.

Like many other contributions before, this paper has – again – focused on women and social restrictions. There seems to be a tendency to focus on women, especially when writing about social or cultural restrictions in the Global South. So what remains are a number of questions: why are women's taboos so much more discussed? Are there more taboos for women than for men? As this is a prominent theme in (linguistic) anthropology, I wonder how this is related to the multitude of ethnographic works on patriarchal societies that focus on the subordinate role of women

in various cultural settings? Are there more taboos for men that we do not talk or write about? I have pointed out a few times that there are also several taboos and restrictions for men with regard to their in-laws, and a more extensive study on men and in-law relations would probably reveal complex social practices linked to taboo. After all, maintaining a patriarchal society requires strict rules and regulations and sanctions for male behavior as well. An important question, in this regard, is how taboo is connected to (heteronormative) masculinities. To bring in a very different example, Farquharson (2005) and Farquharson & Jones (2014) write about (linguistic) taboos for men in Jamaica connected to homophobia and the desire to construct heteronormative masculine identities. Farquharson and Jones write: "Many young Jamaican males, in conversation, will try to avoid any words or expressions associated with homosexuals or homosexuality. For example, since about the beginning of the last decade, the word *fish* has been added to the long list of designations for gay men. This means that some young men, when in the company of their peers, will not order fish in the market or at a local eatery but will ask instead for *swim-around*. The word *men*, from the plural of English *man*, is Jamaican slang which arose in the 1990s to refer to a male homosexual, and words or parts of words that contain phonetic strings which are close to *man* or *men* are also avoided. Therefore, place names such as *Manchester*, *Mandeville* and *Montego Bay* have their first syllable replaced by *gyal* 'girl' as their initial element, producing *Gyalchester*, *Gyaldeville* and *Gyaltego Bay*" (Farquharson & Jones 2014: 121-122). While there are numerous publications that discuss and deconstruct patriarchy and focus on masculinities, these

studies usually do not center on language and taboo, although they certainly touch upon relevant issues. Hence, more studies on taboo, language, men and patriarchy, not only in the Global South, but also in European and American societies would complement the partly one-sided perspectives on taboo and language.

This paper has also attempted to shift the attention from merely describing taboos for women in Zimbabwe as social or cultural restrictions by including a perspective that acknowledges female agency and ways in which women consciously employ communicative strategies in building their in-law relationships.

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08

The linguistic taboo of poisoning in Kivu Swahili

08

The linguistic taboo of poisoning in Kivu Swahili

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The practitioners highlight a fear, which embraced the whole society,
of poisonous forces moving across the urban landscape.
Trovalla (2016: 182)

1. *Karuho*, its emergence and instrumentalization in Goma

Ever since the outbreak of the Rwandan geno-cide in 1994 and throughout the initial stage of the conflict in DR Congo (from 1996 onwards), there have been tremendous waves of refugees arriving in eastern DR Congo from neighboring Rwanda and, concurrently, the level of insecu-rity in the broader region of the Kivu Provinces has drastically worsened. Apart from a major deterioration to the inhabitants' livelihoods,

due to violence and large numbers of inter-nally displaced people (IDP) throughout the area, linguistic and cultural change have also accompanied these major sociodemographic changes and the inhabitants' increased patterns of mobility. One of the aftereffects of the migra-tion waves from Rwanda into the Congo was the increasing occurrence of poisoning cases in Goma, the major city and provincial capital of North Kivu. While there were 7-8 traditional healers specialized in curing poison in 1994, only ten years later were 68 healers specialized

in this growing business (Namujimbo 2004). In this growth, it is also essential to observe that healers are not only the ones who "cure" victims, but equally the producers and distributors of the so-called *karuho* substances; a poison that is the source of fear and wild speculations, in part due to its often undefined nature. Narratives around the poison are, however, only shared among close friends or family members – and never publicly: *Karuho* talk is perceived as strictly taboo in eastern Congolese culture (while it is less stigmatized in the capital Kinshasa and in the western part of the country).

While in numerous African cultures love potions are commonly used as aphrodisiacs and employed for love spells, the Congolese *karuho* is mainly used as a tool for intimidation or the elimination of adversaries and, as explained by several interview partners, mostly motivated by personal or professional jealousy and envy. The generally fragile political climate, with several dozens of armed groups in the broader area, of mistrust and hostility has led to revenge acts that have included the use of poison. When noticed early enough to be cured, the treatment usually costs between 25 and 50$ (according to Namujimbo 2004) and is administered by a healer. He (in DRC usually a male individual) is commonly known as *mulozi* (the one who is able to mix potions and distribute them), *munganga wa asili* (a healer who can cure poisoning but cannot produce harmful substances nor bewitch people), or *mufumu* ('witchdoctor', who is generally considered as evil) (Bose, p.c. 2017).

Historically, in eastern Congo, poisoning did not constitute a common cultural practice, nor a way of eliminating political enemies. The close vicinity of the city, Goma, to the adjacent Rwandan territory across the national border has, however, contributed to the sudden increase in cases of food poisoning: Several sources cover the concept of poisoning practices being steeped in long traditions of the Rwandan kingdom. Also, neighboring groups such as the Banande in North Kivu consider poisoning practices to be mainly a Rwandan practice: The word *akaruho* in Kinande, a lexical borrowing, can be translated as *"un type de poison que les Wanande croient que les Rwandais possèdent"* [a kind of poison that the Banande think the Rwandans have (Kavutirwaki & Mutaka 2012: 5). [1] A further available source that explores the long tradition of poisoning is Vansina (2004: 144), who relates Nyarwaya's death (a successful warrior during King Gahindiro's reign), in around 1867, to a poisoned dish prepared by the Queenmother Nyiramongi, of the Nyiginya court. Burnet (2016: 79), in his analysis of the concepts of 'evil' in regard to the Rwandan genocide, summarizes that the fear of being poisoned is still very much alive in Rwanda and remains related to the *abacunyi* ('healers, herbalists'):

> As in many other African regions, certain ritual and healing specialists could also provide the poison (*uburozi*) necessary to cause trouble for an adversary. Rwandan beliefs about and fears of poison, which can administered [sic!] through material and spiritual forms, persist into the present and strongly shape their habits. For example, family members suspect poisoning in deaths easily explained by modern medicine,

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[1] The fear of poisonous substances is not limited to Goma (DR Congo) and Rwanda. Also in Burundi, in parts of adjacent Tanzania, in the Ugandan capital Kampala and the Kenyan capital Nairobi similar narratives can be witnessed, mostly due to the interconnectedness of these spaces and the fast travelling stories around this phenomenon.

such as a stroke (...). In any home, celebration, restaurant, or bar in Rwanda, the server will only open a bottle (whether beer, soda, or water) in the presence of its drinker as proof that it has not been poisoned.

However, the classification of *karuho* as a type of poisonous substance is difficult. There are two tentative directions in response to this issue of classification; (1) to consider *karuho* as a toxic substance, produced and diffused by local healers leading to severe sickness; or as (2) a psychological tool of intimidation, spreading insecurity and fear. The second clarification develops from the uncertainty and variety of ingredients, recipes, producers, bodily effects and incubation times, consequently leading to a blurring of the boundary between poison (*sumu* in Kiswahili) and witchcraft (*bulozi* in Kiswahili); two concepts that are expressed with the same lexeme in the neighboring Kinyarwanda language (*uburozi*). The most recent medicinal study, a toxicity profile by Kyolo et. al (2018), tested four different kinds of *karuho* samples on the brains of Wistar Albino rats and clarified some of the speculations around its ingredients and biochemical effects.

> Different varieties of Karuho poisons are commonly used to poison people and the effects observed can be acute or chronic depending on the dose and the type of poison used. The poisons are reported to be made locally from the available natural products including venoms derived from chameleon and toad/frog skin, blue headed Agama lizard, human placenta or some rare plant extracts such as Datura stramonium and some minerals like arsenic, mercury and cadmium and many others. (Kyolo et al. 2018)

The findings further showed that acute poisoning may result in nausea, vomiting, sweating, loss of consciousness, convulsion and death (among other outcomes), while chronic poisoning may lead to weight loss, fainting, coughing, chest pain, fever, or nausea, and many more; each depending upon the dose and type of *karuho* poison used (ibid.). A major challenge with these symptoms, and consequently the 'poisoning' diagnosis, is that many resemble those of common diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV infections, typhoid fever, or malaria. While some poisoning incidents go unnoticed by the targeted victims, in other cases the victim will receive a message, either before the poisoning occurs, while the assault is still in the process of planning (see Section 3), or afterwards. Addressing these matters of poisoning in Goma, the linguistic aspects of a 'taboo' topic are evident in the ways inhabitants creatively opt for euphemistic strategies to avoid specific terminology.

The actual Kiswahili term for poison, *sumu*, cannot be publicly uttered at all and is considered a strict linguistic taboo; its use may either result in being poisoned, or lead to social stigmatization. Instead, a broad range of other terms have to be employed; analyzed in more detail in the following sections. The common euphemism *karuho* was translated by Kivu Swahili speakers as *"la petite chose qui fatigue"* [the small thing that exhausts/causes fatigue], stressing that the word became very popular around 1994, at the time of the Rwandan genocide. Etymologically, several speakers of Kinyabwisha (the local Congolese variety of Kinyarwanda, the Bantu language from Rwanda), traced it back to the verb *kuruha* in their language 'to get tired/be weak' (Bose, p.c. 2017). From Kinyabwisha it has probably then entered Kivu Swahili, however most speakers (who have no knowledge of Kinyabwisha)

are today no longer sure of its etymological origin.

While the most common denotation for poison stems from Kinyabwisha, the present work focuses on the linguistic taboo in Kivu Swahili; a regiolect of the Bantu language Kiswahili[2] and the main lingua franca all throughout eastern Congo (see Map 1), spoken by approximately 8-10 million individuals. While Kivu Swahili has already been approached in several grammatical studies (Nassenstein & Bose 2016, among others), no study has, so far, touched upon the topic of taboo in the language.

Map 1. The approximate area of diffusion of Kivu Swahili and the city of Goma

In my paper, I am mostly interested in exploring the linguistic strategies with which speakers of Kivu Swahili (based in Goma) avoid face-loss and social stigmatization by using euphemistic strategies that are – in general only among close friends or family members – carefully employed. Moreover, I intend to show the power of taboo words, which blur the boundary between toxic substances and linguistic practices; revealing that threats and hear-say statements may also have severe psychosomatic effects on their addressees, without any actual substance being involved. This will be discussed in the following paragraphs through detailed insights into the linguistic taboo around poison(ing) (Section 2); I then turn to a discussion of the 'poisoning register' (Section 3) and the intertwined dimensions of poison and witchcraft (Section 4). The preliminary findings presented in this contribution are based on qualitative interviews with residents from Goma (and the Kivu Provinces in general) during several fieldwork periods (between 2010 and 2017).[3]

2. Sharing, swallowing, embodying "sweet medicine": The linguistic taboo of poison(ing)

There are very few studies available on the linguistic taboos surrounding poisoning practices and, in the general framework on taboos provided by Allan and Burridge (2006), poisoning is not dealt with at all. In contrast, early anthropological works such as Evans-Pritchard (1976: 121) extensively describe the powerful poison oracle, *benge,* of the Azande people, as more powerful than the witchdoctors and to be usually consulted in significant matters. The red poison, a substance "manufactured from a forest creeper and mixed with water to a paste", is commonly smeared upon the domestic fowls' beaks – resulting in spasms and a specific behavior of the fowls – which is then interpreted and used to answer the Azande's questions.

Apparently, the most detailed account of poisoning practices, in regard to modified euphemistic and creative language on the African continent, is given by Storch (2011: 168-177) who discusses several practices from East and West Africa. Among others, Storch provides a poison register in Luganda, a Bantu language from Central Uganda, which functions similarly to the Kivu Swahili 'poisoning register', since "danger and power are openly displayed" (p. 158): In itself, the poison terminology already hints to the potential use of the substance, generally by women in Ganda society. The term *kafumbe* ('mashy, cooked') insinuates that a type of poison may be used when cooking the traditional dish of *luwombo*, as its name is derived from the Luganda verb *okufumba* ('to cook'). In other examples, the semantic reference is more complex; such as the connotation of *kafuga nkaande* ('herb used against head pains') as a poison to kill a co-wife, which can be understood when one knows that the grass used "doesn't allow other grasses to grow" (ibid. p. 159). In Kivu Swahili, the different euphemistic and concurrently threatening strategies of 'avoidance speech' neither indicate potential victims (as everybody is constantly in danger of being poisoned), nor relate details about the identity of the person using the poison. While women in Buganda who use herbal poisons know about the ingredients and traditionally use it as an agency-increasing strategy in their relationships, in eastern Congo, those who order and employ poison from herbalists or witchdoctors usually know nothing about the substance, or its potential effect.[4]

In the Kivu Provinces, the direct mentioning of poison and public accusations that somebody is operating as a *mulozi* or *mufumu* are taboo; mostly due to fear, but also in accordance to a general understanding of *heshima* ('respect') and as an avoidance strategy of *(h)aya* ('shame'). This is deeply rooted in Swahili society and reaches even to the fringes of the Kiswahili-speaking world, as in today's DR Congo (Yayha-Othman 1994, Nassenstein 2018). Negative politeness strategies in Kiswahili, i.e. attempts to mitigate face threats

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[4] Unlike in (African) linguistics, the delicate topic of poisoning through a harmful potion (and or mixed within one's food) has been a consistent motive in European art: The act of drinking, mixing or curing poison can be found in famous paintings by Caroto (*Sophonisba drinking the poison*; 1615), Cizza (*The death of Cleopatra*; 1675), David (*La mort de Socrate*; 1787), Goya (*Self-portrait with Dr. Arrieta*; 1820) Wallis (*The death of Chatterton*; 1856), de Morgan (*The love potion*; 1903), and many others.

(Brown & Levinson 1987), are recurrent patterns that include a speaker being indirect and avoiding verbal confrontations. As several interlocutors confirmed, the 'sender' of poison is often a close relative, a neighbor, or a former friend – poisoned drinks do not affect a person arbitrarily but are generally always well-planned and well-placed, in order to reach the targeted individual. While narratives around poison, stories and the latest incidents are privately shared in Goma (see below), accusations of potential perpetrators are uncommon, revealing the same underlying linguistic taboo that restricts the mention of the concrete term *sumu* ('poison'). The fear of accusations can be explained through the pragmatic principle of *kusutwa*, which is defined by Yahya-Othman (1994: 146) as "an occasion, sometimes fairly ritualized, with witnesses and particular gestures, in which someone who has lied about someone else is publicly denounced for lying", which she further describes as an "embarrassing process" due to a person's face loss in public, which then projects shame onto the entire family. Restoring face-loss of a person who has publicly violated the verbal taboo of poisoning by attributing blame to potential poisoners and their practices, is almost impossible: While third-party face is commonly 'repaired' through two persons' (person A and person B) interaction indirectly circling around person C's *fauxpas* (thus attenuating his/her shame and motivating him/her to regain face; see Nassenstein 2018), the fear of being poisoned is far too severe for speakers to risk their own situation in order to restore person C's public face after he/she violated the verbal taboo.

In spite of this, there are narratives around poisoning which are secretly shared among friends, colleagues or family members. Seemingly arbitrary stories around *karuho,* or actual references to another incident can fulfil the pragmatic strategy of indirectly warning a person. These negative politeness strategies avoid direct confrontation with seemingly harmless stories, which enable people to express concern, to educate children and to instrumentalize fear and insecurity – e.g. when threatened by the police or military. The following account of such a poisoning incident (narrated in French) was a popular story in Goma in 2017 (narrated by Bose, p.c. 2017; my translation).

> Francis, a young man from the neighborhood, was said to have attended a function with his girlfriend. They were invited to a birthday party. When they arrived there, everything was normal; they cut the cake and drank with others. As the party went on, people started dancing, when Paul, one of the hosts, called Francis. "Francis, I have kept a special wine for you, only for you and your girlfriend. I don't want everyone to drink it. Follow me to the room, and try some." Francis followed Paul. Upon entering, a small amount of wine was left, they drank a bit, after which Paul asked: "How is it? Is it nice? Sweet?" They were enjoying the drink. The party ended and they went back home. Sometime later, Francis started feeling an ache in his stomach, became feverish and then went to hospital for treatment. After the first tests, they said it was typhoid, then malaria. He was given medication but when, after four days, his state had not changed, he went back. Yet, still nothing was found. In the region, there is always an alternative: Francis decided to see a traditional doctor. The healer poured a small amount of water into two halves of a calabash, added two small leaves, and

made Francis spit into the split calabash. When the secret leaves are dipped into water, they turn red. When you visit the traditional doctor, you have to come in the early morning before breakfast. That's what he did. After spitting into the calabash, it is put in the early morning sunshine. If one is poisoned, the water turns dark. The darker the water, the more poison. If it remains red, you are fine. The test was positive, he had been poisoned. Francis was given some leaves to brew for four days to one week. Alternatively, when having swallowed strong poison, he could have chosen to take a strong powder to make him vomit and cause diarrhea. After one or two weeks, he was back, they tested him again, he was cured from the *karuho* he had been given.[5]

While some of the stories are purely fictional, others are based on true incidents. The taboo character of poisoning narratives becomes further evident in Goma's bars, restaurants and nightclubs, where food and drinks are served. In order to avoid all suspicions that a drink may contain poison targeting a specific customer, customers' complaints about a drink having been potentially already opened are always taken seriously, and drinks are quickly replaced. When attending functions, guests very often wait for their hosts to publicly try the food (in a symbolic act of showing that eating is safe), a practice that was described by one interlocutor as a representation of "no secrets, it is supposed to be made public" (A.M., 2017). Likewise, gifts are nearly always offered unwrapped, so that everybody can see what has been brought to a public function.

Speakers of Kivu Swahili explained that there are several kinds of poison which can be mixed into one's food, with each carrying a different label: While the general *karuho* is said to affect the victim within a short time and can eventually be lethal, the poison labeled *twivan-ire* (Kinyarwanda, lit. 'let us stay with you') is understood to work more insidiously and to affect the body slowly. At first its symptoms are mainly heavy headaches, whereas it can – when not treated properly – also lead to one's death. In contrast, *gutongera* (lit. 'speak strange words about it') constitutes a kind of poison that works on the basis of spells, e.g. when two people share a plate but the poison will finally only affect the addressee. A speaker explained this as:

> We can share the same plate, or drinks, but I can say 'let this poison only get Joseph!' Even when we are sharing with Joseph, since it's specifically for Joseph, it won't harm me or anyone else. The only thing it can do [to others] is: a little rush, two or three days, then it goes, or a slight food poisoning.

3. Poisonous words: Linguistic strategies of avoidance and indirect threats

The 'poisoning register' in Kivu Swahili, apart from saving a speaker's negative face and reducing the risk of face-threatening acts, fulfills a second major function: Euphemistic terms can be used in order to threaten another

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[5] One of the reviewers expressed his/her astonishment about the direct mentioning of the taboo term *karuho* in this narrative. This can be explained with the fact that even though stories of that type are more widespread nowadays, they can only be shared among friends or family members who trust each other. In these cases, also taboo terms may eventually be uttered. In public speeches or in front of broader audiences, such a narrative would not be shared.

person or to exert negative pressure, which can often result in somebody's sickness, or even death. "Poisoned language", i.e. speaking in concealed terms about *karuho* that necessarily leads to the targeted person taking notice, constitutes a form of poison that does not rely on actual toxic mixtures, and can neither be tasted, evidenced nor entirely cured. The flexible boundary between actual substances, i.e. poisoning somebody's drink, and metalinguistic acts, i.e. speaking about poisoning as a threat, turns the use of the avoidance register into a powerful tool of social control and intimidation.

Due to reasons of trust and in-group security, metaphorical and euphemistic speech is mostly held in the speakers' local languages, such as Kinyabwisha, Kinande or Kihavu. However, whenever conversational partners do not share the same ethnolinguistic background, the metaphors are translated into Kivu Swahili; the most widespread lingua franca. The discrepancy between secret whispers, spoken in local languages that are less likely to be understood, and public references, revealed in Kiswahili, which is understood by everybody, addresses what Storch (2011: 9) calls a "huge and powerful secret dramatization". The basis of a taboo's power is also in the requirement for brief, limited exposure and revelation in order to show its enormous strength.

Building on Taussig's (1999) "public secret" concept (initially found in Benjamin's work), Storch (2011) further states that special vocabularies and secret terms etc. often enter "ordinary language"; as is also the case with the eastern Congolese discourse surrounding poison. Firstly, highly tabooed, negative topics in society find constant mentioning in narratives, stories and songs as a semi-secret form of "Chinese Whispers". On the other hand, in order to deal with horror and devastating effects, the topic is discussed as a strategy of control, while conversely simultaneously being employed as "verbal poison" and powerful threats.

The euphemistic strategies, which are supposed to (partly) conceal the act of poisoning, often deal with the preparations that are undertaken before somebody is targeted; the fact that someone was already 'calculated' (in a plan, ex. 1); that (s)he is under surveillance (2); that the elders have already been contacted (3); or that something has already been done (4). While example (4) serves largely as a euphemistic term of avoidance, examples (1) and (2) are equally commonly used as threats; for instance when somebody is addressed with the words *balishakucalculé!* ('they have already planned you in').[6] While some of the verbal references to poison(ing practices) as listed below seem to be very face-threatening and reveal a high degree of positive politeness, they still help to save interactants' group face due to the fact that the discourse around poisonous substance is, at least partially, concealed (through the use of euphemisms or based on synonyms).

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[6] As stated by various interlocutors, in some cases verbal threats do not even have to be as specific as shown in the listed examples; someone's accent alone may even spread fear. Respondents explained that utterances with a Lingala accent would not be perceived as dangerous, while a Kinyarwanda accent, replacing [l] in Kiswahili with the tap [ɾ] and a specific intonation, could even cause an addressee to leave his/her home as a precautionary measure. Poisoning somebody is often understood as a very "Rwandan practice", thus a realization of Kivu Swahili with emblematic phonological features from Kinyarwanda can increase the listener's fear of being potentially targeted.

(1)   *ule balishamucalculé zamani*

u-le   ba-lisha-mu-calculé   zamani

PP1-DEM2   SC2-PRF-OC1-calculate   long.ago

'for long they have planned him/her in (for poison)'

(2)   *batamuangaliliya balishamuraisonné*

ba-ta-mu-angaliy-i-a   ba-lisha-mu-raisonné

SC2-FUT-OC1-look-APPL-FV   SC2-PRF-OC1-reason

'(s)he will be under surveillance, they have already planned to poison him/her'

(3)   *balishamuendeya ku bazee*

ba-lisha-mu-end-e-a   ku   ba-zee

SC2-PRF-OC1-go-APPL-FV   LOC   NP2-elder

'they have already gone to the elders for him/her'

(4)   *balimufanyiya*

ba-li-mu-fany-i-a

SC2-PST-OC1-do-APPL-FV

'they did it to her/him' (i.e. '(s)he was poisoned')

The euphemistic (or threatening) strategies of "public secrets" are also based on other semantic fields, for example a relation to medicine. In these cases, poison can be referred to as 'sweet medicine' (ex. 5), 'vitamine' or 'vitamine k(aruho)' (6-7). All of these terms belong to the 'poisoning register':

(5)   *balimupa dawa ya buroho*

ba-li-mu-p-a   dawa   i-a   bu-roho

SC2-PST-OC1-give-FV   [NP9]medicine PP9-CONN   NP14-candy

'they gave him/her sweet medicine'

(6)   *ule voisin wetu balimupa kavitamine*

u-le   voisin   u-etu   ba-li-mu-p-a   ka-vitamine

PP1-DEM2   [NP1a]neighbor   PP1-POSS1PL   SC2-PST-OC1-give-FV   NP12-vitamin

'they gave our neighbor a bit of vitamin/some vitamin'

(7)   *balishamupa vitamine k*

ba-lisha-mu-p-a   vitamine k

SC2-PRF-OC1-give-FV   [NP9]vitamin.k[aruho]

'they have already given him/her vitamin K (karuho)'

Other semantic strategies of (partial) concealment and avoidance are achieved through food metaphors. This is not surprising, due to the fact that *karuho* is commonly mixed into one's drink or plate of food. Speakers of Kivu Swahili are very acquainted with the metaphors of 'turning the plate around' (ex. 8), 'make somebody lick something' (9), 'giving somebody flour' (10) or 'leaves' (11); the latter having a special connotative relation to the healers' practices of indicating toxicity with the help of specific (secret) leaves.

(8)   *balimugeuziya saani*

ba-li-mu-geuz-i-a   saani

SC2-PST-OC1-turn-APPL-FV   [NP9]plate

'they turned the plate around for him/her'

(9)   *balimulambulisha*

ba-li-mu-lambul-ish-a

SC2-PST-OC1-lick-CAUS-FV

'they made him/her lick (something)'

(10)   *balishamupa bunga*

ba-lisha-mu-p-a   bunga

SC2-PRF-OC1-give-FV   [NP9]flour

'they have already given him/her flour'

(11)   *balimupatiya mayani*

ba-li-mu-patiy-a   ma-yani

SC2-PST-OC1-give-FV   NP6-leaf

'they gave him/her leaves'

The last set of common metaphors make use of non-edible and often harmful concepts to which the poison is compared, including 'that which is not eaten' (12), 'insecticide' (13), 'gum' (14), or a 'thorn' (15).

(12)   *balimupatiya byenye habimezekake*

ba-li-mu-patiy-a   bi-enye   ha-bi-mez-ek-ak-e

SC2-PST-OC1-give-FV   PP8-REL   NEG-SC8-swallow-STAT-IPFV-NEG

'they gave him/her what is not to be swallowed'

(13)   *balishamupa tiyoda*

ba-lisha-mu-p-a   tiyoda

SC2-PRF-OC1-give-FV   [NP9]insecticide

'they gave him/her insecticide'

(14)   *alishakula caoutchouc*

a-lisha-kul-a   caoutchouc

SC1-PRF-eat-FV   [NP9]rubber

'they made him/her eat rubber/gum'

(15)   *alishameza mwiba*

a-lisha-mez-a   mw-iba

SC1-PRF-swallow-FV   NP3-thorn

'(s)he has swallowed a thorn'

In all of the above-mentioned examples, the "impersonal" third person plural *ba-* (a common form in Bantu languages, see for instance Watters 2003: 252 for Grassfields Bantu) is used in order

to avoid mentioning a perpetrator (agent) of the action in question. Fleisch (2005: 108) explains this as "alternative passive which is based on a generalized subject construction involving the third person plural marker" and as a "supposedly more recent passive strategy" than morphological passive markers, giving examples from Cilubà. It can be assumed that this periphrastic structure occurs more often in morphologically simplified language varieties: In periphery Kiswahili dialects, this strategy is more frequently used by speakers than the morphological passive, while ECS makes regular use of the passive voice. Furthermore, neighboring contact languages that have undergone processes of pidginization, such as Lingala and Kituba, also reveal the possibilities of this passive strategy.

Interestingly, all euphemisms lack the use of the common Kiswahili hear-say marker *ati*, which is generally placed sentence-initially when marking the information as a hear-say (see Yahya-Othman 1994), or (secondary) when marking a lack of reliability or hedging. I would argue that the indication of a speaker's involvement in the event, even as a listener or observer (as in *ati alimesha karuho* meaning 'I heard (s)he swallowed poison'), already suffices to put him/her in danger. The use of a hear-say marker intertwines a person to some extent in the taboo(ed) practices such as poisoning.[7] The omission of *ati,* achieved through the use of a third person plural, eradicates the speaker's positionality whether (s)he assumes that somebody has been poisoned or whether (s)he has heard/seen this, in the sense of using *ati* as an evidential. It may thus only be used in cases of quoted or reported speech, when it is absolutely clear that the hear-say assumption is based on other people's judgment and is not grounded on the speaker's opinion.

While there is a wide range of lexical strategies used to avoid the danger or stigmatization of directly addressing a topic and, at the same time, exert destructive power, there are no specific morphological means through which the language is manipulated. While the 'poisoning register' is based on x-phemistic metaphors, another common strategy is code-switching; which is used in order to turn a "public secret" into something less clear, more obscure and to limit the circle of those who possibly understand the uttered statement. In example (16), the speaker intertwines Kiswahili, French and Kinande. The essential statement, 'they gave it to him', is held in Kinande, which makes it clear to the listeners that the given object was actually poison. This highlights how a change of language can determine the delicate meaning of the utterance.[8] In example (17), Lingala and French are intertwined in a Kiswahili structure. The term *ngangakisi* is often used in the Kivus as a broad term for a 'healer' (Lingala) and does not differentiate, as in the finer defined Kiswahili equivalents, between *mulozi* ('good healer') and *mufumu* ('bad sorcerer'): It may therefore be understood as a more general term.

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[7] This may require an additional explanation: The use of *ati* always indicates a certain – even minimal – involvement of the speaker in the process of judging whether poison was actually used or not, which is to be avoided by all means as (s)he might otherwise be accused as preparer of poison him/herself.

[8] This sentence is taken from a conversation between four speakers of Kivu Swahili, among them two of whom also spoke Kinande. In the conversation, an older speaker switched from Kivu Swahili to Kinande when he was asked to list synonyms for poison, whereafter he first hesitated and then uttered the presented example.

(16)   *hm iko simple, ile... umuntu bamuhére basi*

hm   i-ko   simple   i-le...   u-mu-ntu   ba-mu-p-er-e   basi

INTERJEC   SC9-COP   easy   PP9-DEM2   AUG-NP1-person   SC2-OC1-give-APPL-SUBJ   then

'well it's easy, that... they give a person [something] and that's it'

(17)   *ngangakisi alimusauvé*

ngangakisi   a-li-mu-sauvé

[NP1a]healer   SC1-PST-OC1-save

'the healer saved him/her (from being poisoned)'

4. On language, poison and witchcraft: Intertwined dimensions

While poisoning through the use of a specific toxic substance causes, once swallowed, specific negative reactions in the human body, witchcraft beliefs (*bulozi* or *madawa* in Kivu Swahili) are often understood from a psychological and/or religious-mythical perspective; at least according to Western thought, they are separated from physical substance and the body. In Goma, however, both concepts (poison and witchcraft) are neatly intertwined, and often symbiotically interact in poisoning and healing practices.

With a focus on language and poisoning practices in Buganda, where women have a certain control over men by using "ambiguous" ingredients when preparing meals, Storch (2011: 171) argues that "witchcraft and real toxic substances are not separated [which] is partly expressed in the strong accentuation of mimetic terms for magic and poisonous ingredients". Also Trovalla (2016), in her work on urban Nigeria, argues

that there is no clear differentiation between poison as a harmful substance and as a spell or talisman: It is spiritually working and, as such, the way in which it is administered is not the crucial aspect. She states that the central characteristic is "its obscurity – how its maker, path, and presence were veiled" (p. 182-183), explaining that one only knows that a meal was poisoned at the moment that (s)he feels sick. She compares the "brute presence of the other" during an assault with a knife, to the "striking absence of the other" in poisoning, concluding that "through its ability to move beyond the physical limitations of the other, poison brought an absent to a presence" (ibid.). The fear of *karuho* as a pervasive phenomenon in eastern DR Congo can therefore be explained with its absent other, its invisible power and its potentially ubiquitous after-effects which vaguely hint at poison; stomachache, organ failure, or sudden death. Ramsay (2016: 115) summarizes this insecure fear of the absent in his paper on Congolese refugees with the statement "[w]e could not eat, we could not sleep. The

poison was there. It could not be fixed. The poison was stuck in us" (Ramsay 2016: 115).

The close interrelationship between poison and witchcraft also becomes evident in the listed effects of *karuho* poisoning, which are not all biochemical reactions but also affect the poisoned person's psyche; causing behavior change, depression and neurological changes in general (Kyolo et al. 2018). The close connection between the spiritual world (of being cursed, or bewitched) and substance poisoning is "chillingly concrete", as observed by Comaroff & Comaroff (1993: xxvii), who explore the roots of witchcraft in the real world. When individuals are bewitched, verbal curses combine their role with concrete items belonging to the person. Photographs are an especially common link through which someone can be affected by witchcraft in the city of Goma (as stated by my interlocutors), especially in combination with somebody's name. One's name can be regarded as being "linked to the person, according to the ancestral code", as explained by one interview partner (P.B.B., 2017). Using a photograph and the depicted person's name in a ceremony can either heal a person's sickness, when used by a *mulozi*, or can cause bodily impairment and physical problems, when misused by a *mufumu*.[9] The entanglement of concrete possessions and the possessors' bodies is also expressed by Douglas (1984[1966]: 89), who states that "[p]hysical forces are thought of as interwoven with the lives of persons" and stresses that "[t]hings are not completely distinguished from persons and persons are not completely distinguished from their external environment". One of my main interlocutors explained, in regard to the power transmitted through words and the diffuse boundary between language and witchcraft, that words can exert at least as much negative power as a physical poison:

> Culture can be poison, it can bring curses to us, good luck, bad luck. In ethnic groups, paternal aunties have strong power in their nephews' lives. You hurt her, she will tell you "you will die without having children". You can have treatment but it won't work. Only if you bring some cows, goats, and ask for forgiveness, and she has to call back and say something opposite ("now you have the power to produce [children]!"), it is transmitted like that. Saying words can be very effective. (P.B.B., 2017)

Spells that circle around witchcraft often make use of the metaphor of "crossing waters" (i.e. Lake Kivu) or "going to the island of Ijwi" (examples 18-19). This island is inhabited by ethnic Bahavu who are said to have expertise in the use of witchcraft; thus, crossing Lake Kivu can be understood as consulting Havu witchdoctors who can prepare evil spells for those who intend to bewitch their adversaries. While the island is fairly inaccessible, with only one regular ferry stopping there between the major cities of Goma and Bukavu, people mainly visit the place in order to obtain spiritual advice.

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[9] As to my knowledge, the photographs are not manipulated, burnt nor pierced, as this is the case for instance in some Australian Aboriginal communities. I am grateful to one reviewer's critical question.

(18)   *ndakuenda Ijwi*

ni-ta-kuend-a   Ijwi

SC1SG-FUT -go-FV   I.

'I am going to bewitch you (lit. 'I will go to Ijwi')

(19)   *ndakuvukiya mayi*

ni-ta-ku-vuk-i-a   ma-ayi

SC1SG-FUT-OC2SG-cross-APPL-FV   NP6-water

'I am going to cross water for you / bewitch you'

In witchcraft, around two or three days after the addressee gets to know about the spell that is intended to hit him/her, the person is said to show the first symptoms. In one narrated example, the symptoms began with a slight stomachache and then worsened; a process which was also said to have occurred when a person did not witness the spell him/herself, but was told by a third party that a spell had been prepared to hit him/her. Due to the uncontrollable power of words, witchcraft is considered to be more powerful than poison in eastern DR Congo. While poison strictly depends upon the effects of the mix of ingredients and can thereafter be commonly treated by a traditional healer, a bewitched person cannot be easily cured. Furthermore, *karuho* is often understood to cause a range of predictable effects based on the toxic components that are used; in contrary, spells or curses are more diverse and contain the possibility to cause a wide range of negative effects. Finally, speakers stressed the ambiguity of such symptoms as the stomachache felt by the addressee of an evil spell; which can have a natural cause, or be related to a witchdoctor's curse prepared on the island of Ijwi. This further builds the fear surrounding spells and the awareness that witchcraft is the source of one's health problem may come too late if the person's state has already begun to worsen.

5. Concluding thoughts

Poisoning constitutes a powerful practice in the eastern parts of the DR Congo, as does the language relating to these taboo practices. As has been shown, the increased use of *karuho* in the conflict-affected Kivu provinces has led to a broad range of euphemistic terms, which are either used in order to warn somebody, to threaten an interlocutor, or as a strategy of concealment. The taboo surrounding poisoning in Kivu Swahili leads to the use of euphemisms in often very vague discussions of the topic. This is not only to prevent the speakers' face-loss, but also due to the serious and constant fear of being affected by toxic substances. Speakers of Kivu Swahili usually stress that words exert positive and negative power, and can cause harm when used by a practitioner of witchcraft. These are either abstract threats (ex. 1-4), or specific references to witchcraft ("crossing waters", see ex. 18-19). Altogether, the discussed examples show how neatly witchcraft and toxic sub-

stance are interconnected, which also becomes evident through the polysemous patterns of numerous local languages. One example is *erilóga*, in Kinande, which refers to both toxic substances used against people and to witch-craft (Kavutirwaki & Mukama 2012: 85). The 'poisoning register' can be partly understood as the unveiling of a "public secret": While direct mentions of *karuho* are socially unacceptable, inhabitants of Goma frequently share stories and rumors about perpetrators, victims, toxic ingredients and new lethal mixtures. In further linguistic anthropological studies, the examination of poison in discourse should preferably be extended to the neighboring nations: Rwanda and Burundi.

List of abbreviations

1SG	first singular
APPL	applicative
AUG	augment
CAUS	causative
COP	copula
DEM	demonstrative
ECS	East Coast Swahili
FUT	future tense
FV	final vowel
INTERJEC	interjection
IPFV	imperfective
NEG	negation
NP₁	noun class prefix 1
OC	object concord
PP	pronominal prefix
PRF	perfect aspect
PST	past tense
REL	relative
SC	subject concord
STAT	stative
SUBJ	subjunctive

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09

La notion de tabou en wolof

09

La notion de tabou en wolof

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1. Introduction

Beaucoup de travaux ont été consacrés à la langue wolof notamment dans le domaine de la phonétique et de la morphologie. Par contre les travaux sur la syntaxe, la sémantique et la dialectologie sont rares. Maintenant que la phonologie et les mécanismes de fonctionnements de la langue sont bien établis, alors il nous est permis de traiter d'un autre domaine de la langue, qui à notre connaissance n'a pas encore fait l'objet d'une recherche scientifique. C'est ce qui nous a amenée à traiter le tabou en wolof. Le terme wolof désigne en même temps la langue et les locuteurs. La langue wolof est parlée aproximativement par 43%[1] de la population en Afrique de l'ouest notamment au Sénégal. Les

Wolof sont à la troisième position en Gambie avec 16% de la population et 9% en Mauritanie. Ils sont aussi présents au Mali, en Europe et en Amérique du Nord, où la diaspora sénégalaise est bien établie. La plupart des Wolof sont des musulmans. Les traditions et les coutumes tels que le *jom* (honneur) et le *kersa* (pudeur) constituent les fondements de la société. C'est pour cela beaucoup de mots qui décrivent les organes sexuels, la nudité et les expressions qu'on utilise pour insulter ou pour dénigrer, sont catégorisés comme tabou (Durand et al. 2015). C'est dans la même lancée qu'Allan & Burridge (2006) affirment que «[m]any words and expressions are viewed as 'taboo', such as those used to describe sex, our bodies and their functions, and those used to insult other people.»

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[1] Selon le recensement de la population en 2005 par l'A.N.S.D.

En wolof le tabou est généralement utilisé dans différentes situations contextuelles. Dans beaucoup de langues, le tabou linguistique est noté sur divers aspects qui dépendent d'une culture à l'autre. Pour Allan & Burridge (2006: 1) le tabou est noté sur ces aspects suivants:

- bodies and their effluvia (sweat, snot, faeces, menstrual fluid, etc.);

- the organs and acts of sex, micturition and defecation;

- diseases, death and killing (including hunting and fishing);

- naming, addressing, touching and viewing persons and sacred beings, objects and places;

- food gathering, preparation and consumption.

Généralement tous ces aspects listés ci-dessus sont aussi considérés comme tabou en wolof, nous allons le démontrer tout au long de cet article. Les Wolof censurent la langue qu'ils parlent dans la mesure où l'emploi de certaines expressions comme celles qui font références au sexe de manière générale par exemple, n'est pas beau à entendre (Cisse 2010). C'est pour cela, dans le discours, ces mots et expressions ne doivent ni être employés ni faire l'objet de discution en public.

Tabou en wolof est assimilé à toute situation ou comportement ou bien même l'utilisation de certaines expressions qui mettent mal à l'aise le locuteur pour en discuter. C'est ce que l'on traduit par *lu ñu am kersag waxtane wala jëfe*. Ici le mot *kersa* en wolof signifie

pudeur mais, il arrive que le mot tabou signifie dans certains cas l'interdiction (*lu ñu aye / lu ñu tere*) de dire, de faire ou d'exposer quelque chose qui est banie par la société ou même par la religion en public. Il est difficile de trouver dans la langue un référent exact pour traduire tabou; c'est pour cela la langue emprunte le mot tabou du français. Généralement quand on parle de quelque chose de tabou on dit par exemple le sexe est pour nous un tabou *sex tabu la si ñun*, donc le mot tabou est un mot emprunté du français pour traduire « tabou » en wolof.

Le Tabou ou interdiction affecte la vie de tous les jours et quiconque transgresse le tabou paiera les conséquences. Nous allons traiter dans cet article les différentes formes de tabou en wolof que nous allons regrouper en deux groupes à savoir le tabou verbal et le tabou non-verbal.

2. Tabou verbal

Dans cette partie, nous considérons tous mots et toutes expressions utilisés en publique et qui transgressent les normes établies par la société que se soit sur le plan religieux, culturel ou moral comme étant un tabou linguistique. Dans la pluspart du temps le tabou est souvent relié à la sexualité, la nomination des organes sexuels et les fluides corporels, ect. Selon Storch (2011: 34)

> [l]inguistic avoidance and taboo may occur in a variety of contexts, but in most African languages they seem to be related to the common word taboo that are known in most, if not all, languages worldwide and concern the semantic field of body parts and bodily effluvia, sexuality, disease, and death.

La sexualité constitue le tabou principal dans la mesure où on en parle jamais ou presque pas mais il existe à côté d'autres tabous comme:

- Homophobie (homosexualité, lesbienne, etc);

- Concubinage, viol, inceste, nudité;

- Prostitution;

- Sorcellerie;

- Tabou du deuil;

- Tabou religieux (viande de porc, superstitions, jour/mois tabou, enfant illégitime, pénétration par l'anus, etc).

Chacun de ces itèmes listés ci-dessus seront traités un par un pour une meilleure compréhension de la notion de tabou en wolof.

En wolof le tabou linguistique est un langage offensif, qui fait mal ou qui blesse et il est généralement utilisé lorsqu'on est en colère, quand on est mécontent ou quand on veut insulter ou injurier quelqu'un. Alors que dans d'autres circonstances on utilise un language doux, respectueux quand on veut solliciter quelque chose ou lorsqu'on s'adresse à une personne respectueuse, on ne les utilise pas. Si nous reprenons Allan & Burridge, les termes d'orthophémisme *wax ju dëgër* (la rude parole), d'euphémisme *wax ju neex* (la belle parole) et de dysphémisme *wax ju ñaw* (la laide parole), sont utilisés dans des contextes bien définis à savoir quand on parle soit par politesse *yar / teggin* soit par impolitesse *ñaq yar / ñaq teggin*.

Ce qu'Allan & Burridge (2006:1) affirme ainsi: « People constantly censor the language they use (we differentiate this from the institutionalized imposition of censorship). We examine politeness and impoliteness as they interact with orthophemism (straight talk), euphemism (sweet talking) and dysphemism (speaking offensively). »

Si nous interrojons l'idéologie Wolof, on remarque que la culture est assimilée à la pudeur *kersa*. C'est cette pudeur *kersa* qui empêche l'homme wolof de parler de sa sexualité avec ses parents et même avec son entourage.

Je me rappelle lorsque j'étais toute petite lorsque ma mère avait un enfant, elle disait qu'elle avait acheté le bébé au marché et moi pendant un certain temps, je lui demandais « maman quand est-ce que tu vas acheter un autre bébé au marché » et elle riait en me disant *leggi rek* (sous peu). Cela montre comment dans la société, il est gênant de parler de la sexualité surtout lorsqu'il s'agit de ses parents. C'est la raison pour laquelle lorsqu'on parle, il est interdit de nommer directement certains mots ou certaines expressions, il faut les substituer comme nous le montre le tableau ci-dessous.

Dans le tableau ci-dessus ces mots (nonmis en gras) ne doivent jamais être utilisés publiquement sauf dans le cas du *laabaan* (première nuit de noces) ou du *xaxar* (cérémonie d'injures). Ici le tabou linguistique est permis on n'a pas besoin de substituer les mots on les utilise tels qu'ils sont parce qu'ici c'est la fête et l'orateur doit utiliser un language agressif afin de véhiculer son message pour qu'il soit perçu par le public.

Le *laabaan* est un hommage rendu à la jeune fille qui a su se préserver jusqu'au jour de la consommation du mariage ou *jebbale.* Durant la cérémonie, les voisins, les amis de la famille et de la jeune mariée sont conviés par la belle famille ou par la maman de la mariée et la fête

Tabou linguistique en Wolof	Substitution	Signification
góor jigeen	borom ñarri tur yi	« un homme efféminé »
katt	seek ak.. / jote ak..	« faire l'amour »
katal sa ndey / sa lëfël ndey	saaga ndey	« insulter de mère »
lëf, bajo, data, cot	awra jiggeen	« sexe féminin »
coq	naq	« poils pubiens »
koy / wayala	awra góór	« sexe masculin »
dëmm	nitu gudi	« sorcier »

Tableau 1. Tabou verbal

commence au petit matin et se termine tard le soir. Tôt le matin ce sont les bruits de tam-tam qui réveillent le quartier et durant trois jours, la famille fait la fête. La cérémonie se passe dans une chambre et les griots chantent les louanges de la jeune mariée en injuriant les jeunes filles qui ne sont pas vierges. Le message véhiculé ici est général et s'adresse à toutes les jeunes filles en âge de se marier. Il est parlé sur un ton brutal, injurieux, sans pudeur, taboué (cf. katt dans le tableau ci-dessous) et agressif afin que les jeunes filles aient peur de perdre leur virginité comme nous le voyons dans le texte ci-après :

Laabaan
Góor ñi dofuñu
Seeni mbokk dofuñu
Ku ci yaru ñu takk la
Ku ci yarediku ñu katt la
Wacc la ak sa ndey
[Les hommes ne sont pas bêtes
Leurs familles ne sont pas bêtes
Les sages seront mariées
Les indisciplinées seront baisées
Et abandonnées à leur maman.]

Les mêmes propos injurieux et offensants sont aussi utilisés dans la cérémonie du *xaxar*. Le *xaxar* est une performance organisée par les femmes chez l'époux pour accueillir la nouvelle mariée. Parfois les femmes obligent la nouvelle mariée à assister à la cérémonie et elle se déroule à la place du village ou au milieu de la concession devant un auditoire exclusivement féminin. Les femmes forment un cercle ou chacune d'entre elle vient danser et chanter à son tour en véhiculant des propos injuriants et offensifs (cf *bajo* dans le texte ci-dessous) à la mariée, à ses parents et à ses proches comme nous l'illustrons ci-dessous.

Xaxar 1
Baayu séet bi
Bu nee alaaji la, day duul
Da doon aji far deteelu ci **bajo**
Far toog a toog.
[Le père de la mariée
S'il dit qu'il est El hadji, il ment
En allant faire son pélerinage, il est tombé sur un sexe
Et a fini par renoncer.

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Le tabou verbal est aussi utilisé pour injurier *saaga* ou dénigrer quelqu'un *xas*, *xarab*, souhaiter verbalement du mal à quelqu'un *móolu*, menacer *rëbb*, *tëkku*, détruire mystiquement ou marabouter *yaq* dans ce cas le langage est exprimé sur un ton impoli (*ñaq teggin*), agressif et irrespectueux. Les termes comme *katal sa ndey* et *sa lëfël ndey* (injurier quelqu'un de mère) ou bien *sa koyu baay* (injurier quelqu'un de père) sont utilisés et sont considérés en wolof comme *wax bu ñaw* (mauvais langage) qui est traduit par « bad language » selon Allan & Burridge

(2006). Ici on injurie en nommant les organes génitaux de la mère ou du père de celui qu'on veut offenser.

Dans certains cas les injures *katal sa ndey*, *sa lëfël ndey* sont généralement utilisés comme jargon par les jeunes dans la mesure où, les jeunes les utilisent lorsqu'ils communiquent entre eux de manière péjorative comme nous le voyons dans l'exemple ci-après qui illustre une discution entre deux jeunes qui veulent faire du thé.

M:	mais	**boy**	**caayin**	bi	pare-g-ul?
	mais	Jeune.homme	thé	DEF	être.prêt-2SG-NEG

« mais jeune-homme le thé n'est-il pas encore prêt?»

P:	**jambar**	**blemu**	sukër	la	am
	Jeune.homme	problème	sucre	FOC.1SG	avoir

« Je n'ai pas de sucre » (lit. j'ai un problème de sucre)

M:	way	loy	**katt**	**ndeyam**	wax	nii ?
	INT	qu'est.ce.que	insulter	mère	parler	comme.ça
	cenel	si	**hundred**	yi	mu	gaw
	prendre	FOC	100	DEF.PL	FOC	rapidement

« de quoi tu parles comme ça fils de pute? Prends les 100 francs et fais vite »

Les jeunes communiquent entre eux en utilisant leur propre jargon (*boy, caayin, jambar, blem, cenel, hundred*), constitué d'un mélange d'anglais, de jargon, d'un langage de jeunes et d'un langage taboué (*katt ndeyam*) comme nous le voyons dans les mots mis en gras dans l'exemple ci-dessus. Ici le jargon n'est pas considéré dans certains cas comme tabou alors que lorsqu'il est dans une même construction avec un ou des mots taboués alors dans ce cas, il est utilisé de manière pejorative. C'est l'ensemble qui est considéré comme un langage verbal, taboué et dans la pluspart des cas la personne qui entend l'information a ce comportement non-verbal décrit par l'image ci-dessous (voir photos), pour montrer la gravité du discours ou bien la personne affirme verbalement *sa wax ji rëy na* (tes propos sont graves).

Mais il faut reconnaître ici que le contexte et le lieu occupent une place très importante dans le discours dans la mesure où, s'ils sont entre jeunes le problème de la gravité du terme utilisé ne se pose pas mais si toutefois l'environnement change ou quelqu'un entend les propos, alors le message est interprété et perçu autrement. C'est dans ce cadre qu'Allan & Burridge (2006: 53-54) affirme « All these categories of language and behavior are wedded to context, time and place. »

Parcontre si on veut dénigrer *xas, xarab* quelqu'un, on expose ses défauts en voulant l'offenser. Ici le langage est direct alors que dans le cas du *gaaral*, le langage est détourné, la satire s'adresse indirectement en la presence du locuteur. Et le plus offensant c'est de traiter quelqu'un de sorcier *tam* ou de dire de quelqu'un qu'il est un sorcier *dëmm* et ceci peut affecter toute sa projéniture de telle sorte que personne ne veut plus l'approcher ou nouer des relations avec lui. Dès fois ceux qui sont affec-

Figure 1. *Sa wax ji rëy na* (photo FCK)

tés à une telle situation préfèrent déménager dans un autre village ou une autre ville où personne ne les connaît afin de fuir cette injustice sociale (Geschiere 2013). Le dénigrement (*xaste*) est souvent noté lorsqu'on éprouve de la haine pour quelqu'un ou généralement lors d'une querelle ou lors d'une cérémonie de *xaxar* par exemple entre co-épouse où chacune veut blesser l'autre en entretenant des propos virulents du genre:

Xaxar 2
Séet bi xana amul maas?
Magat yu ñaaw yii nga àndal
Xaana amoo maas ?
Mani sunu séet bi ñàkkul sikk
Sunu séet bi ñàkkul sikk
Day sàcc, day fen
Tànk bi gaaw na
Kii moom ñàkkul sikk.

[La mariée n'a peut-être pas d'amis de son âge?
Elle n'est qu'accompagnée que de vielles dames laides
N'as.tu pet.être pas d'amis de ton âge?
Je dis notre mariée n'a point de défauts
Notre mariée n'a point de défauts

Elle est une voleuse, elle est une menteuse
Elle a toujours une destination où aller
Elle, elle n'a pas de défaut.]

Xaxar 3
Toggleen ko
Te jaarale ko ca sëg ya
Ndaw si aay na gaaf
Dëkk bum u dem
Bóom fa ñetti maggat
Rey fa ñaari xale
Musal nu ci baayu xale yi
Ndax mu jëm kanam.

[Préparez-la
Faites la passer par les cimetières
Cette femme porte la poisse
Partout où elle passe
Elle y tue soudainement trois vieillards
Y tue deux enfants
Epargne le père des enfants
Pour qu'il aille de l'avant.]

Dans cette partie nous avons voulu aussi parler de l'effet de la salive qui est un tabou fatal chez les Wolof et qui est communément appellé (*cat*). Ce terme fait référence à la langue comme organe qui produit la salive et lorsqu'on parle souvent que ce soit quelque chose de bien ou de mauvais, alors les Wolof interprètent cela comme la mauvaise langue (*cat*) . C'est la raison pour laquelle les Wolof ne révèlent pas leur secret par exemple, lorsqu'ils entreprennent à voyager ou bien à faire quelque chose, ils ne la divulgue qu'à la fin du résultat sinon si tout le monde est au courant la chose peut échouer à tout moment. Ils ont aussi l'habitude d'utiliser cette expression *yabima xamuma fo ma tope* qui signifie « épargne moi de ta mauvaise langue ». Ici

nous n'avons pas le mot *cat* mais on a plutôt le mot *yabi* qui signifie cracher quelque chose de la bouche donc on voit comment la parole ou même la salive a un sens péjoratif chez les Wolof et c'est ce qui fait que la pluspart des gens qu'on considère de sorcier, le sont à cause de leur langue parce qu'ils sont considérés comme des personnes maudites.

3. Tabou non-verbal

Dans cette partie, il est question de différentes attitudes qui donnent plus de force au langage verbal. Selon Cissé (2010: 43) « les unités non verbales sont d'ailleurs jugées supérieures, sur le plan informationnel, aux unités de la communication verbale. » Il poursuit toujours (ibid.) en disant que « [l]e non verbal est dans tous les cas un vecteur privilégié pour l'expression des émotions et de l'état de la relation interpersonnelle (proximité, distance…) » Nous allons traiter chaque aspect du tabou non verbal qui se manifeste chez les Wolof par le tabou religieux et par le tabou social.

3.1 Le tabou religieux

Par tabou religieux nous faisons allusion à tout ce que la religion interdit et considère comme tabou. Il existe certains tabous si la personne ne le respecte pas, il aura affaire à Dieu et non à la société comme le fait de manger la viande de porc et la suicide pour les musulmans. Tandis que le tabou tel que l'homosexualité est bani par la religion et par la société.

Pour la viande de porc il existe dans certaines circonstances où, il n'est plus considéré comme tabou par exemple si on est dans un endroit où il n'existe que cette viande et si on ne la mange pas on risque de mourir, alors il est

permis de la manger. Ou bien si on la mange par accident sans le savoir, il n'est pas considéré comme un tabou.

Par contre s'il s'agit de l'homosexualité qui est un emprunt de la culture européenne, *ngóor jigéen* en wolof est l'attitude ou le comportement d'un *góor jigéen* communément appelé *borom ñaari tur yi* (une personne qui est de sexe mascullin et qui a des gestes féminins), est à la fois un tabou religieux et social. Nous avons énumé dans le tableau 1 que le terme *góor jigéen* est souvent substitué par *borom ñaari tur yi* pour ne pas nommer le caractère péjoratif ou taboué du terme *góor jigéen*. Nous tenons à préciser qu'en wolof ce terme *ngóor jigéen* signifie tout homme qui a un comportement efféminé de par ses gestes ou de par son accoutrement ou bien même de par sa manière de parler. Le terme *góor jigéen* est décomposable en deux termes: *góor* (homme) et *jigéen* (femme) pour dire de quelqu'un qu'il est efféminé. Ceci est aussi valable pour les lesbiennes (*jigéen góor*) c'est-à-dire une femme qui se comporte comme un homme. Chez nous les termes homosexualité et lesbianisme sont des termes empruntés de la culture européenne et ils ont une dénomination autre de celle de l'Europe, c'est-à-dire un comportement efféminé quand il s'agit d'un homme et d'une attitude masculine lorsqu'il s'agit d'une femme.

Il est difficile voire impossible pour un *góor jigéen* ou un *jigéen góor* de vivre dans la société. Chez nous le mariage entre homme et entre femme n'est pas légalisé, c'est pourquoi la majeure partie d'entre eux préfèrent s'exiler en Europe. C'est ce qui fait que bon nombre de *góor jigéen* vivent en Europe mais cela n'empêche, ils constituent une humiliation pour la famille à cause du regard de la société. Si quelqu'un est un *góor jigéen* ou un *jigéen góor*, il est obligé de

le cacher mais difficilement car la société saura que tel ou tel est un *góor jigéen* de par ses gestes et sa façon de parler qu'on ne peut pas cacher. Et même il ou elle sera rejeté(e) par sa propre famille parce qu'il considère cela comme une honte, une malédiction.

La religion nous dit que même si un *góor jigéen* est décédé on ne doit pas l'enterrer au cimetière, son corps sera jeté aux ordures et c'est ce qui fait que même la famille a tous les problèmes du monde pour enterrer le défunt du fait que les voisins surveillent même les cimetières pour qu'il ne soit pas enterré. Donc être *góor jigéen* dans cette société est fatal voire une honte pour la famille et pour l'entourage.

Le suicide (*xaru*) en wolof est aussi un tabou religieux et une honte pour la famille de celui qui s'est suicidé. En wolof ils ont l'habitude de dire d'un acte bani par la société ou par la religion qu'il s'agit de *way wudul fay* c'est-à-dire litéralement une chanson qui ne s'éteint jamais, un acte qui se répend de génération en génération. C'est pour cela certains comportements sont considérés comme une fatalité *ndogal*, Lorsqu'une fatalité arrive on se résigne (*muñ*) pour éviter le suicide quand on est un croyant. Les Wolof ont l'habitude de dire c'est la volonté divine *ndogalu yalla la* pour toute situation.

> Selon Martel-Thoumian (2015: 303) « [l]es religions monothéistes considèrent le suicide comme un acte contre-nature. Pour le Judaïsme, le Christianisme et l'Islam, celui qui se tue attente à une vie que Dieu lui a interdit de supprimer sans raison valable. La vie de l'homme n'est pas sa propriété, car il ne s'est pas créé lui-même; sa vie n'est qu'un dépôt que Dieu lui a confié, il ne peut donc anticiper sa propre mort. »

Pour toutes ces raisons, la société de même que la religion banie le suicide et il est considéré parmi les tabous religieux et social.

Il est aussi tabou pour tout croyant d'avoir un rapport sexuel pendant la journée du mois de ramadan et de jeûner durant son cycle menstruel. Ainsi la femme doit après le ramadan compléter les jours où elle s'est abstenue.

La nudité *dung* ou *ni ko ndeyam jure* peut être rangée dans ce régistre. La nudité renvoie ici par le fait que quelqu'un soit nu comme un ver. Le fait d'exposer sa nudité en public n'est pas admis dans la société wolof à moins que la personne qui le fait ne dispose pas de ces facultés mentales et si tel est le cas, il y'aura toujours quelqu'un qui viendra lui couvrir avec un pagne. Même avec les nouvelles technologies, les personnes qui s'exposent sur l'internet sont souvent critiquées et dans la pluspart du temps ces critiques ne s'adressent pas à elles seules mais s'adresse aussi à leur famille (Marar 2012). Chez les Wolof la nudité est intime et ne doit pas être exposé au grand jour. Et comme nous l'avons mentionnée plus haut la société wolof repose sur la pudeur *kersa*, le *sutura* (ce qui est caché). Cette société incarne certaines valeurs qui jusqu'à nos jours sont le reflet de la société wolof. C'est pourquoi quiconque qui trangresse ces valeurs sera puni par la société. La photo que nous présentons ici a été postée sur facebook par un groupe qui s'appelle "Femme chic" dont je suis membre. Dans la photo, on voit un petit enfant tenant une tétine à la main qui à la forme d'un pénis. Et les commentaires nous montrent comment la société réagit à de telles situations lorsque le tabou est divulgué ou exposé au grand public.

Figure 2. Tabou en facebook[2]

Il existe aussi un jour dans l'année appelé *alarbay karé* (mercredi noir) qui est le dernier mercredi du mois de safar (calendrier musulman) où il est interdit de se laver, de se marier, de déménager dans une nouvelle maison, ect. Car il est considéré comme un jour fatal pour toute personne qui ne respecte pas cela. Mais rappelons que ici il peut s'agir de superstition et si tel est le cas, la personne est libre de croire ou de ne pas croire. C'est cela la difference entre tabou et superstition.

Les enfants illégitimes sont aussi épargnés de l'héritage de leur parent et vice versa. La religion dit que l'enfant illégitime, né hors marriage *domu njalo* ne doit en aucun cas hériter son père mais par contre le père durant qu'il est en vie peut céder une partie de ses biens à l'enfant. La pluspart du temps l'enfant illégitime n'est au courant que pendant l'héritage et on peut imaginer le choc que cela peut faire si un bon jour il apprend qu'il est un enfant illégitime. Et dans la société wolof c'est une honte d'être un enfant illégitime vu le regard que la société porte sur lui et ces parents. Il arrive même que la famille le dénigre (*xas*) pour lui faire mal ou pour faire mal surtout à la mère. Dans la pluspart des cas ce sont les co-épouses qui

[2] Source: https://www.facebook.com/groups/911002432342646 (visited 10 July 2018)

révèlent le secret au grand public pour faire mal à la mère et à l'enfant déshérité. Et dans certaine culture, la jeune fille qui a eu un enfant illégitime ne sera pas épousé par le père de son enfant parce que la famille préfère ne pas salir leur nom de famille.

3.2 Le tabou social

Ce type de tabou est imposé par la société. Il s'agit de croyances sociales qui sont considérés comme tabou par la culture. Le tabou social est hérité des ancêtres et le peuple Wolof continue jusqu'à nos jours à croire à ces croyances sociales. D'ailleurs ils ont l'habitude de dire *fii la ñu ko fekk* (on l'a trouvé ainsi) ou *noonu la ko mam yi daan doxalé* (c'est ainsi que les ancêtres se comportaient) pour ce qui concerne l'héritage culturel.

En wolof, on a ce que l'on appelle la guigne *gaf* et d'habitude l'homme ou la femme qui a la guigne est nommé de *ay gaf* c'est-à-dire qu'il (elle) est une personne mal chanceuse, qui tue celui ou celle qui le (la) marie. Le plus souvent le peuple Wolof disent que si une personne marche sans poser le talon des pieds, il a la guigne (*gaf*) ou bien si la femme est devenue veuve trois fois consécutif ou si son prétendant est mort le jour du mariage ou lorsqu'on s'apprête à célébrer l'union alors cette personne a la guigne. Dans tous les cas, quelque soit la situation dans laquelle oú elle se trouve, on sent nettement le regard négatif que la société jette envers les personnes qui ont la guigne (*gaf*) et les difficultés aux quelles ces personnes sont confrontées.

Entre autre tabou social, il y a le tabou du deuil (*téenji*) où la femme lors du décés de son mari doit observer selon la religion musulmane quatre (4) mois dix (10) jours de deuil. Et pen-dant ces quatre mois, on évite la veuve comme si elle avait une maladie contagieuse. Elle ne doit pas partager à manger avec la famille. Elle possède ses propres bassines pour laver ses habits, sa propre natte ou prier et s'assoir, tout ce dont elle a besoin elle ne la partage pas avec la famille. Selon la tradition, elle doit dormir par terre sur un matelas. D'ailleurs, à la fin du deuil, elle doit se débarasser de tout ce qu'elle a eu à utiliser et donner cela en aumône à une vieille personne. Même si la personne dit qu'il ne croit pas à la tradition, il doit le faire sinon si toute fois il lui arrive un malheur, la société aura raison sur lui. Ce sont des croyances et des superstitions aux quelles la société accorde beaucoup d'importance et parfois même ces croyances et superstitions se trouvent au dessus de la religion.

Il y a aussi l'existence des castes dans la société traditionnelle wolof, qui sont à l'origine de beaucoup de problèmes sociaux. Nous entendons par société traditionnelle, celle qui vit dans la conservation des traditions et coutumes établies par la société et qui se transmettent de génération en génération à l'aide de la parole ou des comportements sociaux. Donc la communauté traditionnelle wolof a une structure hiérarchique inégalitaire qui est symbolisée par les castes, qui sont une structure à caractère héréditaire et professionnelle. Deux categories socio-professionnelles ont été noté pendant longtemps dans la société wolof: les *géer* et les *ñeeño*.

- Les *géer* plus connus sous le nom d'hommes libres constituent la couche sociale la plus importante. Ils se considèrent être au dessus des autres castes et ne dépendent de personne du fait de leur statut de non-artisan. Ils sont générale-

ment des agriculteurs. Le *géer* aux yeux de la société symbolise la générosité, la loyauté.

- Les *ñeeño* sont les gens de castes dont le statut est determiné par l'activité professionnelle et ils sont tous artisans. Ils sont liés aux *géer* par une relation familiale car chaque famille *géer* a son *ñeeño* qui durant les cérémonies familiales, est chargé d'organiser la cérémonie et de chanter les louanges de ces derniers. Les *ñeeño* sont subdivisés en fonction du métier qu'ils exercent. Entre autre ils regroupent les sous classes des:

- Les *lawbé* (bûcherons) qui ont pour orígne le pulaar et beaucoup considèrent comme appartenent à l'ethnie Toucouleur ou Peul. Ils parlent un mélange de wolof et de Toucouleur et vivent parmis les wolof. Ils ne sont ni castés ni noble et ils sont le plus souvent acceptés par la société wolof du fait qu'ils sont considérés comme une ethnie qui apporte le bonheur, la chance.

- Les *uude* (coordonnniers) travaillent le cuir et pour profession la fabrication des chaussures, sacs et des amulettes. Il n'existe presque pas de rapports entre les *uude* et les *géer* si ce n'est une relation de travail. Généralement ce sont les femmes uude qui faisaient le tatouage des lèvres (*njamal tuñ*) aux femmes *géer* car jadis le tatouage était de coutume pour les femmes pour exhiber leur beauté naturelle.

- Les *tëgg* (forgerons, bijoutiers) qui faisaient le travail du fer, du metal et ils

sont à la disposition des *géer* parce que ce sont eux qui fabriquaient les matériels agricole et militaire de même que les parures pour les femmes. Les femmes *tëgg* faisaient aussi les coiffures pour les femmes *géer*.

Nous avons voulu donner ces différentes classes sociales pour montrer l'importance que jouait et que continue de nos jours de jouer chaque classe dans la société. Elles vivent en parfaite harmonie mais il faut noter que le tabou peut être vu dans ce contexte comme non pas une interdiction mais par l'inacceptation d'une classe sociale à une autre. Et généralement chez les Wolof, ils n'acceptent pas le mariage entre *géer* et *uude* ou bien entre *géer* et tëgg pour la simple raison que les *géer* se considèrent supérieures aux autres classes sociales comme les *tëgg* et les *uude*. Ce que les *géer* traduisent par *si yax bu rëy la bok* (appartenir à une famille noble) et c'est ce qui fait que le mariage entre ces classes sociales posent d'énombres problèmes aux jeunes parce que la famille n'acceptera jamais l'union entre ces classes sociales. D'après les Wolof les *tëgg* apportent la guigne, la malchance ce qu'ils traduisent par *dañuy uume*. Et ce sont malheureusement des faits sociaux qui sont là et qui continuent à être pratiqués même si la jeune generation n'y croient pas, ils sont confrontés à beaucoup de problèmes sociaux qui favorisent la marginalisation de certaines classes vis à vis d'autres. Ce problème demeure un sujet tabou pour la société wolof dans la mesure où personne ne veut en parler parce qu'ils dissent que c'est un phénomène social, que chacun reste à sa place *ken du ñu rax* ou bien lorsqu'ils disent que c'est ainsi qu'on l'a trouvé et il en sera ainsi *fii lañu ko fek te fii lañu koy bayi*.

Quant aux tabous sociaux, on peut citer le viol (*siif*), l'inceste (*tëdde sa dom, wala sa rak, wala ku la jégge*) et la pédophilie (*yaaktan*) qui constituent des faits sociaux et personne n'en parle. Pourquoi?

Le viol, l'inceste et la pédophilie sont des faits sociaux qui affectent l'intimité de la personne et le fait de les camoufler ou de ne pas en parler, ne signifie pas que la culture wolof encourage de tels actes mais la société veut que les bonnes valeurs soient divulguées et non les valeurs destructrices qui donnent une mauvaise image à la société. C'est dans ce cadre que nous rejoignons Marar (2012: 1) lorsqu'il affirme:

> Contemporary society discourages intimacy. We live in a self-regarding culture, soaked through with the impersonal need for instant gratification. Our goal is to get intimate with our-selves rather than others, to identify and indulge in our own desires and fantasies (where do you want to go today?) and to satisfy them by consuming the right products. Success and the pursuit of status are trumpeted at the expense of human connection.

Les Wolof considèrent les liens de parenté ou familiaux au dessus de tout. Pour eux le fait de dénoncer un membre de la famille qui est auteur de viol, d'inceste ou de pédophilie, c'est salir le nom de la famille. La société wolof a l'habitude de dire que le fait de dénoncer la personne contribue à la dislocation des liens familiaux *tas mbok gui*. Le fait de cacher en douce ces pratiques est à l'origine de beaucoup de problèmes même si, ils ont l'habitude d'utiliser cet adage *bu ñu xawi suñu sutura* c'est-à-dire le linge sale se lave en famille. Le plus souvent ce sont les familles proches qui sont l'auteur de ces actes comme les neveux, l'oncle et comme la

société est une société établie sous les valeurs de garder un secret *worma* même si cela fait mal. C'est dans ce contexte que cette société fait table rase *nëp nëpël*, *nës nësël* comme si de rien n'était sur beaucoup de problèmes sociaux dont souffrent les victimes de ces actes ignobles.

Ces violences familiales n'ont jamais fait l'objet de discussion au sein de la famille du fait que le fils de la soeur du père ou le frère de la mère qui en est le responsable, reste et fera toujours parti de la famille et c'est cela qui poussent beaucoup de jeunes à la débauche comme la prostitution. Parfois la société, la famille constitue un pesanteur social qui engendre ces violences sociales (Ndiaye 2010).

À part la linguistique tabou que nous avons notée plus haut concernant l'insulte et la dénomination de organes génitaux, le tabou dans cette société est plus que non verbal dans la mesure où le concept de tabou est vu comme quelque chose dont on ne parle pas. Et c'est la raison pour laquelle beaucoup de mots taboués ont le plus souvent un substitut dans la langue.

Il faut aussi rappeller que certaines maladie comme la lèpre (*ngana*) et le VIH sida sont des maladie de la honte et la société margilise les personnes atteintes de ces maladies. De nos jours on peut être atteint du sida sans que personne ne le sache mais pour la lèpre telle n'est pas le cas. Ces gens sont mis à l'écart et sont porteurs de malheur et ne représentent rien pour la société.

Ainsi nous remarquons que dans le discours wolof les expressions la « belle parole » *wax ju rafet* et la « laide parole » *wax ju ñaaw* que Burridge qualifie successivement d'euphémisme (sweet talking) et dysphémisme (speaking offensively) ne sont pas gratuits. En Afrique et plus particulièrement au Sénégal, la parole est un moyen de maintien de la cohésion

sociale et de soutien dans les rapports interpersonnels et de l'organisation de la vie sociale. C'est ce qui fait que toutes les expressions qui peuvent blesser ou detruire sont perçues comme tabou dans la société.

La « belle parole » fonctionne dans un but unitaire conforme aux réalités culturelles et elle exprime les valeurs et les vertus sociales auxquelles le peuple wolof se réfère. Ce qui n'est pas le cas de la « laide parole » dont l'homme wolof se méfie. C'est pourquoi l'adage dit que avant de parler on doit remuer sept fois sa langue pour éviter de dire quelque chose qui blesse, qui anéanti une personne. Ce que l'on traduit en wolof par *wax balle la su rëcce mënoo ko dabuwat*. ici il y a l'emploie d'un métaphore pour comparer la parole à une balle de pistolet qu'on ne peut plus retenir si on a déjà appuyé sur le détenteur. Tout cela montre pourquoi la société censure certains mots ou expressions mais aussi certains comportements qui détruisent et qui ne sont pas conformes à l'ordre des anciens.

Mais il faut aussi reconnaître que ce que la société considère comme tabou est divulgué dans les réseaux sociaux, qui sont de nos jours une réalité absolue. Cependant la pluspart des pratiques sociales et culturelles disparaissent de nos jours mais il existe toujours des personnes qui sont très conservatrices malgré le modernisme et qui continuent toujours à s'enraciner tout en restant ouvert aux autres réalités culturelles.

Vu sous cet angle il y a lieu de se demander si la notion de tabou *lu nuy aye*, *lu nuy tere*, *lu nu dul waxtaane* en wolof n'est qu'une intimité dévoilée au grand public?

Abbreviations

DEF   defini
FOC   focus
INT   interrogatif
NEG   négation
PL   pluriel
SG   singulier

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10

Taboo in language and discourse:
The case of Kasem

10

Taboo in language and discourse: The case of Kasem

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1. Introduction

Language users create and share from one generation to the other words and expressions deemed inappropriate generally or in certain contexts (Allan and Burridge 2006; Frazer 1911; Agyekum 1996; Ljung 2011; Christie 2013). These words and expressions are commonly referred to as linguistic taboos. Linguistic taboo, as a concept, has cultural overtones and may be defined as the created, established and shared prohibitions ascribed to certain expressions or words in some particular discourse situations or general contexts. It is an act, either verbal or non-verbal that is considered inappropriate in a given context. How, what, when, where, who and to whom an act is made has diverse interpretations

and implications prescribed by the people in question. According to Hughes (2006: 463) linguistic taboo "refers to prohibitions against socially unacceptable words, expressions, and topics". Allan and Burridge (2006) maintain that: "taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual's behaviour where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury." According to Jay (2009: 153), "Taboo words are sanctioned or restricted on both institutional and individual levels under the assumption that some harm will occur if a taboo word is spoken". Accounting for the motivations for the use of taboo words or expressions, Jay (2009: 155) notes thus: "Reasons for using or not using taboo words depend on the conversational goals of the speaker. Swearing is like using the horn on your car, which can be used to signify

a number of emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, joy, surprise)."

Taboo in language and discourse is common to many languages throughout the world, with Kasem being no exception. Some languages have common linguistic taboos while other linguistic taboos are specific to some particular languages. Linguistic taboos are generally shaped by the beliefs, perceptions, aspirations, environment and the entire worldview of a people. In the wake of globalization however, linguistic taboos are more binding in traditional Kasena communities as compared to nearly urban Kasena settings mostly inhabited by diverse people of other language groups. Likewise, some linguistic taboos may not be strictly adhered to, in recent times as compared to the past decades and the possibility of newly invented and instituted linguistic taboos and the linguistically creative ways of managing such taboos cannot be overemphasized. Storch (2011: 9) stresses that languages are

> a powerful form of socially active knowledge maintained by and belonging to people who share ideas and ideologies of aesthetics, truth, sacredness, and identity. The manipulated words and proverbial expressions in created, deliberately changed languages hereby encode various levels of meaning, expressing distance and group boundaries. They are also encoding sacredness and universal truth, unlike the ordinary language beneath it.

More palpable are the unique and diverse measures employed by language users to circumvent linguistic taboos. They are often discussed in round-about ways and most creatively in figurative expressions like metaphors, euphemisms, neologisms, understatements, metonymy amongst a host of other lexical replacements. Linguistic taboos are mainly of two categories, namely: verbal and non-verbal linguistic taboos. With respect to Kasem, further classification kinds are identified as General Linguistic Taboos, Linguistic Taboos Associated with the Supernatural, Social and Physical Ailments and Deformities, Body Parts and Body Functions and Body Language.

Linguistics taboos to a great extent aspire to maintain the status quo. By their deployment in a language like Kasem, both verbal and non-verbal obscenity, profanity, accusations, blasphemy, contempt and general misappropriations of language are put in check. This paper therefore seeks to identify, classify and examine linguistic taboos in Kasem, with respect to the contexts in which they are situated and bring to the fore the linguistic innovations employed by the Kasena to circumvent Kasem linguistic taboos.

In Kasem, linguistic taboos (verbal and non-verbal) like any other taboos are generally referred to as *chulʋ*. Quite apart from the oath in Kasem, that is specifically termed as *dʋʋrɪ*, all other taboos or general restrictions are known by the term *chulʋ*. In Akan for example, the concept *abususɛm* translates as verbal taboos (Agyekum 2004: 318). However, there is no concept used exclusively to denote linguistic taboo in Kasem.

Particular situations may give rise to certain linguistic taboos as the following discussion reveals. Some linguistic taboos are more general to other languages but other linguistic taboos are more specific on the grounds that, the social or cultural experiences that pertain in languages differ from one culture to the other. More so, linguistic strategies such as figurative expressions and concepts amongst a host of other measures employed to evade linguistic taboos, may vary significantly from one language to the other. Hence, the presence of a linguistic taboo in one

Kasena community and its absence in another Kasena community is not in doubt. The following sections elaborate the reasons for such differences. The diverse words and expressions employed to manage linguistic taboos are common and varied in Kasena communities. Yet, there are other words and expressions to evade similar linguistic taboos in Kasem that are typical to some particular communities or peers. Generally, however, the most pervasive strategy employed to evade linguistic taboos is the use of euphemisms. Euphemism refers to "the use of deliberately indirect, conventionally imprecise, or socially 'comfortable' ways of referring to taboo, embarrassing, or unpleasant topics" (Hughes 2006: 151)[1].

Taboo in language is common to most known languages and adherence to these language taboos in the Kasena community does not only serve as a mark of competence on the part of the speaker, it also implies maturity, wisdom and respect amongst a host of other qualities cherished by the Kasena as far as communication is concerned[2]. That notwithstanding, linguistic taboo violations in Kasem as in other languages are common without respect to age, gender or authority. They are generally broken either advertently or inadvertently in communication. Ghounane (2014) however observes that the attitudes of speakers towards the use of taboos and the circumventive use of euphemisms in the Tlemcen speech community in Algeria differ according to sex, age and educational backgrounds of speakers. Jumat et al. (2018) also note a quite unique linguistic taboo where there is a prohibition of communicating directly in some kinship relationships

in Karonese culture. These observations do not pertain in the Kasena community.

As reiterated above, either intentionally or unintentionally, linguistic taboos are breached in one way or the other. The Kasena are certain of this fact and will usually state that:

(1) Nagə na ba dɪ soro yɪ
    Leg now NEG eat slimy (sauce) yet

    dɪ sorə mʊ nɪ nan na dɪ soro
    3SG. slips FOC mouth that now eat slimy (sauce)

    'The foot does not take slimy sauce yet slips, what then will happen to the month that eats slimy sauce.'

What is implied is that people are bound to make inappropriate pronouncements in the communication process. Therefore, diverse linguistic strategies have been put in place to redress such breaches. There are instances where the speaker, where linguistic taboos are hitherto known, intentionally employs them in other to demean the listener. There are however some speakers who are ignorant of the linguistic taboos they employ in some contexts. It is possible for Kasem language speakers, as it is normally the case with other language speakers, to tell whether a linguistic taboo is breached intentionally by speakers or not. Some measures that may be employed to ascertain these breaches mostly rely on the situations (for instance, if a speaker is deliberately rude as a result of a quarrel) involved in communication as a whole. Generally, one's knowledge of linguistic taboos in Kasem ensures a

[1] See Burridge (2012) for a detailed examination of the kinds and nature of euphemisms and other linguistic circumventions in discourse.
[2] See Brown and Levinson (1987) for an elaboration of politeness in discourse situations.

Map 1. The Kasena of Ghana and Burkina Faso

better relation with people as these linguistic taboos serve to maintain the status quo in Kasena communities. One can avoid breaking taboos by either learning them or experiencing them in diverse discourse contexts as time goes by. It should be reiterated that "learning and knowing the contexts of the different ways of speaking can be an ability as critical as the ability to speak a certain language or register" (Lüpke & Storch 2013: 77).

The following sections aim at identifying the types and kinds of linguistic taboos in Kasem. Attempts are also made to categorize the linguistic taboos and examine the ways and manner in which the linguistic taboos are realized in Kasem discourse as well explore the linguistic measures employed to circumvent linguistic taboos in Kasem. It is hoped that the contexts will give deeper insights into the understanding of linguistic taboos. Though most of the linguistic taboos stated herein are common to Kasena speaking communities in general, the linguistic measures to evade linguistic taboos may vary slightly from one community to the other: the main reason being that a word or expression may have a better appeal to one community as compared to the other. Hence, some language speakers may therefore be familiar with or prone to using what is common in their respective communities.

It should be noted that the discussion is primarily based on the native intuition of the author. Clarifications from some other native speakers of Kasem and Kasena elders have also be ascertained with respect to issues that needed clearer elaborations.

2. The Kasena and Kasem: The people and language

Kasem is the language spoken by the Kasena (Kasem SG). The Kasena are found along the fringes of the north eastern border of Ghana in the Upper East Region and along the southern border of Burkina Faso in the Nahouri Province. According to Ethnologue (Simons et al. 2017), the Kasena are estimated to be two hundred and thirty-two thousand, six hundred (232,600) in number. Kasem is a Gur language, belonging to the Niger Congo language phylum. Languages that are mutually intelligible with Kasem are Nuni and Nyele, both spoken in Burkina Faso.

The Gurene speaking neighbours refer to the Kasena as Yulhi/Yulsi (Yulka SG.) whereas others refer to them as *Awuna*, a preamble that translates as 'I say' and often introduces many Kasena expressions. The Kasena are also known as Gurunsi, a term often used to denote some Gur language speakers in the Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana. Find below a map highlighting the areas in which the Kasena are found in both Burkina Faso and Ghana.

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The boundaries between the Kasena of Ghana and those in Burkina Faso could be said to be imaginary by nature as both share striking similarities, if not the same in culture and worldview in general. The differences are mostly with respect to the Kasem dialects spoken. There are some dialectical differences in the Kasem spoken in Burkina Faso just as there are dialectical differences in the Kasem spoken in Ghana. Generally, the Kasem spoken in Burkina Faso is influenced by French, the national language of the country, and Moore and other neighbouring languages in general whereas the Kasem in Ghana is influenced by English, the national language of the country, and Nankani, Gurune, Buli and other neighbouring languages. Nonetheless, irrespective of the slight differences between the Kasena in Ghana and those in Burkina Faso, the people generally regard themselves as one, as their oral history maintains that the Kasena in Ghana originally migrated from the Kasena lands in recent day Burkina Faso some centuries back in time.

3. Types of linguistic taboos in Kasem and their manifestations

With respect to the types of linguistic taboos in Kasem, what is meant is the nature of linguistic taboos and the manner in which they manifest. People create sounds and movements to express diverse ideas and meanings. Language is complex and involves cross-modality to a large extent especially when taboo is concerned. Hence, it will be practical to categorize linguistic taboos under two main types, namely: Verbal and Non-verbal linguistic taboos respectively. In Kasem, both verbal and non-verbal linguistic taboos

abound and each type is considered with no mean discrepancy.

What is generally meant by verbal cues are spoken language. Words and expressions realized in speech may have certain connotations or denotations that restrict their utterances in certain contexts. Some of the verbal linguistic taboos to be explored are words that refer to the female genitalia, totems and several other general verbal linguistic restrictions created and maintained by the Kasena.

Non-verbal cues refer to body language or any form of communication that is not realized in speech. Non-verbal cues are very crucial as far as communication is concerned. They may be referred to as the silent speakers. They are mostly culturally specific. Hence, the discussion on non-verbal cues in the sections that follow refer to the interpretations held by the Kasena. Notable non-verbal cues to be addressed include the way and manner in which a speaker maintains his or her body language as realized in body posture, gestures and facial expressions. Other non-verbal signs examined include the use of space and time.

It is well noting that, non-verbal cues can be employed to create strategic impressions. These impressions are usually more affective as compared to verbal cues. As reiterated earlier, non-verbal cues are silent speakers, yet they speak volumes. Non-verbal cues also seek to reinforce verbal cues. However, a good synchrony of both verbal and non-verbal cues can best enhance communication, whereas a bad synchrony may hamper communication. For instance, in an attempt to give direction to a location, one may verbally state that the direction is to the north meanwhile the hand gesture may be pointing to the east or west or

any other direction order than what is indeed stated. This is common as orientations are not well known to some speakers.

4. Kinds of linguistic taboos in Kasem and the contexts in which they are realized

Kinds of linguistic taboos refer to the functions inherent in taboo words and expressions in Kasem. Linguists have categorized linguistic taboos with respect to kind diversely. These categorizations are usually dependent on the language in question and the convenience of elaboration in general. Writing on avoidance language and word taboo, Storch (2011: 34) makes reference to Allan and Burridge as maintaining that:

> Linguistic avoidance and taboo may occur in a variety of contexts, but in most African languages they seem to be related to the common word taboos that are known in most, if not all, languages worldwide and concern the semantic field of body parts and bodily effluvia, sexuality, disease, and death.

Taboos in Kasem discourse abound and range from diverse kinds. There are the most general ones that address speech or discourse in general to the more specific linguistic taboos associated with the supernatural, body parts and body functions, social and physical defects and last but not the least, associations with body language in general. Allan and Burridge (2006: 1) note five categories of verbal taboos as follows:

- bodies and their effluvia (sweat, snot, faeces, menstrual fluid etc);

- the organs and acts of sex, micturition and defecation;

- diseases, death and killing (including hunting and fishing);

- naming, addressing, touching and viewing persons and secret beings, objects and places

- food gathering, preparation and consumption.

Several are the themes in relation to the categorized kinds of linguistic taboos stated in the preceding paragraph. Most categorizations vary with respect to the people or language under study. Though the classifications by Allan and Burridge like many other researchers are insightful, Kasena linguistic taboo classification vary in certain respects. It is worth noting that categorizations of Kasena linguistic taboos herein are solely the work of the author for ease of elaboration and for similarities in thematic focus.

4.1 Associations with the supernatural

Linguistic taboos associated with the supernatural are generally words or expressions deemed too holy or contempt to be mentioned without any reasonable motive. They range from the words *Wɛ* 'God', *Tangbənə* 'gods', *Chulı* 'totems' in general, which often come in the form of florae: the baobab, kapok trees and sacred groves in particular, fauna: leopard, lion, python and several other animals and objects in the environment such as mountains and last but not the least, *Chɪrə* 'the departed'. Gods and totems are almost one and

the same, as gods are often known to either inhabit or own certain totems. Though it is not uncommon to mention the above stated words or concepts in normal Kasem discourse, what is forbidden in Kasena contexts in particular is the invocation of these spiritual words in a 'curse' *sɔlə*, 'swear' *dʋʋrɪ* and 'an oath' *nɪ*, generally referred in Kasem as *n' tɪŋ nɪ* 'to take an oath'.

Gao (2013: 2313) observes "that among all the people of the world there is a feeling that the names of the gods are too holy, and the names of evil spirits too terrifying, and they are not supposed to be treated as other common words". God and gods according to Kasena worldview are inextricably entwined. Accordingly, the gods were created by God Almighty to assist in running errands of human demands. As it is the case with most other people, gods, some noted to have wives and children and other social relations as found with humans, are varied and perform diverse functions in the human world. They are revered in all instances as they are known to bring both good and bad fortunes in human lives. Even though the Almighty God is mostly revered above any other thing, gods or deities are feared as much as they are revered. Generally speaking, invoking deities is deemed sacrilegious. Reasons that account for these assertions are explored in the paragraphs that follow.

The verb 'swear' *dʋ* itself is forbidden and generally not encouraged as its ramifications can be very devastating. Most instances of swearing revolve around two parties, and in one way or the other one party is definitely affected by the consequences stated by the swearer. Speakers often try to swear by God and gods as proof that what they maintain is what is truly the case. Though swearing is generally not encouraged, especially on normal discourse situations, it becomes imperative in instances of accusations such as murder and theft amongst a host of other indictments for an accused to swear in order to affirm his or her innocence.

Speakers swear by deities or entities associated with them. For instance, one may hear the expression *A dʋgɪ dɪ … tangbəm* which loosely translates as 'I swear by the god …'. The god that is generally mentioned is usually known by the speakers. In other instances, one may say *A dʋgɪ dɪ dɪ* which loosely translates as 'I swear by the python', whereby the python is known to be a totem of the speaker(s). Swearing by the Almighty God is however more common as compared to gods. Speakers are aware that, the Almighty is more relaxed with apportioning sanctions as compared to his god emissaries.

Kasena may also invoke 'the dead' *Chɪrə* or mostly their 'ancestors' *Nabərə* in swearing. As with the cases of the Almighty God, gods and totems, swearing by the ancestors is also abhorred. Kasena believe in the hereafter, and that death is just a transition of life. Hence, the deceased have simply moved into a different realm. In fact, ancestral worship is a common religious practice amongst the Kasena as the Kasena belief that the dead or ancestors for that matter have an influence in the affairs of the living. Quite apart from the reasons given above, stating why swearing is forbidden amongst the Kasena, the elders also maintain that the dead are to be allowed to rest in peace. Also, making references in the form of allegations to the deceased are also forbidden in Kasena discourse contexts. Kasena elders maintain that such restrictions are done as to

deter people from making wrong allegations to the deceased who are not present, in the physical sense of the word present, to defend any allegations. If this linguistic taboo on making (wrong) allegations or references to the deceased is not taking seriously, some speakers may easily find escape grounds for their wrong actions by simply relaying them to the deceased.

Swearing and cursing are often realized in the same discourse situations. The infliction of harm (either physical, spiritual) or bad omen on someone through the invocation of the supernatural is termed as cursing (Hugh 2006). Just as swearing by God, gods, totems and the departed are generally abhorred, cursing is likewise forbidden in Kasena communities. The accused perpetrators of these linguistic taboos as swearing and cursing are usually sanctioned by both spiritual and mundane means to revert the said afflictions invoked. In most instances also, the accused is made to render an apology to the one the affliction is directed to and an entire group of elders in some instances. As a whole, invoking deities, totems and the departed in swearing and cursing are restricted due to social constraints as reiterated in the preceding discussion.

Taking or making oaths with gods in Kasena land is also a common phenomenon. "Dʋʋrɩ" refers to an oath as well as swear in Kasem. The Akan have two perspectives of taboo oaths as in *Duabɔ* and *Ntam* taboos respectively (Agyekum 1999: 318). Stories are told of people who in one time of their lives sort assistance for children, riches, power and a host of other human desires through oaths. In most of these tales, the end is usually a bitter one as the gods tend to punish men who do not stick to their pledges. The fact is that, the

gods do not forget, and it may take generations upon generations before a god decides to act on a man's failures. In some instances, those who are punished in diverse ways, of which death is common, are usually not directly involved in the oaths. The elders maintain that, successful oaths are rarely known. However, unsuccessful oaths are known to many as a result of the unfortunate happenings that ensue. For this reason, Kasena warn against making oaths with gods and prefer that one prays for solutions. Though oaths with gods in particular are forbidden, some people still venture into taking oaths with gods in dire situations.

It is also a taboo to announce a case of death explicitly. When issues of death are announced explicitly, what is normally implied is that the speaker has no feeling of empathy with respect to the demise of the person. Hence, matters related to death are often veiled in euphemisms. Euphemisms employed to announce death in Kasem are diverse and generally depend on the linguistic prowess of the speaker. The most common euphemistic circumvention to announce death in Kasem is *ajəŋwɩ mʋ tɩrə* 'X is no more' amongst a host of others. It is worth noting that with respect to the demise of notable figures as chiefs and custodians of the land, epithetical euphemisms such as 'the mighty tree has fallen' or 'the mighty elephant has fallen' may be applied. In traditional Kasena settings, there are people who are known by some epithets and more often than not things associated with them as totems. Epithetical concepts may therefore revolve around totems associated with the deceased.

The coming generations have also expanded their creativity with respect to death. It is therefore not uncommon to hear

expressions like *ajəŋwɪ bəm* which translates as 'X has said goodbye' or *Ba bəm ajəŋwɪ* (*ba yəgɪ*) which translates as 'They have said good bye to X' when communicating an instance of death. It must be noted here that what is usually implied with the former is that the deceased has supposedly died naturally whereas the latter expression usually implies that the death of the deceased has been orchestrated by someone or a group of people. That not notwithstanding, both expressions can generally be employed to mean the former. Matters relating to death as a whole are accorded strict restrictions. For instance, amongst the Kasena, dirges are forbidden to be sung in any other contexts other than the funeral (Taluah 2013).

4.2 Associations with bodyparts and bodily functions

Linguistic taboos associated with body parts and body functions are viewed by the Kasena in quite different ways. Generally, one cannot be explicit with sex or activities related to sex. Matters relating to sex or sex organs in particular are considered taboo in Kasem discourse. This is especially true with matters or words related to women. Male sex organs are much more likely to be tolerated in discourse as compared to female sex organs. Anxiety, embarrassment, profanity and vulgarity are the repercussions of linguistic taboos associated with body parts and body functions cited in inappropriate discourse contexts.

For instance, the verb *dzʋm* 'fuck' and *mampʋlɔ* 'vagina' are the most delicate tabooed words in this category. These two words are hardly heard in conversations because the mere mention of them is a complete

embarrassment on the part of the speaker in particular and the listeners in general. Hence, sexual activities that relate to sex or the female genitalia come in understatements as *n' pɛm dɪ* 'to sleep with' to refer to sexual intercourse for humans and *di* 'climb', the verb to express sexual intercourse amongst animals. The female genitalia are simply referred to as *yɪgə*, a polysemous word that means 'face' or 'front'. More so, menstruation is referred to as *zarɛm* 'wash' and as such, a lady in her menstrual period will usually say:

(2) A   nɛ   a   zarɛm   mʋ
     1SG. see 1POSS washing FOC
     'I am menstruating'.

Agyekum (2002b) examines menstruation as a verbal taboo amongst the Akan of Ghana and notes how varied euphemisms serve as taboo avoidance techniques. He also observes that most of the Akan euphemisms for menstruation "have become fossilized" with the advent of urbanization and its currents.

Interestingly, other sexual words associated to the male gender as 'penis' *pɛm*, 'testis' *manchalə* and other female sexual associations like 'buttocks' *bɛnə* and 'breast' *yɪlə* are accorded much less restrictions as far as linguistic taboos are concerned.

'Saliva' *lɪleirʋ*, 'urine' *fɪə*, 'sweat' *lʋluŋʋ* are not deemed serious linguistic taboos and can be heard in many discourse situations. Any one may mention these at any time without qualms. However, some notable human excretions such as 'faeces' *benʋ*, 'Phlegm' *mʋmeirʋ* and 'menstruation' *zarɛm* in particular are not mentioned, especially in certain contexts, of which meal times is paramount. These words

are repulsive and tend to evoke disgusting images. For the sake of courtesy, it also not advised for any speaker to resort to mentioning these words.

4.3 Associations with social and physical ailments and deformities

Other linguistic taboos in Kasem relate to prohibitions in overtly mentioning the social and physical defects of people. These linguistic taboos also tend to affect the social roles and endeavours of individuals in the community in general. In Kasena contexts, not considering the prohibitions associated to these concepts is considered offensive, a mockery of both God and man.

Some notable ailments that are forbidden in discourse and require evasive substitutes include *nayorɛm* 'leprosy', *kinkirisə* 'epilepsy', *kadɛgo* (generally feminine) 'sterility' and *Agɔ tɪ* 'HIV/ Aids'. The words to denote leprosy, epilepsy and sterility are indigenous to Kasem whereas the expression *Agɔ tɪ* to denote 'HIV/ Aids' is a neologism that loosely translates as 'I will kill, no matter what the case may be'. Another evasive expression often employed to denote HIV/ Aids is generally *jawiv kʋm* 'the sickness'. Physical defects include albinism, blindness, deafness, dumbness, deformities of the limbs and any other forms of deformity either acquired by accident or birth. Though physical defects may be mentioned as a genuine point of reference, it is the mockery of such abnormalities that is considered offensive, and as such, abhorred in Kasem discourse.

Most importantly, insults that directly comments on the aberration or abnormality of a person either as a result of nature or accident is strictly abhorred. For instance, one does not insult someone as a cripple when one is indeed one as a result of nature or accident. One does not insult very obvious or serious defects as big head, big ears and so on and so forth of a person when it is indeed true one has such features that may have been attained by nature or by accident. Pregnant women in Kasena society in particular are very careful with insinuations to deformities of people as it is believed that the pregnant woman can bring forth a child with such deformities she attacks. Indeed, you do not mock the deformities of others when you do not know the state and nature of the foetus you are carrying.

The idea is that, if it is indeed by the dictates of nature, it is not the person's making, so any insult directed to such a person is actually being directed to God the creator. Since one does not wish to tell God that He is imperfect, it is better for one not to resort to direct insults of a person's disability either by nature or accident at all. In the instance that a person's deformity or disability is by accident, the Kasena maintain that until the grave one can never be certain about how he or she will end up in this world. Therefore, you do not mock a person's deformities as any can befall you. In fact, such admonishments when considered critically actually deter people from mocking the deformities of others.

Some other notable insults that can stir commotion in Kasena communities are *kaboro* 'whore', *varɛm* 'animal', *chirɪ* 'witch' and *tampirɪ* which loosely translates as 'one whose father is unknown'. These insults carry with them diverse other insinuations. For instance, if a person is labelled as *tamperɪ*, it does not only mean that the person has no knowledge of his or her father but that his or her mother is consequently a 'whore' *kaboro* and as such, can

be likened to *varɛm* 'an animal'. In fact, insults as these are usually considered as affronts to one's personality as compared to ordinary insults. Veiled words or expressions for these taboo words are hardly available. The only way a speaker may mention these words without getting into trouble is to say them to one who is not attributed to in the insults in secret.

It is also strictly abhorred to overtly state the negative effects of an ailment when the affected person is yet to recover from that ailment. For instance, informing a sick person that he or she is deteriorating is strictly abhorred in Kasem discourse situations. It is advised that one encourages the sick to be comfortable by maintaining that they are faring well, even when one clearly notices the opposite. If indeed one does not have any positive remarks to make, it is better for one to keep quiet with his or her reservations. It is said that when negative comments are made to the hearing of the sick, they are normally demoralized and that may worsen the healing process.

More so, drugs like cocaine and weed are generally considered as bad drugs, and as such, persons who engage in the sale and/or intake of these drugs are often looked at with disgust. The mere mention of these words can raise contention in many discourse situations. At instances where cocaine or marijuana are to be mentioned, speakers usually circumvent these words by applying concepts such as *tuntuarımı* which actually means 'ashes' to refer to cocaine and *nanwalı* which means 'tobacco' to refer to marijuana. In other instances, some speakers may employ expressions as *wun'tın ba na ficsı tv* implying, 'the things that are sniffed' to refer to cocaine. *O di wo yɔrv mv* as in 'He or she eats useless things' is also employed in reference to one who takes illicit drugs. It is also

possible to find other words and expressions in Kasem that try to evade the use of illicit drugs especially in the discourse of diverse peer groups. For instance, to say one smokes marijuana, some Kasena youth employ the evasive expression thus: *O dvrı weelə yəm mv*, which loosely translates as 'he or she runs the wheels'. There is certainly a reason for the use of wheels to refer to the smoking of marijuana. Based on enquiries, some Kasena maintain that what the statement seeks to convey is that one is engaged in useless activities. Wheels are often driven by children as representations of their vehicles in unproductive ventures. Hence, the expression evokes images of unproductiveness on the part of the smoker.

Also, worth noting are linguistic taboos against accusations in Kasem. Accusations of different kinds often arise in Kasena communities as people associate with each other in their daily endeavours. Though these social connections may run smoothly at a point in time, misunderstandings are bound to arise at certain times. The results of misunderstandings between people are petty squabbles which in some instances may result in one party or the other making accusations. Some common accusations include chırɛm 'witchery' or 'sorcery', *chɔnɛm* 'poisoning' and *gvm* 'murder'. It appears that in most cases, the deaths of persons are usually attributed to orchestrations by enemies. Only in rare occasions, such as deaths of the elderly in particular, do people assume that it is indeed natural.

Since accusations of witchery or sorcery, poisoning and murder are often difficult to ascertain and may lead to mistaken culprits, Kasena elders forbid their pronouncements. These accusations can stir suspicion amongst people and must be treated with the strictest

care in other not to arouse distrust amongst people. More so, as a result of grief, relatives of a deceased person may try to apportion blame where it is not due. People who are also tagged as committing such heinous crimes are often looked at with disgust, if not ostracized or banned from the community. Kasena elders do not see it fit for the innocent to go through these ordeals and thus, these accusations are only allowed if they can be verified beyond all reasonable doubt.

4.4 General verbal linguistic taboos

Whereas some linguistic taboos are considered inappropriate in certain contexts in particular, others are more general with respect to the contexts of their realizations and can be referred to as general verbal linguistic taboos. These linguistic taboos in Kasem are diverse. Attempts are made to capture most of the general verbal linguistic taboos that are taught and known by many people raised amongst Kasena.

Perhaps, the first and paramount general linguistic taboo as far as Kasem is concerned is that you do not divulge vital information to strangers. The word strangers may be relative, however, what is meant is that a man without as secret ultimately lends himself to destruction.

Commenting on an issue when one is being spoken to is regarded as gross disrespect especially when the speaker is an elderly person. It is also a taboo to tell an elderly person he or she is lying even if he or she is indeed not speaking the truth. This is one of the taboos that infringes on truth and justice. More so, finding an outlet to state what is polite and also not offensive by traditional dictates is almost impossible. It is said that the elder's hand is

not twisted. Implying you don't engage in an argument with the elderly as a sign of respect.

Linguistic taboos raise issues of politeness in language. Being patient and not being harsh with respect to the diction one employs and the nature of expressions uttered, even in arguments where one is right is considered a linguistic virtue. Amongst the Kasena, humility is a virtue most cherished. One needs to avoid boastful words or expressions. You stand out the more if you have others blow your trumpet than you blowing it yourself.

Sound and silence in Kasena discourse also carry with them some linguistic taboo overtones. It is significant to note that, there is a thin line between sound and silence in Kasem discourse situations. Speaking at the wrong time or being silent at the wrong time have quite negative implications. Amongst the four contexts examined by Johansen (1974), the second contexts he notes: "the role of silence in purposive, every day, interpersonal communication" is what is implied in this discussion. One needs to be very careful, especially with relation to the elderly in matters of sounding and remaining silent. There can hardly be an instance or context deemed most appropriate for either the former or the latter to be observed. In that regard, one needs to monitor the mood of the addresser to be able to make a right decision at the right time. When one is being communicated to, the general practice is that one remains quiet and listens. "[T]o remain silent is the politest strategy for handling face threatening acts" (Agyekum 2002b: 34). Agyekum observes further that the conformity of silence is a social control mechanism and measure of communicative competence. One who speaks in a discourse situation when he or she is being spoken to by an elderly person is considered

disrespectful. However, one who remains quite at the time he or she is considered to speak is also tagged as disrespectful. Perhaps the old English adage "silence is golden" is a force to reckon with. The usual practice is that one does not speak when one is not asked to speak. More so, in an attempt to respond either to a question or an allegation, one may be told to "shut up and listen" and this instruction must be strictly adhered to. "Thus, silence is communicative and functional. It carries illocutionary force and perlocutionary force and has pragmatic uses, meaning and impact" (Agyekum 2002b: 32-33)[3].

Verbal taboos that restrict whistling at night, in the forests and during rainy seasons have some general cultural and environmental undertones. Whistling in the process of bathing is considered a taboo. It is said that one who whistles in the process of bathing invites dwarfs, whom people naturally dread. However, a significant case is made that when one sings or speaks in the process of bathing, the probability of one imbibing the detergent or dirt supposed to be washed away is high. Kasena maintain that it is a taboo to speak while eating. Reasons are that food is king and should be respected as such. The palpable reason for the adherence of this taboo stems from the that fact that one can get chocked in the process.

It is a taboo to stand by a water body such as a river and pronounce your fear of it or profess equality or superiority to the water body. What is modest is that as human you humble yourself before the water body whether you believe in its existence or not. These taboos have spiritual implications. Generally, most water bodies such as rivers are inhabited by gods. Therefore, if the water

body or god for that matter is offended by one's pronouncements, the probability of one drowning in the water, when one attempts to cross is great. More so, names of some particular animals (mostly dangerous) are forbidden to be mentioned especially at night or in some obscure places like the forest. For instance, it is believed that names have far more spiritual connotations than can be imagined. Therefore, the mere mention of the names of dangerous animals as snake or scorpion may invoke the said animals in reality.

It should be borne in mind that the environments or the settlements in which the Kasena find themselves is reflected in their linguistic taboos and taboos in general. Hitherto, settlements were scattered around bushes, forests and water bodies. The presence of forest and water spirits like gods, dwarfs, animals (totems and wild) is a case to reckon with in some of the taboos associated to the supernatural in particular.

4.5 Associations with body language

Body language, otherwise known as kinesics plays an important role in human communication. In fact, the employment of body language can enhance communication. However, body language can also serve as a bane rather than blessing in Kasem discourse and as such, the employment of body language in inappropriate contexts are strictly tabooed. Body language taboos may be termed as non-verbal linguistic taboos as a whole. These non-verbal taboos include body postures, gestures, eye movements, contact and distance amongst diverse cues.

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[3] See Agyekum (2002a) for an examination of the kinds of silences and their contexts amongst the Akan of Ghana.

In Kasem discourse situations, personal relationships in communication must strictly be maintained. When one is being spoken to by an elderly person, the way and manner in which the body is maintained can send varied signals. The one being spoken to (if he or she is younger for example) must stand straight and at best, his or her hands folded to the back and must be very attentive as a sign of respect. Any other body posture that falls short of these descriptions is suspect. Standing akimbo or raising the hands haphazardly in discourse situations as this is forbidden amongst the Kasena.

Social use of space, also known as proxemics and contact are also crucial non-verbal cues amongst the Kasena. Building from the above argument, one who is being communicated to by an elderly person must maintain good social distance by standing close to the speaker. Standing at a distance or communicating from a distance when one is being communicated to is seen as a sign of gross disrespect. This holds true with respect to contact as well. In fact, the distance one maintains in a discourse situation as stated above should be such that one is unable to touch the speaker when spoken to. In the process of communication, it is also deemed inappropriate for one to turn his or her back in the process of communication. Walking out on or away from people when communication is in process is forbidden. If indeed one wishes to leave, then the interaction or discourse must have been considered complete by both parties. A breach of this is considered arrogance and impolite.

Chronemics, which is the use of time in Kasena communities cannot be overemphasized. The time one takes to respond or attend to a call especially from an elderly person must be immediate. When a response or an attendance to a call is breached by immediacy, then fault is ascribed to the person that was called upon. One who does not pay attention to respond to calls at the appropriate times is considered disrespectful in general.

Perhaps, the most adhered to non-verbal linguistic taboo is the use of the left hand. Irrespective of age or gender, the left hand is strictly abhorred in Kasem discourse. Generally, raising or gesturing the hands in an angry manner in communication is disrespectful. More specifically, the use of the left hand in greeting, pointing to a person or thing is a sign of gross disrespect. For instance, you do not raise your left hand to respond or comment on something in any discourse situation. You cannot use the left hand independently in gestures. You may either use your right hand independently or a combination of both hands. Pointing the left hand at a person is considered disrespectful and so is pointing your left hand at a thing or object considered to be of significant value. A Kasena proverb explains the taboo associated with the left hand in general and pointing at a thing in particular quite succinctly when it says: *Ba ba jɪgɪ jɔŋwɪə ba brɪ ko/nabrə sɔŋɔ*, which loosely translates as 'you don't use the left hand to point at your father's/ mother's house'. What is implied is that you don't deride your origin. An investigation of the use and consequence of the left hand taboo on Ghanaian gestural practices as a whole are in tandem with, and confirm the observations of left hand taboos amongst the Kasena in particular (Kita & Essegbey 2001).

Taboos associated with the left hand can be quite extensive as well. For instance, using the left hand in drinking *pito* (locally brewed beverage) or other beverages like beer, in the

mist of elders or other people is strictly forbidden in Kasena communities. This act has diverse connotations that may range from the spiritual to the mundane. One who decides to drink with the left hand, be him or her left handed or not, is interpreted as a profession of spiritual potency (juju) or deliberate disrespectfulness. Offenders can be sanctioned in diverse ways ranging from the mildest which is normally a rebuke, to stronger sanctions as spiritual challenges which normally come in the form of poisoning or spiritual attacks. In as much as the use of the left hand is seen as a sign of disrespect, it is also assumed that one who uses the left hand to drink possesses some kind of magical power. Using the left hand to eat is also generally disallowed. However, the implications of eating with the left hand are not taken seriously as compared to drinking with the left hand. This is so because, most of those who may be found eating with the left hand are children. In fact, the left-hand taboo to say the least is prevalent across Africa.

More so, nodding or shaking of the head when communicating is considered as inappropriate amongst the Kasena. It is possible to nod to the verbal affirmation yes or to shake the head with the verbal affirmation no when communicating. Head nods and shakes done in the absence of their verbal constituents are considered impolite amongst the Kasena. A reaction to these linguistic inappropriations is usually countered by the elderly in the question "Are you a lizard?" Why? Because lizards nod and shake their heads without utterances.

Eye contact, also known as occulesics when not well controlled does not auger well for communicators. Blinking and winking of the eyes is considered inappropriate in Kasem discourse situations. It is natural that some of these nonverbal expressions may seem involuntary to some persons. However, what is required generally is that one should remain steady in the process of communication. In instances where those involved in the discourse are not peers, care must be taken by the younger one in order not to appear disrespectful or arrogant to the older person being communicated with. Blinking or winking may send wrong signal in the process of communication. The general Kasena belief is that those who wink or flutter their eyelids incessantly are liars and criminals. What is also implied is that culprits of these acts are generally disrespectfully evasive.

5. General implications of linguistic taboos in Kasem

From the foregoing discussions, it could be deduced that linguistic taboos are speech ethics, such as prohibitions or restrictions and sanctions of words or expressions maintained by language speakers in certain contexts of communication. It is worth noting also that linguistic taboos abound in diverse languages. Though there are many similarities, especially with relations to themes and evasive strategies of linguistic taboos, the evidence of some differences especially with relation to sanctions as unique to some languages or people cannot be denied.

What do linguistic taboos portray about a language or people in general? Taboos in Language or discourse can be very revealing. Critical examinations of linguistic taboos reveal that they are shaped by the worldview of the people who speak the language in question. To some extent, some language taboos may sound illogical in recent time or to some other

language speakers, but a critical examination of their etymology and circumstances at a particular time and place can be very enlightening. What is certain is that linguistic taboos exist and shape language and discourse and the worldview of a people as a whole.

Interestingly however, linguistic taboos are not intrinsic but extrinsically acquired. And if indeed, linguistic taboos are words or expressions forbidden in society, how do people get to know of such words or expressions, let alone avoid them in speech?

Once one is raised in a community or speaks a particular language, knowledge of the linguistic taboos that pertain in the said language, if not fully, is acquired mostly effortlessly. In certain discourse situations, some speakers are bound to employ linguistic taboos either consciously or unconsciously. Speakers get offended sometimes and may in retaliation resort to defend themselves with words or expressions that are considered inappropriate in the society. In other instances, people in an effort to express their feelings or intentions unintentionally employ linguistic taboos. These amongst other instances account for ways in which linguistic taboos are acquired and either adhered to or breached by speakers.

When linguistic taboos are breached, society is quick to effect sanctions, in order that such linguistic taboos are considered seriously amongst speakers. In the presence of such linguistic offenses and sanctions, one is certain to understand linguistic taboos. Knowledge of linguistic taboos in Kasena communities can also be acquired in diverse ways. Most significantly, linguistic taboos are enshrined in oral traditions like folk tales, proverbs and riddles amongst a host of other oral genres. For instances, there are diverse tales that showcase the breaches of linguistic taboos and further consequences. Proverbs more significantly also caution languages speakers on the dos and don'ts enshrined in the language.

That notwithstanding, acquiring linguistic taboos can also be quite simple. For instance, some language speakers maintain that, for the fact that some words or expressions are not uttered in certain situations, they simply abide by such measures. Sometimes, one does not need to know the reasons for such restrictions, knowledge of the instruction is enough. For example, as reiterated earlier, Kasena dirges are not sung in any other context or situation other than the funeral. Since one has made this observation, there is no need for one to sing dirges on the way to the riverside when he or she has never heard anyone in the community do so.

Nonetheless, no matter the nature of the linguistic taboos or their consequent sanctions, they are broken at one point in time or the other in diverse situations. What is significant to note is that the community does not relent in their efforts to implement sanctions. Depending on the gravity of the offense, some linguistic taboos are sanctioned by rebukes. Other linguistic taboos may require the offender to render an unqualified apology while in strict situations of breaches that relate to the supernatural in particular, offerings and sometimes rituals are rendered as sanctions for appeasements.

How then do speakers go about linguistic taboos? One cannot imagine a language without figures of speech such as euphemisms, metaphors, understatements, neologisms, code switching, code mixing and other kinds of language ambiguities and linguistic strategies to offset linguistic taboos.

Euphemism, the tendency to express a painful situation in a mild way or to assert what is serious in a mild way is the most common linguistic strategy employed by Kasena speakers in most situations. Most Euphemisms relate to death, sickness, loss and general matters of politeness. Code switching and code mixing have also been the order of the day especially with respect to the growing rate of bilingualism amongst recent generations in particular. Some young speakers of Kasem today rely on code switching, code mixing and neologisms to confound linguistic taboos and messages in the presence of the elderly. Normally the sanction givers have no knowledge what so ever in the language being switched to, mixed or words or expressions employed in general. Children may employ these strategies in the presence of parents who are unlettered.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, we come to a clear realization that what is considered inappropriate in certain discourse contexts is termed as linguistic taboo. Linguistic taboo also implies avoidance, offensive and forbidden words or expressions entailed in a language. Linguistic taboo may then simply be expounded as to do, use, talk about issues or concepts in inappropriate ways.

The way and manner in which linguistic taboos are constructed and maintained in a language are based on the worldview of the speakers. These linguistic taboos are also created, shared and transferred from one generation to the other. As some linguistic taboos may lose their significance in certain discourse contexts and languages in general, other new linguistic taboos are created with time and with influences of globalizations and its cur-

rents. In most instances, taboos in language and discourse serve as basis of politeness, courtesy, maturity, knowledge and wisdom as a whole.

With respect to language, both verbal and non-verbal cues in the communication process are complementary by nature. Hence, linguistic taboos range from the verbal to the non-verbal as the preceding discussions seek to elucidate. More so, one needs to be explicit in communication in other not to appear offensive. Strict care must also be maintained in observing the nature and contexts of linguistic taboos in a language and adopting evasive linguistic strategies in order for one not to fall prey to sanctions. Actions that do not attract social approval and are abhorred by speakers of language should be appreciated as such.

From all indications, linguistic taboos also serve to expand the linguistic creativity of a people. They give room for linguistic creativity in the forms of euphemisms, metaphors, neologisms, proverbs and other linguistic strategies.

Efforts have been made to capture Kasem linguistic taboos in detail. It is significant to note that some of the linguistic taboos discussed herein are also common with some neighbouring groups while others are more specific to the Kasena in particular. In all, language censorship is a long-term process as far as communication is concerned. It takes two people (male and female) to give birth to a child, however, it takes a whole community to raise a child.

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PART 3

Exploring taboo and cultural mobility

11

This is not about cannibals

11

This is not about cannibals

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Angi has childhood memories of cannibals, which are disturbing for their uncertainty. What she remembers is not remembered by others. Like memories of party nights, these reminiscences are not shared or supported by others. They have something to do with a taboo, and remembering here might also be a taboo.

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When I was a child, my family and I lived in a very small town in Upper Palatinate, a faraway place in Germany with a really crude dialect. Since our village was so small that there wasn't even a shop or a restaurant, my parents built themselves a party location in our basement, where they could party with their friends until morning. My father designed a postcard wall, where he glued all the postcards that he had received and collected over the years.

When I was talking to him in August 2018, we incidentally came across exactly this topic and he told me about the postcards. I was really astonished, because I don't remember that wall at all. Postcards? Hm. No. What I remember was a huge painting on the other wall. A painting with a big green cooking pot in which a person with black skin was boiling. I don't remember the details around the cooking pot. When I told my father this, he was astonished and said, that there was no painting and how I think that he could draw something on the wall which

is against his inner attitude. So I asked my mother and my sister in our WhatsApp group if they remember a painting on the wall (not mentioning, what this painting was showing) and my sister wrote that something, deeply hidden in her memory tells her, that one wall was painted, not remembering what the painting was about. My mother wrote that there were postcards. When I sadly answered that I remember a cannibal painting but nobody else seems to remember, my mother wrote "Angi!!!!! I really cannot remember cannibalism being present in our house".[1]

What has happened to my memory?

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As if a *damnatio memoriae* was imposed on the person in the pot. A decision not to remember such images and the hilarity that went with them, a kind of erasure and of colonial amnesia, which makes it difficult to talk about childhood memories that are about what then, some forty years ago, would have been a matter of tradition and local custom. The cannibalising practices of othering, the parody of mimesis, are practices of others, not of one's own immediate environment. Anne has childhood memories on devouring letter-shaped biscuits.

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My grandparents lived in a small town near Frankfurt, and I often visited them over a weekend. One of the nicest things was to walk over to a little shop with my grandmother in order to buy a few things that would be needed to prepare pancakes and a soup only she would prepare properly. She always bought me a packet of letter-shaped biscuits, which were called *Russisch Brot* 'Russian bread',[2] and a bottle of *Multivitaminsaft*, which is a juice made from all kinds of tropical fruit. The German terms do not sound very exotic, because they denote common commodities; translated into English, they resonate colonised spaces and connections. What I remember as well and my family deems really banal is that the shop sign for a long time, until the nineties perhaps, said *Südfrüchte und Kolonialwaren* — 'Tropical fruit and colonial groceries'. The shop as well as my grandparent's house and all the houses in-between them were certainly built in the 1920s and 1930s, and by the time I spent weekends with my grandparents, in the 1970s and 1980s, most of the formerly colonised parts of the world had become independent. Yet, the anachronistic shop sign was deemed appropriate. I think it oozed solidity: then, *Kolonialwaren* had a strange connotation; they meant quality food in contrast to supermarket fare, freshly roasted coffee and organic fruit — a conceptualisation of the colonial as a remnant of a past that was good and authentic. When I think of it today, I cringe. But then, I happily went back home, led a charmed life and devoured my letter-shaped biscuits.

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[1] Original: *Angi!!!!! Ich kann mich an cannibalism bei uns wirklich nicht erinnern.*

[2] Etymologically, *Russisch* most likely derives from *rösch* 'crisp', not 'Russian'.

Figure 1. Cannibal caricature post (Facebook)

different approach to linguistic memory). But not speaking about cannibalism and making images of the cannibal and of the pot is something else; not a taboo at all it seems, but a matter of censorship:

> These days the expression cannibal, like primitive and savage, tends to be avoided because of its racist overtones. The highly coloured cannibal narratives of the early chroniclers were an effective way of justifying the activities of the 'civilized' colonizers – human sacrifice and flesh-eating are 'savage' practices, and people who eat other people are not quite human. European invaders either converted them to Christianity or had few qualms about wiping them out entirely. Perhaps knowing these details makes many guilty westerners reluctant to believe accounts of cannibalism. They are the stuff of folklore, literature and racist jokes. Cartoons of painted natives stewing their victims (missionaries or big game hunters with pith helmets intact) in large pots over open fires persisted into the 1960s. (Allan & Burridge 2006: 187 f.)

They persist until now. A post of a cartoon by a German cooking class participant shows that the pot has been upgraded, but the motif remains the same. "Did you think we live on the other side of the moon?", the tribal-looking man on the right asks and hence states that he as the cannibal is up-to-date with modern kitchen accessories.

Censorship and political correctness are mocked in a very revealing way here. Even though the motif is no longer considered appropriate, it remains present, as a reminder of the colonial unconscious that bears no allochronic shop sign, but translates fluently into hypermodern kitchen gear and fusion

The cannibal image has been removed from the walls of party rooms as well as anachronistic shop signs have been exchanged for the signs of brands and chains. In their work on *Forbidden Words*, Keith Allan and Kate Burridge think about the cannibal as a subject of linguistic taboo and censorship. Not only in colonial and post-colonial contexts, but generally: "Behind every rule of table etiquette lurks the determination of each person present to be a diner, not a dish" (Allan & Burridge 2006: 187). The overwhelming presence of the inherent violence in turning animals and plants into food is, the authors suggest, the motivation for the taboo itself, which of course did not prevent people from turning other people into food throughout history (see Dixon 2017 for a

cuisine. Making erasure visible and throwing the hidden back into people's faces, caricatures have the possibility to tell multiple stories – about the continuity of colonial images, and how the unconscious speaks back, the incapability to address colonial experiences and legacies in an appropriate self-critical way, and – importantly – about the materiality of colonialism. There is the notion of the pot that continues to exist, and then the image itself, which as such forms part of a large mass of images that all show the monstrous other. In her book on *The Colonial Art of Demonizing Others*, Esther Lezra (2014) shows how patterns of the past persist in the present in complex ways. These images, like all images and texts, are intertextual and show that what can be seen as well as that what cannot be seen. Lezra therefore argues that they do not only depict colonised people as counter-images – monstrous and savage – but also depict the violent, monstrous self.

At this point, the little cartoon has an uncanny connotation. Consider the consequences it has for our thought about our traditions and customs: in order to know who we are, to see ourselves, we are always in need of the other, the mirror through which our nervous system receives proof that we are really there. Identity and face are relational concepts, the other is always already there. Intertextuality again – that what we read in the other and in our own appearances belongs together as threads that make a complex tapestry. And here, that what is seen as a reflection of the self is a funny little cannibal. George Lipsitz, in his introduction to Lezra's work, argues that all these images of the other – evil, distorted and foreign – ultimately construct the evil through a gaze that perceives

the other as evil. And through the evil other, knowledge of the evil done by the Self shines through:

> Europeans fashioned images of monstrous Blackness as projections of their own guilt and as justifications for the brutality that conquest and colonization required. These images then became crucial to European and North American self-identity, portraying themselves as defenders of civilization rather than predatory conquerors and explorers. (Lipsitz 2014: ix)

Images interfere with knowledge, and vice versa. Colonial art depicts and illustrates, it ascribes and serves as proof. The monstrous other who is also the violent self in a contradictory way is both phantasy and evidence. The cannibal, either in the pot (as in Angi's childhood memory), or next to it, is, according to Heike Behrend (2011: 44) "the radical Other of Victorian science". Through practices and performances of the carnivalesque, she writes, the cannibal endures. Party rooms, cartoons, food, drinks, transgressions. To Behrend, these are never banal concepts, objects and practices, but symbols of the possibility of an utopia that is about regaining completeness:

> It is the inversion of the social order that unites the carnivalesque, (cannibal) ethnographies and utopian hope. Thus, cannibalism in the Western world forms a continuum of positive as well as negative meanings and practices: at one extreme, cannibalism is a somewhat suspicious figure of transcendence, an act of union and love, an utopian yearning for a lost unity and oneness, thereby bridging even the divide between eating and being eaten; at the other side of the continuum, cannibalism is an abominable

act that not only attempts to kill but also to anni-
hilate its victim. The two extremes are mediated
by carnivalesque transgressions and laughter.
(Behrend 2011: 44)

There are different ways to laugh, we
suppose, amused or bitter, depending on how
mediation works. Cartoons, in their flatness
and precarious duration, might invite a
chuckle. Other carnivalesque representations
elicit different emotions, such as surprise or
anger. What, for example, if the other, the
object of Victorian science, the reflection of the
self, does not wish to stand next to the pot any
longer, but flatly rejects the image and trope?

Angi has had other experiences with can-
nibalism, this time at a Kenyan beach.

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It is a sunny, but an acceptable and
not too hot day in a September in Diani
Beach, Kenya. I am out on the beach,
walking like a tourist who has a lot
of time, enjoying the holiday. But I am
not a tourist. I am on research, a word
that might sound wrong in the ears of my
linguist colleagues for a research place
like that. I am working on language,
discourse and styles among the 'beach
boys' as well as on language and ideol-
ogies among the tourists, which means,
that my "field" is the beach and my uni-
form is a bathing suit. I amble together
with three, four, sometimes five young
men, who are accompanying my steps,
thoughts, movements. It is hard work to
listen carefully to their language and
to remember what they tell, ask and show
me. An hour of walk is hard work and so

I excuse myself after that time, turn
round and head back towards my hotel
in order to write down the experiences
and data. A man approaches me, on his
hand a little girl, maybe 5 years old,
on her face a painted green butterfly,
which matches the wonderful green dress
that she is wearing. I smile, but not
too loud, because I don't want to talk
anymore. "Hello, how are you", I am
greeted and I greet back, but still not
too friendly.

"You don't have to be scared of my
dark skin. I won't do you any harm. I am
not a cannibal!"

What am I supposed to say to an
address of welcome of that kind? I
stammer words like "no no" and "I am
not scared" and am scared like hell as
I am trying to imagine how to present
this meeting in a talk. We continue
talking and the man is trying to sell
aloe vera juice to me, which I don't
need and thus reject the business. The
man looks miserable, as he becomes
aware that he is not going to earn
money this time and he tells me, that
it's his daughter's birthday today and
that they have no money to celebrate.
I leave them with a little less money
than I had before and with a feeling that
I have to sort out my experiences anew
and include the forgotten cannibalism
in them.

The conversation was held in English,
the official language of Kenya besides
Swahili. But the cannibal strategy was
possible in German as well, since the
Beach Boys are multilingual and adapt
repertoires of European languages to

their varying working spaces on the beach. In a beach area where mostly Germans, British and Polish tourists have their favourite hotels, the Beach Boys are able to use the same phrases in the respective European languages.

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As our project continued and we spent more time at beaches, especially those right in front of hotels that catered to northern package tourists, we understood that the man employed a strategy that was common. In order to enhance one's chances in selling what one was supposed to sell, it was necessary to create attention and some kind of emotional investment. Declining numbers of tourists had resulted in a dramatic situation for the beach vendors, who found it increasingly difficult to sell – nobody there to sell things to – and who said that most visitors took to passing them by without even a greeting or a nod. *Du brauchst dich nicht zu fürchten, ich tu dir nichts! Ich bin kein Kannibale!* 'Don't be afraid, I will not harm you. I am no cannibal,' was a frequent reply to denial, refusal and ignorance: in German, the language mostly spoken by the tourists around. The 'beach boys', as the vendors are called, invest into language as well as into skills of emotional manipulation, and this results in encounters at the beach that bring out that what might be hidden behind the obscene and hilarious performances of the carnivalesque: that the carnival does not erase social inequalities and injustice. And if tourists would not respond adequately, for example by giving a tip or buying something, the performance would change:

Ihr mögt keine Menschen, ihr mögt nur Tiere!
'You don't like humans, you only love animals!'

And then some swear words. The vendors here comment on colonially established practices, such as the safari and the construction of "Africa" as a space of otherness, in which wilderness and animals are used to construct an image of alterity and allochrony (Wainaina 2006, Fabian 1983). Speaking back, in a mocking, bitter way. Ana Deumert (2014: 154), referring to Bakhtin's understanding of the carnival, writes that "without laughter, there cannot be carnival". Laughter at this beach is short-lived; it has a bitter sound and does not "purify[y] from dogmatism, from the intolerant and petrified; [it does not] liberate[…] from fanatism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didactism, naïveté and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality" (Bakhtin 1984: 23, cited in Deumert 2014: 154). It brings all this to attention, makes clear that no carnival of laughter will be possible at this beach, in such neocolonial settings.

Yet, there is a play with hilarity. We were thinking about the possibilities of mock language at one point. There are some good arguments for this. Mock language has been in the focus of sociolinguistic research for some time now, directly or indirectly feeding into debates on the linguistic effects of globalization and the diversification of speaker communities. Mostly, practices of mocking the language of others have been analyzed as forms of linguistic hostility and as genres of impoliteness, with a salient connotation of racist exclusion. This is largely due to the impact of Jane Hill's important work on Mock Spanish and racism in everyday language practices (Hill 1998). Hill

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described mocking imitations of Spanish aimed at, or referring to, historically Spanish-speaking people in anglophone Northern America. Her work has contributed substantially to a better understanding of how mock language is used in order to stigmatise particular social groups. Inserting imitated Spanish linguistic material – such as phonological features and prosodic markers, lexical material, syntactic features – into English is, according to Hill's analysis a salient part of the strategies that help to discursively construct racialised Others. An example would be the affixation of Spanish grammatical elements to non-Spanish words, as in *no problem-o* 'no problem', or *el cheap-o* 'low quality product' (Hill 1998: 682). There also is a jocular element in all this, something playful, which contributes to the indirectness of mocking as racialised and pejorative discourse, as in German constructions that mimic American English-based Mock Spanish such as *el Blond-o* 'blonde-haired male' (referring to an actually brown-haired member of an all-male gang in the sitcom *Tatortreiniger*, Feldhusen 2015). In spite of its playfulness in certain contexts, its major function, Hill suggests, remains "the elevation of Whiteness" (1998: 682).

A similar interpretation is suggested by John M. Lipski, who, in a contribution on foreigner talk or "Tarzanic", suggests that these language practices in their perfect imperfectness exaggerate the comic element of the inferior Other: they express ideas about the black Other who mimes Whiteness and reproduces concepts of alterity. Lipski demonstrates that stereotyped foreigner talk expresses "emotions and attitudes [that] have ranged from racism to surreal humor, but a common denominator is the inferiority of the 'other' as

'demonstrated' by the inability to use language properly" (Lipski n.d.: 32).

Jonathan Culpeper's work on the language of impoliteness highlights the mimetic character of such practices: Self and Other belong together in what he calls "implicational impoliteness [through] mimicry and echoic mention" (Culpeper 2011: 161). The pejoratively racialised and stigmatised Other here is an echo of the Self, an imitation of hegemonic evaluations of Otherness. Such "caricatured re-presentation", Culpeper writes,

> involves quoting someone, and a quotation in spoken face-to-face interaction will involve features of the original accent and gestural behaviour as well. But if one quotes 'too much' (e.g. all the original speaker's prosodic features) the quoter becomes 'suspect'. [… But] [w]hat exactly counts as 'too much'? To recognise a 'quotation' as such and to infer the speaker's meaning requires inferential work. (2011: 161)

The 'too much' in mock language as echoic irony seems to be not only a 'too much' of mimicked linguistic features or of performativity, but also a 'too much' of the echoed: not a single person, but an entire category of people who are constructed as a coherent grouping along racial and social parameters.

Samy Alim, in a programmatic contribution to the newly-emerging field of raciolinguistics, suggests that such phenomena are at the core of "the increasingly vexed relationships between race, ethnicity, and language in a rapidly changing world" (2016: 5) and consequently deserve particular attention as language practices that consistently seem to characterise sociolinguistic contexts in globalised settings. In a case study on

"inverted Spanglish", Jonathan Rosa (2016) exemplifies what this might look like: even though mock language stigmatises groups racialised as marginal, foreign, and so on, it is, in an accelerated way, used in an inverted form by those who are originally mocked – as a way of speaking back, of gaining access to strategies of self-authorship, and of performing language rights.

As a messy picture emerges, we seem to reach a point where things are less clear. Who speaks, after all, and to whom? We might no longer simply ask about the meaning of words and the identity of speaker and audience, but questions such as the following:

> What was the situation? Who was present? What kind of person said it? What was intended? […] [W]hile my own perspective recognizes that language meaning is always shaped by the context of use and that it may often take unpredictable paths, diverse public understandings of racist words, including both "folk" and "scholarly" theories of language (Hill 2008), are important to acknowledge. In addition, by evaluating anti-racist strategies in terms of how they engage with these language ideologies, we can explore why certain strategies, such as satire, carry a potential to significantly shift public consciousness […]. (Chun 2016: 82)

While most of the influential work on mock language has focused on English-speaking societies of the global north, or almost entirely on anglophone North America, it might be a timely task to enquire about the practices and meanings of mock language elsewhere (e.g. Nassenstein in print). What about other contexts where imbalanced heteroglossia is an important aspect of every-day experiences of speakers? What about other language ideologies coming into play? Alexandra Aikhenvald (2003) describes the performance and evaluation of mock speech in a multilingual setting in the Amazon. Among speakers of Tariana, linguistic exogamism is rationalised as a means to distinguish one's own group from others. The use of languages other than Tariana in a mocking way index-icalises not simply otherness, Aikhenvald suggests, but differences in being Other:

> Those who use Portuguese words to "show off" their knowledge, or use them when a Tariana equivalent is readily available, get ridiculed, albeit behind their back: They are nicknamed "white people" who "have no language at all." […] "Mock Baniwa" has over- tones of friendly teasing. In contrast, mixing elements of the few surviving Tariana dialects is almost as bad and as dangerous as using the Tucano languages in inappropriate circumstances. Inserting Portuguese into one's Tariana, beyond in- evitable necessity, implies that one intends to break with being Indian and to acquire power in the greedy and negative (though coveted) white man's world. "Mock Portuguese" is a semiotic index used to condemn this ethnic stereotype. (Aikhenvald 2003: 15-17)

Aikhenvald describes a situation in which mock language practices reflect experiences of formerly balanced multilingualism turning into imbalanced communicative practices, whereby Tariana slowly disappears from the repertoire. More or less clear power-based binaries, as in Hill's work, do not seem to make sense here; mock language does other things than enhance hegemonic relations. This is an important for finding an approach

to mock language elsewhere, in other settings shaped by colonialism. Let us travel. "Travelling is so important! Seeing new things!" (Deumert p.c. 2018). Angi and Anne have traveled indeed, to a carnivalesque paradise. While Angi is elsewhere for a moment, Anne reminiscenses.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

NOTE BOOK, DAY 1. We arrive early. Three forms to fill, questions nearly the same in all of them, and visa issued quickly. Outside payment to the shuttle bus driver, and an hour of waiting in his minibus for just one more guest. Finally, a man approaches us, asks nothing, says nothing, greets not. Leaves his baggage to the bus driver to be stowed away, watching him suspiciously. A wall close to the airport road is decorated with murals of postcolonial heroes. I can read 'Frants Fanon' written below a large portrait. Mombasa's periphery in the early morning: an enclave between places where life might be easier; cosmopolitan tristesse, groups of migrants from Somalia and elsewhere who seek work that is not easy to find. A ferry crowded by people hurrying to town, Chinese ships anchored in the roadstead. Markets, then farmland and in-between villages. In Diani shop signs that promise souvenirs and safari trips and the pompous gateways of hotels that tell tales of the paradise, but all closed down. Finally, our hotel, which is one of very few that still have guests and operate normally.

Its architecture elicits Africa in many ways: imitations of elephant tusks, imitations of palm trees, imitations of buildings, streams, waterfalls, architecture. All is included in what we paid, a non-place *de luxe* where one will spend happy times, free, relaxed and grounded. A paradise.

Time is absent here. The only greeting one hears is *jambo*[3], no good mornings good evenings good nights, and no pragmatically complex language, no expressions of politeness that would convey status and hierarchy. The place is designed in ways that shut anything unexpected and surprising out — a normed pool and standard room guarantee a steady flow of daily routines. Outside, on the beach this might be different, but we are not yet there. Wearing a pink plastic bracelet, I am entitled to all this, the *jambo* and the coffee and the clear water of the pool. Other guests are like me, pink plastic around their wrists, sitting together in small groups and talking in German about a recent trip to Mallorca or last night's supper. Couples of elderly white men and young women who are not white. An Indian family with cell phones that play Bollywood songs. Almost any interaction with the staff of the hotel produces exclamations of *hakuna matata*, no problem.

And there are no problems. Everything is provided for — the safari trip for those who have not yet had the opportunity, an ego boost for those who

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[3] *Jambo* is the typical Swahili greeting in the tourist areas of Kenya. It is a short form of *hujambo* 'how are you (sg.)' which has to follow the rules of conjugation according to the person addressed (e.g. *hamjambo* 'how are you (pl.)').

look worn out from a cold northern summer, and attention for those who seem lonely:

Safari ham wa schon?
'Safari done already?'

Du bist ja Schokolade, du bist nicht Käse.
'You are chocolate, not cheese.'

Wo ist der Papa? [Nicht da.] Ah. Aber du bist gut, noch gesund, du kannst noch Liebe. Du musst nicht alleine sein. Ich bin Papa Afrika. Nikolaus! Ich mach es dir schön!
'Where is daddy? [Not around.] Ah. But you are good, still healthy, you still can make love. You don't need to be lonely. I am Daddy Africa. Santa Claus! I let you have a good time!'

The man who makes this generous offer stands on the other side of the little hedge that demarcates the border between the hotel grounds and the beach and waves at me as I stand on the veranda of my room. He wears a red bonnet over his dreadlocks: Santa Claus, performed as an upgraded version that even has a sexuality. He uses colloquial German that he has learned from the tourists over the years, with no salient trace of the transgressive language of the beach.[4]

There are no strangers in this hotel, but people who form separate units: the old-young German-Kenyan couple, the group of Germans who have been here before and now greet the animator at the pool like an old dear friend. He announces that water gymnastics will start just now and turns on the music. A small group of shyly smiling women assembles in the pool. Each exercise is performed ten times: "raise your left arm, one two three, now the right arm, can you count?" A woman counts in Gujarati, and the others repeat what she says. Then there is counting in German, Swahili, and then they run out of language. The animator steps in: "Do you have your *nabo are uni*? Let's count in Maasai." And they count in Maa, which they perhaps have done before in their safari camps, a week ago. And again, they run out of language. "Now let us count in Cameroonian, in my language", the animator says. And counts, and I begin to wonder. As they repeat what he says I keep on making notes and recordings of this multilingual pool party. How wonderful: a daily ritual (always at three pm) of linguistic diversity, counting in order to count the languages that come together here. A paradise. And so diverse. The animator is even from Cameroon.

Later, I asked one of his colleagues why he had come from West Africa to work precisely here. Were there more people from outside Kenya? This was really about the sociolinguistics of globalization: how tourism brought all this together, even here, even in the crisis.

"He is also from Kenya, he is just pretending", the colleague said. And why?

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[4] (Nassenstein 2016, Mietzner 2018)

`"Because the Cameroonian footballers are good. It is fun."`

`Throughout my stay, there would be joking about Cameroon and Kenya, counting in tongues, and performances of being foreign. Stereotypes of the exotic and strange were played out in evening entertainment shows and morning gymnastics, guarded beach walks and glocalised birthday parties. Because the Cameroonian numbers had been so good, reminiscent of my former experiences with West African Benue-Congo, I googled "Cameroonian counting", and quickly found a YouTube clip on the numbers in Ewondo`[5]`. This tutorial, targeted at those who enjoy — or need — language, made its way into the pool, as a strategically used resource in order to broaden a repertoire.`

<center>***</center>

Counting makes sense in multilingual settings that involve trade. However, the counting game at the pool seems to fit so nicely into Jan Blommaert's understanding of truncated multilingualism and the use of the Internet (among other resources) as an instrument that offers "opportunities for homogenization and uniformization at one level of communicative structuring […]" (2010: 133). The messy and diverse make-up of such repertoires reveals differences and structural inequalities, Blommaert suggests, that

> are fundamental to an understanding of socio-linguistic reality, because a repertoire is never

'flat' and smooth, but always chequered and truncated, and thus reflective of the lives of real people in real social environments. The mobility of people increases the visibility of the differences between repertoires. (ibid.)

Language "distorted by processes of mobility" (Blommaert 2010: 197), such as in the example of Ewondo, gets dislodged from imposed forms of representation, such as the language documentation archive it comes from here. And because Blommaert asks us to historicise these processes, as "contemporary sociolinguistic realities of globalization [that] articulate old and new patterns of inequality" (Blommaert 2010: 197), it is obvious to conclude that the colonial past that has not passed in sociolinguistic environments such as the Kenyan all-inclusive hotel plays a role here: ethnicist stereotypes (safari and the Maasai), ideologies about national languages ("Cameroonian") and the commodification of language (counting language in the pool) clearly were in the center of the performance.

But then there were other performances, later at the poolside: mocking local (Kenyan) ways of speaking while even more mockingly in excessive inversion performing Cameroonian ways of speaking. A hilarious mock French call for applause: *biga biga biga biga biga plause!* [biga biga biga biga biga plO:z]. Counting in "Chinese", using invented numbers, mimicking prosody and voice: *yi – cher – ling – chang – ching – tsim – sung – er – tsi – chu*. "We have many Chinese in Kenya, that's why", he said. It was reminiscent of all the mocking and imitating that took place at the beach, just outside the hotel premises, which never felt

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[5] A Bantu language of Cameroon; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypbUOrtZiFg

so funny but rather difficult. After all, there, where the hotel now stands used to be a sacred forest and a fishermen's village, which were all removed in order to make way for a tourism industry that has now ceased to be profitable. This phantasmatic return of the sea (Taussig 2018) leaves us with ambiguous feelings.

Even though the linguistic othering that happened at the poolside was more a bit different – by any means it was a strategy to bring people together, for example in order to participate in water gymnastics – it was unsettling too: how could one estimate the degree of hilarity it might be able to reach, and how could one ever be sure whether the animator would not change his strategy and make others the subject of mirth. And then the tourists who usually all remained unscathed rose from the pool waters, chatting and smiling and joking, and continued to greet each other and differed from those who had not been in these seemingly magical waters, by waving at each other again when they met once more during the evening shows. While the other guests tended to remain amongst themselves, unapproachable like passengers in a German suburb train, the 'counters' had changed: they now were connected to each other and to the animator and even to those who made fun of him. Pleasant events, good food, cool drinks and so on would now be commented by shouting *biga biga biga biga biga plause* (or simply *biga biga biga biga biga*), and in the end some of those who did water gymnastics again contributed to the

Figure 2. Pool numbers (photo AS)

invention of new numbers, in languages we had never heard of.

What kind of mimicry and mock echoing was going on here? What kind of shared group identity was constructed by this diverse, inconsistent and divergent group? What could be gained through mocking whatever language practice possible? And why was it so likable? And why was any other practice similar to this one likable and not offending in the first place? What about Santa Claus? And cannibals?

We have been thinking much about these contradictory impressions. Even though we felt deeply disturbed about the ubiquitous commodification of all there is – bodies, emotions, identity, language, taste, the sun, the water, the beach – we much liked Nikolaus Papa Afrika and the animator: there was irony, and distance, in spite of transgression and objectification. After a while we saw how relationships were established that could have been meaningful in many different ways. So, what about connectedness then? These mocking practices at the pool and even the beach seem to be dif-

ferent from what we first thought they were, namely hostile language and stigmatizing performance. Obviously, the questions asked by Elaine W. Chun make a lot of sense, especially this one: What was intended? But how could we know?

Perhaps one needs to turn the gaze not at structure (not at the hotel buildings and terraces and pools; not at truncated multilingualism – what an inconsistent term), but at fluidity, at the beach and at language that is overflowing there, that is too much for just a single body. For this beach, among others, has been and still is a site of connectedness. Elder men we talked to said that certain stretches of the beach are inhabited by spirits, who also have villages, but under water. Some spirits can mount the *ngalawa* and make them sink. One needs to be attentive. The beach is a liminal space that connects people, spirits, places, and so on.

Language that sounds like language but cannot be translated in the usual sense of the word is ubiquitous there. And as we were gazing out of a window, looking at the beach which unfolded as a theatre where players of different origins and ages performed their roles, we felt reminded of what we had read and learned about Zar and Bori, among other forms of spirit possession: performances that, as Fritz Kramer had assumed, could be understood as ethnography of the Other, knowledge from below. The use of language that was merely a mimetic interpretation of Other language could, in this sense, be read as a performance of local linguistic theory and of an attempt to theorise difference. Moreover, possession as a body technique could evoke and could shut out the spirits. And because spirits almost always have this Otherness in them, their domestication in ritual practices such as Zar also has the

connotation of *inviting the Other in*. This can be for purposes of healing, increasing agency, memory, and so on, depending on context.

What the theatre at the beach continued to show was the strong connotation of connectivity that was in all these forms of mimetic language, in all these echoes of the Other's presence. Mimicking Other language certainly was ambiguous and polysemic. Yet, the notion of connectivity seemed of particular importance. The mocking interpretations of Chinese, Cameroonian, and so on, had something utterly inviting and hospitable in them: as if these performances were also meant to remind ourselves of the relationships we have with others, in the historical sense of the word (as heritage and shared experience), as well as in the sense of something that is emergent and never completed. Languages that are elicited in these settings therefore might more adequately be understood not as truncated repertoires but as performances of connectivity. These snippets of Otherness and relatedness are ambiguous metaphors that are *complete* – very abstract and very short, but highly agentive substance, which has the power to heal and to ruin. In the pool, there was healing: hospitality and a feeling of liberty, namely to use language even though one might not know much of it, and to connect to each other.

This suddenly makes these tourism spaces appear less banal and very complex instead. In her work on Zar practices across the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, Sara Zaveree has highlighted the meanings of language performances as performances of shared connections, across time and space. Language and place in these epistemologies are multiple and not fixed. Places are mobile and so are spiritual concepts, which include

language. Hence, even though the audience of the animator and of the performers down at the beach might have had a different take at the semiotics of echoed, mimicked, or invented language, there obviously was some shared knowledge about the possibilities of establishing relationships through these language practices. In other words, the opacity of other minds does not bar us from hospitality: "the world of the individual is always a social world", Alessandro Duranti (2015: 209) reminds us, where the speech (acts) of others might based on intentions that are grounded in diverse social and cultural contexts. If we want to make sense of the speech acts of those we encounter in these diverse settings, Duranti suggests, we "should be looking beyond what individual speakers might have meant, known, or understood at the time of producing those acts and focus […] on social contexts, social relations, and consequences of effects of particular acts" (2015: 210).

At the beach and the poolscape just next to it, we are faced with a multiplicity of contexts, relations, and effects. And these are evasive: the geographies of the languages that are at stake there are not fixed. Therefore we call them soft geographies here – malleable and adaptable, hospitable. Not rigid, but inviting, not alienating but open. Yet still, stigmatizing and as effects of the performance at the beach also marginalizing. Duranti, with reference to Heidegger's observation that the Other is always already there, regardless of what the focus of our intentions may be, suggests that

> [d]ifferent cultural traditions may or may not recognize or encode in their language the wide range of our human ways of being-with-others, but we know that they are there. Our intentions,

together with our language, are always in a world of others. (2015: 232)

In the usual linguistic or sociolinguistic text, these worlds of others are not the worlds of the linguists' others; they are the worlds that linguists explore, as others' spaces and contexts, and the other who is in them is the others' other. Linguists, in other words, do not form part of a world of others, they are in a world apart, looking at what happens in a distance. To suggest that this might be a misconception and that they actually are also present in these worlds, already scripted by the places they choose to work at – as tourists, missionaries, development aiders, influential professors, fools – tends to elicit discourse on the OBSERVERS PARADOX. "Of course", somebody would say, "we are part of the research setting which we at the same time observe. This is such a paradox!" But is it really?

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After working on our project for two years, having spent time in the field at mass tourism destinations in the Mediterranean and in East Africa, we travel to a conference. African linguistics, dynamics, new concepts. How interesting. A brief meeting with a colleague whom we haven't seen for a while: "So you are here? Haven't you stopped doing real linguistics?", she asks. Later, we are told how, at a different meeting, other colleagues thought it was quite shocking, but also really funny how we went on holidays all the time and pretended that this was linguistic work. "They do a weird kind of linguistics

there at Cologne", somebody had said. We wonder why. Haven't they had a look at our publications, which are online, open access? We also wonder what was going on there in terms of disciplining, demarcating the boundaries of the discipline. Outside the discipline, such research had been received with much interest; inside the discipline it was as if we had violated a taboo.

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At the mass tourism sites, the beaches and pools, everything seems banal. Intellectuals do not go there, they spend their leisure time at cultural sites, or hike in the hills. Linguists are not wearing beach costumes and are not approached by sex workers, and they are not supposed to be mocked at by their 'informants'. Linguists are experts, they have methodologies, wordlists and other questionnaires, and they lead semi-structured interviews. Linguists are in control. But we weren't. We stood at the beach, in a swimming costume, and we were what the place and those present there made us into. We had bodies, and we had private life experiences which all the time interfered with our research – and had to.

Our work and presentations, the images we had shown in our powerpoints and the critical questions we raised – about the 'field' and the 'informant' – must have touched upon taboos surrounding expert bodies and expert identities. And like in other contexts of taboo violation, a form of silencing and indirect punishment had been the consequence.

A discussion on the presence of the researcher's body that has been led in anthropology since several decades now has touched upon some of these experiences in a very critical way. Don Kulick (1995: 3) analyses the contrast between the ubiquitous, nude and sexualised 'native' bodies and the rarely visible, clad and controlled body of the anthropologist as one of the most problematic aspects of anthropological text production:

> Sex – their sex, the sex of 'the Other' – has always constituted one of the gawdiest exhibits in the anthropological sideshow. It has provided endless fodder for reflection, speculation, and flourish. In pondering what it is that anthropologists actually do, one can readily agree with Clifford Geertz that much anthropological work (and a great deal of the fun doing that work) consists of 'keep[ing] the world off balance … pulling out rugs, upsetting tea tables, setting off firecrackers' (1984: 275). But to that list of mischief, one might add a time-tested shenanigan that Geertz neglected: peeping through keyholes and broadcasting what we see there. Thus, in addition to Geertz's 'Australopithicenes, Tricksters, Clicks and Megaliths' (1984: 275), anthropologists also peddle polyandry, puberty houses, *baloma* conceptions, subincision, ghost marriage, ritual defloration, chiefly incest, homosexual insemination, and sleep crawling. Merchants of astonishment indeed.

Sex, and that includes besides that what Kulick mentions, cannibalism and carnival, is what the other does and has. The researcher – anthropologist or linguist – has no erotic subjectivity that would by any means form part of his or her writing, and has no body (unless a SUFFERING BODY): "partial selves" is what Kulick (1995: 15 f.) calls the researchers' selves in the field. Figure 3 stands in no relation to the erotic subjectivity of the researchers present in this

text, but shows bodies, as they were when a painting of a cannibal might have been present in a party room, way back then. Those who look closely may spot a little black-skinned doll, which was named Molly.

And these partial selves are not only selves that lack erotic subjectivities, but also reflexivity, childhood memories, non-disciplinary textual practice, and every-day banality. Such constructions reveal continuities of coloniality that are part of power inequalities which still shape academic production of knowledge (Connell in print): the 'expert' is as strange a construction as the 'informant', and as much a commodity as the latter, or as language itself (Storch submitted). Moreover, the discipline's definition of what is 'proper' and what not here hides complex and messy experiences of ambiguity and insecurity, because the disciplining of a linguist – or of an Africanist, as in our cases – results in the construction of expert identities: images of aloof figures who spend lifetimes with the proper description of each tone, phoneme or morpheme of a word, the reconstruction of its historical development and its journey into other proper systems (as a loanword). African languages that are studied by these aloof experts preferably are no beach languages, but should be spoken in villages or in the diaspora. Other communicative practices such as tourism language practices seem to mock both the expert and his or her research as an act of moral decency; language there has the power to reveal, provoke, grab attention, shock and insult. Africanists therefore should record African languages in their villages, especially when they are about to become extinct: a stereotyped image that resembles what Wainaina (2006) ironically describes as the appropriate way in which 'Africa' should

Figure 3. A researcher's body (private collection AM)

be presented anyway. The body of the linguist in turn is not a native body, but an exquisite body that flits around in the intellectual heavens. It doesn't belong to party rooms and to mass tourism sites, but to villages and baobab trees. Quite a thought to think: the beach is so improper.

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12

'Silence is the best language' –
sound as taboo in tourism

12

'Silence is the best language' – sound as taboo in tourism

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1. Introduction

Research on taboo has focused on how people censor their language in order to fulfill social expectations and to avoid rudeness, discomfort and the assumed dirtying of oneself or others (e.g. Allan 2019; Allan & Burridge 2006; Sagarin 1968). Without knowledge about which topics must not be addressed directly, the social recognition of a speaker would be a coarse and harsh one. Certain aspects of human life seem to be tabooed in many societies: e.g. the body and its liquids, sexuality, death, family relations or religious objects and places. Nonetheless, the exact extent of a ban of words and the correct way to elaborately maneuver around or through it is to be learned and differs within each culture and language. The phenomenon of capitalism has ascribed itself to connecting people around the world through its biggest economy: tourism. "[A]s such a huge global industry, there is surely no one whose life remains unaffected by tourism, be it those people privileged enough to tour or people who are 'toured' " (Thurlow & Jaworski 2010a: 6).

Some decades ago, it was only the super-elite being able to travel for leisure, using expensive means of transport like airplanes or luxurious cruise ships. By now, more and more people from different cultures are offered tours around the world by cheap flight tickets, while masses of hotels are competing for their

guests by special discounts and packages. The traditional international traveler profile is slowly changing from the North American and European middle aged to a multi-national and multi-aged consumer group. The destination should be more exotic and different from the everyday life. Many countries like Kenya are famous for their tourism industries, offering beaches and safari to their visitors. The data samples presented here have been collected during a research trip to Tanzania and Kenya in August and September 2017 that was generously made possible by Anne Storch and Angelika Mietzner, to whom I remain deeply grateful. Its aim was to research the language, semiotics and entanglements within the tourism context of the beach and its outcome is enhanced by further examples of other tourism settings here. Within the theoretical framework of Thurlow & Jaworski's (2010a & 2010b) conceptualizations of silence in tourism, as well as Francesconi's (2014) multimodal analysis of tourism soundscapes this paper examines how the boundaries of taboos are defined within the multicultural setting of tourism and guest/ host relations, naming the contradictory perspectives of visitors and the visited and silencing as a strategy of avoiding defacement.

2. Diani Beach & the aural desire in commercials

At the East African coast in southern Kenya, Diani Beach is one of the most visited destinations for international as well as national tourists. Along the shore, large-area hotel palaces were built (see image 1) which are in most cases owned by international investors and stand in stark contrast to the living experiences of the

Figure 1: Newly renovated five-star hotel in Diani Beach (photo JT 2017)

population just a few streets further away from the sea. Although many of the villagers find jobs in the hotel establishments, it can be assumed that the largest share of the tourist economy's profit does not remain in the nearby settlements. However, the buildings of the hotel compounds are designed in a Swahili-style architecture, including wide open areas and Arabian and Indian ornament decoration, trimming the line of vision to the center of attraction, the sea.

Lovell & Bull (2018) describe sea side resorts as historically nostalgic places, especially in regard to childhood memories of spending time at the beach with the family. Especially within the British culture, enjoying the sea breeze and the view upon the waves from a beach hut has become an established tradition in the wake of the industrial revolution and its economic and ecologic effects (ibid. pp. 89–104). As a marker of increased wealth, being seen spending leisure time and escaping the increasingly polluted cities yielded prestige. I argue that whether

or not the architecture garnishing the holiday experience is an original fishermen hut or the respective geographical equivalent is not important for the classification of a setting as authentic. Much more, it is the revival of family holiday memories the visitor has, or the emulation of a social ideal about them. Therefore, even if the hotel compounds are in no way authentic replicas of the everyday experience of the local population, the tourist might still consider the offered principles of the resort (sea gaze, exotic style elements, wide spaces…) as creating authenticity for their own enterprise.

The reasons for the visitors to travel besides the taking a time-out from one's job are relaxation, wellness, self-optimizing (bronzing), self-representation on social media and, of course, curiosity for the new. This becomes clear by looking at holiday commercials of travel agencies and their promises to the tourists. The most common advertising photographs for Kenya present wide grasslands, wildlife and calm beaches. The tourist is constructed as adventurer who steps out to conquer the world. Some are even portrayed in a safari costume, gazing at nature (image 2). If local people are visible, they are always dressed in colorful traditional dresses or as servants around the hotels or lodges. Although celebrities like Melania Trump are harshly criticized by the media for wearing a pith helmet while being on a safari in Kenya, beige pants with many pockets and other tropical clothing are quite popular amongst tourists[1].

Figure 2: The safari gaze in an online advertisement[2]

KENIA ENTDECKEN
4 Tage, Nairobi ➤ Nairobi

ab **€ 919 / CHF 1'063**

Small Group Adventure

Masai Mara Wildreservat, Kenia

HIGHLIGHTS
- Zwei Tage in der Masai Mara
- Unzählige wilde Tiere
- Spannender Lake Nakuru NP
- Nashörner im Nairobi Nationalpark
- Fahrt durch das Great Rift Valley
- Flamingos, Nashörner & Flusspferde

LEISTUNGEN & INFOS
Reisebeginn: Ausgewählte MO **Unterkunft:** Camping (2 Nächte), Lodge (1 Nacht, DZ) **Gruppengröße:** Max. 20 **Mahlzeiten:** 3 x Frühstück, 3 x Mittagessen, 3 x Abendessen **Sonstiges:** Alle Transports, Parkgebühren, Pirschfahrten inklusive **Hinweis:** Eintritt in den Nairobi Nationalpark und Giraffen-Center sind nicht im Preis enthalten **Tour Code:** 1SNBODSK - Discover Kenya

Auf dieser tollen Kurzreise, die nur vier Tage dauert, sieht man trotzdem alle Highlights Kenias! Sie beginnt und endet in der Hauptstadt Nairobi und bietet viele Safariabenteuer mit Besuchen im Nairobi Nationalpark, dem Lake Nakuru Nationalpark und dem Masai Mara Wildreservat. An Tag eins wird das Great Rift Valley durchfahren und die weiten Ebenen der Mara erreicht, wo zwei Tage verbracht werden – hoffentlich mit den Big 5 sowie Tüpfelhyänen, Straußen, Zebras, Giraffen und vielen mehr! Wer zwischen Juli und Oktober reist, hat gute Chancen, die Gnu-Migration zu erleben, wenn über eine Million Gnus, Zebras und Antilopen in die Mara von der Serengeti ziehen. An Tag drei steht eine Pirschfahrt im Lake Nakuru Nationalpark an sowie eine weitere an Tag vier im Nationalpark der Hauptstadt.

MASAI MARA, AMBOSELI & NAKURUSEE CAMPING SAFARI
6 Tage, Nairobi ➤ Nairobi

ab **€ 1.287 / CHF 1'489**

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[1] As Shepherd writes in his article with Storch & Deumert (forthcoming), this dress code is also regarded as a sign of professional affiliation for researchers in anthropology, archaeology and other related fields.

2 https://issuu.com/statravel_centraleurope/docs/sta_travel_katalog_afrika_2018_2019/2?ff&e=1544688/64647376 (accessed on 11.01.2019).

The touristic spaces are presented as quiet areas in the advertisements. Francesconi (2014: 79) differentiates between intentional and non-intentional aural choices. The former is defined as such, that is fulfilling the purpose itself (e.g. a loud voice in a public speech), the latter as one that is a by-product of another action or experience and not necessarily performed or perceived for the sound itself (e.g. traffic noise). If intentional aural choices like music or loud voices are present in advertising, they would always occur in combination with direct consumption. For example, during the visit to a Maasai village crafted goods will be sold or a music playing bar where the tourist is invited to dance will sell overpriced drinks. Interestingly, such events are unlikely to be depicted in the tourist ads. One explanation can be that spending money is indeed necessary for going on vacation, but many people would not want to be confronted with it in advance. In order to not lose potential customers, only pictures are shown that would most likely create positive emotions and desires among the larger number of travelers. Therefore, all intentional aural choices like loud music or voices are shut out. Instead, non-intentional natural sounds like wind, animals or crushing waves are suggested. Francesconi (2014: 80) writes:

> When visitors look for the presence of a view, they also ask for the absence of sound, *for the sound of silence*. Silence is an important pull factor that accommodation can offer to its visitors, and is associated with the push factors of relaxation, serenity and tranquility. (original emphasis)

Screenshot of Video 1: Diani Beach in Kenya (Storch 2017; access at https://themouthjournal.com/2019/ 02/12/soundscapes-in-tourism/)

Screenshot of Video 2: El Arenal in Spain (Traber 2018; access at https://themouthjournal.com/2019/02/12/soundscapes-in-tourism/)

The sounds imposed on the tourist by the holiday advertisements are such that can be heard, but must not actively be listened to. They are presented as enjoyable and responsible for real relaxation. Comparing video 1 and 2, the visual impressions are similar, although taken at two very different sites. Both show artificially installed water in touristic settings and they both include the burbling of water. However, video 2 is accompanied by the sounds of a nearby construction site. Although the formation of the site in video 1 is just as well the result of heavy man-made performance, the knowledge about the human origin of the sound in video 2 would be highly disturbing for a tourism commercial.

In reverse conclusion, the information that intentional human aural impressions do not fit the frame must be assumed. Another extension of this perception is the fact that many tourists consider walking the streets outside the hotel resorts potentially stressful, as they might be approached by street vendors ('beach boys', see Mietzner forthcoming and Nassenstein forthcoming) or travel guides. The walls enclaving the quiet tourist space do not only mark the borders of the visual tourist experience (Urry 2002), but also those of the 'domesticated' soundscapes. Leaving them means entering fields of unpredictable noise. LaBelle (2010: 47) suggests that "in [the] exposure to noise and silence [one] confront[s] questions of place and placelessness". Knowing where one's expectations about the 'proper' amount of communication and sounds will be met provides the tourist with a feeling of security. Leaving the 'tourist bubble', the local population is met with suspicion by many, to which they instead react with the feeling of being rejected by the tourists as they do not speak

to them. "You like only animals, not people", would one man in Ukunda shout at tourists, implying that they travel to Kenya for gazing at wildlife while ignoring the possibilities of human communication.

Dunn (2005: 116) quotes Cronin (2000: 82): "[T]he experience of travel in a country where the language is unknown to the traveler will be heavily informed by the visual. If you cannot speak, you can at least look. Sightseeing is the world with the sound turned off", to explain that even language not understood provides a linguascape that can be experienced by a visitor. Still, it must be assumed that many tourists do not only travel to make the (new) experience of being unable to understand the spoken language and to take the adventure of making their way through it, but presumably do not want to understand. In many cases, a traveler would not know which meaning words and sounds in their temporary environment have. Yet, this releases the listener from a lot of responsibility for oneself and one's actions. Therefore, although "the semiotics of sound has not (yet) reached the same levels of abstraction and functional structuration as other codes" (Francesconi 2014: 79), we can argue that the taboo of noise and sound in hotels and places of retreat is also an ideological one.

3. The effect of the sound taboo on touristic spheres and visitor/host relations

As mentioned before and shown in image 2, many tourists enjoy to acquire a certain dress for their trip to Kenya. Although the usual safaris are conducted by vehicle, khaki pants and pith helmets are not unusual to be worn by tourists sitting in them. Pan & Ryan (2009:

635) write that aural, olfactory and tactile senses are closely related to the experience of a natural environment. For example, for many people to go hiking in the forest is connected to the sounds of wind and birds, the smell of fresh air and freshly chopped wood and the feeling of soft soil beneath the feet. Urban environments, however, are dominated by the impressions of visuals. One would rather think of impressive architecture like skyscrapers and monuments as triggering attractions. In this regard, the suggested soundscape of this exemplary nature-related tourist activity is of high relevance. Although in image 2 the tourist is only placed in the margin of the photograph, he is essential to its informational content. The man is completely focused on his camera. Within the process of concentration, people are likely to be either blending out sounds or to be distracted by them. The fact that the person is able to focus as presented here means that there is surrounding silence. The wide savanna and the distance to the animals imply that their sounds cannot be heard either. And finally, although it is unlikely for a foreigner to make his or her way to a national park without a tour guide, there is no other human in the picture that would speak to the tourist. Hence, the expectation of silence is already established during the process of advertising. As well as the dress and the behavior of many tourists is regarded as neo-colonial attitude, so can the requirement for silence and intolerance for human sounds (meaning language) be interpreted as repressive and taming manner.

Schwarz (2013: 383–384) writes: „sonic practices and preferences in nature sites are associated with certain social identities and read as identity markers that mark group boundaries". Therefore, it can be assumed that for another customer profile completely different aural choices might be attractive. Reversibly, sound profiles of nature sites that differ from those expected by one's own culture are regarded as disturbing or misplaced. This can easily be the case if the expectation of silence is established before a trip, which would then turn out to be shared with big groups of other tourists and tour guides and furthermore accompanied by traffic noise.

The reason why tourists in postcolonial contexts are granted such attitudes is described by Manning (1978: 198) as an effect of financial dependence: "Reliance on an economic system based on capital, management, and clientele coming chiefly from white metropolitan countries […] erodes the sense of autonomy by tending to relegate the native population to a role of servitude and parasitism".

Bandyopadhyay (2011) explains that in these settings, tourists easily take for granted the host population as serving while feeling charitable themselves as their visit allows them the opportunity for work.

As a result of this established touristic semiotic, further power imbalances can be attested in regard to the crossing of taboos.

As the predominant religion along the East African coast is Islam, many locals suffer from affronts by tourists entering shops or restaurants without appropriate clothing. Nonetheless, many visitors perform the exact same inconvenience, but it would be socially regarded as rude and distressing for a local to approach them and point out disaster. The influence of the 'tourist bubble' (Smith 1989) is demonstrably expanding. While the visitors feel no shame to transgress the boundaries of appropriate dress codes, the local popu-

Figure 3: Written but not spoken of (photo JT 2017)

are two semiotic resources that work almost symbiotically to realize the kind of social exclusion upon which contemporary notions of class inequality are predicated" (Thurlow & Jaworski 2010b: 191). They go on that tourism acts as heavy influence on the reorganization of cultural practices, the establishment of ideologies of difference und perpetuation of unequal relations.

The described active (hotel sphere) as well as passive (unaddressed border-crossing) influence on and domination of the spoken soundscape results in the objectification of the hosts as holiday experiences that can be instrumentalized and consumed.

"These beautiful people are here to amuse visitors, not because they are people in their own right with individual lives and priorities", states an enraged travel writer on the website of *The Guardian*[3] on retrospective generalizations of many tourists. Another person answered:

> This is fluff. Try to live and let live. Perhaps you lke [sic!] to travel "responsibly". Fine, but some of us travel to relax, to see new things in a detached I-am-not-going-to-do-an-exam-on-this fashion. We ooze superficially through the new experiences, we recall few details and the people we encounter are remembered as an undifferentiated mass of niceness. That is what relaxation means to many of us.

Reactions like this show a blunt rejection of a critical self-reflection of tourist's behavior. The experience of being on holiday seems to be connected to neither needing nor wanting to care about other individuals. The author of the

lation feels prevented to speak up against this breach. But although it is not possible to confront the matter directly, a medium for avoidance language was found. In the shape of a big sign on the street shown in image 3, the personal confrontation of individuals is bypassed. This way, both the taboo of the educating verbal dispute, as well as (at least in some cases) the one of committing the act in the first place are avoided. Thurlow & Jaworski (2010b) write that silence can be read as cover up for unbalanced relationships and is the dominant linguistic form in socially ambiguous situations. "Space and silence

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[3] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/08/people-beautiful-colonial-tourism-travel (12.01.19).

comment draws a feeling of freedom from this attitude that results in 'relaxation'. The remark suggests that even if personalized interactions would take place, they would remain generalized and undifferentiated in the tourist memory.

As speaking a lot is connoted by being intrusive or even pushy by the tourists, it would easily result in a negative generalized impression. In other touristic spaces, some entrepreneurs have already elaborated a marketing strategy to benefit from this perception. An Italian restaurant in the much-visited harbor city of Chania on Crete (Greece) proudly offers silence as their unique advantage in comparison to their abundant competitors. "WE DON'T SPEAK TOO MUCH…", while the use of all capital letters is often meant to express shouting the respective words in chat rooms or messenger apps, here it might be used to state the phrases sincerity. The plate's content creates the image of a safe restaurant the tourist can escape to. Although it still employed staff that would explain the gastronomic specialties and placed music producing speakers in the corners, just to claim that it would be more silent than the other restaurants would invite more customers. Furthermore, it creates a demand that might have been unnoticed before. Before reading this intensely written in capitals-plate, many tourists might have not even been experiencing the restaurant promoters along the street as tiring. Therefore, the concrete offering of less language and less intentional aural experiences creates a demand in this case, and if subsequently fulfilled a more positive memory and unfolds in a higher chance for a return of the visit.

Figure 4: Restaurant sign board
(Chania in Greece, photo JT 2018)

4. Future perspectives and concluding remarks

The reasons for the imposition of silence in form of the absence of language as well as other intentional human noise lie in the combination of the demand for relaxation, the ignorance of other cultures as well as the construction of neo-colonial attitudes before and during the vacation.

By the absence of specific sounds in the images of a perfect holiday that are created by the tourism industry, they are being constructed as intrusive noise. But the connotation of sound can change. In the past, the howling of wolves was considered ominous 'noise' that had to be tamed, but has shifted to a positive 'sound of nature' within the 20th century by the upcoming movement of environmental consciousness (Coates 2005). Therefore, it is plausible to assume that if the powerful tool of tourist advertising would present the guest/ host relations more often and at balanced eye level, the encounters in reality would be positively affected.

The reception and rating of sounds varies culturally and different sonic norms can co-exist at the same time (Schwartz 2013: 383). Edensor (2002: 96) for example describes how a British tourist couple pays a visit to the Taj Mahal, both remaining deliberately and devoutly silent. As they recognize that local tourists would feel no requirement to be silent and therefore engage in active loud conversations, the British couple felt affronted. For the example of Kenya, it is mostly European visitors that have dominated the tourist industry in the last decades. Due to political instabilities, the number of arrivals has decreased between 2005 and 2008 and has not yet recovered. Therefore, if tourism will focus on attracting another profile of visitors in the future to keep the economy alive, it must be assumed that their reception of sounds will differ from the so far established standards and result in a change of the aural norms. According to Secorun Palet (2016) the numbers of domestic tourists have been highly increasing during 2015. If that tendency breaks into the market, the economy could increase and the set of approvable soundscapes and their inherent ideologies would expand. For many people one of the first reasons to travel is curiosity. By allowing for speech and more variable soundscapes in the future, a richer holiday experience for tourists could be created, while the relationships with the hosts could be on eye level.

The expectations about soundscapes in tourism were historically constructed in the course of the industrialization of the touring nations. Nostalgic memories and imaginations about holidays at the beach comprise a certain arrangement of space and architecture that are crucial for the perceived authenticity of a destination. While advertisements suggest not only what to look at, they also present the absence of sounds in many ways. In combination with the way tourists themselves are represented in them, the ideology of the visitor as predominant factor in the creation of the touristic space is established. This concept leads to a gap of verbal communication between the guests and hosts, as the latter perceives it a taboo to indicate the occurring transgressive behavior to the visitors and the former distinctly does not want to communicate in the first place. As a form of avoidance medium, signs are erected between the beach zone and the local dwellings. They serve to discipline and to mark social territory. The touristic economy in Kenya seems to be orienting to a broader profile of visitors in the future. As aural preferences are highly culturally scripted, it can be expected that the soundscape of the tourist zones might diversify as well.

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GE|ER|M|ÄCHT|IG|UNG

Das Penismotiv im Tourismus-Kontext

13

GE|ER|M|ÄCHT|IG|UNG
Das Penismotiv im Tourismus-Kontext

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„Schock-Nachricht auf Mallorca: Junggesellinenabschied ohne Penis-Antennen, wie soll das gehen?" Die Headline eines Beitrages auf der Onlineplattform für Hochzeitsdienstleistungen zankyou klingt alarmierend. Die beliebten Scherzartikel heißt es, Diademe mit Plastikpenis, seien von den mallorquinischen Machthabenden verboten!

Der Text verweist auf die politischen Regulierungen, in Zuge dessen in mehreren Maßnahmen-Paketen, dem exzessiven Tourismus auf Mallorca Einhalt geboten werden soll. Am Massentourismus auf Mallorca entzünden sich spannungsgeladene Fragen biopolitischer Gouvernementalität, Ökologie, Gentrifizierung, sexualisierter Gewalt und Ausbeutung, imperialer Lebensweise[1], Süd-Nord-Migration. Aber darüber will ich jetzt nicht sprechen. Was mich hier interessiert ist das Penismotiv. In aktuellen europäischen Gesellschaften ist die Benennung oder Darstellung von Genitalien an Tabus geknüpft. In ihrem rundumschlagenden Band zu Tabu und Sprache beschreiben Keith Allen und Kate Burridge das Tabu wie folgt.

> Groups with written regulations also have unwritten conventions governing appropriate behaviour. In all cases, sanctions on behaviour arise from beliefs supposedly held in common by a

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[1] Der Begriff „imperiale Lebensweise" wurde von Brand und Wissen geprägt und kennzeichnet den individuellen Ressourcenverbrauch im Globalen Süden als ursächlich für globale Ausbeutungsverhältnisse und der ökologische Krise (Brand und Wissen 2018).

consensus of members of the community or from an authoritative body within the group. Although Freud has claimed that 'Taboo prohibitions have no grounds and are of unknown origin', it seems obvious to us that taboos normally arise out of social constraints on the individual's behaviour. They arise in cases where the individual's acts can cause discomfort, harm or injury to him/ herself and to others. The constraint on behaviour is imposed by someone or some physical ormetaphysical force that the individual believes has authority or power over them – the law, the gods, the society in which one lives, even prioprioceptions. (Allan and Burridge 2006: 8f)

Auch der Penis ist tabuisiert. Nicht immer und nicht überall, wohlgemerkt, aber das Zeigen des (Feigenblatt!) und das Sprechen über den Penis erfolgt häufig in Metaphern, in Eu- und X-phemismen. Im Englischen beispielsweise gibt es über 1000 Umschreibungen für den Penis (Allen and Burridge 2006: 243). Dagegen ist der Penis auf Mallorca recht explizit. Wie kommt das? Während die anderen Beträge in diesem Band sich mit Sprache auseinander setzen, fehlen mir hier die Worte. Eine profunde Analyse werde ich nicht leisten, sondern begnüge mich mit der Deutung der Zeichen, einem Kratzen an der semiotischen Oberfläche, aus eigenem Erleben heraus.

Auf dieses Penismotiv stieß ich durch ein Forschungsprojekt zu Tourismus auf Mallorca. Meine Kolleg*innen am Kölner Institut für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie besuchen nun seit einigen Jahren die Insel und haben sich in mehreren Publikationen mit verschiedenen Aspekten des Massentourismus

Abb. 1. „Schocknachricht auf Mallorca"[2]

Abb. 2. Artefakte mit Penismotiv (Janine Traber 2016)

auseinandergesetzt (Storch et al. 2017a, 2017b; Hollington et al. 2018). Regelmäßig bringen sie von ihren Forschungsreisen Artefakte mit. Viele von ihnen sind Objekte mit Penismotiv in allen möglichen Variationen.

[2] https://www.zankyou.de/p/schock-nachricht-auf-mallorca-junggesellinnenabschied-ohne-penis-antennen-wie-soll-das-gehen-90163 (zugegriffen am 16.12.2018)

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Im Oktober 2018 veranstalteten sie in einem Strandhotel in Palma de Mallorca eine Tagung zu Intimität im Kontext von Sprache und Tourismus[3], bei der ich auch zugegen war. Wie zu erwarten kam auch der Penis während Vorträgen und Pausen zur Sprache. Denn tatsächlich, die penalen Objekte sind allgegenwärtig. Als noch zu kaufende Souvenirs in den zahlreichen Läden der Strandpromenade oder als bereits gekaufte Spielzeuge und Dekorationen an den Körpern der Menschen. Die Beziehung Objekt-Körper wurde durch eine sensorische Erfahrung auch an meinem eigenen Körper exerziert: als nämlich bei einem rekreationalen Ausflug in den Megapark, einer berühmt-berüchtigten Partyhalle am Ballermann, ein junger Mann mich mit seiner Wasserpistole in Penisform vollspritzte. Der Akt erfolgte ohne allzu wahrnehmbare mimische Veränderung seines Gesichts, mit einer Gleichgültigkeit und Normalität, die überraschte. Ob dieses merkwürdige Fehlen von Exaltiertheit mit meinem kritischen Gesichtsausdruck oder Anderem zusammenhing, vermag ich nicht zu sagen, in der feuchtfröhlichen Atmosphäre fiel das bisschen Wasser auch nicht weiter auf.

Die Chiffre Mallorca steht gemeinhin für Enthemmung, für Zügellosigkeit und Entgrenzung. Bei den Teilnehmer*innen der Tagung bewegte sich die Haltung zum Ort und seinen Ritualen zwischen Entsetzen und ironisierter Begeisterung, Empathie und Ekel. Die Diskussionen um den Penis verliefen in Bahnen anti-patriarchaler Kritik. Ich war mir nicht so sicher. Ich fragte mich, ob das Penismotiv Symptom hypersexualisierter patriar-

chaler Ordnungen ist oder Symbol sexueller Befreiung. Oder beides? Oder keines? Ich weiß es jetzt immer noch nicht. Aber diese Debatte inspirierte mich über den figurativen Penis weiter nachzudenken.

In den letzten Jahrzenten können wir eine Art Globalisierung der Penisfigurine im Tourismus-Kontext beobachten. Wo das ihren Anfang genommen hat, weiß ich nicht, aber die Holzpenii auf Bali kommen sofort in den Sinn. Einem sakralen Zusammenhang entsprungen – die Objekte repräsentieren den kosmischen Penis des Gottes Shiva (*Shivalingam*) und symbolisieren Glück – sind sie heute als globalisierter Peniswitz kommodifiziert. Als Dekoration in Hostels und Restaurants oder als Mitbringsel können sie konsumiert werden. Auffällig erscheint das Zusammendenken von Penisfigur und individualisierter Sexualität. Eine semiotische Inbezugsetzung, die möglicherweise für Balines*innen eine periphere Rolle gespielt hat.

Globalisierung touristischer Motive

Doch während das Penismotiv auf Mallorca oder anderen massentouristischen Party-locations des globalen Nordens – wie etwa Las Vegas – kaum ein Schulterzucken provoziert, verwundern sie zunächst im Globalen Süden. Wie kann es sein, dass solche Objekte in Orten mit vermeintlich rigider Sexualmoral den öffentlichen Raum besetzen, mag sich mancher fragen, wie dieser Betrag in der Hamburger Morgenpost schön veranschaulicht (Abb. 3).

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[3] Third Workshop on Language and Tourism. Language and Intimacy: Discourses and Narratives. El Arenal, 13.-14. Oktober 2018. http://afrikanistik.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/index.php?id=37496 (zugegriffen am 16.12.2018).

Die Konsumption der Penisfigur im Globalen Süden ist nicht frei von Kontroverse. Sie berührt Diskurse um Anstand, Geschmack und der *richtigen* Art des Reisens und reflektiert die dichotomisierende Erzählung des schlechten Pauschaltouristen versus dem guten Rucksackreisenden.

Penis-Figurinen sind heute auch an Orten zu finden, die keine prätouristische Penisobjekt-Tradition aufweisen. Die Globalisierung touristischer Motive wird verstetigt durch Wiederholung und Imitation. In Hurghada, dem Tauchparadies Ägyptens, sind sie beispielsweise in Märkten des Durchlaufes, wie dem Flughafen, zu kaufen.

Darstellungen des Penis und anderer Genitalien und ihre kulturelle Signifikanz unterliegen divergenten räumlichen und zeitlichen Konfigurationen, ihre Semiotik und Formsprachen sind so mannigfaltig, wie ihr Vorkommen. Unzählige Praktiken weltweit haben den Phallus zum Thema. *Lingam* aus dem hinduistischen Kontext wurden eben genannt. Ein anderes Beispiel ist das schintoistische *Kanamara Matsuri* (Fest des stählernen Phallus) in Japan, heute ein massentouristisches Event.

Häufig jedoch ist die Deutung der Zeichen befangen durch in Europa popularisierte Penis-Diskurse. Im Kontext der touristischen Penisfigur scheint es mir, dass auf diese „europäischen" Diskurse verwiesen wird. Sie werden mimikriert, verworfen, imitiert, verachtet und neugeordnet. An dieser Stelle ertappe ich mich selbst in die Eurozentrismus-Falle zu laufen, wenn ich meinen Blick ausschließlich auf diese Diskurse richte.

[4] https://www.mopo.de/reise/touristen-irritiert-wieso-sieht-man-in-diesem-land-ueberall-penis-bilder--23802780 (zugegriffen am 16.12.2018)

Abb. 3. „Touristen irritiert über Penis-Bilder auf Bali"[4]

Abb. 4. Altägyptische Figur mit vergrößertem Penis aus Hurghada (Christiane Kühnrich 2018).

Abb. 5. Darstellung eines Satyr (Wikipedia Commons)

kleinen Penii an altgriech-
ischen Statuen. Wieso sind
sie so mickrig, fragt der
besichtigende   Mensch.
Das   Internet   antwortet
darauf mit dem maskulinen
Ideal der Moderation.[5] Der
ideale griechische Bürger
ist geleitet durch Vernunft
und nicht durch zügellose
Lüsternheit.

Dazu sagt der Klassizist
Andrew Lear:

There is the contrast between the
small, non-erect penises of ideal
men (heroes, gods, nude athletes
etc.) and the over-size, erect
penises of Satyrs (mythic half-go-
at-men, who are drunkards and
wildly lustful) and various non-
ideal men. Decrepit, elderly men,
for instance, often have large penises. (zitiert
nach Goldhill 2016)

Sie sind für mich leichter zugänglich, besser
untersucht und in einer Art und Weise
globalisiert, von der ich glaube, dass sie die
Grundlage für die Kommodifizierung des
touristischen Penismotivs bilden. Denn
am Ende der Warenkette stehen zweifellos
europäische Konsument*innen. Bezeichnen-
derweise beginnen die großen europäischen
Penis-Meistererzählungen mit antiken Großre-
ichen, manchmal noch mit der ägyptischen
Antike, immer aber mit der Griechischen.
Eine Frage, die zur Recherche einlädt sind die

Im Kontrast dazu steht der riesige Penis
Erectus des verfluchten Gottes Priapus, Sohn
der Aphrodite und des Dionysus, den die
eifersüchtige Hera dazu verdammt auf ewig
(unbefriedigte) Lust zu durchleben (Sullivan
2017). Auch die Satyr, Trunkenbolde und
Schelme werden mit großen Penii dargestellt.

Es ist das betrunkene, entfesselte, schwa-
che, männlich gelesene Wesen, das keine
Kontrolle über seinen Körper und damit über
seinen Geist hat.

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[5] Beispiele finden sich hier https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-ancient-traditions/real-reason-men-classical-portrayals-were-given-small-manhoods-008127 und hier https://qz.com/689617/why-do-greek-statues-have-such-small-penises/ (zugegriffen am 16.12.2018).

Des Teufels Gemächt

Das christliche Mittelalter ist geprägt vom griechisch-klassischen Ideal. Körperlicher Exzess widersprach geistiger Reinheit. Penisdarstellungen verwiesen auf moralischen Verfall und Unsitte. In *A Mind of its own: A Cultural History of the Penis* (2001) schreibt David Friedman eine (europäische) Universalgeschichte des Penis. Er beginnt sein Buch mit der Beschreibung einer Hexenverbrennung in der frühen Neuzeit. Die zu Verbrennende hatte unter Folter ausgesagt den überdimensionierten Penis des Teufels geritten zu haben.

Der Höllenritt überführte die beschuldigten Frauen der moralischen Transgression. Die inquisitorische Methodologie lieferte das *Malleus Maleficarum*. Der *Hexenhammer* von Heinrich Kramer und Jakob Sprenger, 1486 in Speyer veröffentlicht und bis ins 17 Jahrhundert in 29 Auflagen nachgedruckt, gilt als Standartwerk der Hexenverfolgung.

Friedman determiniert abgegrenzte historische Phasen seit der Antike bis heute. In seinem Narrativ ist der antike Penis geheiligt und mit supranatürlichen Kräften ausgestattet. Den Griechen ist er nach Friedman den Willen der Götter unterworfen, den Römern galt der große Penis als Sinnbild männlicher Stärke, als „fleischgewordene römische Macht." (Friedman 2001: 28). In der Neuzeit wird der Penis seziert und pathologisiert. Er wird zum Objekt wissenschaftlicher Untersuchungen. Der Imperialismus schließlich ist die Zeit des rassistischen Penis. Im Kapitel *The Measuring Stick*, zeichnet er die grausame Mischung aus Faszination, Neid und Angst gegenüber dem Penis des Anderen nach. Frühe Entdeckungsreisende waren schockiert von der enormen Größe des „Äthiopischen Penis". Konservierte Penii in Gläsern fanden sich in medizinischen Museen Europas. Die gewalttätige Obsession mit dem Penis des Anderen verbildlicht Friedman an Lynchmorden in den USA: Kastration vor der Ermordung.

Koloniale Penis-Obsession

Der Penis des Anderen, des kolonialen Gegenüber, ist gefährlich und angsteinflößend. Damit einher geht die Lust an der Perversion. Begierde und Grauen sehen sich in einer ewig co-dependenten Beziehung. Ein plastisches Beispiel hierfür ist die Medaille „Die Wacht am Rhein" des völkischen Medailleurs Karl Götz.

Abb. 6. Hexe reitet einen Phallus
(Wikipedia Commons)

Abb. 7. "Die Wacht am Rhein von Karl Götz (1920)"[6]

Im Zuge der politischen Kampagne „Die Schwarze Schmach" wurde die Besetzung des Rheinlandes durch französische Kolonialsoldaten nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg zu einem Symbol der (rassischen) Demütigung des besiegten Deutschlands (vgl. Koller 2004; Traore 2014). Kinder aus sexuellen Beziehungen zwischen schwarzen Soldaten und deutschen Frauen wurden zu sogenannten Rheinlandbastarden abgewertet, später von Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf* als Beispiele für Rassenschande angeführt und während des Nationalsozialismus zwangssterilisiert. Wirkmächtigkeit und Kontinuität dieser penilen Obsession lässt sich heute an Auseinandersetzungen um den gefährlichen Penis des inferioren muslimisch/afrikanischen Migranten ablesen. Besonders deutlich wird sie in neurechten Phantasien von

vergewaltigenden Geflüchteten in Deutschland. Die Grafik „Spießrutenlauf am Kölner Hauptbahnhof", auf dem rechten Blog *BilDung* wurde am 09. Januar 2016 veröffentlicht, also kurz nach den gewalttätigen, sexualisierten Übergriffen durch migrantische Männergruppen in der Kölner Silvesternacht. Die Ikonografie lässt stark an die „Schwarze Schmach" erinnern: der schwarze *Andere* mit großem Penis, der die blonde Frau bedroht. Dieses Motiv wurde in der Folge in vielfältigen Variationen in der „Rapefugees not welcome"-Kampagne verwendet.

Der Penis des Anderen ist so gefährlich, weil er wild und ungezügelt ist und damit das gemäßigte, zivilisierte Selbst irritiert. Die Ehre der Nation ist geknüpft an die Reinheit der weißen, deutschen Frau. Das Eindringen des Geflüchteten in den imaginierten nationalen Raum wird gedacht als enthemmte, unkont-

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[6] http://www.yorkcoins.com/kg13_-_the_watch_on_the_rhine___the_black_shame_(die_wachte_am_rhein___die_schwarze_schmach),_struck_bronze_satirical_medal,_21_73g_,_36mm,_by_karl_goetz.htm (zugegriffen am 16.12.2018).

Die Schänder und die Schande von Köln

Victim blaming
Bild *Dung
Frauen als Freiwild
Gang Bang Rape Culture

Der SpießRutenLauf im Kölner HauptBahnhof

Abb. 8. „Spießrutenlauf am Kölner Hauptbahnhof"[7]

rollierte sexuelle Penetration. Dazu schreibt Homi Bhabha:

> Black skin splits under the racist gaze, displaced into signs of bestiality, genitalia, grotesquerie, which reveal the phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body. (Bhabha 1994: 131)

Bhabha hat sich kaum mit Gender oder Sexualität beschäftigt, was ihm von verschiedener Seite Kritik eingehandelt hat (Yeğenoğlu 1998; Young 1995). Aber ein Blick auf den Penis durch die Bhabha-Brille lohnt sich, vor allem auf den *not quite* Penis, den Penis als diskursive Form der Repräsentation. Bhabhas Hinleitung von Sigmund Freuds Fetisch zum kolonialen Stereotyp ist hier von besonderem Interesse. María do Mar Castro Varela und Nikita Dhawan schreiben in ihrer Einführung in Bhabhas Denken, das koloniale Stereotyp

teilt mit Fetisch nicht nur die metonoymische Struktur, indem es Ersatzobjekt für das reale Objekt ist, sondern tritt auch als ein Mittel auf, das stark konfliktträchtige Gefühle und Haltungen ausdrücken und kontrollieren kann (Castro Varela & Dhawan 2005: 225)

Wie der Freudsche Fetisch verfälscht das Stereotyp die Realität nicht einfach nur, sondern will sie fixieren und verschleiert damit Ambivalenz. Das Stereotyp ist „befriedigend und beängstigend zugleich" (ebd.: 226), aber eben nicht nur ängstlich, sondern auch in der Lage zur „Ermächtigung der kolonialen Autorität" (ebd.: 228). Die Paranoia und die Angst sind es aber, die gleichzeitig diese Autorität in Frage stellen.

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[7] https://bilddunggalerie.wordpress.com/page/474/ (zugegriffen am 16.12.2018)

Brüche und Brüchiges

Im Gegensatz zu Homi Bhabha, hat sich Sigmund Freud mit dem Penis sehr ausführlich beschäftigt. Unter anderem ihm verdankt er seinen Platz in der Moderne. Er wird psychopathologisiert und als Symbol von Männlichkeit und Macht gedeutet. Seine Dysfunktion bedeutete im Umkehrschluss die Dysfunktionalität der Männlichkeit. Freud ist es auch, der den Penisneid erfindet (Friedman 2001: 154). Das Band zwischen Penis und Macht allerdings ist nicht neu, wie ein Blick auf die Begriffsetymologie von „Gemächt" zeigt. Das Wort findet seinen Ursprung im althochdeutschen *gimaht*. Das Präfix *gi-* verstärkt *maht*, also das Vermögen, die Kraft. In der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts wird der Penis konsequenterweise zum Feind der Feminist*innen der Zweiten Welle. Friedman interviewt und zitiert Andrea Dworkin und führt den *Hite Report* von Shere Hite als ersten radikalen Angriff auf die Penis-Fixierung in der Sexualität an (Friedman 2001: 199-152). Die feministische Kritik richtet sich vor allem gegen die dem Phallus eingeschriebene Macht im Patriachat, die zum Zwecke der Unterjochung und der Kontrolle weibliches Verhalten normiert. Die mystische Macht des Penis zu brechen, heißt einen enormen Tabubruch wagen: ihn durch Zurschaustellung zu erniedrigen. Der figurative Penis dient auch heute zuweilen als interventionistische Kritik am virilen Autoritarismus. In Tel Aviv protestierten 2007 queere Aktivitst*innen anlässlich des 40. Jahrestages des Sieges im Sechs-Tage-Krieg gegen israelischen Militarismus und Besatzung – mit einem überdimensionierten pinken Penis.

Abb. 9. "A Salute to the National Erection"[8]

Auch die Aktion der Künstler*innengruppe *Woina* (Krieg) an der Gießerei-Brücke im Zentrum von Sankt Petersburg, direkt gegenüber dem Sitz des Inlandsgeheimdienstes FSB wird als performativer Protest gelesen. Der FBS wurde kurz zuvor von der Duma mit undemokratischen Sondervollmachten ausgestattet.

Abb. 10. Kunstperformance an der Gießerei-Brücke[9]

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[8] https://vimeo.com/38013620 (zugegriffen am 25.01.2019)

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2qZoAozZXM (zugegriffen am 25.01.2019)

In beiden Aktionen wird Autorität durch den Peniswitz ironisiert und damit entmachtet. Die Subversion erfolgt durch die Aneignung seiner Macht durch Objektifizierung. Doch müssen wir Acht geben und – wie Jacques Lacan insistiert - den Penis nicht mit dem Phallus verwechseln (Young 1995: 9), also das Organ mit dem Symbol. Sekundiert wird diese Erkenntnis von der feministischen Sexkolumnistin Susannah Bright. Wobei „sekundieren" wohl hier unpassend wäre. Sagen wir, sie schlägt in eine ähnliche Kerbe (und fällt den Baum).

Penisneid vs. Dildoneid

Unter dem Künstlerinnennamen Susie Sexpert schreibt die Publizistin über Sexualpolitik und Sexualität. Sie gilt als eine der Begründerinnen des sexpositiven Feminismus. In *Best of Susie Sexpert* (2001), einem Ratgeber für lesbische Frauen, antwortet sie auf die Frage einer als Butch identifizierenden Frau, die sich darüber sorgt an Penisneid zu leiden, wenn sie einen Dildo in der Hose trägt: nein das tue sie nicht. Sie hätte höchstens Dildoneid. Ein Dildo sei ein Objekt zum Zwecke des Vergnügens. An einem Penis jedoch hänge noch ein ganzer Mensch. Der Sexpositivismus des Dritte Welle Feminismus in den 1990ern versuchte sich von der Sexualfeindlichkeit vorhergehender Bewegungen abzugrenzen: mit einer expliziten Aufforderung Spielzeuge in die „feministische Selbstliebe" zu integrieren. Aber erst durch Film- und Fernsehproduktionen, wie *Sex and the City*, wurden sie für ein Massenpublikum popularisiert.

Abb. 11. Scene aus "Sex and the City"[10]

Der Vibrator ist mitnichten eine neue Erfindung. Die weibliche Masturbation als Therapie gegen Hysterie der Frau hat seinen Platz im Korpus der Medizin, der Vibrator zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts wird zur dessen mechanisierter Konsequenz, wie Allen und Burridge (2006: 149f) aufzeigen. Neu ist jedoch die Loslösung von pseudomedizischer Pathologisierung. Der enttabuisierte Vibrator ist nicht länger eine medizinische Notwendigkeit hinter verschlossenen Türen, sondern dient der Lust allein und wird veröffentlicht.

Gleichzeitig wird diese Penisfigurine zum Konsumprodukt, zu einem warenförmigen Witz. Das Spiel, verkörpert durch das Spielzeug, bricht mit der Macht des Gemächts und damit das Tabu. Es macht es kontrollierbar, managebar, es verliert seine mystische Potenz. Ein Mechanismus des Spiels ist Verniedlichung durch Objektifizierung; diese Objektifizierung kann Verkleinerung an Materialität und Wert zur Folge haben. Verniedlichung und Verkleinerung als Strategien, um einen Umgang mit bedrohlicher Macht zu finden, beobachten wir auch an anderen touristischen

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[10] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp0Uhv6aC0w (zugegriffen am 25.01.2019)

Kontexten. Wie zum Beispiel an alten Gebäuden, wie den Pyramiden oder dem Eifelturm. Sie werden in Fotografien verkleinert oder zu kleinen Objekten miniaturisiert. Das macht sie handhabbar. Es ist einfacher mit ihrer überdimensionierten Zeitlichkeit und Größe umzugehen, die beängstigend an die eigene winzige Zeit auf Erden erinnern. Sie zu verkleinern, bedeutet sie zu beherrschen, ihre mystische Macht zu kontrollieren und einzudämmen. Durch Imitation und Wiederholung sind sie an vielen touristischen Orten der Welt verfügbar. Den Miniatur-Eifelturm gibt es auch dort zu kaufen, wo es den Besucher*innen vielleicht auf Grund der globalen Ungleichverteilung der Ressource Freizügigkeit kaum möglich ist, das Original selbst zu erleben.

Die historische Stadt Neyshabur im Nordosten Irans suchen Pilger*innen auf dem Weg nach Mashad zum Mausoleum des Imam Reza auf, dem 8. Imam der Zwölferschia, dem zweitwichtigsten schiitischen Pilgerort. In Neyshabur sind auch die Grabstätten der großen Dichter Omar Khayyam und Fariduddin

Abb. 12. Souvenirladen in Neyshabur mit Miniatur-Eifelturm (SZ 2018)

Attar. Hier steht der Eifelturm in niedlicher Proximität zu den Grabmälern der Dichter und den Fußspuren des Imams.

Penis und Zivilisation

Doch kehren wir zum Anfang zurück, dem Beitrag auf zankyou. Oder besser: zu dessen Ende. Das vermeintliche Verbot der Penis-Antennen stellt sich als Aprilscherz heraus. Peripetisch wird nun Werbung für Hochzeitsreisen nach Mallorca angezeigt. Ob nun der kommodifizierte Penis im Tourismus-Kontext zu sexueller Befreiung führt oder patriarchale Ordnungen verstetig, weiß ich immer noch nicht. Und zugegeben, das Penismotiv und seine Semiotik, die Miniaturisierung erhabener Gebäude und das koloniale Stereotyp sind doch recht inkommensurabel. Doch über die Achse globaler Kapitalismus ließe sich eine trichotomische Operation anstellen. Durch Entmachtung und Aneignung wird der einst bedrohliche Phallus zu einem Witz, einem Spielzeug verkleinert. Globalisierte europäische Diskurse finden ihren Niederschlag in touristische Kontexte und dienen auch dazu einen Umgang mit dem exotisierten, rassistisch aufgeladenen Gemächt des Anderen zu finden. Es ist schwer am Ballerman zu sein und den Penis nicht zu treffen. Sei es in sexuellen Beziehungen, im linguistischen Habitus oder in seiner figurativen Form, wie die non-verbale kommunikative Situation im Megapark, die ich anfangs beschrieb. In einer Bar in Deutschland passiert es wohl selten, dass

man von einer Penis-Wasserpistole vollgespritzt wird. Es fielen keine Worte, es brauchte auch keiner Worte. (Er hätte dabei vielleicht grölen oder singen können.) An diesem Ort wirkt dieser Akt mit diesem Objekt ritualisiert. Der Agent muss sein Handeln nicht erklären, da es eingeschrieben ist in den Raum als regulierter Exzess, als regulierte Form der Ekstase. Der figurative Penis als Konsumprodukt auf Mallorca ist platziert in einem geordneten Raum für Enthemmung und Zügellosigkeit und stabilisiert damit das zivilisierte, gemäßigte Selbst in heimischen Gefilden.

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14

Breaking taboos in doing fieldwork:
You never know whether cannibalism
and homicide are appropriate topics

14

Breaking taboos in doing fieldwork: You never know whether cannibalism and homicide are appropriate topics

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1. Introduction

In 2016 and 2017 I taught African linguistics and German as a foreign language at the University of Kisangani (UNIKIS) in DR Congo as a visiting professor.[1] I used my spare time to carry out fieldwork on Zande language with native speakers some of who were students at the University, and some of whom worked in the administration. Two Zande stories recorded by Evans-Pritchard should be used as a basis for questions. These stories in which homicide and cannibalism play a role were highly appreciated by Zande language consultants in Central African Republic, where I had used the subjects in preceding years in order to analyse complex grammatical constructions. While I expected that speakers of Zande in Kisangani would also love these stories, one of them was fairly unhappy with the topics,

homicide and *cannibalism*. Furthermore, I realized that I had not chosen the right language consultants for interviews on the university campus. Both the topics of the stories and the choice of language consultants meant breaking taboos.

In the present paper I want to discuss how I broke some taboos and why there were no ways to avoid this. Taboos were broken because I did not know about them, and when I learned about them, I had no chance to modify my research and make it appropriate.

The paper is organised as follows: My use of the term taboo is discussed in Section 2. Section 3 outlines the linguistic situation in Kisangani and the taboo-regulated difficulties to find speakers of Ubangian languages. The taboos concerning the topics of the given working texts are discussed in Section 4. Conclusions are drawn in Section 5.

2. Taboo

More than a hundred years after James Cook gave the first documentation of the word *tabu* in 1777 (Imber 2014: vii), the first scientific investigation of the subject 'taboo' was done by Sir James Frazer when editing the respective article (Frazer 1898) for the ninth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (1875-89) (Radcliffe-Brown 1952). Frazer, who distinguishes between tabooed persons, tabooed acts, and tabooed things, says with regard to tabooed items that "taboos act, so to say, as electrical insulators to preserve the spiritual force with which [these items] are charged from suffering or inflicting harm by contact with the outer world" (Frazer 1911: 224).

Beattie (1968: 216) still distinguishes between breaking normal interdictions, the sanctions of which are known by experience and the breaking of taboos which are sanctioned by ritual. According to him "we do not say that it is taboo to drive through a red traffic light".

While in anthropology taboo was for a long time defined as "consecrated, inviolable, forbidden, unclean or cursed" because of religious reasons, in daily life the difference between taboo and interdiction has become blurred, and taboo is often used as a synonym for "forbidden" or "socially inappropriate". Mary Douglas' (1979: 73) definition of 'taboo' reflects the current use of the term: "ban or prohibition", adding that the way the word is used in English and other European languages does not have much to do with religion, but denotes "a rule which has no meaning, or one which cannot be explained." Taboo systems uphold cultural systems, which are patterns of values and norms (Douglas 1979: 72), and breaking taboos entails social punishment, which may not be outspoken, but consist in the reactions by other members of the society, e.g. in keeping silence about the matter.

We may conclude that the range of notions of taboo goes from 'primal prohibition' as strictly defined by anthropologists like Frazer and Beattie and psychologists like Freud (1974) to the personal expectations of individuals that in a given place others refrain from doing specific things which they may do at other places. Inappropriateness is a matter of degree, and despite the given statements which reflect the use of 'taboo' in the notion 'unwanted or not tolerated way of doing things', a given behaviour is normally considered breaking a taboo only when it is socially highly inappropriate, e.g. walking naked in public, eating human flesh. In such cases the transgression of a taboo-border tends to be verbalized without

using the word 'taboo' ("das geht gar nicht!", "this cannot be tolerated!", "c'est impossible!") and also without giving the reason why. Quite often, such criticism is instead communicated to persons who are likely to agree the rejection of the behavior, than to the persons concerned. The higher ranking a taboo breaker is, the less likely he will be verbally corrected, and an uneasy silence may prevail which the taboo breaker may eventually sense.

In this text the term 'taboo' is used first in the sense of socially inappropriate behaviour, which threatens social stratification and which require different patterns of behaviour of people belonging to the different strata concerned. Breaking such taboos means disregarding given power relations (Metz-Göckel et al. 2015: 10). Although nobody has defined these rules, and nobody talks about them, the rules are obeyed without problems by both sides. It applies to the choice of language consultants and collaboration with them in order to produce a publication. Secondly, the term is used with regard to cultural values which are valid for everybody in the same way and which require the same behavioural restrictions, such as the taboos of homicide and cannibalism, the topics of stories which I had prepared as a basis of interviews about grammatical constructions. In both cases, taboos are double prohibitions, i.e. they must neither be broken, nor must the respective taboo breaches be talked about. Breaking a taboo may lead to social exclusion, i.e. while the effect of breaking a norm may teach the person concerned how to do better the function of a taboo is sanction (Metz-Göckel et al. 2015: 11).

The silence about taboos makes it difficult for an outsider to know and obey the respective rules.

Breaking taboos in context of German and European universities, is topic of a special volume (Kamphans et al. 2015) in which *sexual harassment*, *bullying*, *grade inflation* and *taboos in the governance of universities* are discussed. All of these items are also investigated in other publications, but as criminal acts, this one being to the best of my knowledge the only one that has the word taboo in its title. Investigations on similar taboo breaches in African universities are likewise discussed under the name of the respective criminal offence, e.g., sexual harassment (Norton Rose Fulbright 2013) or racism, victimization and bullying (UNISA 2018).

If in a given situation someone is afraid of unintentionally having broken a taboo and willing to repair the situation s/he might have no chance to do so because nobody comments about the taboo breaking, and nobody will explain why people react in given ways. When the taboo-breaker finally recognizes the situation, the best solution might be to go on, in order to avoid the confronting fact that everybody is even more at unease, the very solution of the Emperor in Andersen's famous tale (Andersen 1935-37).

Social inappropriateness of behavior is gradable and only serious cases are considered breakings of taboos, but the borderline is difficult to define. The use of the term taboo shows also degrees of applicability. In Europe, discussions about taboos and taboo breaches are fairly common in the mass media, e.g.: „Rote Ampel überfahren ist kein Tabu mehr"[2] (MPU), or „Burka-Verbot: Österreich macht Verschleie-

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[2] "Failure to observe a red traffic light is no longer a taboo". (translation HP)

rung zum Tabu"[3] (Hofer & Siebenhaar 2017). Here taboo is, however, not used according to the definition by Douglas, but in the sense of legal prohibition. In colloquial speech, the term is often used in statements where rather personal attitudes play a role than taboos in the sense defined above. If somebody declares, e.g.: *in this house smoking/meat/sugar is taboo* or *in my house dogs are taboo,* they underline their personal rejection of consuming tobacco, meat or sugar or of having dogs around, but do not refer to a general rule, although agreement with ideologies of certain groups may be expressed. Breaking such house rules is considered by some people breaking a taboo, while others regard it rather as a case of impoliteness or bad behavior.

It is noteworthy that in written reports or dialogues about taboo breaches which seriously violate moral or ethical values of the society, e.g. child abduction, the word taboo is normally not used, because what imports here is the degree of criminality and its correlation to the severity of penalty.

With regard to DR Congo, the range of topics called taboo appears much more restricted than in Europe. It comprises primarily aspects of sexuality, be it homosexuality,[4] violation of women and men,[5] menstruation,[6] AIDS[7], but also often tattooes[8] and sorcery.[9] These taboos are discussed, however, more on western than on Congolese websites. In Congolese texts the term taboo is mostly used with regard to the overcoming taboos in sexual education[10] and with regard to political discussions[11], where "sans tabou" means 'without secrecies'. Cannibalism with regard to DR Congo does not normally belong to the topics discussed in the internet. If at all, it is a topic of anthropological studies (Travis-Henikoff 2008). And when I asked people about it, they would evasively respond that they had no personal experience, that it may have existed in the past, but does not exist anymore. Homicide, however, is discussed openly when there has been an incidence of manslaughter and people express their dismay with it, as I could observe when in 2016 a taxi-driver was killed in Kisangani.

Respect of hierarchies is highly important in the whole country and the respective rules are learned reinforced and internalized within the family. For foreigners it is often difficult

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[3] "Burka-ban: Austria makes wearing a veil a taboo". (translation HP) (accessed 28.02.2019)

[4] "I even managed to negotiate that two men can stay in one room; a taboo in Congo", (http://www.followtheshadow.de/crossing-congo-the-stream/, (accessed 28.02.2019).

[5] "Sexual violence is a taboo in Congo" (https://jeppeschilder.com/stories-series-jeppe-schilder-photography/2016/1/24/sexual-violence-is-a-taboo-in-congo, accessed 28.02.2019).

[6] "Menstrual hygiene in the DRC: a taboo?" (https://ponabana.com/en/menstrual-hygiene-sin/, accessed 28.02.2019).

[7] "Il ne faut plus que le VIH-SIDA soit un tabou en République démocratique du Congo" (https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/j-ai-contamin-plusieurs-personnes-du-sida-par-ignorance, accessed 28.02.2019).

[8] "While tattoos are generally considered a taboo in Congolese society, the designs share the stories of their bearers", (http://www.francescavolpi.com/tatoos-democratic-republic-of-congo, accessed 28.02.2019).

[9] "La sorcellerie est un sujet tabou en Afrique", (https://www.afrik.com/la-sorcellerie-une-realite-africaine, accessed 28.02.2019).

[10] "L'objectif a été de briser le tabou qui existe entre les parents et les jeunes adolescents sur l'éducation sexuelle", (http://www.adiac-congo.com/content/sante-de-la-reproduction-les-eleves-sensibilises-leducation-sexuelle-complete-51108, accessed 28.02.2019).

[11] "Sans tabou, Alain Akouala a répondu à la question sur la transparence de l'environnement des affaires au Congo", (http://adiac-congo.com/content/forum-des-pme-accueil-favorable-par-les-chefs-dentreprise-du-projet-de-zones-economiques, accessed 28.02.2019).

to know such rules, which are normally not explicitly taught, and one needs good friends to correct inappropriate behavior and explain how to avoid breaking these rules in a given situation. For example, one easily gets the impression that whenever people hear music they dance to the rhythm or at least shake their head, or move a hand or a leg. One easily overlooks, however, that certain people do not do that. In the eyes of academics, for example, any dance-like movement outside a dancing event is not appropriate behavior for university teachers, "ce n'est pas professoral", and should be avoided in any case.

3. The linguistic situation in Kisangani

In Kisangani, Kiswahili and Lingala are by far the most important languages, in particular for oral communication. The third language is French, the primary medium of written communication,[12] basically the only medium in higher levels of administration and the only medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education. In the city centre, French is also an important language for oral communication in Catholic and Protestant Churches, it is used in hospitals, on the market and in shops, in particular when talking to Europeans. Occasionally Arabic is used by Arab traders, and English is used by people from oversea and on the university campus by students who are practicing. One does, however, not hear Ubangian languages when walking along the streets or on the markets, and even in the residential neighbourhoods they are rarely heard.

Many people have no good competence of their ethnic languages but are only fluent in Swahili or Lingala.

The chance to teach at the University of Kisangani (UNIKIS) was attractive to me because I expected to find speakers of Ubangian languages in the town with whom I could work on their languages. Before my first visit, colleagues had told me that in Kisangani there live many speakers of Zande, Nzakara, Ngbaka, Mbane and other Ubangian languages. Even among the university students there would be numerous candidates and whom they could introduce to me.

But when I arrived not a single one was introduced to me, and for several weeks I could not find any, and the colleagues could not help me. It took me some time to get an idea why it was so difficult to introduce to me speakers of Ubangian languages.

3.1 University students

Students of linguistics are encouraged to write their B.A. and M.A. theses about their ethnic tongues, a situation which made me look forward to get data from such theses and their authors. This also did not lead to good results, because the number of students of linguistics is not high and most of them are speakers of Bantu languages. Like other inhabitants of Kisangani many students do not feel competent in their ethnic[13] tongues, but have Kiswahili or Lingala as their first language. In their theses, they prefer to write about these two languages or about French or English. It fol-

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[12] In the churches, Lingala and Swahili prayer books are used, but while people read texts written in these languages, they normally do not write such texts.

[13] They call the language of their home villages or their forefathers their ethnic languages even if they do not speak them.

lows that there is only a very small number of theses on non-Bantu languages[14], and most of the authors had left university and Kisangani and could not be contacted.[15]

Students of linguistics and their teachers agree that doing proper fieldwork means to go to rural areas and work with language consultants in the villages, preferably with old persons who memorize linguistic forms which the younger generation has forgotten. It is not quite clear where this concept of the ideal linguistic consultant originates which was already rejected by Jaberg & Jud (1928: 241) when they began to work on the *Linguistic and Ethnographic Atlas of Italy and southern Switzerland*.[16] Its general acceptance at Kisangani explains why only students who have the financial means to go to their home village during holidays and do fieldwork there are prepared to work on their ethnic languages. Even students who claim to be competent speakers of their ethnic language are reluctant to rely on their linguistic competence for their theses. When in 2016 I found a young man who had written a B.A. thesis on his mother tongue Mbane (Kimanga), he was ready to be my language consultant on condition that he could go to his village, use my questionnaire and present the answers of the villagers to me. After some discussions, he agreed to be my language consultant, but with much reluctance. I had the impression that his reluctance resulted not really from lack of linguistic competence but rather from the fact that he as a young person and a trained linguist living

in Kisangani was not the right person to give information on the Mbane language.

Of course, in courses on linguistic methodologies students learn that when writing a grammar or analysing a specific linguistic problem they should not rely on information given by only one single speaker and – more important – not rely only on their own intuition. Only forms and constructions given by several competent speakers should be considered correct. But they were not taught to completely distrust their own linguistic competence. This means that they obey a rule which in the sense of Douglas (1979: 72) has no origin and cannot be explained, since nobody has formulated it. When asking students of linguistics to work as language consultants for me I had the impression of obliging them to break a taboo and give information without having sufficient competence.

3.2 Administrative staff

People working in the administration of UNIKIS and the professors cooperate without problems on administrative matters, they greet each other in a friendly way, but they don't socialize. The professors have definitely a higher social status. The organization of the main building reflects the social structure of the scientific and non-scientific university personnel. The administration is located in the ground level, some professors of the faculty of humanities have their offices in the first and

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[14] Prof. Arthur Cimwanga kindly gave me access to the theses written at the Faculty of Humanities of the last ten years.

[15] Other than professors, administrative and cleaning personnel only registered students may enter the campus of UNIKIS. As soon as they have their exams, they are not allowed to go there.

16 They explicitly state that they do not want to document an 'original' dialect, but the current dialect with all mixtures and infiltrations, since there is neither a genuine nor a homogenous dialect.

the second floors[17] and the rector's office is in the third floor.

At the same time, the people working in that building and in the rest of the university are convinced that all people are equal and have the same rights, and idea which is occasionally expressed in conversations. They obviously do not experience a cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) between the observable social stratification and the knowledge that all people are equal because the social stratification as such is never discussed and would probably be denied if somebody asks about it. Other reasons are made responsible for the given organisation of the floors and also for the communicative behaviour, e.g. that the administration employees have different jobs. "Ce sont nos agents", was a professor's explanation to my question why members of the two groups don't socialize. The fear to break the taboo of disturbing the established hierarchical order was quite probably what made it impossible for professors to find a qualified language consultant or me in the administration.

In order to do so it would have been necessary for my colleagues to interview a number of administration employees, each of whom would have to be asked whether they master their ethnic languages well enough for the respective job and whether s/he would be available during my planned visit. Such questions, in particular those concerning the linguistic competences, are normally only addressed to persons to whom there is a close relationship, which explains why my colleagues were shy to find language consultants in the administration. Furthermore, since people without experience as language consultants cannot know whether they will be good in that job or not, it is no considered appropriate to confront them with such questions. A third reason is that it is not easy to select one person among the administration employees for a job and leave the others behind, who might consider the choice unfair.

The taboo preventing a professor from finding a language informant on the campus for was finally overcome when two of my students found a Zande speaker, Pepe,[18] who worked in the administration, and introduced him to me. The fact that they are not part of the hierarchy of the university personnel facilitated the matter. Students have to consult the people in the administration in a similar way as they have to consult their professors when they need assistance or advice. Of course, asking one of the persons in the administration whether he or she would be interested to work as language consultant for a visiting professor is not a typical request for students, but it is a possible one when they have been sent by a professor. Professors can send students with different tasks to any institution within the university.

The question arises whether I could have avoided this taboo-breach. I had already begun to cooperate with Pepe when I realized that some people were uneasy with my doing so, although nobody would make any comment. Even when I began to become aware that my cooperation was highly unusual, I asked Pepe and also some professors, whether it was inappropriate to go on or whether I should stop. The answers were short "no, no, everything is fine, you may go on", but it was clear that this

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[17] Other professors have their offices in other buildings.

[18] For protection of privacy the correct name is not given.

topic was not one for a discussion, but rather one of silence. The students, who assisted me, did not see any problem, but during the first days I felt a bit like the emperor without clothes when I went to work with Pepe in his office for interviews, each time going past other administrative employees who would not comment on such unusual behaviour. The way they greeted me indicated that they were happy with the situation.

4. Texts with inappropriate topics

Pepe was quite interested to give information about his language, but he was not the person to give answers to a questionnaire concerning verbal conjugations, relative clauses or possessive or other grammatical constructions. He would prefer to read texts and have them recorded in audio-files, and he agreed to read two texts documented by Evans-Pritchard (1956, 1965). The first of these texts is about Zande cannibalism and the second about a man-killer, two stories which I had chosen because the speakers of Zande in Central African Republic (CAR) with whom I had worked five years earlier liked them very much.

The texts of these two stories which I showed Pepe were accompanied by glosses and translations in French. The printouts had been prepared in Germany before I went to Congo because it is very difficult to get texts printed in Kisangani. The glosses and the translations made reading cumbersome for Pepe and I removed them and had made new printouts. Now that Pepe could read more easily, he realized problems with the spelling and wanted the letter <r> to be replaced in all instances by <l>, and the script should be in a bigger font since he was short-sighted and had

no glasses. After all these changes were made, he was unhappy with the content of the stories, accepting neither homicide nor cannibalism as appropriate topics with regard to the Zande.

I explained that Evans-Pritchard (E.P.), editor of these stories, was most probably fooled because in those days. The interest of anthropologists focused on cannibalism and homicide, that the consultants would rather tell what E.P. wanted to hear than what was to the truth. This explanation was of no comfort to Pepe. He apparently realized that these stories had become a dangerous reality in themselves, since they had been published in Europe and were taken by me first to CAR and now to DR Congo, a reality which did not reflect the truth but which did harm to the Zande people. For him, cannibalism and homicide, in particular with regard to Zande people, were not possible topics of a tale. It is likely that he had been uneasy with the two topics from the very beginning, but that for several days he had been reluctant to say so. Unfortunately, my stay in Kisangani was almost over and there was no chance to prepare other texts by Evans-Pritchard in a similar way and have them printed. Pepe continued to read the stories and explain the structures, but he repeatedly expressed his frustration with the content.

After the Zande language consultants in Central African Republic had been so happy with the same stories I was at a loss and talked about that experience with an anthropologist. He laughed out loud and said: "No, no, it is not the Zande who practiced cannibalism in those days. We, the Mangbetu, were cannibals." For him talking about cannibalism, even with regard to his own ethnic group, was quite obviously not a taboo. But it must be taken into

consideration that as an anthropologist he has learned to distance himself from being affected by such taboo breaches.

The question arises again, whether could I have avoided breaking that taboo and in what way. Under the given constellations this would have been quite difficult. For lack of printing facilities it was not possible to prepare other stories, and to give up the project would not only have destroyed my own plans, but also the hopes and ambitions of Pepe, who for a number of reasons had a serious interest in working on his language. It appeared best to continue our work as if that problem would not exist. Pepe's trade-off consisted in providing two highly appropriate texts which were added in the publication (Degbe et al. 2018).

5. Conclusion

Although in DR Congo the term taboo is used less frequently that in Europe there is some similarity in the use and not-use of the term. It is actually used mostly with regard to minor taboos, and 'without taboo' means 'without secrecies'. With regard to major taboos like violation, homicide, etc. the respective terms are used.

To do linguistic research on vernacular languages in an urban centre like Kisangani means breaking a methodological taboo, because the allegedly best variants of the respective langue, which is mastered by old speakers in the villages are neglected. Of course, this taboo might be overcome by doing research in the respective villages, at least theoretically. The argument that my research on Mbane was aimed at speakers living in Kisangani, who are not longer fluent was difficult to understand. It does not make sense when

proper fieldwork means to make interviews with old persons and look for forms which are obsolete. In the end we had some sessions from which I could elicit data, but we were both unhappy: he with his tabooed role as a language consultant and I with the fact that he was not more relaxed in providing data.

Finding competent speakers is difficult because people may know the ethnic affiliation of others but they usually have no idea about their linguistic competence in the mother tongue. Within the university social stratification between professors and people working in the administration makes it basically impossible, that the former can find potential language consultants. Student can be of help and solve the problem.

Although one can never foresee their reactions with certainty, it is useful to supply the language consultant with enjoying stories. It appears however wise, to avoid stories on cannibalism and manslaughter with regard to the ethnic group of the language consultant.

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[19] This website provides information about trainings for drivers in Germany who want to regain their revoked driving licence.