African Voices in Islamic Manuscripts from Mali

The first workshop of the DFG-funded project “African voices in Islamic manuscripts from Mali: documenting and exploring African languages in Arabic script (Ajami)”

In conjunction with the meeting of the “Old Mande Research Network”

Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Warburgstraße 26

31 October – 1 November 2018

Wednesday, 31 October (room 2002)

9.00 am Welcome coffee
9.15 am Introduction: Dmitry Bondarev, Hamburg

09.30 am Samby Khalil Magassouba, Bamako and Djibril Dramé, Hamburg
Analysis of a Soninke Ajami poem

10.15 am Hamadou Boly, Bamako
Une étude analytique de la poésie du cheick Mouhammad Abdoulaye Souadou

11.00 am Coffee break

11.30 am Lameen Souag, Paris
Preliminary notes on a page of premodern Songhay and Tamasheq poetry from Timbuktu

12.15 am Ismaila Zangou Barazi and Sidi Imam Miga, Bamako
La pensée lexique dans les manuscrits de Tomboctou (presentation in Arabic)

1.00 pm Lunch

3.00 pm Darya Ogorodnikova, Hamburg
The scribes of the Soninke Islamic manuscripts and their networks

3.45 pm Djibril Dramé, Hamburg
Soninke of the Islamic Manuscripts: A comparative overview of a written register and modern (spoken) Soninke.

Thursday, 1 November (room 2002)

10.00 am Coleman Donaldson, Hamburg
Preliminary ethnographic and historical insights regarding language, literacy and scholarship amongst the Jula of the former Kong Empire

10.45 am Coffee break

11.15 am Artem Davydov, Saint Petersburg
An example of the missionary use of the Arabic script for Guinean Maninka

12.00 pm Round-table discussion

=================================================================
Participants: Sidi Bamadio (Bamako), Ismaila Zangou Barazi (Bamako), Hamadou Boly (Bamako), Dmitry Bondarev (Hamburg), Alphadi Cheikna Bouker (Bamako), Artem Davydov (Saint Petersburg), Mohamed Diagayeté (Timbuktu/Bamako), Nikolay Dobronravin (Saint Petersburg), Coleman Donaldson (Hamburg), Djibril Dramé, (Hamburg), Imam Shettima Habib (Maiduguri), Abdel Kader Haidara (Bamako/Timbuktu), Philip J. Jaggar (London), Shamil Jeppie (Cape Town), Samby Khalil Magassouba (Bamako), Darya Ogorodnikova (Hamburg), Maria Luisa Russo (Hamburg/Bamako), Abande Mohammed Shettima (Hamburg), Lameen Souag (Paris), Banzoumana Traoré (Bamako), Saadou Traoré (Timbuktu).
Abstracts

Ismaila Zangou Barazi et Sidi Imam Miga, Bamako
La pensée lexique dans les manuscrits de Tomboc Tou

Hamadou Boly, Bamako
Une étude analytique de la poésie du cheick Mouhammad Abdoulaye Souadou

Artem Davydov, Saint Petersburg
An example of the missionary use of the Arabic script for Guinean Maninka

Coleman Donaldson, Hamburg
Preliminary ethnographic and historical insights regarding language, literacy and scholarship amongst the Jula of the former Kong Empire

In my talk I will discuss the Arabic-based writing system used by SIM and Pioneer Bible Translators for Guinean Maninka. The range of topics I am going to cover includes the grapheme inventory and its connections with segmental phonology and tonology of Maninka, orthography and word division. A comparison with Roman-based Manding systems and with N’ko will be made.

In this talk, I introduce my recently re-opened research project about language, literacy and scholarship amongst the Jula community of the former Kong Empire in southwestern Burkina Faso and northeastern Côte d’Ivoire. I begin by presenting my foray into the topic via Ajami literacy practices that I stumbled upon when visiting my former Peace Corps village in 2012. Following some contextual and theoretical preliminaries regarding the Kong Jula network, linguistic registers and the Islamic healing tradition, I introduce my library- and field-based investigations conducted since arriving in Hamburg in 2018. Next, I discuss specific preliminary insights and holes of knowledge regarding 1) the history of the Kong network and its clerical tradition; 2) the current state of Jula Islamic scholarship au sense large (viz. schools, scribes and healing practices); 3) distinct Jula registers tied variously to Islam, Kong, Christianity, and changing ethnic relations in southwestern Burkina Faso. I conclude with potential paths for future research down the road.
Djibril Drame, Hamburg

Soninke of the Islamic Manuscripts:
A comparative overview of a written register and modern (spoken) Soninke

The written register used in various Soninke manuscripts differs in many ways from the modern Soninke spoken varieties. This presentation is a preliminary comparative overview of phonological, morphological and syntactic features identified in the written Soninke and in the Soninke dialects. The comparison will be based on the data from ten manuscripts, previously analysed by Darya Ogorodnikova, and four dialects of Soninke, such as Gidimaxa, Gajaaga, Jaahunu and Kaedi.

Samby Khalil Magassouba, Bamako and Djibril Dramé, Hamburg

Analysis of a Soninke Ajami poem

This presentation deals with a Soninke Ajami poem about fish, water and fire. The fish is very strong in the water and becomes very weak while on fire. The fire cannot resist the force of the water. This poem is used to guide people to do good things and be humble in life. In the first part of the presentation, we will introduce the poem and play the recording as sung by the author. In the second part we will analyse and explain the poem using some known literary sources.

Darya Ogorodnikova, Hamburg

The scribes of the Soninke Islamic manuscripts and their networks

West African Islamic manuscripts with the main texts in Arabic and annotations in Soninke were most probably used for educational purposes. It is evidenced by references in the margins, indicating teachers, students and also some scholarly centres located in the greater Senegambia region and Guinea. This information allows us to understand the links between the manuscripts and to reconstruct the networks of scholars involved in the production and circulation of these manuscripts. I will present preliminary results of this reconstruction and discuss some linguistic features of Soninke used as the language of annotations. I will demonstrate that scribal choices of spelling were possibly conditioned by specific linguistic background of scribes and scholars.

Lameen Souag, Paris

Preliminary notes on a page of premodern Songhay and Tamasheq poetry from Timbuktu

Among catalogued non-Arabic materials at the Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Learning and Islamic Research, one fragment consisting of a single page stands out in several respects. Its format is quite unusual among West African Ajami materials in the prominence given to the Ajami material: it consists of two finely calligraphed non-Arabic poems, one in Koyra Chiini (Songhay) and one in Tamasheq (Tuareg Berber), with Arabic marginal and interlinear commentaries explaining the first of them. Linguistically, unlike most material examined, it seems to reflect a relatively early source: both the Koyra Chiini and the Tamasheq poems show archaisms predicted for earlier stages of the languages but unattested in 20th century materials. This presentation will explore the content of this fragment and its consequences for our understanding of the linguistic history of the region.