

Gender system variability across Fulfulde dialects

Arguments for a long time isolation of the Guinean variety

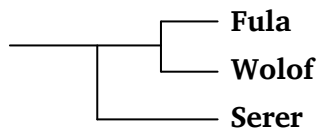
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1 Introduction

1.1 Basic information on Fulfulde¹

- **Classification:** Niger-Congo > Atlantic-Congo > Atlantic > Northern > Senegambian > Fulani-Wolof > Fula (Lewis 2009)



- SVO
- Head-initial
- **21-24 agreement classes** (*'noun classes'*): Agreement between the noun and definite articles, demonstratives, adjectives, numerals and pronouns
- **Verbal morphology:**

(1) **stem**–(derivational suffix_n)–**TAM**–(subject pronoun)–(IO pronoun)–(DO pronoun)

- Verb paradigms are classified whether as perfective or imperfective; there are **3 perfective** paradigms vs. **5 imperfective** paradigms²
- **Consonant mutation:**

(2) GUINEA

a.	fell-o	b.	pell-e
	hill-9		hill-3
	'hill'		'hills'

[Balde & Leroy 2002: 235]

1.2 Geographical extension

- Fulfulde has around **13 million speakers** in **18 African countries** (Lewis 2009)

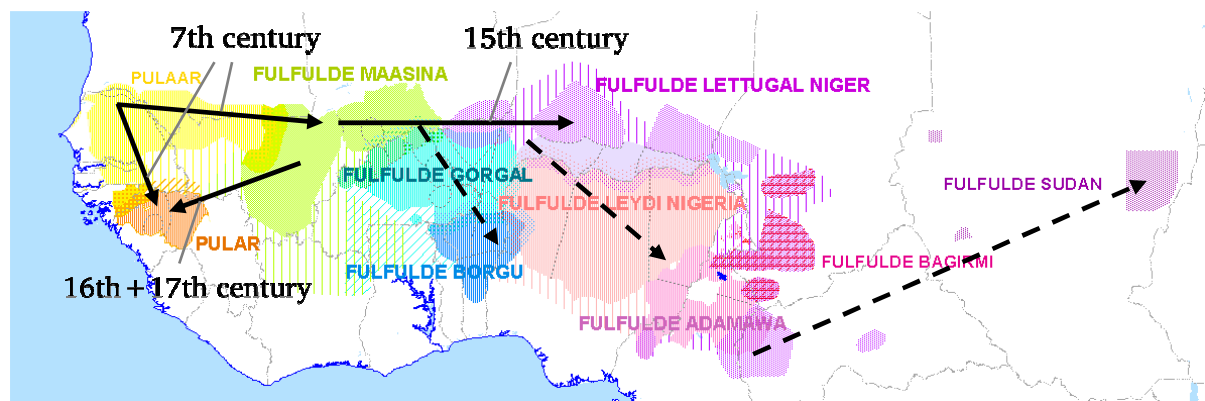
¹ This work is based on my PhD research on Information Structure in Fulfulde, which is realized in affiliation to the Integrated Graduate School in the SFB 632 'Information Structure' and is funded by the DFG.

² The asymmetry of 3 vs. 5 paradigms is due to the fact that in the traditional Fulfulde literature, moods as imperative and subjunctive are part of the imperfective paradigm.

- Harrison (2003) groups subdialects according to **areas of clear communication and shared socioethnic identity**; for this presentation, I will consider the following dialects:

Pulaar	Senegal	<i>Sylla (1982)</i>
Pular	Guinea	<i>Diallo (2000)</i>
Fulfulde Maasina	Mali	<i>Gajdos (2004)</i>
Fulfulde Leydi Nigeria	Nigeria	<i>Jungraithmayr & Abu-Manga (1989)</i>
Fulfulde Adamawa	Cameroon	<i>Klingenheben (1963)</i>

- **Origin:** Senegal/Mauretania
- **7th century:** migration eastwards to Mali and southwards to Gambia and Guinea
- **15th century:** migration towards Niger (and further eastwards)
- **During the 16th and 17th century:** groups from Mali migrated again to Guinea (Diallo 2001)



Map 1: Migration directions of the Fulbe³

1.3 The hypothesis

Hypothesis: The Guinean dialect was over many centuries nearly isolated from the other dialects and thus preserved older forms (Mukarovsky 1962, Gajdos 2004).

- This hypothesis seems to be proven by the missing consonant mutation in plural verb forms in the Guinean dialect, which developed in other dialects analogue to the singular/plural nominal forms (Mukarovsky 1962, Gajdos 2004):

(3)	SENEGAL		
a.	o	yah-ii	b. ɓe njah-ii
	3S	go-PFV	3P go-PFV
		‘s/he went’	‘they went’

³ The map is adapted from Harrison (2003), arrows and indications of centuries have been inserted by myself.

GUINEA

c.	o	yah-ii	d.	be	yah-ii
	3S	go-PFV		3P	go-PFV
		's/he went'			'they went'

[cf. Sylla 1982: 132, Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 36]

- But both – the innovated consonant mutation in plural verb forms and its non-existence – are found in both Eastern and Western dialects (Ziegelmeier 2008), that's why this doesn't seem to be an appropriate indicator for a long isolation of the Guinean dialect

⇒ In this presentation, I want to take a look at the gender system of the above mentioned dialects to try to point out resemblances/differences and to find arguments for and against a long time isolation of the Guinean dialect

2 Gender⁴ in the Fulfulde of Fuuta Jaloo (Guinea)

2.1 Agreement and head noun classes

- There are **24 agreement classes** (17 singular classes, 4 plural classes, 2 singularia tantum and 1 paucal) in which nouns can be classified
- The criterion for a noun to enter into a certain class is first of all a **semantic** one (human/non-human, length, diminutive etc.)
- The agreement class is usually overtly marked by a **suffix** (which occurs in up to 4 degrees⁵) on the noun:

(4)	a.	taab- al	ngal	b.	laaw- ol	ngol
		table-11	DEF.11		street-14	DEF.14
		'the table'			'the street'	[Balde & Leroy 2002: 35]

- Of the overall 78 suffixes there are **only 7 morphologically identical** ones which occur in more than one class, e.g. the suffix *-al*:

(5)	a.	taab- al	ngal	b.	kos- al	kal
		table-11	DEF.11		milk-19	DEF.19
		'the table'			'the little of milk'	[Balde & Leroy 2002: 34f.]

⁴ The terminology is based on Corbett (1991).

⁵ E.g. the 4 degrees of class 11 are *-al*, *-wal*, *-gal* and *-ngal*.

- Nouns **without** any morphological agreement class marker (e.g. proper names, generic nouns, loan words, kinship terms) belong usually to the human singular class 1:

(6)	a.	taanira	on	b.	oto	on
		grandchild.1	DEF.1		car.1	DEF.1
		‘the grandchild’			‘the car’	

[Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 15, 25]

- There are only 3 **exceptions** to this rule which are the lexemes *maafe* ‘sauce’, *fojje* ‘millet’ and *mbaye* ‘manioc’; they belong to the very restricted class 18
- Lexemes can switch from one class to another by exchanging the agreement marker if semantic changes should be expressed (e.g. *cow*, *big cow*)

⇒ **There are 24 agreement classes and 25 head noun classes** (24 agreement classes with an overt class marker suffix + 1 head noun class for nouns without an overt suffix) in the Fulfulde of Fuuta Jaloo

2.2 Agreement of depending elements

Depending elements which have to agree with the agreement class of the noun are:

1. DEFINITE AND DEMONSTRATIVE ARTICLES

(7)	a.	suu-du	ndun	b.	nduu	suu-du
		house-7	DEF.7		DEM.7	house-7
		‘the house’			‘this house’	

[Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 58]

2. ADJECTIVES

(8)	Mido	maar-i	gerto-gal	dane-wal.
	1s	have-PFV	chicken-11	white-11
	‘I have a white chicken.’			

[cf. Balde & Leroy 2002: 58]

3. NUMERALS (‘HOW MANY?’, CARDINAL AND ORDINAL NUMBERS)

(9)	Ko	duuβ-i	jelu	o	mar-i?
	TF	year-4	how.many.4	3S	have-PFV
	‘How old is he?’				

[Baldé, Caudill & Diallo 2000: 15]

(10) ⁶	a.	pay-koy	did-oy	b.	suu-du	did-aβ-e-ru
		child-22	two-22		house-7	two-ORD-GV-7
		‘two children’			‘the second house’	

⁶ Examples without a source are created by myself with native speakers of the Guinean dialect.

4. PRONOUNS (SUBJECT/OBJECT/EMPHATIC/POSSESSIVE/RELATIVE/INTERROGATIVE/ALLIATIVE)

(11) Ko **ngee** nag-**ge** baale-**we** nawn-i. Ko baree-ru
 TF DEM.8 cow-8 black-8 be.sick-PFV TF dog-7

ndun ηatt-i-**nge**. Koy-ngal **magge** ngal no wul-i,
 DEF.7 bite-PFV-8 leg-11 POSS.8 DEF.11 AUX be.warm-PFV

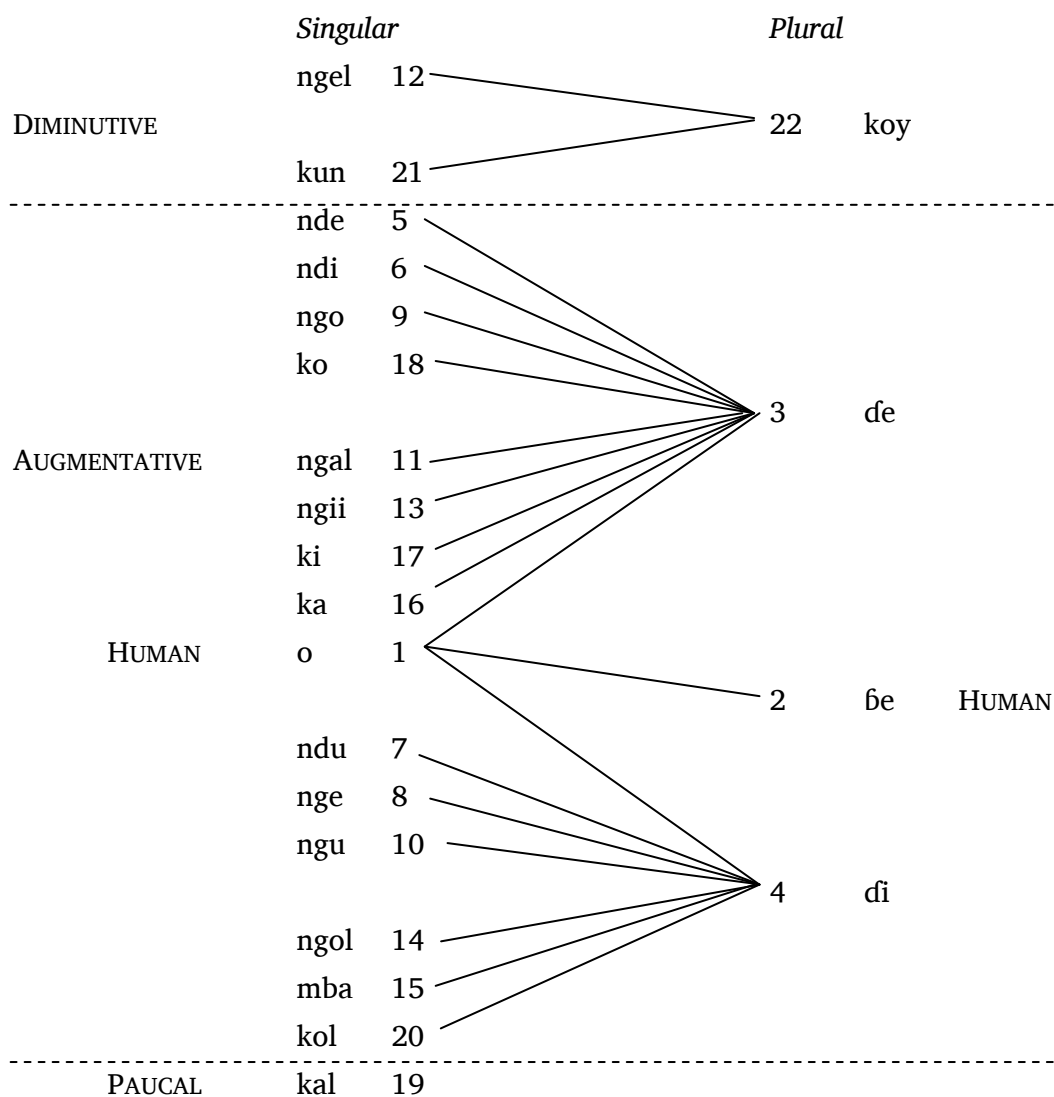
nge alaa e nyaam-ude few.
 8 NEG and eat-IPFV nothing

‘It is this black cow which is sick. It is the dog that bite her. Her leg is warm, and she doesn’t eat anything.’

2.3 Gender and number

⇒ There are 19 genders:

Figure 1: The gender system of Fulfulde in Fuuta Jaloo



SINGULARIA TANTUM *ɗan* 23

SINGULARIA TANTUM *ɗun* 24

[cf. Diallo 2000: 90-98]

- There are two genders for the diminutive, whereas the agreement class 12 *ngel* expresses a degrading/pejorative meaning
- The agreement class 19 *kal* expresses in all examined dialects a paucal, and not, as often found in the grammars, a diminutive (in only few cases it can form a plural with the plural diminutive class 22 *koy*)
- The augmentative is expressed by class 11 *ngal*
- Loan words mostly enter into the human singular class 1 *o*, but form their plural with the classes 3 *de* or 4 *di*, depending on the phonology of the loan word (e.g. *oto*, car.1, ‘car’; *otoo-je*, car-3, ‘cars’)
- There are still exceptions to the genders drawn in figure 1, e.g. one can find a lexeme of class 15 *mba* which forms its plural with class 3 *de* instead of class 4 *di* (*ngesa* ‘field’, *gese* ‘fields’); the size of these exceptions must be checked in future work

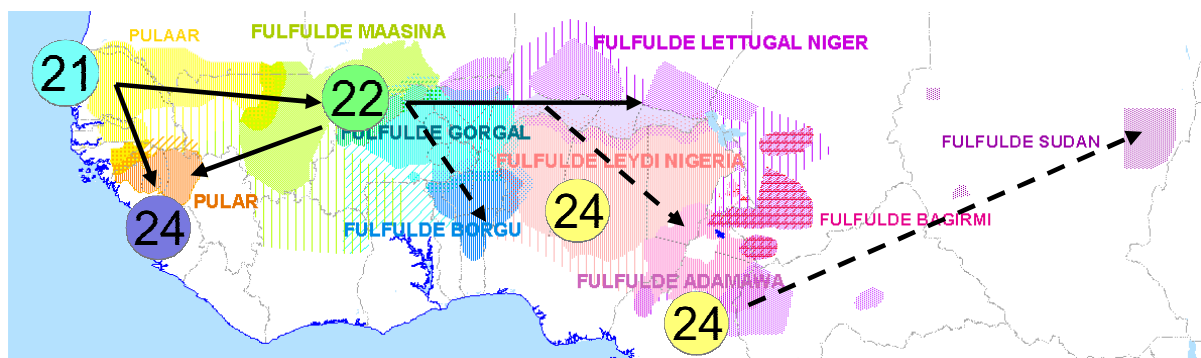
3 The gender system variability

3.1 The gender system

- Surprisingly there are only few differences in the gender systems across the dialects
- The dialects of Mali, Nigeria and Cameroon have a very similar gender system, in only three cases the plural class of a singular class differs
- The gender system of the Guinean variety has more similarities with the Senegalese counterpart than with the other dialects, which seems to attest its origin

3.2 The agreement system

- In the examined dialects the number of agreement classes varies between 21 and 24:

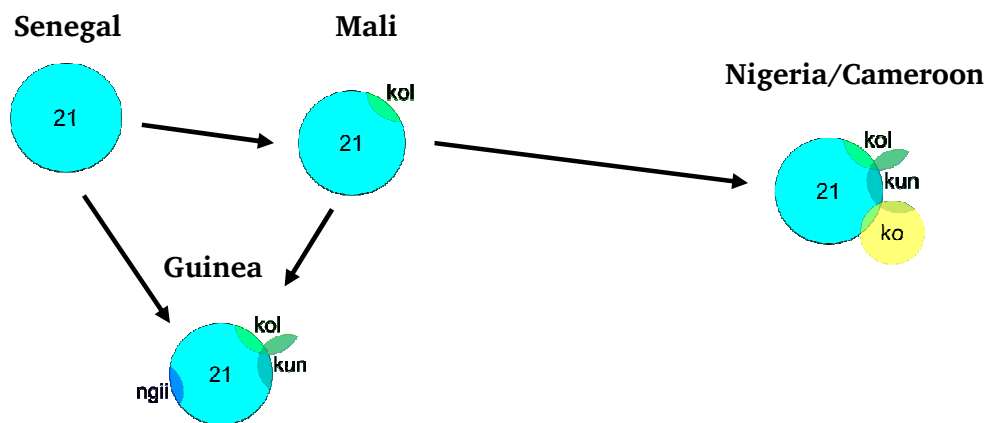


Map 2: The variation of the number of agreement classes⁷

⁷ The map is adapted from Harrison (2003), arrows and numbers have been inserted by myself.

- The agreement classes of the Nigerian and the Cameroonian dialects (Eastern dialects) are semantically and morphologically identical, that's why I do not distinguish them any further (the resemblance of the gender system of the Nigerian and Cameroonian dialect underlies the assumption that they developed recently from one another)
 - 21 agreement classes are in all dialects mostly identical, although in the Eastern dialects there is a semantic shift: the augment is not expressed in class 11 *ngal* as in the other dialects, but is shifted to class 15 *mba*

Figure 2: The variation of number of agreement classes across dialects



- The Senegalese dialect has the most reduced agreement system
- The Malian dialect has only one additional class 20 *kol* which is (in all dialects) relatively small, designating domesticated animals
- The Eastern dialects have additionally to the class 20 *kol*, the diminutive class 21 *kun* and the augmentative plural class 25 *ko*
- The Guinean dialect has the additional class 21 *kun*, and as the only dialect the class 13 *ngii* which expresses an augmentative/pejorative and insects

3.3 1st scenario: Increase from originally 21 to 24

One could assume an increase from originally 21 to 24 agreement classes, but this doesn't seem to be very plausible because this scenario could hardly explain **the co-occurrence of the class *kun* in Guinea and the Eastern dialects** which have historically not been in contact.

3.4 2nd scenario: Reduction from originally 24 to 21

It may be also possible that a reduction of 24 (or more) agreement classes took place mainly in the Western dialects (maybe also due to contact with Wolof and Serer, which have 11 (Wolof) and 16 (Serer) agreement classes), which would mean that the Eastern dialects

including Guinea are more conservative. Evidence for the reduction scenario is given in the following section.

EVIDENCE FOR THE 2ND SCENARIO

There is evidence for a still ongoing reduction of the agreement system:

- **Reduction of the agreeing elements:**

- In the Senegalese dialect, interrogative pronouns do not agree with the corresponding agreement class (Sylla 1982)
- In the Malian dialect, some color terms do not agree with the corresponding agreement class (Breedveld 1995: 467)
- In the Cameroonian dialect, a single possessive pronoun *maajum* or *man* is used, no matter what the class of the noun referred to is (Arnott 1974: 14)

- **Agreement is established with a kind of “dummy” class:**

- In the Senegalese dialect, the agreeing object pronoun can be replaced by the object pronoun *dum*⁸:

(12) O rokk-i ko-do o kos-am, o rokk-i **dum** gaw-ri.
3S give-PFV stranger-1 DEF.1 milk-23 3S give-PFV 24 millet-6
,He gave milk to the stranger, he gave him millet.’ (Sylla 1982: 148)

(13) Rawaa-ndu ndu, Aali jagg-ii ndu/**dum**.
dog-7 DEF.7 PN catch-PFV 7/24
,The dog, Aali caught it.’ (Sylla 1982: 149)

In example (12), the object pronoun of class 1 *mo* (referring to ‘stranger’) is replaced by *dum*, in example (13) this replacement is optional (which makes the ongoing reduction visible).

- Arnott (1974) points out that agreement within a noun phrase can also be established by the use of the neuter agreement class (unfortunately he doesn’t specify the dialect or source):

(14) a. liŋ-ŋgu mbood-ŋgu ŋgu’u b. liŋ-ŋgu bood-**dum** **du’um**
fish-10 good-10 DEF.10 fish-10 good-24 DEF.24
,this good fish’ ,this good fish’ (Arnott 1974: 13)

⁸ Here, information-structural aspects as inferability and givenness do play a role, but these examples may still illustrate a reduction of the agreement system.

4 Summary

- The gender systems across the dialects show only few differences, whereas the pairings Senegal-Guinea and Mali-Nigeria-Cameroon show the biggest similarities
- All in all the agreement system of the languages is very stable (21 similar agreement classes)
- As an ongoing reduction/simplification of the agreement system can still be observed today, it is more plausible that the Proto-Fulfulde had a bigger agreement system which got reduced in the Western area and remained more conservative in the Eastern area and Guinea than the other way round
- Assuming that the Guinean dialect is more conservative, a longer isolation seems to be proved
 - a) by the conservation of the (Proto?) agreement class 21 *kun*
 - b) by the independent development of the extra class 13 *ngii*
- The later influence of the Malian dialect during the 16th and 17th century could be proved by the fact that morphologically three classes in the Malian and Guinean dialect differ from their counterpart in the other dialects:

class	Senegal	Mali	Guinea	Nigeria/ Cameroon
22 PLURAL, DIMINUTIVE	kon	koy	koy	kon
23 SINGULARIA TANTUM	ɗam	ɗan	ɗan	ɗam
24 SINGULARIA TANTUM	ɗum	ɗun	ɗun	ɗum

Table 1: The morphologically identical agreement classes in the Malian and Guinea dialect

⇒ **The look at the agreement system seems to give evidence for a long time isolation of the Guinean variety and for the later influence from the Malian dialect**

In future work, this needs more comparison of other parts of the language such as verb paradigms, pronouns, the phonological system and so on. Influences from other surrounding languages need also to be taken into account.

5 Abbreviations

AUX	auxiliary	GV	glide vowel
DEF	definite article	IO	indirect object
DEM	demonstrative article	IPFV	imperfective
DO	direct object	n	number of elements

NEG	negation	POSS	possessive pronoun
ORD	ordinal number marker	PREP	preposition
P	plural	S	singular
PFV	perfective	TAM	tense/aspect/mood
PN	proper name	TF	term focus marker

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