

27. Oral Tradition, Sociolinguistics, Language Contact in Hunting and Gathering societies. An Ethnol

15892 - Oral Tradition as a field of research in HG history, language and identity. Case studies from Africa and Indonesia

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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Oral tradition, with its huge and precious heritage of legends, tales, songs and riddles, is one of the fields where cultural identity is usually best preserved and perceived. Specific genres can be witnesses of determined historical contact and influence from external groups, or represent an original, indigenous form of expression. Loanwords and other external syntactic or morphological elements, if present, can be analyzed as traces of contact, while the context in which these phenomena appear (religious or not, for example) can give the researcher important hints about the socio-political weight of external groups in the daily life of the people he/she is studying.

This paper, presenting two different case studies, aims to discuss some of these significant elements, which can be used as key factors in the new wave of a socio-political upheaval for the defense of "indigenous peoples' rights".

In the first case study, Ilaria Micheli investigates specific genres and loans of the oral tradition of the Ogiek of Mariashoni, a Kalenjin (Nilo-Saharan) speaking group of Kenya, encapsulated in a Maasai and Nandi/Kipsigis milieu. While the language and themes used in tales and legends indicate a clear continuum with the Kipsigis (Kalenjin) tradition, their songs, especially those performed during tumdò, the Ogiek initiation ceremony, contain major hints witnessing their socio-economic relation with the more powerful Maasai.

In the second case study, Antonia Soriente discusses themes and genres in the oral literature of the Punan Tubu', a group of former hunter gatherers living in the Province of Northern Kalimantan in the Indonesian Borneo. Through the description of several stories collected for a language documentation project it will be analyzed: a) whether there are themes that are typically shared by hunter gatherers in Borneo and, b) whether oral literature is one of the fields where language and cultural contact is evident. In their interaction with the Kayan and Kayanic settled neighbors the Punan Tubu' people have the tendency to collect and borrow ideas, artifacts, linguistic, and cultural elements from their neighbors considered as their patrons and holders of more prestigious languages and cultures. In particular the nearly disappeared genre ketuya' will be addressed as an example of a poetic oral tradition considered by the Punan Tubu' people as a symbol of group identity but where, more than elsewhere, the key of interpretation is the linguistic and cultural influence from their settled neighbors.

16048 - The Agta Negrito vs Ifugao in mythology and oral tradition (Northern Luzon, Philippines)

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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Highly endangered groups of hunter-gatherers of Northern Luzon, known under the umbrella term of Negrito or Aeta, many of them being reduced to the last speakers, have been studied by anthropologists and linguists (Griffin 1985, Headland & Reid 1989, 1991; Reid 1989 et al). However, almost nothing has been done so far in respect to oral literature that is a valuable source on the interconnections of the hunter-gatherer and agriculturalist groups. The Negrito groups have changed their residence as a result of the population pressure. The Agta Negritos that presently reside in Palanan, Sierra Madre, previously lived in the Cordillera areas populated by the Ifugaos. Mythology and oral traditions of both ethnic groups retain reminiscences of contacts and mutual influences that date back to earlier times, those before the hunter-gatherers were pushed to the most unfavourable locations where they reside presently. The paper focuses on mutual representation of the Agta and the Ifugao in oral literature and mythology, using the published materials (Constantino 2001, 2003; Barton 1946, 1955) as well as the author's field materials collected in Ifugao province in 1995-2014.

Literature

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15875 - The Medium is the Message: Markedness and Intra-Ethnic Communication among Penan

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Sercombe, Peter (Newcastle University uk, Bishop Auckland, Un. Kingdom / Ver Königr.)*

This paper considers language behaviour among Eastern Penan in interaction with fellow Penan, residing elsewhere. This paper provides examples of 'marked' discourse and attempts to account for their occurrence. It is argued, here, that some non-Penan variants in Penan language use are marked not, for instance, examples of codeswitching, nonce occurrences, or cultural borrowings. The frequency and type(s) of non-Penan occurrences are such that they reflect larger innovations in Penan. Many Penan continue to demonstrate residual behavioural features evident among hunter-gatherers (e.g. lack of domestic resource conservation; a highly limited set of personal and family possessions; short intensive spells of labour). In terms of language, unmarked speech among Penan in Borneo can include: the use of Penan without code-mixing; the use of Iban or Malay as a default code in interaction with non-Penan (depending on language repertoire); or the use of non-Penan items, in a Penan language matrix, for which there are no Penan equivalents, i.e. unmarked culture-specific borrowings, the features most commonly 'borrowed' across languages. From an etic perspective, occurrences of language-mixing in discourse appear marked when Penan are addressing other Penan and where there occur features of Iban and Malay for which there are Penan semantic equivalents. Further revealing areas of marked form include the exclusive use of Iban for communicating with Penan relatives and friends in neighbouring Sarawak, many of the latter being unable to comprehend these messages.

16068 - "Lost and found": the strange story of the Elmolo language

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Galli, Carla sofia (University of Turin, MI, Italy / Italien); Tosco, Mauro (Italy / Italien)*

The Elmolo are a group of about 700 individuals living along the south-eastern shore of Lake Turkana, Kenya. Belonging to the Cushitic group for both the genetic and the linguistic point of view, they are a small enclave of fishermen (long considered "the smallest tribe of Kenya") surrounded by Nilotic pastoral populations, mainly Samburu and Turkana. Their original language (East Cushitic branch, Omo-Tana subgroup) has been replaced by Samburu in a relatively short time (few decades) not only in the external, but also in the intra-family use. Persisting distinctive features are, however, sufficient to highlight the diversity of Elmolo from neighboring peoples. A relationship between the Elmolo with another Cushitic group, the Marle (which is also the name of one of the Elmolo's clan), has been hypothesized. Nowadays, the languages closest to Elmolo are those spoken by two other Cushitic pastoralist groups, the Dassanach and the Arbore. By the way, Elmolo language survives in short sentences used in ritual collective ceremonies and in some words mainly related to fishing activities (which are absent in Samburu). In our recent study, performed by structured interviews (both individual and group based), that involved 196 persons, the Elmolo, despite being outnumbered by the pastoral populations and stigmatized for their different culture and life-style, repeatedly manifested some resistance to change their livelihood and at least some of their cultural characteristics. According to their myths of origin, they persist in considering themselves "the true people of the lake" (gúra páu), i.e. the original inhabitants of the area. Nevertheless, the challenging confrontation with pastoral populations and, afterwards, modernity, have induced deep changes in lifestyle, including marriage habits and economic activities, and triggered individualistic behavior within the community. A language revival program, aimed to restore the Elmolo unity, is presently carried on by a group of local intellectuals. Interestingly, some of the interviewed people (mainly the youngest), despite preferring to identify themselves as Kiswahili and English speakers, were interested in this program, seen as an opportunity for redemption by subordination to Samburu and a possible way to take distance from the Samburu and get closer to Turkana, who do not stigmatize fishermen and hold nowadays large part of the political and economic power in the area. This suggests the need of new alliances to face the increasing ecologic and economic challenges, maybe more than a true willing to restore a language probably very difficult to be re-introduced in the common use.

16233 - Language Erosion and Maintenance among the Akie (Tanzania)

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Legere, Karsten (*Institut für Afrikawissenschaften, Austria / Österreich*)

Language Erosion and Maintenance among the Akie (Tanzania) This presentation deals with the Tanzanian Akie and their language (South Nilotic, Kalenjin group) summarizing from a socio-linguistic perspective some issues that have been studied since 2009, currently funded by a Volkswagen Foundation grant of the DoBeS type. Its focus is as follows: 1. Akie distribution and linguistic identity This is an overview of the current spread of Akie people and related communities (Kisankare, Kinyalang'at) that has been the result of a puzzle-like approach due to the migrant character of the Akie as hunter-gatherers. Emphasis is here on how competent Akie speakers were traced by the researchers and especially by committed Tanzanian assistants including Akie who are extremely worried about the dramatic language shift in recent years. The distribution of the Akie over a wide area ranging from Makau (Simiyu Region) in the North (four Akie speakers were found last August) down to Nanje (Kiteto District, Manyara Region) as well as remote settlements in Kilindi District (Tanga Region) is demonstrated in a map that has to be regularly updated in view of people's migration. 2. Linguistic competence Here a sketch of the Akie linguistic profile that has been found so far will be presented. Given the social position of Akie people and the heavy impact of neighbouring communities (Maasai, Nguu/Zigua) as well as of the official Swahili language, most Akie are at least bilingual. Thus, many Akie (even competent Akie-speaking individuals) communicate with each other in Maa. This results in an eroding Akie competence that will be demonstrated in an audio/video file (if possible, given time constraints) and transcribed samples. 3. Oral traditions, traditional knowledge and documentation Here a summary of what has been documented will be made available.

15921 - Hunter-gatherers and farmers in Borneo: assessing dual linguistic influences, the relative persistence of linguistic features, and the resulting ethnocultural identity

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Sellato, Bernard (Centre Asie du Sud-Est, EHESS, Paris, France / Frankreich)*

The Müller-Schwaner central mountain range of Borneo is home to a handful of small ethnic groups that are historically derived, at least in part, from forest hunter-gatherer groups (Punan) and which I collectively called the Müller-Schwaner Punan (MSP; Sellato 1981), and they appeared as such in Wurm & Hattori's (1983) Language Atlas of the Pacific Area. Although MSP languages have tentatively been included in the Kayanic Group (Hudson 1978), their position has remained quite ambiguous. In the same way that MSP people display cultural features clearly originating from two distinct major clusters of farming people, the "Kayan" groups (to the north and east) and the "Barito" groups (to the south and west), both of which they had extended historic contact with, MSP languages show phonological and lexical affinities with both the Kayanic and Barito language groups. By examining various features of MSP languages, this study endeavors to discriminate between those that may belong to original Punan tongues and those resulting from contact with either the Kayanic or Barito language groups; to assess these features' relative persistence through time; and to ponder the effect of this dual linguistic contact situation on MSP groups' ethnocultural identity in the region.

16088 - The Baka language in Gabon: who uses it and for what?

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Paulin, Pascale (DDL Laboratory CNRS & Lyon University, LYON, France / Frankreich)*

In this presentation I will discuss the situation of the Baka language in Gabon, an Ubangian language in an essentially Bantuphone environment. I will focus on the Minvoul region where Baka is surrounded by groups of Fang speakers, belonging to the country's majority ethnic group, and where Baka are bilingual. I will then present various situations and several consequences of this context of diglossia (Wolff 2000), such as an array of changes the language has undergone over the last three generations. Following Milroy (1992) I will take into consideration criteria such as age, contextual styles (transactions with neighbors, interethnic marriages, etc.) and diatopic variation (Minvoul versus Makokou areas) in relation with the language chosen by the speakers. I will then examine the different factors which have contributed to the endangerment not only of the Baka language but also of the Baka culture, such as a difference in the social status (prestige) between the Baka and Fang populations, and the depreciating attitudes of the Fang towards the Baka people, which have led the latter to consider themselves as inferior beings. Finally, the questions of whether the language succeeds in maintaining itself in spite of pressure from Fang and whether the Gabonese government has a clear policy for the preservation of the local languages will be considered.