

THE KAKABE DIALECTAL CONTINUUM: A LEXICOSTATISTICAL STUDY¹

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Abstract: Kakabe, an understudied language in Guinea (Mokole < Western Mande < Mande < Niger-Congo), is spoken by several ethnic groups, mainly of inferior social status, most of which are bilingual in Pular. There are four dialects of Kakabe: Northern (the Kankalabe area), Central (villages to the north-west, east and south-east of Timbo), Kuru-Maninka and Wure-Kaba Maninka. The Northern and Central dialects are close to each other linguistically, their speakers refer to themselves as “Kakabe”, and these dialects can be regarded as comprising “nuclear Kakabe”; meanwhile, the speakers of Kuru-Maninka and Wure-Kaba Maninka reject being identified as “Kakabe”, and their varieties have far fewer loans from Pular. A lexicostatistical study based on the Swadesh 100-item wordlist has been carried out. It confirmed the preliminary hypothesis of a particular affinity between the “core dialects” and showed that the other two dialects are further removed from them, but not as distant as the Mogofin (Mixifore) language spoken to the south of Boke (extreme NW part of the Republic of Guinea). Therefore, from a linguistic viewpoint, the Wure-Kaba Maninka and Kuru-Maninka varieties can be regarded Kakabe dialects despite the fact that their speakers do not consider themselves Kakabe.

Key words: Kakabe, Mogofin, Mokole, Mande languages, dialectology, lexicostatistics, language contact

¹ This publication can be regarded as an updated version of the paper (Vydrina & Vydrin 2014) published in Russian.

1. Introduction

As recently as ten or even seven years ago, any publication dealing with Kakabe (< Mokole < Western Mande < Mande < Niger-Congo, ISO 639-3 kke) would need to begin by providing a lengthy presentation of this understudied language. Today, this is hardly necessary: a dictionary (Vydrina 2015) and two grammatical descriptions (Vydrina 2017a; 2017b) of Kakabe are available, numerous papers on specific aspects of of Kakabe phonology, morphosyntax and information structure have appeared (Vydrina 2009; 2011a; 2011b; Vydrina 2013; Vydrina 2014; 2020a; 2020b; Nikitina & Vydrina 2020), and a sociolinguistic study of multilingualism in the Kakabe area should also be mentioned (Vydrina 2021). By standards of African linguistics, Kakabe is no longer an understudied language. For this reason, our introduction will be rather concise.

Today, it is clear that Kakabe is spoken by some 50,000 people in the south-eastern part of the Fouta-Djallon plateau in Guinea. The great majority of Kakabe speakers are bilingual in Pular, the predominant language of Fouta-Djallon, and Kakabe-Maninka bilingualism is also wide spread (Maninka was the language of the medieval Mali empire, and in today's Guinea it is the second most widely spoken language after Pular; Maninka is closely related to Kakabe).

The current name of the Kakabe language goes back to the Pular word *Kakkabe* 'servile population of a land governed by Fulbe'; for more detail see Vydrina (2017b: 41). The ancestors of the Kakabe were the indigenous inhabitants of the south-eastern part of Fouta-Djallon. They were reduced to a servile state during and after the Fulbe jihad of the 18th century. Those who did not accept slavery migrated to the north-west, to a coastal area south of Boke, and their descendents are the Mogofin people (also known by their Susu name, Mikhifore); some others found a refuge in the south, and their descendants are the Wure-Kaba Maninka. The Wure-Kaba Maninka associate themselves with the Maninka rather than the Kakabe (which is understandable, taking into account the inferior status ascribed to the latter), although their

linguistic variety is close enough to Kakabe to be regarded as a dialect of it. The same can be said about the Kuru Maninka variety spoken in the very centre of Fouta Djallon (see Figure 1).

The slavery of the Kakabe officially ended only in 1958, when Guinea became independent, but their language is still stigmatized as a “language of slaves”.²

In fact, Kakabe represents a language/dialect continuum including some varieties whose speakers do not consider themselves to be Kakabe for socio-historical reasons. In the east, it gradually fades into the *Fúta máninkakan* varieties which share, to various degrees, some grammatical features of Kakabe and have a predominantly Maninka vocabulary (Davydov 2014; 2017), and in the west, Mogofin can be regarded as a part of this continuum, despite the distance of about 250 km separating the Kakabe and Mogofin areas.

In this paper, we attempt to apply the lexicostatistical method in order to evaluate the linguistic distance between Kakabe varieties representing different dialectal groups.

2. Kakabe dialectal zones

As mentioned in (Vydrina 2017b: 38–39), the Kakabe dialects can be grouped into nuclear and non-nuclear Kakabe.

Nuclear Kakabe includes:

- the Northern dialect (NK), spoken in the Kankalabe subprefecture, to the north of the Tene river,
- the Western dialect (WK), between Timbo in the east and the Tene river in the north,
- the Central dialect (CK), from Timbo in the West to Dogome and Kindoye in the East and Marela prefecture in the South.

The Central and Western dialects are sufficiently close, they can be taken together in opposition to the northern dialects.

² For more detail on the status of the Kakabe language see (Vydrina 2021).

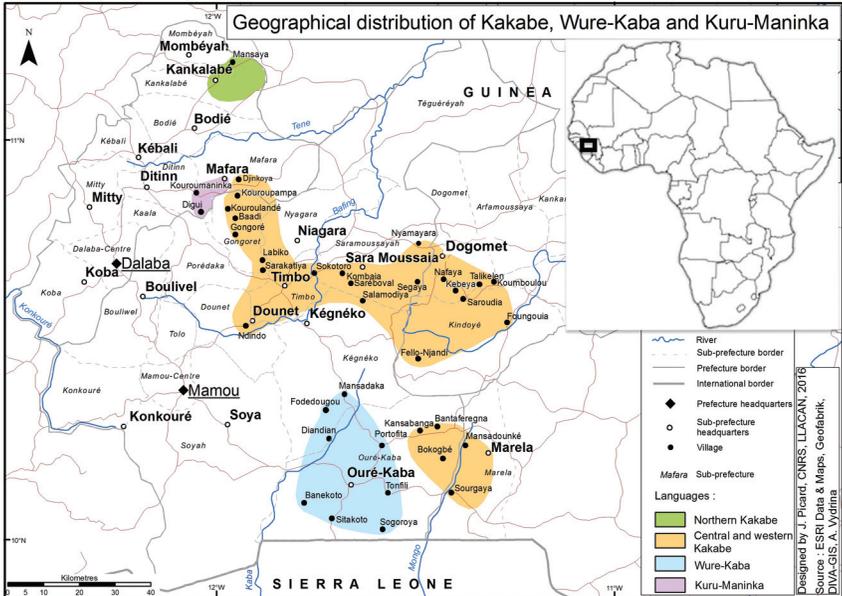


Figure 1. Kakabe and neighbouring languages (Vydrina 2017: 20; designed by Jérôme Picard)

Non-nuclear dialects are the following:

- Kuru-Maninka,
- Wure-Kaba.

These dialectal subgroups are represented on the map (Figure 1).

In this paper, we present commented 100-item Swadesh wordlists for four Kakabe dialects: Central Kakabe (as spoken in Sokototo village), Northern Kakabe (two lists: one was collected in the Saajoya village and the other in Nasurulayi), Kuru-Maninka and Wure-Kaba-Maninka. For the sake of contrast, we also provide comparative lists for Mogofin (it can be assumed that Mogofin has undergone much less Pular and Maninka influence) and standard Guinean Maninka (a variety spoken in and around Kankan).

We first provide some details about the circumstances of data collection for each dialect.

2.1. Central Kakabe

Our data were collected in Sokotoro village, first with the chairman of the district Abdoulaye Barry, then with Alfa Bakar Dumbuya (born in 1986). These data are complete and reliable. Sokotoro is situated on the Conakry-Kankan highway, and this explains the high mobility of its population and the remarkable degree of language shift towards Pular that can be observed. As a result, many Sokotoro dwellers (especially young people) have a poor command of Kakabe or do not speak it at all. Certain semantic fields (for example, plant names) are almost entirely occupied by Pular loans. A similar situation is typical of some other villages of the Central Kakabe area, such as Sara Moussaia (Artem Davydov, p.c.). However, the situation is different in the southeastern segment of the Central zone: here, Maninka is the predominant language of the area, rather than Pular, and monolingual Kakabe speakers can still be found.

2.2. Northern Kakabe

Both major language assistants for northern Kakabe, Samba Juma Keyita (born in 1960) and Mamadu Sayidu Konde (born in 1987), were residents of the village of Sàajoya; our data for the variety spoken in this village are reliable. In 2009–2010, we also collected comparative wordlists (and some morphosyntactic data) in most other villages of the northern zone: Mànsaya, Sélibaya, Wánsan, Mingiya, Boriya, Nasurullayi, Fitadala (there are two more Kakabe villages in that area where data were not recorded: Mànsaya and Sangarare; another village, Samaya, has a mixed Kakabe and Fulbe population). The varieties spoken in these villages are very close to the one spoken in Sàajoya, and therefore we have included in our comparative list only the variety of Nasurullayi (recorded on 29 January 2010).

Practically all the Kakabe population of the Northern dialectal area is bilingual in Pular; many can also speak Maninka. Nevertheless, there Kakabe remains a language of everyday communication for all the generations.

2.3. Kuru-Maninka

This variety is spoken in the area known as Kuru, about 30 km to the south of Kankalabe and about the same distance to the north-west from Timbo (see the map). The area owes its name to the mountain Kuru; in Kakabe *kùru* means ‘stone’, and in the Standard Maninka of Guinea it means both ‘stone’ and ‘mountain’. Almost all the villages of the area (with the single exception of Kuren) have Kuru as the initial element of their names: Kuru Julala, Kuru Kεnkepeba, Kuru Pellali, Kuru Kurabasi, Kuru Bɔʒɔkɔ, Kuru Dantaatɔ, Kuru Jaabilafata, Kuru Katibaya, Kuru Farafε, Kuru Kɔεε. By the way, some of the “Kuru-villages” are not inhabited by Kuru-Maninka; for example, Kuru-Pampa is a Kakabe village.

We collected the Kuru-Maninka wordlist during a very short visit to the Julala village. Our language assistants were Mamadu Siise and Sidi Jaabi, two old men; we communicated with them in Standard Guinean Maninka, which is therefore also current in this zone. Later on, the data were checked by Alexandra Vydrina during her more recent visits.

2.4. Wure-Kaba Maninka

This variety is spoken in the Wùre area (see the map). The center of Wure is the large village of Kaba (or Wure-Kaba; the French spelling is Ouré Kaba) on the Mamou–Faranah highway, 65 km to the east of Mamou, close to the border with Sierra Leone; a full list of the Wure villages is given in (Vydrina 2017b: 622–623). As stated above, speakers of Wure-Kaba Maninka do not accept being identified as Kakabe (despite the evident affinity of the language varieties); they also tend to deny their proficiency in Pular; in any case, unlike in some parts of the Central Kakabe area, there are no signs of language shift.

We first visited Wure-Kaba on January 22, 2010, when we recorded M. Swadesh’s 100-item wordlist with two speakers: the first half with an old man, inhabitant of Kaba, member of the Duno clan (an equivalent of Keyita), and the second half, with Nene Kuruma (*Néénè Kùrumá*),

from the Sebekoto village, 14 km from Kaba; Nene was a schoolgirl, 15 years old. Some loopholes in the list were filled in 2013, when Alexandra Vydrina visited Wure-Kaba again.

3. Comparative wordlists and lexicostatistics

3.1. Comparative wordlists for Kakabe varieties

In Table 1, comparative wordlists are given for five Kakabe varieties; among these, two lists (from Saajoya and Nasurullayi) represent the Northern dialect. The order of columns in Table 1 reproduces the geographical sequence of the dialects from northwest to southeast. Variants of the same lexical items are separated by a comma, while different lexical items used for the same meaning are separated by a semicolon. Optional elements are given in brackets. Morphemes in polymorphemic words are separated by a hyphen. The loanwords are excluded from the statistics and are grey-shaded.

The Mogofin data, given for external comparison, are drawn from (Polinder et al. 2009),³ and some missing terms were supplied by our field data. The Maninka list is identical with the one used in (Vydrin 2009). When we refer to forms from other Mande languages, Valentin Vydrin's unpublished Etymological dictionary of the Mande family (Vydrin n.d.) is used.

According to the requirements of Sergey Starostin's (2000) "smart glottochronology", compared wordlists should be, as far as possible, purged of borrowings, because only group-internal innovations reflect the genetic distances between languages. The main sources of borrowings in Kakabe are Pular (these loans are easy to identify) and Maninka (these are more problematic, given the genetic proximity between the Mokole and Manding language groups).

³ This source allowed for the improvement of the 100-item wordlist used in (Vydrin 2009).

Table 1

**Swadesh 100-item wordlist for Kakabe dialects,
in comparison with Mogofin and Standard Maninka of Guinea**

	Mogofin	Nasurullayi	Saajoya	Kuru-Maninka	Sokotoro	Wure-Kaba	Maninka
1. 'all'	bée	fɔ́	fɔ́	gbée	fɔ́	bée	bée
2. 'ashes'	bùgùtá, bògòtá	bùguta	bùguta	bùguta	bùguta	bùguta	bùudi-gbe
3. 'bark'	wónbó	wónbo	wónbo	yírí wónbe	wónbo	lǎgɔ́ wónbe	wónbo
4. 'belly'	búú	búú	búú	kónɛ	búú	búú	kónɔ
5. 'big'	bèlèbèlé; kóló	báa, báa	bèlebele; báa; kòlo	báa; kóló	bèlebele; báa; kóló	báa; kóló; bùmbaa	bèlebele; bònba
6. 'bird'	kóndéngè	kòndɛɛ	kòndɛɛ	kòndɛɛ	kòndɛɛ	kùndu, kòndu	kòɔ
7. 'bite'	kín	kín	kín	kín	kín	kín	kín
8. 'black'	fín	fín	fín	fínna	fín	fínna	fín
9. 'blood'	básé	jéli	jéli	jéli	jéli	jéli	jéli
10. 'bone'	kóló	kóló	kóló	kóló	kóló	kóló	kóló
11. 'breast'	síngí	síngi	síngi	síngɛ	síngi	sín	sín
12. 'burn'	bìntán	bìntan	bìntan	jàni	bìntan	bìntan	méne; jèni, jàni
13. 'claw, nail'	ɲánsíŋ	ɲánsin	sòɔ́rin	bólosòɔ́rɲɛ	sòɔ́rin	sùrin	sòrin

Continuation of Table 1

	Mogofin	Nasurullayi	Saajoya	Kuru-Maninka	Sokototo	Wure-Kaba	Maninka
14. 'cloud'	<i>litúúrú</i>	<i>dúúle</i>	<i>dúúle</i>	<i>júúte</i>	<i>dúúle</i>	<i>bánta nirinara</i>	<i>biátika, mídtika, mídtigba; kába</i>
15. 'cold'	<i>kímá</i>	<i>kíma</i>	<i>kíma</i>	<i>kíma</i>	<i>kíma</i>	<i>kíma</i>	<i>súma</i>
16. 'come'	<i>nà</i>	<i>nàa</i>	<i>nàa</i>	<i>nàa</i>	<i>nàa</i>	<i>nàa</i>	<i>nà</i>
17. 'die'	<i>fàgá</i>	<i>fàga</i>	<i>fàga</i>	<i>fàya</i>	<i>fàga</i>	<i>fàka</i>	<i>sà</i>
18. 'dog'	<i>wùlú</i>	<i>wùlu</i>	<i>wùlu</i>	<i>wùlee</i>	<i>wùlu</i>	<i>wùlu</i>	<i>wùlu</i>
19. 'drink'	<i>mún</i>	<i>mìn</i>	<i>mìn</i>	<i>mìn</i>	<i>mìn</i>	<i>mìn</i>	<i>mìn</i>
20. 'dry'	<i>bálá</i>	<i>gbála</i>	<i>gbála</i>	<i>gbàla; jà</i>	<i>gbála</i>	<i>gbála</i>	<i>jàran</i>
21. 'ear'	<i>tóló</i>	<i>tólo</i>	<i>tólo</i>	<i>tólo</i>	<i>tólo</i>	<i>tólo</i>	<i>tólo</i>
22. 'earth'	<i>dùgú</i>	<i>dùgu</i>	<i>dùgu</i>	<i>dùgee</i>	<i>dùgu</i>	<i>dùgu, dùku</i>	<i>dùu</i>
23. 'eat'	<i>dómó</i>	<i>dàmu</i>	<i>dàmu</i>	<i>dàmu</i>	<i>dàmu</i>	<i>dàmu</i>	<i>dómun, dámun, dáwun</i>
24. 'egg'	<i>kélé</i>	<i>kéli</i>	<i>kéli</i>	<i>kéli</i>	<i>kéli</i>	<i>(súsee) kéli, kálu</i>	<i>kéli</i>
25. 'eye'	<i>já, jíáá</i>	<i>jíáa</i>	<i>jíáa</i>	<i>jíáa</i>	<i>jíáa</i>	<i>jíáa</i>	<i>jíá</i>
26. 'fat'	<i>kén, kéjè</i>	<i>kèn</i>	<i>kén</i>	<i>kén</i>	<i>kén</i>	<i>kèn</i>	<i>kén, cén</i>

Continuation of Table 1

	Mogofin	Nasurullayi	Saajoya	Kuru-Maninka	Sokotoro	Wure-Kaba	Maninka
27. 'feather'	<i>kónadéjité</i>	<i>kòndé tii</i>	<i>kòndò tii</i>	<i>kòndée téé</i>	<i>kòndò tii</i>	<i>kòndé tíí</i>	<i>sí</i>
28. 'fire'	<i>tá</i>	<i>táa</i>	<i>táa</i>	<i>táa</i>	<i>táa</i>	<i>táa</i>	<i>tá</i>
29. 'fish'	<i>yéggé</i>	<i>yéggé</i>	<i>yéggé</i>	<i>yéggé</i>	<i>yéggé</i>	<i>yékke, yéke</i>	<i>jéé</i>
30. 'fly'	<i>tún</i>	<i>würe</i>	<i>würe</i>	<i>gbán</i>	<i>würe</i>	<i>túu</i>	<i>gbán</i>
31. 'foot'	<i>kèj</i>	<i>kèn</i>	<i>kèn</i>	<i>kèn</i>	<i>kèn</i>	<i>kèn</i>	<i>sèn</i>
32. 'full'	<i>fáa, fá</i>	<i>fáa</i>	<i>fáa</i>	<i>fáa</i>	<i>fáa</i>	<i>fáa</i>	<i>fá</i>
33. 'give'	<i>dí, díí</i>	<i>díí</i>	<i>díí</i>	<i>dí</i>	<i>díí</i>	<i>dò</i>	<i>dí</i>
34. 'good'	<i>káññ</i>	<i>ñìn</i>	<i>ñìn</i>	<i>núma, ñìn</i>	<i>ñìn</i>	<i>yìn</i>	<i>ñìn</i>
35. 'green'	<i>bùlulama; yànbakutamama</i>	<i>kútaŋe</i>	<i>kútaŋe</i>	<i>fitakendelema</i>	<i>kútaŋe</i>	<i>yànbaku-tandaama</i>	<i>fidakenelema</i>
36. 'hair'	<i>kúnsigé</i>	<i>kúnsigi</i>	<i>kúnsigi</i>	<i>kúnsige</i>	<i>kúnsigi</i>	<i>kúnsigi</i>	<i>kúnsii</i>
37. 'hand'	<i>bóló</i>	<i>bólo</i>	<i>bólo</i>	<i>bóle</i>	<i>bólo</i>	<i>bólo</i>	<i>bólo</i>
38. 'head'	<i>kùn</i>	<i>kùn</i>	<i>kùn</i>	<i>kùŋe</i>	<i>kùn</i>	<i>kùn</i>	<i>kùn</i>
39. 'hear'	<i>mówé</i>	<i>mòye</i>	<i>móe</i>	<i>mén</i>	<i>mén</i>	<i>móyi</i>	<i>mén</i>
40. 'heart'	<i>sòndòŋè; jùsé</i>	<i>jùsu</i>	<i>jùsu</i>	<i>jùsu</i>	<i>jùsu</i>	<i>jùsu</i>	<i>sòñ; jùsu</i>
41. 'horn'	<i>bíná</i>	<i>bina</i>	<i>bina</i>	<i>bíŋa</i>	<i>bíŋa</i>	<i>búŋa, bíŋa</i>	<i>bíŋe</i>
42. 'I'	<i>ñ</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ń</i>
43. 'kill'	<i>fàgá</i>	<i>fàga</i>	<i>fàga</i>	<i>fàya</i>	<i>fàga</i>	<i>fàka</i>	<i>fàa</i>

Continuation of Table 1

	Mogofin	Nasurullayi	Saajoya	Kuru-Maninka	Sokototo	Wure-Kaba	Maninka
44. 'knee'	kúmbéllén	kúngbèlén	kúngbèlén	kúngbèlɛɛɛ, gbɛlɛɛɛ	kúngbèlén	kúngbèlén	kúmbèrén
45. 'know'	lón	lón	lón	lón	lón	lón	lón
46. 'leaf'	yánbá	yámba	yámba	fíta	fíta	yámbakun	fída
47. 'lie'	sá	sà	sà	là	là	là	là
48. 'liver'	sòndón-è	béccé	héere	búɲa	búɲa	búɲa	búɲe
49. 'long'	káyàn	yan	yàn	jàn	jàn	jan	jàn
50. 'louse'	ɲàngá 'head louse'; kàranbá 'body louse'	kàran; ɲànga	kàran; ɲànga	kàrangbaa	kàran; ɲànga	ɲàŋka	ɲímín 'head louse'; kàrangba 'body louse'
51. 'man'	káyí	káyí	káyí	kée	káyí	káyí	kè, cè
52. 'many'	sýà, sýáa	búyí	búyí; sýa	sýaman	búyí	sýama	sýa
53. 'meat'	sùbú, sòwo	sòbo	sòbo	sòbo	sòbo	sòbo	sòbo
54. 'moon'	kàré	káru	kárí	kárí	kárí	kárré; káru	káru
55. 'mountain'	kònkó, kònké	kòŋko	kòŋko	kòŋkee	kòŋko	kòŋke	kòŋke; kùru
56. 'mouth'	dá	dáa	dáa	dáa	dáa	dáa	dá
57. 'name'	tǎgé	tǎgo	tǎgo	tǎye	tǎgo	tǎgo; tǎke	tǎo

Continuation of Table 1

	Mogofin	Nasurullayi	Saajoya	Kuru-Maninka	Sokototo	Wure-Kaba	Maninka
73. 'seed'	súgé	súgu	súgu	súgu	súgu	súgu	súu
74. 'sit'	sígi		sígi	sígi	sígi	sígi	sii
75. 'skin'	bóló	gbòlo	gbòlo	gbòle	gbòlo	gbèlee	gbòlo
76. 'sleep'	kínúngò, kùndágo, kùndágo	kùnnogo	kùnnogo	kùndogo	kùnnogo	kùnnoko	sùncò, sùncò
77. 'small'	mèsén; dègò, dègò-maj	dógoman	dógoman	mèsenje; dýgo	dógoman	dòko, dègo	mìsen; dáo
78. 'smoke'	sùsè	sùsi	sùsi	sùsee	sùsi	sùsi	sùsi
79. 'stand'	só	sòò	sòò	lòò	sòò	lòò	lò
80. 'star'	lòolo, lòlé	lòòlò	lòòlò	lòòle	lòòlò	lòòlò	lòlo
81. 'stone'	kùrú	kùru	kùru	kùree	kùru	kùru	bèrè, kába, kùru
82. 'sun'	tèlé	tèle	tèle	tèlee	tèle	tèle	tèle
83. 'swim'	jí másá	fúbbe	gbùgbasi	kà táyá jée kúmmà	búnban	gii gbòe	néwun, námun
84. 'tail'	fójó	fójó	fójó	fójne	fójó	fójne	kó
85. 'that'	wò	kèe	kèe	ké	kèe	kèe	wò
86. 'this'	kè	lòò	lòò	lòò	lòò	lòò	nùn, jùn; mèn
87. 'thou'	í	i	i	i	i	i	í

End of table 1

	Mogofin	Nasurullayi	Saajoya	Kuru-Maninka	Sokoto	Wure-Kaba	Maninka
88. 'tongue'	nén	nèn	nán	nèɲɛ	nèn	ɲén	nèn
89. 'tooth'	ɲín	ɲín	ɲín	ɲín	ɲín	ɲín	ɲín
90. 'tree'	lógó	lógó	lógó	yíɛ	lógó	lógó	yíɛ
91. 'two'	filà, filà	fila	fila	fila, fùla	fila	fila	fila
92. 'walk'	tágámá	tágaman	tágaman	táya	tágaman	táɓma, tágoma	táama
93. 'warm'	bàndi	gbàndi	gbàndi	gbandi; kalama	gbàndi	kálama	gbàndi; kálaman
94. 'water'	jí, jé	jíi	jíi	jíi	jíi	gíi	jí
95. 'we'	mò, mós (exclusive)	mò (exclusive)	mó (exclusive)	ma (exclusive)	ma (exclusive)	mà	án; ò
96. 'what?'	fén, fén-dè	fén, fénmun	fén, fénmun	fén	fén, fénmun	fén	mùn
97. 'white'	bé, béé	gbée	gbée	gbɛɛ	gbée	gbée	gbé
98. 'who?'	ɲóm	ɲón	ɲón	ɲón	ɲón	ɲón	jón
99. 'woman'	mùsú	mùsu	mùsu	mùsu	mùsu	mùsu	mùso, mòso
100. 'yellow'	nétémùgùlámá	nételama; píuta	nételama; píuta	nétémungula-ma	nételama	nétémùn-kùdámà	nétémùlama

In the Kakabe dialects considered in our study, the following Pular loans have been found:

- Saajoya (northern Kakabe), 4 words: *fɔɔ* ‘all’ (Pular *fow*); *héere* ‘liver’ (Pular *heyre*); *wiire* ‘to fly’ (Pular *wiiru-gol*); *njáarendi* ‘sand’ (Pular *njaareendi*),
- Nasurullayi (northern Kakabe), 4 words: *fɔɔ* ‘all’; *wiire* ‘to fly’; *njáarendi* ‘sand’; *fúbbe* ‘to swim’ (Pular *fubba-gol*),
- Kuru-Maninka: no Pular loans,
- Sokotoro (central Kakabe), 2 words: *fɔɔ* ‘all’; *wiire* ‘to fly’,
- Wure-Kaba Maninka: no Pular loans.

As we can see, in the dialects whose speakers accept the name “Kakabe”, Pular loans do penetrate the basic vocabulary, unlike in those dialects whose speakers identify themselves with Maninka (despite the fact that all these varieties exist in contact with the Fulbe).

Let us now analyze the divergences shown by the varieties under consideration.

1. ‘all’: in nuclear Kakabe, the original stem (also present in all the other Mokole languages and in Manding) has been replaced by a Pular loan. It has been retained in Wure-Kaba and in Kuru-Maninka (in Kuru-Maninka, the labiovelar consonant needs to be explained; **b* > *gb* is likely to be a recent innovation).

4. ‘belly’: the stem *búu* attested in all Kakabe dialects with the exception of Kuru-Maninka is typical of all the Mokole languages, and also of Vai and Kono. The Kuru-Maninka form *kóne* is a cognate of the stem represented in all the languages of the Manding group; its Proto-Manding reconstruction⁴ is **xónɔ*. This stem is not attested in other Mande groups. Therefore, the Kuru-Maninka form is most probably a Maninka loan.

5. ‘big’: the form *báa* is attested in all Kakabe dialects, but it is likely to be an augmentative suffix and should not be taken into account in lexicostatistics. The stem *kólo* appears in all the languages of the

⁴ We use the unpublished Proto-Manding reconstruction done by one of us (Valentin Vydrin).

Mokole and Vai-Kono groups; it may go back to the same form of the proto-language as the Soninke word *xòor-é*, Bozo-Tigemaxo *xolo*, Bozo-Kelinga *hùlò* (the tonal differences appear to speak against this connection; however, in Mokole, as in Manding, adjectives appear most often in tonally compact constructions, where their lexical tone is irrelevant). The stem *bèlebele* is represented in all the Mokole languages; it may also exist in Kuru-Maninka and Wure-Kaba-Maninka, and its absence from our data may be fortuitous; if so, this divergence may be invalid. Outside Mokole, this stem is also represented in Manding, Susu, Bobo, and in some South Mande languages, e.g. Guro *bèlèbèlè*.

9. ‘blood’: in all Kakabe dialects, a stem *JELF*⁵ is found which is identical to the main Manding stem for ‘blood’. The Mogofin form *báse* ‘blood’ seems to be innovative, even if the stem itself is quite ancient and is well represented in Western Mande languages in the meaning ‘satin wood’ (*Terminalia ivorensis*).⁶ The juice of the satin wood is used as a red-brown or red-yellowish dye; the name of the tree is often applied to the dye, and also extended from there to give the word for blood. Sometimes this word, when used for blood, is perceived as an euphemism and applied specifically to menstrual blood (as in Maninka) or blood emanating from a wound (as in Bambara).

11. ‘breast’: the monosyllabic form (as in Wure-Kaba *sún*) and the disyllabic forms (in other Kakabe dialects) may represent a single root, in which case *síngi* is a compound, **sín-jí* ‘breast water’, i.e. ‘breast milk’, with a subsequent semantic shift to ‘breast’.⁷ The form *sún* is

⁵ Capitals are used for sound classes.

⁶ This identification can be found in dictionaries of some Mande languages; we cannot guarantee that it is always correct, or that this word is not used for other species of trees yielding yellow dye.

⁷ Competition between monosyllabic forms (presumably from **xín*) and disyllabic ones (presumably from a compound **xín-jí* <breast-water>, although a simplex form, **xíngi*, cannot be excluded) is observed in some other groups of Western Mande as well, cf. Susu *xíngé*, Jallonke *qíngé*, Mandinka *súnju*, Xasonka *súnji* vs. Jogo *cén*, Koranko *kí, sí*, Maninka *sín*, Bozo-Tigemaxo *xen*, etc. An indirect

a result of a diachronic (and not quite clear) process of vowel backing; it is attested in Wure-Kabe in some other monosyllabic words as well: *túu* < **tí* ‘to fly’, *dò* < **dí* ‘to give’.

12. ‘burn’: the stem *bìntán*, which prevails in Kakabe dialects, is also attested in all the Mokole languages (Lele *mìnda*, Koranko *mìndā*) and Vai-Kono (Vai *bìndá*, Kono *mínda*), but it is lacking outside these groups. Evidently, it is a common innovation of Mokole and Vai-Kono.⁸ As for the Kuru-Maninka form, its cognates are found only in Manding languages (Mandinka, Xasonka, Maninka *jàni*, Bambara *jèni*, Marka-Dafing *zěĩ*, etc.). Most likely the Kuru-Maninka word is borrowed from Maninka.

13. ‘claw, nail’: the Nasurullayi stem *ɲànsín* is well represented in Mokole (Mogofin *ɲànsín*, Lele *ɲànsí*; it can be reconstructed for the Proto-Mokole level) and in Vai-Kono (Kono *yáansen*, probably Vai *kènji*); it also appears in the Manding language Mandinka (*ɲònsiŋ*), where its presence can be explained as the result of substratum influence.⁹ The stem *sòrin*, *sùrín* of the other Kakabe dialects is also wide spread among different Mande groups: Mokole (Koranko *sùrĩ*), Manding (Maninka *sòrin*, Bambara *sòrĩ*, *sòni*), probably Soninke *jàré* ‘claw, canine teeth’; South Mande (Eastern Dan *sūʔ*, Guro *sōlě*, Wan *sróŋ*, etc.). For the Proto-Mande, reconstruction of a form like **sòriŋ* seems plausible, and the stem **ɲònsiŋ* seems to be a common innovation of Mokole and Vai-Kono (the retention of the reflexes of **sòriŋ* in some Mokole varieties can be explained through Manding influence).

argument in favour of the compound nature of the stem *síngi* in Kakabe is the form of the Kakabe word for ‘rain’, *sángi*, where the second element (-*gi*) certainly goes back to *jí* ‘water’.

⁸ These forms are remotely reminiscent of Mandinka *mála*, Maninka *méne*, Bambara *méne*, *mána* etc. ‘to catch fire; burn; shine’ and Bobo *mūlū* ‘shine’ (of fire), but it seems doubtful that they would represent the same proto-stem.

⁹ We also find in Mandinka the forms *ɲòriŋ*, *ɲòriŋ*, *ɲòliŋ* which may have emerged through the merger of *ɲònsiŋ* with the Manding stem **sòrin*.

14. ‘cloud’: in the nuclear Kakabe dialects we have *dúule*. This form could be regarded as a Pular loan; however, its reflexes are not found in Pulaar-Fulfulde dialects outside Fouta-Djallon. Besides, its cognates are found in Lele (*dúye* ‘cloud’) and Koranko (*dúru* ‘mist, fog; dew’). Therefore, this stem can be postulated for the Proto-Mokole level; most probably, it was borrowed from Kakabe to Pular, and not vice versa. The Kuru-Maninka form *jútè* and the Wure-Kaba form *bántá nírínará* seem to be recent innovations specific to these varieties; no cognates are attested in other Mande languages. Generally speaking, stems for ‘cloud’ in Western Mande are rather unstable: in particular, the Mogofin form *lútúru* is also an innovation.

20. ‘dry’: in all Kakabe dialects we have *gbálá* (the low tone in Kuru-Maninka may be explained through contextual modifications). This stem is represented in nearly all Mande groups, and can therefore be reconstructed for Proto-Mande. In Kuru-Maninka we also find an alternative form *jà* which has probably been borrowed from Manding. The stem *jà* or *jàlan* can be regarded as an innovation at the Proto-Manding level.

27. ‘feather’: the Kakabe stem *tii*, *tee* is widely represented in the Western Mande branch. It is not clear if the forms of the type SI (found in most Manding languages, but also in Lele) are reflexes of the same stem; if so, we would have to postulate an irregular correspondence *t : s*.

30. ‘to fly’: in the nuclear Kakabe dialects, this meaning is expressed by Pular loans. In Wure-Kaba, we find *túu*, an archaic stem attested in other Mokole languages (Lele *tín*, Mogofin *tún*) and in other West Mande groups (Kono *tíj*, Jogo *tí*, Mandinka *tíi*, Mau *tíj*, probably Bobo *tirē*, Dzuun *tsén*). The Kuru-Maninka form *gbán* is most probably borrowed from Maninka, although it cannot be excluded that it represents a common Mokole-Manding innovation (cf. Lele *kpan*, Koranko *gbá*).

35. ‘green’: the nuclear Kakabe form *kútán* has as its basic meaning ‘new; fresh’. Its cognates also appear, in the meaning ‘new’, in Manding, Mokole and Vai-Kono groups; cf. a Dzuun look-alike form

kyèèróŋ ‘new’. The meaning ‘green’ seems to be a recent Kakabe innovation. The Kuru-Maninka *fitakendelema* and Wure-Kaba *yànbàkùtàngáàma* forms, despite their transparent etymologies (“like a fresh leaf”), may be more archaic.

39. ‘hear’: the disyllabic Kakabe forms (northern Kakabe *mòyé*, *móè*, Wure-Kaba *móyi*) reflect the same Proto-Mande stem as the monosyllabic forms of Kuru-Maninka and Central Kakabe (*mén*), although for the latter form, an explanation involving Maninka influence cannot be excluded (note however that the same distribution of vocalic structures is attested for the wordlist item 51 ‘man’). In Manding, this stem is also represented by both monosyllabic and disyllabic structures, cf. Mandinka *mòyi*, Nyokolo Maninka *móyi* vs. Maninka of Guinea, Bambara *mén*, Xasonka *mé*.

46. ‘leaf’: contrary to the general trend, the distribution of the two stems *yànbá* and *fitá* does not correspond to the division of the Kakabe dialects into nuclear and non-nuclear. Our interpretation of this fact is that both these stems are original in Kakabe. They are well represented in Western Mande and often coexist in a single language, in which case they manifest semantic differences: the semantics of *YANBA* / *JANBA* tends to evolve to ‘tobacco; Indian hemp’, and that of *FIDA*, to ‘bush, forest; medicine’. Cf. Mandinka *fitá* ‘leaf, bush’, *jànba* ‘tobacco’; Vai *filá*, *fiá* ‘forest, bush’, *jànbá* ‘leaf; verdure’, etc.

48. ‘liver’: the Nasurullayi form *béccε* is unclear. It may go back to the same proto-stem as *bíyná* in most other Kakabe dialects and *bíye* in Maninka and result from the denasalization and devoicing of the word-internal palatal consonant, followed by gemination (this is the interpretation we have assumed for our lexicostatistical study). However, a phonetic evolution of this kind is rather uncommon, and other historical interpretations can also be envisaged.

50. ‘louse’: according to (Kassian et al. 2010: 67), if a language has more than one name for different species of lice, the word for head louse should be taken. Unfortunately, we have only one word for louse in the Kuru-Maninka list, *kàrangbáa*, which probably designates the body louse.

The stem *nàngá* (or *nànká*) used for head louse in the other Kakabe dialects is typical of all the Mokole and Kono-Vai languages, but it is not found outside these groups (Xasonka *jàmi* Bambara *jími* and other Manding forms seem to belong to another root).

52. ‘many’: *búyí* is an innovation of nuclear Kakabe, and it is not attested outside Kakabe. The Kuru-Maninka and Wure-Kaba forms (respectively, *sýaman* and *sýama*) are certainly more archaic: this stem is represented in all Mokole languages and in Manding.

59. ‘new’: *námá* in nuclear Kakabe, *kútá* in Kuru-Maninka and in Wure-Kaba. Both stems are attested in Mokole, Vai-Kono and Manding,¹⁰ with some semantic differences: *NAMA* is the basic word for the notion ‘new’ in Kono, Vai, Mogofin and nuclear Kakabe, while in Bambara and Guinean Maninka *má-nama* is a rare word for the meaning ‘brand new’. The stem *KUTA* means ‘new’ in all Manding languages, and also in Lele and Koranko, while in Mogofin and Kakabe it means ‘raw, fresh, green’; in Vai *kú’á* means ‘raw (uncooked)’. There seems to be a long history of coexistence and competition between the two stems, which is deserving of additional study.

61. ‘nose’: it is not yet clear if *sún* in nuclear Kakabe and *nún* in Wure-Kaba go back to one Proto-Mande stem (the reconstructed form might be **díŋ*, which could have evolved into **súŋ* in Proto-South-Western Mande, Proto-Jogo-Jeri, Proto-Kono-Vai, and Proto-Mokole, as opposed to **díŋ* > **díŋ* > *nún* in Proto-Manding) or two (**sú* and **díŋ*). In the current lexicostatistical study, we have assumed that all these forms represent a single proto-stem. In any case, it is highly probable that the Wure-Kaba form is a Manding loan.

69. ‘round’: forms expressing this notion in Mande languages are rather unstable. Often enough, they are, by origin, participles from verbs meaning ‘to go round; to round’; this is also the case for Kakabe. In all Kakabe dialects we have identical forms, participles of the verb

¹⁰ Cf. Proto-South-Western Mande **nünă*, Proto-Susu-Jalonke **nèné*, Proto-Jogo-Jeri **năn*, etc. So far it is difficult to say if these forms represent the same proto-stem as *NAMA* in Mokole and Kono-Vai.

tíntan. This stem is also attested in other Mokole languages (Lele, Koranko) and outside Mokole: Manding (Guinean Maninka *tíndan*, *tíntan*), Vai-Kono (Kono *tíndan*), South-Western Mande (Guinean Kpelle *tínéŋ* ‘to turn’, Liberian Kpelle *tínáŋ* ‘to turn; to bypass’, Liberian Looma *tite(g)* ‘to turn, turn round; to walk round’, Guinean Looma *tàti(g)* / *lati(g)* ‘to turn, to stir’, etc.). As for the Mogofin form, it might be a participle of the verb *rá-dìgirin* ‘to round off’ which is probably a Susu loan.

83. ‘swim’: each Kakabe variety under comparison has a different stem for this notion (and they are also different from the Mogofin and Maninka stems); evidently, all these forms are recent innovations. In the Saajoya form *gbùgbásí* one might identify a verbal stem *gbàsi* ‘to beat’, but the remaining element *gbù* seems to have no clear etymology in Kakabe. More plausible is the provenance of this verb from the onomatopoea *gbùgbas* ‘splash!’ (imitating the sound of swimming). The Sokotoro form *búnban* can be compared with the Soninke *banbe* ‘to swim; to float’ and Numu (Jogo-Jeri group of Western Mande) *bùán kyó* (lit. ‘swimming do’), although these rapprochements do not seem reliable. In Nasurullayi we have a Pular loan; in Kuru-Maninka, the idea of swimming is expressed by the expression *kà táyá jèè kúmmà*, lit. ‘to walk on the surface of the water’. The Wure-Kaba form *gii gbɔɛ* is unclear; probably, *gii* means ‘water’ (see lexical item 94), but the meaning of the verb *gbɔɛ* is unknown.

84. ‘tail’: one and the same stem appears in all Kakabe dialects, and also in nearly all other Mokole languages (with the exception of Lele) and in Vai-Kono (Vai *féŋé*, Kono *fée*). It is also attested in Manding: Mandinka *féne* and Nyokolo Maninka *fòno*. Forms presumably reflecting this stem are also found in Soninke, Bozo, Bobo, and Beng.

The stem *kó* which appears in our table for Maninka is even better attested in Mande languages; in particular, we find it in the Mokole languages Koranko (*kú*) and Lele (*kó*). Here again, we have two competing Mande stems; both can be reconstructed for the Proto-Mande level (probably, with some semantic distinction).

90. ‘tree’: the Kuru-Maninka form *yíre* reflects a stem represented in nearly all Mande groups, with the exception of Mokole and Vai-Kono, where reflexes of two stems are in competition: **kɔ̀n* (Vai, Kono, Lele, Koranko) and **dʒɔ̀* (nuclear Kakabe, Mogofin). The latter stem is widespread in groups of the Western Mande branch, most often with the meaning ‘firewood’. According to the semantic typology, if a stem has the meanings ‘tree’ and ‘firewood’, the former is normally primary, and the latter is secondary (Starostin 2013: 294). The primacy of the meaning ‘tree’ for the stem **dʒɔ̀* is confirmed by the Bobo data (*s̄n-nó* ‘tree; wood’) and by the fact that in western Bambara dialects the word *dʒɔ̀* ~ *lɔ̀ɔ̀* can have both meanings, ‘tree’ and ‘firewood’. The Kuru-Maninka form *yíre* may be a Manding loan, and the Saajoya form *lɔ̀ɔ̀* seems to be a retention.

93. ‘warm’: two stems appear in Kakabe dialects, *gbàndi* and *kálama*; both of them coexist in Kuru-Maninka (as in Guinean Maninka). It is not excluded that the form *kálama* may also exist in Wure-Kaba, besides *gbàndí* (it may have gone unnoticed during our hasty survey), but in our lexicostatistical study we assume that it is missing.

95. ‘we’: in nuclear Kakabe, forms of the exclusive plural (Sokotoro *ma*, Saajoya *mɔ̀ɔ̀*) and the inclusive plural (Sokotoro *ɔ̀ma*, Saajoya *ɔ̀mɔ̀ɔ̀*) are distinguished. The latter forms are compounds (2_{PL} + 1_{PL.EXCL}). In our lexicostatistical studies, only the exclusive forms have been taken into account.

96. ‘what?’: the stem *fén* attested in Kakabe dialects is an isogloss bringing together Mokole and Kono-Vai. This isogloss differentiates these languages from the rest of Mande, where the stem *MUN* predominates. It is tempting to link this form with the stem for ‘thing’ (which is also *fén* in Kakabe); in this case, the semantic evolution could be as follows: *fén m̀n?* or *m̀n fén?* ‘which thing? what?’ > *fén?* (incidentally, the form *fén m̀n?* ‘what?’ does exist in nuclear Kakabe). The Koranko form *nfé* ‘what?’ could be a contracted version of *m̀n fén?* > *nfé?*

However, similar interrogative pronouns are also found in the Samogho group (Jowulu *vè*, Banka *fɔ̀*, Duun *fɔ̀ɛ*, Dzuun *féé*), which

may testify to the ancient nature of this interrogative pronoun. If so, it cannot be an innovation at the Mokole level.

3.2. Evaluation of linguistic distance

We now present the results of pairwise comparison between the Kakabe varieties, Mogofin and Guinean Maninka, see Table 2. For each pair, the percentage of cognates is given; the real number of compared forms is taken to be 100%, i.e., lacunae and identified borrowings have been excluded. Apart from Pular loans in nuclear Kakabe and one Susu loan in Mogofin, there are three Guinean Maninka loans in Kuru-Maninka (*kɔ̀nè* ‘stomach, belly’, *jéni* ‘to burn’, *yírè* ‘tree’) and one in Wure-Kaba Maninka (*nún* ‘nose’).

Table 2

Share of cognates in the 100-item wordlist in Kakabe dialects, compared with Mogofin and Guinean Maninka

	MGF	NSR	SJY	K-M	SKT	WuKa	Maninka
Mogofin	—	92	93	89	90	91	81
Nasurullayi		—	98	93	98	94	82
Saajoya			—	95	99	95	83
Kuru-Maninka				—	95	94	91
Sokotoro					—	93	84
Wure-Kaba						—	82

4. Conclusion

According to the lexicostatistical analysis, the nuclear Kakabe dialects manifest a greater affinity between themselves than each of them does with any other language variety represented in Table 2.

The distance separating nuclear Kakabe from Kuru-Maninka or Wure-Kaba Maninka is smaller than that between nuclear Kakabe and Mogofin. Kuru-Maninka and Wure-Kaba prove to be closer to nuclear

Kakabe than to Guinean Maninka or Mogofin; therefore, their inclusion in Kakabe is justified.

3) The distance between Kakabe varieties (both nuclear and peripheral) and Mogofin is close to 10%, which is often regarded as marking the threshold between closely related languages and dialects of one language (Koryakov 2017).¹¹ In this liminal situation it seems expedient to keep to the established tradition of considering Mogofin and Kakabe as different languages.

4) Kuru-Maninka is characterized by an elevated rate of cognacy with Guinean Maninka: even after the exclusion of three Kuru-Maninka words from the list as obvious Guinean Maninka loans, the divergence is only 9%, almost half as great as that observed between Guinean Maninka and any other Kakabe variety. Evidently, there are some unidentified Maninka loans in the Kuru-Maninka list.

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¹¹ In (Vydrin 2009), where the Sokotoro variety represented the entire Kakabe language, the distance between Kakabe and Mogofin was evaluated in 12%. This elevated rate can be explained by the fact that some borrowings were not removed from the lists.

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