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## N-initial nouns in Landuma and their counterparts in Mande

This paper describes a group of kin terms in Landuma (a Mel language spoken in northwestern Guinea) which have a non-standard phonological structure: they begin with the consonant cluster NC. It is shown that the anomalous properties of these nouns can be explained via their origin: all of them are borrowed from Mande.

In Western Mande languages, nouns for elder kin are also anomalous in that they are often unable to adjoin a definite or referential article. It has been suggested previously that this anomaly could be explained by the presence of an archaic nasal prefix, a grammatical marker of elder kin. At the same time, such a nasal prefix is not attested in any modern Mande language.

Two hypotheses can be advanced on the origin of the initial nasal element in the anomalous Landuma nouns. According to the first, this element goes back to a nasal prefix reconstructed for nouns referring to elder kin in Mande. If so, the Landuma data can be regarded as an argument for the relatively recent disappearance of this prefix in Mande (i.e., subsequent to the start of close contact between speakers of Proto-Landuma and speakers of Proto-Manding and Proto-Susu). Alternatively, the nasal element can be regarded as a reinterpreted Mande 1SG pronoun *ni* which, in its possessive function, appears frequently with kin terms. It cannot be excluded that both sources may have been relevant.

*Keywords:* Landuma language; Mel languages; Western Mande; kinship terms; language contact.

### 1. General information on Landuma

Landuma is a language of the Mel family spoken by about 30 000 people (our estimate) in the north-west of the Republic of Guinea, in the vicinity of the city of Boke. The Landuma data analyzed in this paper was obtained in the course of fieldwork in Guinea in 2015–2018. A writing system for Landuma was elaborated by Kirk Rogers (Rogers 2005; 2008).

The phonological system of Landuma includes three front vowels *i, e, ε*; four back vowels *u, o, ɔ, ɒ*; and two central vowels *ə, a*. The consonants are represented in Table 1.<sup>1</sup>

|                    | Labial | Dental | Alveolar/palatal | Velar                | Labiovelar | Laryngeal |
|--------------------|--------|--------|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------|
| Voiceless plosives | p      | t      |                  | k <sup>2</sup> [k/g] |            |           |
| Voiced plosives    | b      | d      | j                |                      | gb         |           |
| Fricatives         | f      | s      |                  |                      |            | h         |
| Affricate          |        |        | c                |                      |            |           |
| Nasal              | m      | n      | ɲ                | ŋ                    |            |           |
| Oral sonorants     | w      | r, l   | y                |                      |            |           |

Table 1. Landuma consonants

<sup>1</sup> In this paper we use an IPA-based phonological transcription (with modifications typical for African linguistics), rather than the practical transcription introduced by Kirk Rogers.

<sup>2</sup> The sounds [k] and [g] are allophones of the same phoneme *k*.

Landuma has a relatively simple agglutinative morphology, mainly in the verbal domain. The verbs have a rich derivation system (reflexive, reciprocal, instrumental, etc.). They inflect for TAM categories and agree with the subject in person/number, animacy/ “noun class” (see Section 2). Landuma is a right-branching SVO language.

## 2. Nominal morphology and agreement

The only regular grammatical affixes on the noun are nominal prefixes. These prefixes, which are present on most nouns, at first sight function as class markers. They show a number opposition between singular and plural (see Table 2). Some prefixes are also associated with other semantic features: for example, the prefixes *tɿ-/mɿ-* (SG/PL) express diminutivity, *pɿ-/nɿ-* (SG/PL) are augmentative, the pair *wə-/a-* is characteristic of human nouns, and deverbal nouns are always marked by the prefix *kə-*. Other prefixes have no obvious semantic value, besides signaling number.

| Singular | Plural | Examples                                   |
|----------|--------|--|
| wə-      | a-     | wə-caməs / a-caməs ‘merchant’              |
| dɿ-      | sə-    | dɿ-lɿkɿ / sə-lɿkɿ ‘day’                    |
|          | yɿ-    | dɿ-sek / yɿ-sek ‘tooth’                    |
| kə-      | cə-    | kə-babu / cə-babu ‘maize’                  |
|          | yɿ-    | kə-ca / yɿ-ca ‘hand’                       |
| ɿ-       | yɿ-    | ɿ-bat / yɿ-bat ‘river’                     |
| tɿ-      | mɿ-    | tɿ-sar / mɿ-sar ‘small stone’ (diminutive) |
| pɿ-      | nɿ-    | pɿ-sar / nɿ-sar ‘big stone’ (augmentative) |

Table 2. Nominal prefixes in Landuma

At the same time, Landuma has a significant number of nouns that bear no prefix in the singular<sup>3</sup>. Prefixes are absent in most recent borrowings, which are mainly from French: *farin* ‘flour’ < French *farine*, *plas* ‘place’ < French *place*, etc. Most proper names, both personal names and place names, also have no prefix: *Barlande* ‘Barlande’ (village name), *Fatu* ‘Fatu’ (woman's name). Finally, and most importantly, 12 to 20% of other nouns are prefixless without there being any obvious reason for this, cf. *bumbi* ‘hare’, *dis* ‘body’, *gbundo* ‘secret’, *jombo* ‘hyena’, *kas* ‘father’, *nɛnc* ‘fire’. These nouns form their plurals by adding one of the plural prefixes: *bumbi* ‘hare’ / PL *yɿ-bumbi*, *dis* ‘body’ / PL *sə-dis*, *gbundo* ‘secret’ / PL *yɿ-gbundo* or *sə-gbundo*, *jombo* ‘hyena’ / PL *yɿ-jombo*, *kas* ‘father’ / PL *a-kas*, *nɛnc* ‘fire’ / PL *yɿ-nɛnc*.

The most intriguing property of Landuma nouns concerns how they control agreement. Agreement is found within the noun phrase (adjectives, demonstratives, the numeral ‘one’ and some other words agree with the nominal head) and within the clause (the verb agrees with the subject). The choice of anaphoric pronouns generally follows the same rules as agreement proper.

Agreement in Landuma is basically agreement in animacy, but there is also a kind of agreement based on the phonology of the controlling noun. The basic (and somewhat simplified) agreement rule is as follows:

<sup>3</sup> Every plural noun has a prefix.

- (1) a. semantic agreement: animate nouns trigger special animate prefixes (example 2abc).  
 b. phonological (radical alliterative) agreement: the first consonant of the agreement prefix repeats the first consonant of the controller; if the controller begins with a vowel, the agreement prefix begins with  $\eta$ -<sup>4</sup>, example (3abcd).

(2a) *jombo wək-in*  
 hyena AN-one  
 ‘one hyena’

(2b) *karməkɔ wək-in*  
 teacher AN-one  
 ‘one teacher’

(2c) *wə-bɛ wək-in*  
 NP-king AN-one  
 ‘one king’

(3a) *tɪ-lər t-in*  
 NP-finger AGR-one  
 ‘one finger’

(3b) *lɔkuj l-in*  
 week AGR-one  
 ‘one week’

(3c) *gbundo gb-in*  
 secret AGR-one  
 ‘one secret’

(3d) *ɪ-sar ɪ-in*  
 NP-stone AGR-one  
 ‘one stone’

The rules seen in (1) are strictly observed by all inanimate nouns and by human nouns with the prefix *wə-*. At the same time, there are some groups of nouns that combine semantic and phonological agreement and/or fluctuate between these two options in certain constructions.

Nouns denoting ANIMALS trigger animate prefixes on verbs and anaphoric pronouns (4), but, most usually, alliterative prefixes on the agreement targets within a noun phrase<sup>5</sup> (5ab).

(4) *Jombo ɪ-yup lɛ wə-sɔntle lɛ dɔ, dɔr dɪ-mɔp kɔ lɛ,*  
 hyena IPRS-turn.out ASR 3SG.AN-run.fast ASR there hunger AGR-catch him/her ASR  
*wə-c-kɔ kə-kɔ dade ɲkɔn fəna, wə-sarɪ.*  
 3SG.AN-CONS-go NP-go village (s)he.SUBJ also 3SG.AN-carry.baggage  
 ‘(It turned out that) the hyena was running very fast, (after a while) it felt hungry, it was running and (finally) came to the village. It, too, was carrying its baggage.’  
 [oral text]

<sup>4</sup> Radical alliterative agreement is a typologically rare phenomenon found in the Kru language family (Sande 2019), the Arapesh languages of New Guinea (Dobrin 2012), and a few others.

<sup>5</sup> Within the noun phrase, some fluctuations between non-alliterative and alliterative agreement markers are attested.

(5a) *jonbo jə-bi*  
 hyena AGR-black  
 ‘black hyena’

(5b) *jonbo j-in* or *jonbo wək-in*  
 hyena AGR-one hyena AN-one  
 ‘one hyena’

The agreement behavior associated with prefixless animate nouns is less predictable: they allow phonological agreement in certain constructions, but ultimately their agreement varies across speakers.

Most human nouns without the prefix *wə-* (*karməkɔ* ‘teacher’, *karandi* ‘student’, *bobo* ‘deaf-mute’, *imamu* ‘imam’; diminutive and augmentative nouns referring to people like *tancay* ‘little girl’) allow alliterative agreement within the NP (6ab) but require semantic (animate) agreement markers on verbs (6c) and are antecedents of animate anaphoric pronouns.

(6a) *karməkɔ kə-tɔt* or (6b) *karməkɔ wə-tɔt*  
 teacher AGR-good teacher AN-good  
 ‘good teacher’

(6c) *karməkɔ wə-n-der* *lɛ*  
 teacher 3sg.AN-FACT-come ASR  
 ‘The teacher came.’

A special group of animate nouns will be considered in the next section.

### 3. A special group of animate nouns (N-nouns)

#### 3.1. Presentation of the N-nouns

In this section, we will turn to the main topic of this paper, namely a small group of animate nouns (henceforth “N-nouns”) which are in several respects non-typical of Landuma. The full set, according to the dictionary (Rogers & Bryant 2012), includes nine nouns referring to close social relations and kinship terms: *nna* ‘mother’, *mbariŋ* ‘friend’, *mbeŋba* ‘ancestor’, *ncɔkɔ* ‘uncle, mother’s brother’, *njatiki* ‘host’, *ntana* ‘father-in-law, mother-in-law’, *ntara* ‘elder sibling’, *ntɛnɛŋ* ‘aunt, father’s sister’, *ntɔkma* ‘namesake’; one noun referring to an animal: *mbərfi* ‘wild boar’; and, finally, two proper nouns (*Nfasori* ‘Infasori’, *Nfali* ‘Enfali’) and also *Nkila*, the title of the prophet Muhammad (*Nkila Mahamadu* ‘the prophet Muhammad’).

All N-nouns begin with a consonant cluster of the type NC (where N is a nasal consonant). These are the only words in Landuma that begin with a consonant cluster.

The initial nasal consonant in all N-nouns agrees with the subsequent consonant in place of articulation. In the Landuma orthography elaborated by Kirk Rogers (2005; 2008), it is represented by the letter *n* in all cases.

Landuma has four nasal consonant phonemes: /m/, /n/, /ɲ/, and /ŋ/. The palatal consonant /ɲ/ is rare; it is only attested word-initially before a vowel, as in *ɲamane* ‘time’ (certainly an Arabic borrowing). The consonants /m/ and /ŋ/ are allowed in various positions; in particular, they are found before consonants (although infrequently, and never word-initially) and do not undergo assimilation: *wəkomsi* ‘midwife’; *camne* ‘carry on the head’. Finally, the consonant /n/ is allowed in various positions, but when it precedes an obstruent it undergoes place assimila-

tion: /nb/ is realized as [mb], /nk/ as [ŋk], etc. For example, the factative marker *n-* is realized as [m] before labial consonants and as [ŋ] before velars:

(7a) *Wə-m-bɔr lɛ m-ɔɔ m-i.*  
 3SG.AN-FACT-add ASR NP-rice AGR-DEF  
 ‘(S)he added some rice.’

(7b) *Fatu wə-ŋ-kudi mi lɛ.*  
 Fatu 3SG.AN-FACT-greet me ASR  
 ‘Fatu greeted me.’

This means, in particular, that three different nasal sounds ([m], [n], [ŋ]) can be met before dental and alveolar consonants but [n] is impossible before labial and velar consonants. In the latter case, the phonological oppositions /m/ vs. /n/ and /n/ vs. /ŋ/ are neutralized<sup>6</sup>. Henceforth, we will use a capital N to encode the initial nasal consonant in nouns with an initial consonant cluster (for example, *Nbenba* ‘ancestor’, *Ncɔkɔ* ‘uncle’, etc.).

### 3.2. Morphology of N-nouns

Postulating a common consonant in a group of semantically close nouns immediately raises the question: does this consonant represent a prefix or a part of the noun stem? Identifying it as a prefix does not seem to be a good decision in our case. For example, the plural forms of the N-nouns feature the plural prefix *a-*, which is quite usual for animate nouns: *Ntana* ‘father-in-law, mother-in-law’ — PL *aNtana*, *Ntara* ‘elder sibling’ — PL *aNtara*. One of our language consultants also allowed forms with the unique prefix *ara-*: *araNtana*, *araNtara*. In any case, the plural forms of the N-nouns are invariably formed by adding a prefix to the singular form, which is quite normal for prefixless nouns. All prefixed nouns form their plurals by replacing the singular prefix, cf. the examples in Table 2.

Another important factor is agreement. As described in Section 2, prefixless animate nouns constitute a zone in which agreement patterns are fluctuating or mixed. This is not the case with the N-nouns (including the animal noun *Nbɔrɔfi* ‘wild boar’), which invariably trigger animate agreement markers:

(8a) *Ncɔkɔ ɲɔn*  
 uncle AN.DEF  
 ‘the uncle’

(8b) *Ncɔkɔ w-a*  
 uncle AN-that  
 ‘that uncle’

(8c) *Ncɔkɔ k-ɔn*  
 uncle AN-3SG.POSS  
 ‘his/her uncle’

(8d) *Ncɔkɔ k-a Mamadu*  
 uncle AN-POSS Mamadu  
 ‘the uncle of Mamadu’

<sup>6</sup> Different phonological interpretations of the initial nasal consonants followed by another consonant can therefore be proposed, and we do not plan to discuss the issue in more detail here.

(9a) *Nb̄arfi wək-in*  
wild.boar AN-one  
'one wild boar'

(9b) *Nb̄arfi wə-pɔŋ*  
wild.boar AN-big  
'a/the big wild boar'

One of our language consultants allowed phonological agreement and used the consonants [m] and [n] in the agreeing units. This suggests that we ought to interpret the initial clusters of the N-nouns as representing different nasal phonemes. However, this data is not fully reliable and was not endorsed by other speakers.

### 3.3. Mande cognates of N-nouns in Landuma

It turns out that practically all N-nouns in Landuma have cognates in Mande languages. Let us consider them one by one.<sup>7</sup>

#### 1) Landuma *Nna* 'mother'

Proto-Manding \**ná*, **Mandinka** (Creissels, Jatta & Jobarteh 1982; Anonym 1995) *náa* 'mother' (address form), **Xasonka** (Tveit & Dansoko 1993) *ná* 'mother; mother's sister', **Kita Maninka** (Creissels 2009: 55) *ná*, **Maninka** *ná* (without the tonal article) 'mother', **Bamana** *nà* 'mother, mummy' (address form)

**Bozo-Soninke: Tiegaxo** (Anonyme 1982) *nan* 'mother'; (in combination with the name of a fruit) 'fruit tree', **Sorogama** (Daget, Kanipo & Sanankoua 1953) *ná* 'mother'; (in combination with the name of a fruit) 'fruit tree'

**Bobo** (le Bris & Prost 1981) *nâ*

**Samogo: Duun** (Hochstetler 1996) *na*, **Dzuun** (Solomiac, Traoré & Traoré 1998) *ná*

**Proto-Eastern** (Schreiber 2008) \**da* / \**nā*, **Boko** (Jones 2004) *dá*

**Southern Mande: Dan-Blo** (Erman & Loh 2008) *dǎ́*, **Dan Gwɛɛtaa**, **Kla-Dan** *dǎ́* 'grandmother, great-grandmother; elder paternal aunt; father's or mother's elder brother's wife; mother's elder co-wife; mother-in-law (for a man)', **Tura** (Idiatov ms.) *dǎ́* 'grandmother; elder paternal aunt; father's or mother's elder brother's wife; elder sister-in-law; mother-in-law, grandmother-in-law', **Guro** (Kuznetsova & Kuznetsova) *dǎ́*, **Yowre** (Hopkins 1982) *dǎ́*, **Mwan** (Perekhval'skaya & Yegbé 2018) *dǎ́-lē* 'mother-in-law (for a woman)', **Wan** (Nikitina) *nà* 'mother', **Ben** (Paperno) *nà* 'mother'

#### 2) Landuma *Nbariŋ* 'friend'

**Southwestern Mande: Liberian Kpelle** (Leidenfrost & McKay 2007) *málèŋ* 'sororal nephew'

**Soso** (Anonyme n.d.) *bárèn* (?) kin; intimate friend, **Jalonke** (Creissels 2010) *bári-méxè* (?) 'kin', *bári-dì* (?) 'child; compatriot'

**Jeri** (Tröbs 1998) *béli* 'uncle'

**Mokole: Lele** (Vydrin 2009a) *bérin*, *beyin*, **Lele** (Mara & Camara 1979) *bayen*, **Koranko** (Kastenholz 1987a) *béř*

**Manding: Mandinka** (Creissels, Jatta & Jobarteh 1982) *báriŋ*, *bárimma*, **Nyokolo Maninka** (Meyer 1983) *bariŋ*, **Xasonka** (Tveit & Dansoko 1993) *báriŋ*, **Kita Maninka** (Creissels 2009) *bárin* (no article), **Kagoro** (Vydrine 2001) *bàri-no* 'nephew, niece (sister's child)', **Maninka** *bárin*, *bári*, *bórin*, *bérin* 'maternal uncle; maternal kin'

<sup>7</sup> In the following list, when a Mande word is cited without gloss, its meaning is the same as the meaning of the Landuma word.

3) **Landuma** *Nbenba* ‘ancestor’

**South-Western Mande: Mende** (Innes 1969) *mbémbá* ‘lineage, family’; **Guinean Kpelle** (Leger 1975) *ḥomɔ-kɔɔ*, *ḥemɛ-kɔɔ* ‘ancestor (from the same clan)’

**Susu** (Diané & Vydrine 2012) *bénbá*, *bénbà* ‘ancestor, forefather’; ‘grandfather; great-grandfather’; **Yalunka** *bénbà-nà*

**Mokole: Lele** (Vydrin 2009b) *bénba* ‘grandfather’, **Koranko** (Kastenholz 1987a) *bénba* ‘ancestor, forefather’

**Manding** \**bÉnbaa* ‘ancestor’: **Mandinka** *bénbaa*, **Xasonka**, **Guinean Maninka** *bénba*, **Bambara** *bénba*

**Bobo** (le Bris & Prost 1981) *bēmā* ‘ancestor’

**South Mande: Eastern Dan** *ḥéḥá*, **Tura** (Idiatov) *ḥéḥá*

4) **Landuma** *Ncɔkɔ* ‘maternal uncle’

**Susu** *sóxɔ* ‘maternal uncle’, ‘sororal nephew’, **Jalonke** (Creissels 2010) *sóqɔ*, **Yalunka** *sóxɔ*

5) **Landuma** *Njatiki* ‘host’

**Mende** (Innes 1969) *yàlî* (< Manding)

**Susu** (Willits n.d.) *yàtigi* ‘protector’, **Jalonke** (Creissels 2010) *jààtìgí*, **Yalunka** (Willits n.d.) *yatigi*

**Mokole: Lele** (Vydrin 2009a) *yatii*, **Lele** (Mara & Camara 1979) *yáyí*

**Manding: Kita Maninka** (Creissels 2009) *jàtigi*, **Maninka** *jàtii*, **Bamana** *jàtigi*

**Soninke-Bozo: Bozo-Tigemaho** (Anonyme 1982) *jadi*, **Bozo-Sorogama** (Daget, Kanipo & Sanankoua 1953) *jatigi*

6) **Landuma** *Ntana* ‘father-in-law, mother-in-law’

**Manding: Maninka** *tàna* ‘totem; nuisance’, **Bambara** *tènɛ* ‘taboo, interdiction’

7) **Landuma** *Ntara* ‘elder sibling’

**Soso** (Diané & Vydrine 2012; Touré 1989) *tààrá*, *-ø*, **Jalonke** (Creissels 2010) *tààrá* ‘elder sister’

**Mokole: Kakabe** (Vydrina 2015) *tàata* ‘elder sibling’, **Mogofin** (Polinder, Janse & van Linden 2009) *táata* ‘elder sister’

**Manding: Mandinka** (Creissels, Jatta & Jobarteh 1982; Anonym 1995) *táataa* ‘elder sibling; husband’, **Xasonka** (Tveit & Dansoko 1993) *tàata* ‘elder sibling’

**Soninke** (Galtier & Dantioko 1979; Smeltzer & Smeltzer 2001) *taata*

8) **Landuma** *Ntɛnɛɲ* ‘aunt, father’s sister’

**Southwestern Mande: Bandi** (Grossmann, Rodewald & Covac 1991) *tènà* ‘aunt’; **Guinean Kpelle** (Konoshenko 2019) *télêɲ* ‘paternal aunt; any elder woman of the paternal aunt’s family’

**Susu** (Diané & Vydrine 2012) *ténèn* ‘paternal aunt’

**Vai** (Welmers & Kandakai 1974) *ténà* ‘maternal aunt’

**Mokole: Lele** (Vydrin 2009a) *téne* ‘paternal aunt’, **Koranko** (Kastenholz 1987a) *téne* ‘paternal aunt’

**Manding: Kita Maninka** (Creissels 2009) *ténen* ‘paternal aunt’ (no article), **Guinean Maninka** *ténen*, **Bambara** *téne* ‘paternal aunt’; **Segu Bambara**, **Beledugu Bambara**, **Kaarta Bambara** ‘aunt’ (either paternal or maternal)

**Bozo-Tigemaxo** (Anonyme 1982) *tayen* ‘paternal aunt’

**South Mande: Tura** (Idiatov) *téé* ‘paternal aunt’

9) **Landuma** *Ntɔkma* ‘namesake’

This is a borrowing from Manding, where the form \**tɔGɔ-ma* is morphologically transparent: \**tɔGɔ* ‘name’ + *-ma*, a suffix of mutual kinship relation. The word also appears in many other Mande languages (where it can be also regarded as a Manding loan):

**Southwestern Mande: Liberian Kpelle** (Leidenfrost & McKay 2007) *tɔmá*, **Guinean Kpelle** (Konoshenko 2019) *tɔwéi*, *tɔyéi*



**Susu** (Willits n.d.) *tóxómà*, (Diané & Vydrine 2012; Touré 1994) *tóxómàn*, **Jalonke** (Creissels 2010) *tóqómá*

**Southern Mande: Western Dan** (Erman & Loh 2008) *tóóá*, **Eastern Dan** *túú*, **Kla-Dan** (Makeeva ms.) *túà*

There is also a similar Soninke form *toxora* where the function of the final element *-ra* is not quite clear.

10) **Landuma** *Nbər̄fi* ‘wild boar’

**Susu** (Willits n.d.) *báli* ‘pig’ may have a common origin with the Southwestern Mande forms: **Looma** *boi-g, boĩ-g, buĩ-g*, **Liberian Kpelle** (Leidenfrost & McKay 2007) *bōĩ*, **Guinean Kpelle** (Konoshenko 2019) *bòì* (there are some less reliable forms in other Mande languages which may also be cognates). The final element *-fi* is unclear (however, it may be comparable to Manding *fin* ‘black’, in which case the form would mean ‘black pig’).

11) **Landuma** *Nkilà* ‘title of the prophet Muhammad’

Most probably, a borrowing from Manding, where *\*kí* means ‘send’ and *\*-la* is an agentive suffix, giving *\*kíla* ‘messenger’. This word was borrowed into many modern Mande languages.

**Manding: Mandinka** (Creissels, Jatta & Jobarteh 1982) *kiilaa* ‘messenger; prophet’, **Guinean Maninka** *kíla, kéla, céla* ‘messenger’, **Bambara** *kíra* ‘prophet’ (with an irregular form of the suffix)

**Southwestern Mande: Bandi** (Grossmann, Rodewald & Covac 1991) *kèelá* ‘messenger’, **Looma** *kela, keela* ‘messenger’, **Liberian Kpelle** (Leidenfrost & McKay 2007) *kélá* ‘messenger’, **Guinean Kpelle** (Konoshenko 2019) *kélé, kélá*

**Susu** (Willits n.d.) *xéérá* ‘messenger’, *kiilà* ‘Prophet’ (the latter form is probably borrowed from Manding).

Both proper nouns belonging to this group, *Nfasori* ‘Nfasori’ and *Nfali* ‘Nfali’, may also be borrowed from Mande, and more precisely from Manding, where *Fà Sori* may be a honorific form of the male name *Sòri* (*fà* means ‘father’), and *Fàli* may have been a heathen name meaning ‘donkey’.

### 3.4. N-nouns in the context of Landuma-Mande language contacts

The history of the Landuma (and their closest relatives the Kogoli<sup>8</sup>) is characterized by very close contacts with Mande people. The earliest written sources mentioning them date back to the beginning of the 16th century, and they appear in these documents as subjects of the king of Manding (Suret Canal 2000: 334). One of the main trade routes connecting the medieval Mali Empire led from Siguiri to Boko (Iffono 2000), and there is even an oral tradition that places the origin of the Kogoli in Siguiri, a Maninka town (Suret Canal 2000: 336–337). Historical documents tell us less about contacts of the Landuma with the Susu and Jalonke. However, it can be taken for granted that these contacts continued for centuries, with the result that today most Landumas are bilingual in Susu. Moreover, the Mogofin people are immediate neighbours of the Landuma, therefore some contact between the two languages is to be expected.

The N-nouns are certainly not the only group of nouns borrowed from Mande. However, the initial N is not found in other borrowed nouns. In particular, it is absent in the borrowed

<sup>8</sup> The Kogoli are an ethnic group in the area of Kumbia in north-western Guinea and adjacent areas of Guinea-Bissau, speaking a language that is, reportedly, closely related to Landuma. Unfortunately, practically no data on their language is available; the rare publications on the Kogoli that do exist (Suret Canal 2000; Ferry & Sande 2000) provide almost exclusively ethnohistorical data.

kin term *dimbore* ‘cousin’, from Susu *dinbore* (Raimbault 1923; Lacan 1942).<sup>9</sup> Landuma also has three borrowed kin terms that begin with a nasal consonant, but not with the NC cluster: *mama* ‘grandfather, grandmother’; *nande* ‘father’s second wife’, and *nimokɔ* ‘spouse of one’s elder sibling; younger sibling of one’s wife’. These nouns do not show any phonological differences from other Landuma nouns (whether borrowed or not).

This shows that the peculiarities of N-nouns cannot be explained by the simple fact that these nouns are borrowed: other borrowed nouns (including certain kin terms) do not belong to this group. More than that, in the modern Mande languages which represent the most likely sources of the borrowings into Landuma — that is Susu, Jalonke/Yalunka, Maninka and Mogofin — the cognate words have no initial element N-. In what follows, we consider two alternative sources of the initial consonant cluster in these nouns.

#### 4. N- as a prefix for elder kin terms in Western Mande languages

According to the first hypothesis, the presence of the nasal element at the beginning of kinship terms in Landuma can be explained by the fact that the Mande donor languages had, in earlier periods of their existence, a nasal prefix marking exactly this semantic group of words. A reconstruction of this prefix was advanced in (Vydrin 2006). Since this paper is available only in Russian, let us briefly survey the morphological peculiarities of West Mande languages that provide grounds for this reconstruction.

##### 4.1. Elder kin in Manding languages

As mentioned in (Spears 1972), most terms for elder kin in Guinean Maninka are incompatible with the tonal article (which is normally represented by a floating low tone following the noun): *`ná* ‘mother’, *fâ* ‘father’, *téne* ‘paternal aunt’, *bórin* ‘maternal uncle’, *`má*, *mámá* ‘grandmother’, *bénba* ‘grandfather, ancestor’, *kè* ‘husband’. Maninka texts written in Nko (where tones are accurately marked) confirm the absence of the articles with these words. Spears also points to the fact that *`ná* ‘mother’ and *`má* ‘grandmother’ have a preceding floating low tone.

In some Kagoro dialects, at least certain terms (*fâ* ‘father’, *bàabaa* ‘father’, *kòto* or *qòdɔke* ‘elder brother’, *bídan* ‘in-law’) are also used without the article (Vydrine 2001: 104, 121, 128).

##### 4.2. Elder kin in Koranko and Susu

In these languages, nouns appear in most cases with a suffix *-í* or *-é*. In Koranko this is a definite or specific article, and in Susu it has evolved into a nominal morpheme.

However, in both these languages, there is a group of nouns that cannot attach the suffix.

In Koranko (Kastenholz 1987b: 206), this group includes: *bó* ‘comrade’ (age-mate?), *díyenamɔ* ‘friend’, *kàrànmɔ* ‘teacher’, *tóoma* ‘namesake’, *téne* ‘paternal aunt’, *bérí* ‘maternal uncle’, *bénba* ‘grandfather, ancestor’, *fâ* ‘father’, *ná* ‘mother’, *númɔ* ‘younger brother-in-law’.

In Susu (Touré 1989), there are several groups of nouns that appear without the nominal morpheme *-i*: French and Arabic loans; some shifters; a few names for biological species; and, finally, kinship terms and some other words for social relations: *ngá* ‘mother’, *bàábá* ‘father’, *sóxɔ* ‘uncle’, *mààmá* ‘grandmother’, *bánbá* ‘grandfather’, *tánún* ‘grandfather’, *ténèn* ‘paternal

<sup>9</sup> This term appears in older sources on Susu (Raimbault 1923; Lacan 1942). In more recent ones we find another term for ‘cousin’, *dééxɔ*.

aunt', *nándén* 'mother's co-wife', *tààrá* 'elder sibling', *xúnyàà* 'younger sibling', *dééxó* 'cousin', *nìimóxò* 'younger brother-in-law', *tóxómàn* 'nickname', *kèlé* 'friend; lover', *yààtígí* 'host'. I should be noted that *ngá* 'mother' is the only noun in Susu with an initial prenasalized consonant.

#### 4.3. Elder kin in Southwestern Mande

All the languages of this group are characterized by the phenomenon of initial consonant alternation. As a rule, each content word (noun, verb, adjective) has two forms with different initial consonants.<sup>10</sup> These forms appear in different syntactic contexts. The initial consonant alternation in Southwestern Mande has been widely discussed in the specialist literature; see, among many other publications, (Dwyer 1974; Dwyer 1986; Kastenholz 1997: 100–104, 125–137; Vydrin 2006: 100–114). Historically, the trigger of this consonant alternation is a preceding nasal element. This element can be a syllable coda, as in the word *màsà(ɲ)* 'chief' in (10b), or a syllabic nasal *\*ɲ-* representing a grammatical morpheme: a 3SG pronoun, as in (11b), or a referential article (12b) going back to the same 3SG pronoun.<sup>11</sup> In what follows, the alternant appearing after the nasal element will be referred to as STRONG, and the other as WEAK.

Bandi (Rodewald 1989: 30)

(10a) *ɲàhà*            *lókò*  
REF \ woman    hand  
'woman's hand', historically *\*ɲàhà tókò*.

(10b) *màsà*            *tókò*  
REF \ chief    hand  
'chief's hand', historically *\*màsàɲ tókò*.

Mende (Innes 1971: 146)

(11a) *Ngí*    *tì*    *lɔ́-á*.  
1SG.BAS 3PL    see-PRF  
'I have seen them', historically *\*Ngí tì tɔ́-á*.

(11b) *Ngí*    *tɔ́-á*.  
1SG.BAS 3SG.INAN \ see-PRF  
'I have seen it', historically *\*Ngí ɲtɔ́-á*.

Mende (Innes 1971: 36)

(12a) *Pùù*            *vàndè-í*    *mìà*.  
REF \ European    cotton-DEF    be  
'That is the European cotton', historically *\*N-pùù fàndè-í mìà*.

(12b) *Fàndè-í*            *mìà*.  
REF \ cotton-DEF    be  
'That is the cotton', historically *\*N-fàndè-í mìà*.

At the same time, in Mende, Loko, and Bandi there is a group of nouns whose initial consonants, contrary to expectations, do not undergo alternation: in any context, they appear with

<sup>10</sup> In most languages of the group, there are some consonants which stand outside the consonant alternation system. They will not be considered here.

<sup>11</sup> In all Southwestern Mande languages, there are at least two articles: the "referential article" *\*ɲ-*, going back to the 3SG pronoun, and the suffix *-i*, a "definite article", which most probably goes back to a demonstrative pronoun/determinative. The latter is very likely to be etymologically identical with the article *-i/-e* in other Western Mande languages as discussed above; the former is specific to the Southwestern Mande languages.

a strong initial consonant. This group includes nouns for elder relatives and some semantically close words, e.g.:

Bandi (Covac 1978: 20)

(13) *ní kéeýè*  
1SG.POSS father  
'my father' (rather than \**ní yéeýè*)

(14) *ngì njée*  
3SG.POSS mother  
'his mother' (rather than \**ngì yéeé*)

These nouns are given here (the lists may be incomplete).

Loko: *kèèýé* 'father', *kepa* 'maternal uncle', *nje* 'mother', *ndéýé* 'elder sibling'.

Mende: *kèké* ~ *kèê* 'father', *kéjá* 'maternal uncle', *njě* 'mother', *ngóò* 'elder sibling', *ndéwè* ~ *ndèè* 'brother', *ndiámó* 'friend', *mbăâ* 'age-mate'.

Bandi: *kèèýé* 'father', *kèýá* 'maternal uncle', *njèè* 'mother', *ndé* 'mother' (address form), *ndià* ~ *ndiyà* 'elder sibling', *mámá* 'grandmother',<sup>12</sup> *kàwálá* 'grandfather', *ténà* 'paternal aunt', *ndiámó* 'friend', *mbàlà* 'age-mate'.

These words usually appear without the definite article *-i* (the available data is insufficient to show whether they are compatible with the article in principle).

As we can see, the forms of the terms for elder relatives look as if they constantly appear with the referential article \**ɲ*, even in contexts where the referential article would not normally be expected. In (Vydrin 2006: 139) it was suggested that we have here an archaic noun prefix \**Ñ*- (presumably homonymous with the 3SG pronoun and the referential article), which marks the semantic group of elder relatives.

The complementary distribution of this marker with the definite article *-i* is an evident parallel with the incompatibility of the elder kin terms with articles in other Western Mande languages mentioned in 4.1 and 4.2. That is why in (Vydrin 2006) the prefix \**Ñ*- for elder kin terms is reconstructed for Proto-Western Mande.

#### 4.4. Elder kin terms borrowing from Mande to Landuma

As shown in 3.3, the N-nouns in Landuma were undoubtedly borrowed from Mande languages. According to the first hypothesis, the source of the initial nasal consonant might be the reconstructed prefix \**Ñ*- for elder kin terms.

For sociolinguistic reasons, the main candidates likely to have donated these borrowings are Susu and/or Jalonke (Susu is the dominant language of the littoral zone in Guinea) and Manding. Mogofin and Kakabe (two closely related languages of the Mokole group) also cannot be excluded, although they are less probable candidates, given their low social status: the role of their ancestor in the past was hardly more significant. The Southwestern Mande languages are too distant from Landuma to be considered as probable lexical donors.

The borrowed kinship terms in Landuma confirm this assumption. They can be subdivided into the following groups (see 3.3 for details):

- a Susu loan: *Ncɔkɔ* 'maternal uncle';
- Manding loans: *Nna* 'mother', *Nbariŋ* 'friend', *Njatiki* 'friend', *Ntana* 'father/mother-in-law', *Ntɔkma* 'namesake', *Nkilɔ* 'Prophet';

<sup>12</sup> In Bandi *m* alternates with *w̃*, while in Mende *m* is a non-alternating consonant. For this reason we have no way of knowing whether the Mende word *mámá* 'grandmother' belongs to this group or not.

— Susu or Manding loans: *Nbenba* ‘ancestor’, *Ntara* ‘elder sibling’, *Ntɛnɛŋ* ‘paternal aunt’<sup>13</sup>.

In both the Susu-Jalonke and Manding groups, the kinship terms have no prenasalization, although its presence in the proto-language can be reconstructed. In Southwestern Mande, traces of the nasal element are more tangible (although still elusive), but direct borrowing from these languages to Landuma is hardly probable.

If the “archaic nasal prefix hypothesis” is accepted, two main conclusions can be drawn concerning the history of the Mande languages.

First, the Landuma data confirms the reconstruction of a nasal prefix in Proto-Western Mande advanced in (Vydrin 2006).<sup>14</sup>

Second, the disappearance of the prenasalized consonants in kinship terms in Western Mande languages (in particular Manding and Susu-Jalonke) seems to be a much more recent phenomenon than one might suppose, most probably dating back less than 1000 years: it must have followed the period when the kinship terms were borrowed into Landuma.

## 5. N- as the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun in Mande

Another hypothesis is much more straightforward: the word-initial nasal consonant in the Landuma kinship terms can be interpreted as a reflex of a Mande 1SG pronoun.<sup>15</sup>

A semi-vocalic nasal, most probably high-toned (i.e. \*Ń), can be reconstructed at least for the Proto-Western Mande level (and very probably for the Proto-Mande level too). Kinship terms, being relational nouns by definition, are rarely used in Mande languages without indication of the anchor (i.e. the individual to whom they stand in a kinship relation). As indicated by Dahl & Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001), for kin terms, “a common case is for the anchor to be identical to the speaker of the utterance”. In Mande, the kin terms typically appear with a 1SG possessor<sup>16</sup> and, hence, could have been borrowed into Landuma in this form. In this relation, we would like to quote Denis Creissels’ observation (p.c.):

... dans un des textes diola-fogny sur lesquels je travaille actuellement, le terme mandinka *nándiŋ* ‘co-épouse de la mère’ revient au moins une dizaine de fois sans aucune référence à un possesseur particulier, et toujours comme *nmandiŋ* ou *inandiŋ*. S’il y avait un possessif, ce serait forcément un suffixe. Or il s’agit d’un emprunt occasionnel au mandinka, pas de quelque chose qu’on pourrait

<sup>13</sup> Kinship terms borrowed from Mande and retaining an initial *n-* are occasionally found in other Mel languages, cf. *ntene* ‘aunt’ in Baga Tshi-temu (Lamp 2016); *ndòdmáá* ‘namesake’ in Kisi (Childs 2000). These forms seem to be the only instances of the presence of the roots of our list in Mel outside Landuma (or at least we have not found anything else in the data available for the other languages of the family). These two forms certainly result from independent (and relatively recent) borrowing from Mande; there is no reason to postulate their presence in Proto-Mel (or even a proto-language at any lower taxonomic level).

<sup>14</sup> In (Vydrine 1994; Vydrin 2006), this Proto-Western Mande morpheme was interpreted as an archaic noun class marker. Alternatively, it might be regarded as a kind of grammaticalized “honorific marker”. We are not going to delve here into discussion about its nature; our fundamental concern is simply the fact of the existence of this morpheme in Proto-Western Mande.

<sup>15</sup> We are thankful to Denis Creissels for drawing our attention to the plausibility of this hypothesis.

<sup>16</sup> We have tried to check this assumption in the Bambara Reference Corpus (Vydrin, Maslinsky & Méric 2011–2020) (accessed on April 10, 2020). *Fà* ‘father’ appears in the disambiguated subcorpus 1000 times. It is preceded by the non-emphatic 1SG pronoun *ń* 79 times, and by the emphatic 1SG pronoun *nê* 68 times (147 occurrences in total). For *bá* ‘mother’, we find 1137 occurrences; it is preceded by *ń* 87 times, and by *nê* 41 times (128 in total). These numbers may seem not very convincing, but the relatively weak cooccurrence of these kin terms with 1SG pronouns can be explained by the predominance of narratives in the Bambara Corpus. In dialogs the figures would certainly be much higher.

faire remonter à un contact ancien avec une hypothétique langue mandé, puisque les dictionnaires diola n'enregistrent pas ce terme. Le *n-* initial ne peut donc s'expliquer que comme le figement du possessif de première personne du mandinka.

## 6. Discussion

We have to admit that, at the present state of our knowledge, we do not see decisive arguments in favour of either of the two hypotheses. Certainly, the cognitively sound “1SG pronoun hypothesis” looks highly attractive and convincing. There are, however, some minor arguments which can be interpreted in favor of the “archaic prefix hypothesis” too.

First, all kin terms in the N-group refer to elder relations, which conforms with the proposed meaning of the archaic prefix. The absence of the nasal element in the Landuma word *dimbore* ‘cousin’ borrowed from Susu can be regarded as such an argument.

Moreover, the “1SG pronoun hypothesis” does not explain the initial nasal in the word *Nkila* ‘prophet’.<sup>17</sup> In this particular case, the “archaic prefix hypothesis” fits better, if we assume that this prefix had some kind of honorific semantics.

Meanwhile, neither hypothesis provides any reasonable explanation for the prenasalization in the Landuma word *Nbərɸi* ‘wild boar’, unless we embark on speculations concerning the role of wild boars in the spiritual life of Landuma and/or ancient Manding speakers.

It is quite probable that both sources of prenasalization were pertinent. For some of the prenasalized Landuma forms which are not true kin terms (*Njatiki* ‘host’, *Ntɔkma* ‘namesake’), a pronominal origin for the nasal element seems more plausible. The same is true for the noun *Nna* ‘mother’, which is mainly used in the appellative function (the standard referential term for ‘mother’ is *karɔ*). At the same time, for some other nouns (e.g., *Ntara* ‘elder sibling’, *Ntɛnɛɲ* ‘aunt, father’s sister’ and the other kin terms), the prefixal hypothesis appears quite reasonable.

## Abbreviations

|                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1, 2, 3 — first, second, third person | INAN — inanimate          |
| AGR — agreement prefix                | IPRS — impersonal         |
| AN — animate                          | NP — nominal prefix       |
| ASR — assertive                       | POSS — possessive         |
| BAS — basic pronominal series         | PRF — perfect             |
| CONS — consecutive                    | REF — referential article |
| DEF — definite                        | SG — singular             |
| FACT — factative                      | SUBJ — subject            |

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<sup>17</sup> *Kíra*, *kéla*, *céla* ‘prophet’ in the Manding languages is not a relational noun: it is normally separated from the possessor by a possessive marker. In the Bambara Reference Corpus there are 1915 occurrences of *kíra* ‘prophet’, and among these there is not a single one immediately preceded by the 1SG pronoun *ń* or 1PL pronoun *án*. The same result obtains for the Maninka Reference Corpus, which gives 8761 occurrences of *kéla* ‘prophet’, not a single one of which is immediately preceded by the 1SG (*ń*) or 1PL (*ń*, *án*) pronoun.

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Н. Р. Сумбатова, В. Ф. Выдрин. Существительные с начальным носовым согласным в ландума и их соответствия в языках манде

В статье анализируются термины родства в языке ландума (семья мел), распространённом на северо-западе Республики Гвинея. Эти существительные характеризуются не-



стандартной фонологической структурой: они начинаются с консонантного кластера структуры NC. Делается вывод, что эта аномальная особенность может быть объяснена происхождением этих существительных: все они оказываются заимствованиями из языков манде.

В западных языках манде названия старших родственников тоже нередко отличаются аномальным поведением, что проявляется в невозможности присоединения определённого или референтного артикля. Ранее уже высказывалось предположение, что такая аномалия может объясняться присутствием архаичного назального префикса, который был грамматическим маркером этой семантической группы слов. Однако такой назальный префикс не был обнаружен ни в одном современном языке манде.

Для объяснения происхождения начального носового элемента в аномальных существительных ландума можно выдвинуть две гипотезы. В соответствии с первой из них, этот элемент восходит к архаичному назальному для старших родственников, реконструируемому для языков манде. В таком случае данные ландума может считаться свидетельством того, что этот префикс в языках манде исчез сравнительно недавно (уже после начала интенсивных контактов между носителями пра-ландума, пра-манден и прасусу-джалонке). Альтернативная гипотеза возводит начальный назальный элемент ландума к местоимению 1 лица единственного числа *í*, которое существует в соседних языках манде и часто употребляется с терминами родства. Можно также допустить, что могли быть задействованы оба эти источника.

*Ключевые слова:* язык ландума; западные манде; термины родства; языковые контакты.