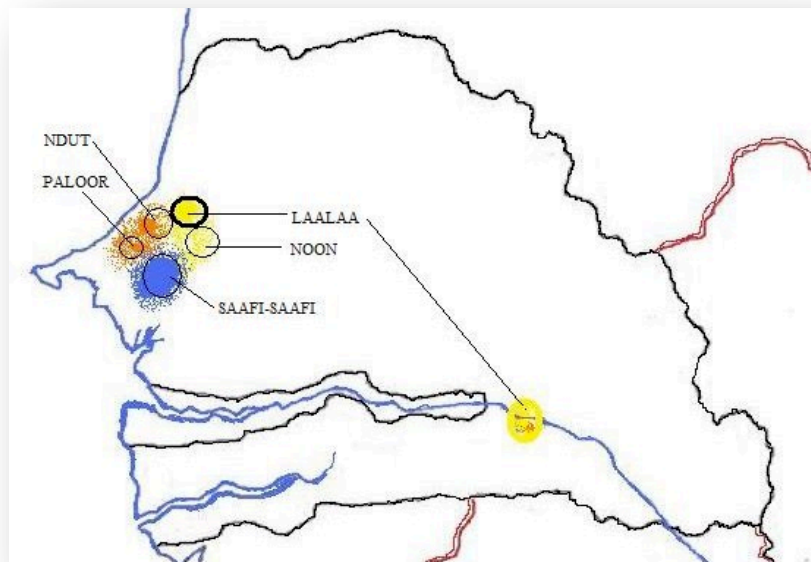


“The ethnolinguistic classification of Seereer in question”

The ethnic groups which consider themselves as Seereer are essentially located in Senegambia. The lack of mutual understanding between the speakers of different seereer dialects is problematic. Is language a sufficient criterion to classify ethnic groups in the seereer context? Pichl (1966), D. Sapir (1971), Doneux (1977), Gravrand (1981) consider the Seereer from Siin as the “original” ones and their dialects are considered to be the “authentic” seereer language (Cf. Lopis-Sylla, 1997). Saafeen, Laalaa, Noon, Ndut and Paloor-siili communities (and languages) are categorized as “Cangin” and therefore excluded from Seereer. Doneux reattached them to Wolof (Fall, 2005, 2010).



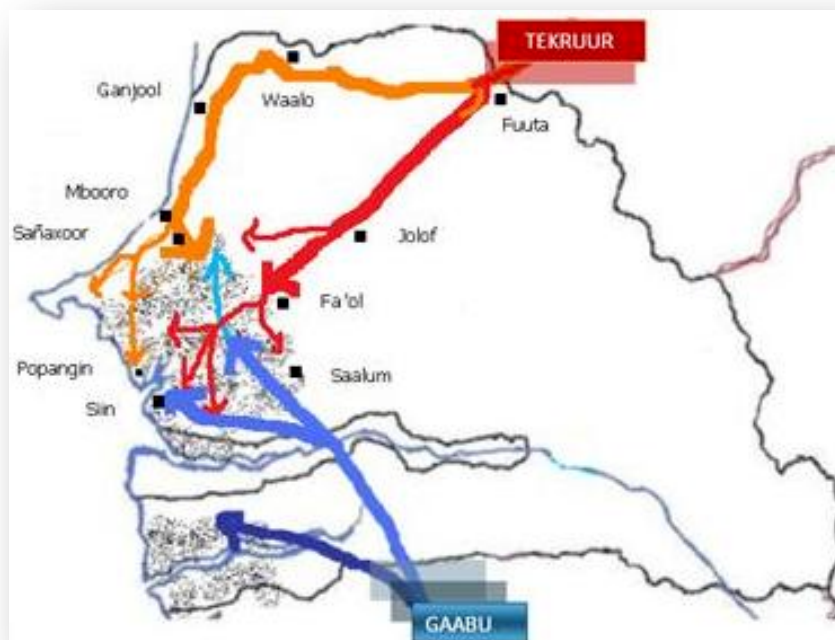
MAP 1: Location of “Cangin” sub-group

This is causing a real unease, particularly at the Seereer community itself. The intellectuals are questioning the relevance of the name "Cangin" and its ideological implications (denial of seereer membership) in the ethnolinguistic classifications of involved seereer sub-groups (Fall, 2010 et 2005; Ciss, 2001).

My position is that “Seereer” is not really referring to one specific language. It simply corresponds to an ethnic denomination: the *mythic symbol* of the threatened identity of the so-called groups and/or languages, e.g. the Seereer Siingandum, the Seereer-Laalaa, the Seereer-

Ol, the Seereer-Saafi, etc. The associated terms -Siingandum, -Laalaa, -Ol, -Saafi permit the Seereer themselves to point out the differences between the (various) Seereer subgroups and dialects. Another fact is that the people (“ethnic groups?”) in Senegambia are so mobile, in time and in space, that we have a common *cultural, linguistic and ethnical background* in the entire area. In the Seereer context, this mobility is a source of mutual influences, both internal (between seereer subgroups) and external (between seereer and non-seereer).

Based on the above observations, I’d like to present some hypotheses on the migration and origin of Seereer communities.



MAP 2 : Seereer migratory axis,
from Pinet-Laprade (1865) to Baako Mbay (2009)

Then I will analyze the dynamic evolution of the concept of identity in the seereer context. I will also demonstrate the limits of lexicostatistics to approach Senegalese *so-close-languages*. I will try to compare the conception of *academic communities* with that of the Seereer. My ambition is to deal with the Seereer’s self-perception as opposed to how they are actually perceived by their environment.

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