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**Article:**

# Why are they named after death? Name giving, name changing and death prevention names in Gújjolaay Eegimaa (Banjal)

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This paper advocates the integration of ethnographic information such as anthroponymy in language documentation, by discussing the results of the documentation of personal names among speakers of Gújjolaay Eegimaa. Our study shows that Eegimaa proper names include names that may be termed 'meaningless names', because their meanings are virtually impossible to identify, and meaningful names, i.e. names whose meanings are semantically transparent. Two main types of meaningful proper names are identified: those that describe aspects of an individual's physic or character, and ritual names which are termed *death prevention names*. Death prevention names include names given to women who undergo the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' to help them with pregnancy and birth-giving, and those given to children to fight infant mortality. We provide an analysis of the morphological structures and the meanings of proper names and investigate name changing practices among Eegimaa speakers. Our study shows that, in addition to revealing aspects of individuals' lives, proper names also reveal important aspects of speakers' social organisation. As a result, anthroponymy is an area of possible collaborative research with other disciplines including anthropology and philosophy.

1. **INTRODUCTION.** Anthroponymy is a research area which has attracted much interest from various disciplines including Anthropology, Philosophy, Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology. Anthropological research on naming practices includes the investigation of name giving times and the continuity of the use of names given from childhood. It also includes the plurality of names, that is, bearing several names at the same time (Bodenhorn & vom Bruck, 2006; Journet, 1990, 2001; Journet-Diallo, 2008; Valentine, Brennen, & Bredart, 1996; vom Bruck & Bodenhorn, 2006). The meaning of proper names has also taken centre stage in Philosophy and Linguistics. Valentine et al. (1996: 12) argue that there are two competing views on the semantics of proper names: *the descriptive theory of reference*, according to which names describe characteristics of an individual, and *the theory of direct reference*, which states that proper names have no internal semantics, and that their meaning is confined to external reference only. Cognitive psychology investigates, among other things, the mental processes involved in the recognition and recall of proper names. The interest in proper names from various

disciplines points to the importance of including anthroponymic information in language documentation, in that it provides a fertile field for interdisciplinary research.

This paper investigates aspects of name giving practices among speakers of Gújjolaay Eegimaa (Eegimaa hereafter) from an anthropological linguistic perspective. It provides an analysis of aspects of the structures and meanings of proper names in Eegimaa, but also the cultural background necessary to understand those meanings. Our primary focus is on proper names, which we define following Valentine et al. (1996) as names that designate unique individuals. Other kinds of proper names like surnames, geographical names or animal names are not investigated here. The naming practices examined here include some which are in strong decrease (e.g. birth-giving rituals and their naming practices), and others like name changing which have been abandoned mainly due to the influence of new religions and administrative complications involved in reregistering a new name (cf. §5). In the last century, new naming practices have been introduced along with new religious influences from Christianity and Islam as well as the formal school system, and exist alongside some of the older ones. These new naming practices are however not investigated here. Rather, our focus is on Eegimaa traditional naming practices, especially those of the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' which we will refer to as *death prevention names*, a term we borrow from Obeng (1998), to refer to names given to newborns to help prevent them from dying.

This paper begins with a presentation of the language and its speakers in §2. It is followed by a discussion of the source of our data in §3, where we also discuss the importance of including traditional naming practices in Language Documentation. In §4 we examine name giving practices among Eegimaa speakers, and provide an analysis of different categories of meaningful names given to children, as evidence that traditional Eegimaa names are not mere labels for name bearers. We discuss different name changing practices in the traditional society of Eegimaa speakers in §5, including name changing to avoid homonymy with deceased members of the community. §6 provides an analysis of the structure of the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' or death prevention names given in the Eegimaa language and other contact languages. We show that among Eegimaa people (and also other Jóola peoples and their non-Jóola neighbours) death prevention names are given to both newborn children whose death is being fought against, and also to their mothers, who change their names as part of the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' to help them fight unsuccessful maternity. We compare Eegimaa death prevention names for mothers, which we refer to as 'child-bearing names', to those given to children, and argue that by examining their meanings, it is possible to tell whether the name bearer is a child or a mother. We summarise the discussion in §7.

**2. GÚJJOLAAY EEGIMAA, ITS SPEAKERS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS.** This section briefly presents the Gújjolaay Eegimaa (Eegimaa for short; Ethnologue code: ISO 639-3: bqj), its speakers and its varieties. We also discuss aspects of the contact situation of the Eegimaa language. This is important, because as we will show in §6 below, some of the Eegimaa death prevention names and child-bearing names are given to Eegimaa people from other communities.

Eegimaa is a Jóola language spoken in the Basse Casamance area of Southern Senegal by a population estimated to be between 7,000 (Bassène, 2007) and 11,200

speakers (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014). Jóola languages are classified as members of Sapir's (1971) BAK group of Atlantic languages of the Niger Congo language phylum. Speakers of these languages are found in the Gambia, in the former Casamance region of Southern Senegal and in Guinea Bissau. The map in Figure 1, taken from Ethnologue, presents the languages of Senegal. The arrow on the map points to the Eegimaa speaking area (Bandial is the name used by Ethnologue for Eegimaa).



Figure 1. Map of Senegal (courtesy of Google maps)

Eegimaa is mainly spoken in Mof-Ávvi, a former kingdom of 10 villages located to the west of Ziguinchor, the capital city of the former administrative region of Casamance in the south of Senegal. Mof-Ávvi is a peninsula bordered by the Casamance River to the north, which separates it from the Jóola Búluf and Jóola Fogny areas, and to the east by the villages Brin and Djibonker, where the speakers of Kujireray and Baïnounk Gubëeher live. In the south, the river known as Kamobeul Bolon separates Mof-Ávvi from the Bayot speaking area, while the west side of Mof-Ávvi coincides with the homeland of the Jóola Kaasa Húluf and Jóola Kaasa Ésuulaaluʔ. The map in Figure 2 below, adapted from Palmeri and Gazio (1995), shows a very approximate location of Mof-Ávvi in relation to other neighbouring speech communities. Some of these communities will be referred to in our discussion of death prevention names in §6. The Eegimaa spoken in Mof-Ávvi is known by several names given by speakers of neighbouring languages. For example, the
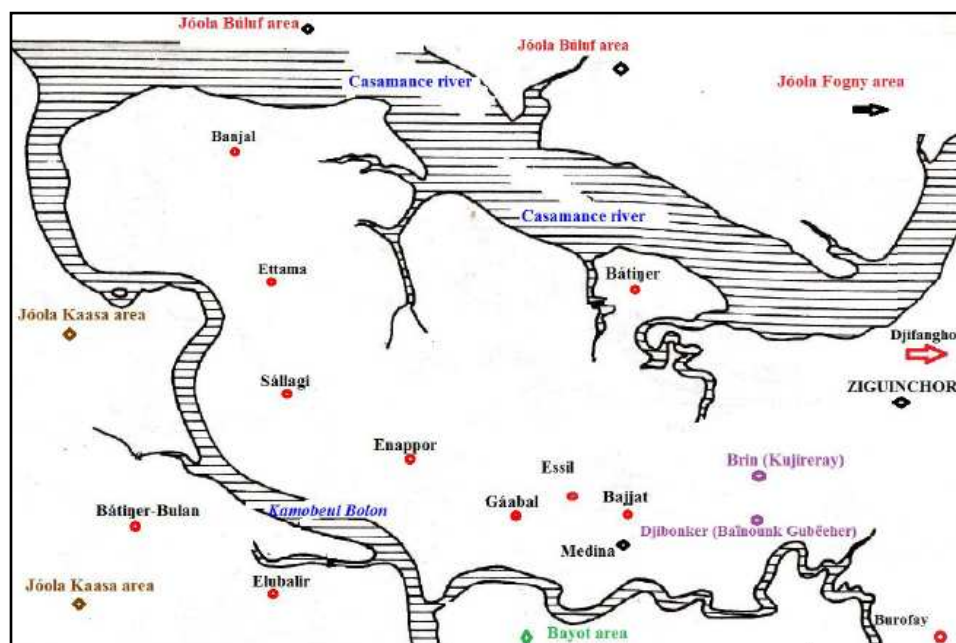
Figure 2. Map of the Eegimaa speaking area

name *Kusiilay*[1] 'the language of Essil', is the name given by speakers of Kujireray to the Eegimaa language, because Essil, of which Bajjat was a district, is the village which has a border with their village. *Endungo* is the name given by Bayot speakers, but its meaning is not known. *Kúlaakiay*, 'the language of village of Seleki/Sállagi', is the name given by Jóola Kaasa speakers who are more familiar with the village of Seleki/Sállagi' than all other villages of Mof-Ávvi. Finally, *Banjal/Bandial* 'the language of the village of Banjal', the most popular of all those names, is the name given by the Jóola Búluf and Jóola Fogny speakers to Eegimaa people and their language, because people from the village of Banjal were the first to be in contact with them.

Jóola language varieties which are closely related to Eegimaa include *Kujireray/Kuluunaay* (from the village of Brin with 76% lexical similarity) and *Gufiñamay* (from the village of Afiniam with 74% lexical similarity (based on Lewis et al., 2014 eds.)). *Gútaamay* (from the village of Butam), *Gulapaoray* (from the village Djilapaor) and *Gusiilay* (ISO 639-3: bsl) from the village of Thionk Essil are also other languages related to Eegimaa. They are located north of the Casamance River in the Jóola Búluf area. There are also small migrant Eegimaa communities in villages like Djifanghor (east of Ziguinchor) and in Bourofaye (south of Ziguinchor), where they cohabit with speakers of Baïnounk languages. Nowadays

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[1] Village names are written using their usual spelling. The Ethnologue language codes are provided for language varieties that have them. Language names are written following the recommendation for the transcription of national languages of Senegal, Decree 2005–981. Names of the villages of Mof-Ávvi are written using the Eegimaa orthography and following the pronunciation of village names by native speakers.

most Eegimaa speakers from Mof-Ávvi live outside their homeland, generally in urban areas like Ziguinchor and Dakar. Speakers of Eegimaa use the term *Gújjolaay* (meaning Jóola) to refer to their language when they speak to each other, but Eegimaa to distinguish their Jóola variety from that of other Jóola peoples.Eegimaa is an endangered language whose transmission to new generations has been declining significantly in the last decades.

It is important to understand the contact situation of Eegimaa, because some of the ritual names analysed in this paper come from other languages or from neighbouring communities. These names are given either in Eegimaa or in a different language.

Eegimaa people are neighbours to a multilingual village called Medina, which is located within the territory of Mof-Ávvi between Gáabal (Kamobeul) and Djibonker (see map in Figure 2 above). However, none of the participants in our research has been to that village to undergo the 'birth ritual' described in §6 below, and none of them bears a name coming from that village. Medina is a relatively recently founded multilingual village (probably one to two hundred years old according to the inhabitants of Mof-Ávvi), which is populated by migrants from different linguistic communities. The languages spoken in that village include Jóola Búluf, Jóola Kaasa, Fula and Mandinka, and Wolof, which is becoming a more important *lingua franca*. The multilingual situation of Medina is uncharacteristic of the rest of the territory of Mof-Ávvi, which is a linguistically homogeneous Eegimaa speaking area, in the sense that there is only one linguistic speech community, with Eegimaa as the language of communication. Speakers of Eegimaa have become increasingly multilingual, especially in the last five to seven decades due to schooling in French and rural exodus. However, the linguistic landscape of the Eegimaa speaking areas of Mof-Ávvi is characterised by the use of Eegimaa throughout the ten villages.[2]

Note that some speakers of the Manjaku (Mandjak) language and Jóola people from the Jóola Búluf speaking areas have settled on the peripheries of the villages of Bajjat and Gáabal, which are on the border between Mof-Ávvi and Médina (cf. Figure 2 above). While migrants from the Jóola Búluf areas to Mof-Ávvi have totally shifted to Eegimaa, Manjaku speakers have kept Manjaku as a home language, but they use Eegimaa in their daily interactions outside their home.

There are reports that some Eegimaa women have left their homes to live with the Manjaku speakers after pregnancy or after giving birth to hide from supernatural malefic forces that threaten the life of their newborns. However, we do not have any death prevention or child-bearing names in the Manjaku language in our current database.

## 3. THE DOCUMENTATION OF EEGIMAA PROPER NAMES

**3.1 THE SOURCE OF THE DATA.** This paper originates from collaborative work between two native speakers of Eegimaa who have been collecting traditional names

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[2] There are two main types of village in the Casamance. The first type is that of multilingual villages which are composed of different linguistic communities. These villages, like cities, are linguistically heterogeneous in the sense that different languages are used in different districts. The second type of village is that of villages like those in Mof-Ávvi where only one language is used in each village. Speakers may be multilingual as a result of schooling and migration, but this is a case of individual multilingualism rather that societal multilingualism. The villages can be seen as linguistically homogeneous because only one language is used among the speakers who live there.

separately for different purposes.[3] The two authors' combined methods of data collection include native speaker intuition, since they are both members of the Eegimaa community, and are as a result, familiar with individuals who bear traditional proper names, or they know traditional names of many ancestors. The methods also include elicitation sessions conducted with other native speakers, but also the collection of names from different types of songs e.g. funeral dirge songs, initiation songs, and libation rituals during which the names of ancestors associated to a shrine are called.

Bassène (the second author) has been collecting names in written form for several years in order to include them in the calendar he produces annually for Eegimaa speakers. The calendar is based on the six day week of the Eegimaa people and records, in addition to proper names, names of activities such as agricultural activities and also traditional rituals, celebrations and the times they take place during the year. Bassène's calendar is important because most traditional rituals take place on specific days of the traditional week which are different from the more commonly used modern French based calendar.

Sagna's data on traditional proper names was collected during his documentation of endangered linguistic and cultural aspects of Eegimaa and its speakers (Sagna, 2011). The documentation of Eegimaa has provided a record of speech from various communicative events. The primary data collected includes narratives, rituals, songs and conversations etc., all of which includes occurrences of proper names, which were added to the list of proper names compiled during elicitation sessions. Interviews about the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' were also conducted as part of the documentation of proper names in which speakers, especially women who are involved in those rituals, explained the reasons, procedures and significance of those rituals and also the associated ritual names. The analysis proposed here is based on a careful examination of at least 1000 proper names including meaningful and meaningless names and death prevention names.

**3.2 WHY DOCUMENT PROPER NAMES?** Names of European origin like *Elisabeth* and *Daniel*, which are often classified as Christian names, and those of Arab origin like *Ousmane* and *Ibrahima*, often referred to as Muslim names, are common names among Eegimaa speakers today. These names have no meanings, but are labels, which in most cases indicate the religious affiliation of the name giver or the name bearers. In contrast to these recently introduced names, traditional Eegimaa names generally have meanings, though there are names whose meanings cannot be traced synchronically or they simply don't seem to have meanings.

Eegimaa traditional names include those whose meanings point to aspects of the name

bearer's physic or behaviour. For example, a name like *Amigaat* 'He/she has a skinny leg' describes the physique of a skinny person. Other names give insights into the circumstances of birth of the named individual, or for women, their struggles to give birth later in life. Examples of names of this kind include *Akkalenjayi* 's/he torment his/her mother' which reveals the suffering of a mother to keep her child alive, while *Farugaye* 'tired womb' is the name of a women who has previously had many miscarriages. These are meaningful names which will be called death prevention names for children and child-bearing names for mothers (see §6 below for a detailed account). Death prevention names are names given as part of ritual practices designed to prevent infant mortality. Women who have recurrent miscarriages and those who repeatedly lose children at a very young age are given new names when they undergo the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual'. The meanings of these names capture their unsuccessful experiences with motherhood. Names given to the children of these mothers are protective names which often tell the individuals' story as the child is helped to stay alive.

One of the main goals of documentary linguistics is to provide primary data of good quality, for long-term preservation "so that it can be used in new theoretical ventures as well as in (re-)evaluating and testing well-established theories" (Gippert, Himmelmann, & Mosel, 2006: v). Documenting names like death prevention names is therefore an enterprise that goes beyond a simple collection of a list of names. It involves an understanding of not only the meanings of the names, but also the belief system including the conceptualisation of the different supernatural forces that can affect the life of a newborn, and those that can help to protect it. As will be shown below, using information based on personal knowledge from the two authors and from the investigation carried out for the purpose of this research, infant mortality is believed to have several sources. On the one hand it can be the result of the incarnation of a spirit into a human body. In this case, competent seers can help to remove the spirit[4] to prevent it from killing the child. People who are involved in trying to remove the spirit and keep the child alive can rely on their medical ethnobotanical knowledge when they need to use the right medicine to expel the spirit. There are also situations where a child who is believed to have supernatural power can be identified by seers as one who uses their supernatural power to 'travel' between life and death by being born and then dying again and again. Here again, seers intervene to help suppress the supernatural power of the child in order to prevent him or her from dying 'on purpose'. Early child death can also be due to maltreatment in the world of totems which are associated with every individual member of a family lineage. Every member of a lineage has a totemic animal double and the illness or death of the totem will inevitably affect the human double in the same way. Thus understanding the meanings of death prevention names also requires a good understanding of aspects of the kinship system. Note that people involved in trying to keep a child alive can also rely on a shrine to help protect the child, especially when external supernatural forces such as witchcraft are identified as the sources of the mothers' and babies' misfortunes.

Documenting naming systems like the Eegimaa one provides information on the speakers' worldview, including the categorisation of the supernatural world and the way the

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[4] The methods used to suppress supernatural power are kept secret by seers. As a result we are not in a position to provide any details on how the fight with supernatural forces is carried out.

language speakers interact with entities in it. At the same time, by providing a record of the meaning of proper names and the relevant information on aspects of the kinship system, rituals, birth and death etc., such documentation inevitably contributes resources for research in disciplines such as philosophy and anthropology, considering the interest in proper names from these various disciplines, as mentioned in the introduction.

Name-giving practices not only give insights into the speakers' conceptualisation of concrete and abstract entities such as the people and spirits around them, but also give a good understanding of the way people solve problems they face in their environment, including those relating to life and death. Eegimaa traditional names, as we will show below, are therefore not mere meaningless labels. Investigating their meaning and aspects of the cultural settings in which they are grounded is an attempt to produce a 'multipurpose record' of the language and culture (Himmelmann, 2006: 1), which can be used for research beyond linguistics. The multipurpose nature of language documentation, and its usefulness to other disciplines, is reflected in the claim that "ethnographical information is a crucial component of any language documentation" (Franchetto, 2006: 183). Topics which are likely to be of interest to anthropologists, and whose investigation in a multipurpose documentation is therefore important, may include pregnancy, birth, rituals, witchcraft and onomastics, including anthroponymy, etc. (Franchetto, 2006; Geschiere, 1997, 1998; Mbunwe-Samba, Mzeba, Niba, & Wirmum, 1993; vom Bruck & Bodenhorn, 2006). Thus traditional names and naming practices, wherever they can be found, should be an integral part of a documentation project, because of the wealth of linguistic and cultural information they contain. In many African societies like Eegimaa, traditional names have complex linguistic structures and meanings, and are therefore of interest to linguists and philosophers. At the same time, they include interesting cultural information and are, as a result, relevant to anthropological research.

Eegimaa traditional names are still given to many children. But nowadays, children who bear traditional names tend to be named after other relatives. Many traditional naming practices described in the sections below are either extinct or they are being abandoned. For example, very few children are given 'death prevention' names nowadays, partly because the infant mortality which these names is supposed to help fight has decreased significantly. Thus traditional naming practices represent an endangered genre among Eegimaa people, while practices such as name changing to avoid homonymy with deceased people are already extinct. Our examination of the structure of Eegimaa traditional names and naming practices reveals that their meanings contain important information on aspects of speaker's views and beliefs on pregnancy and birth. At the same time, they show a link with the supernatural world, which includes both protective forces like ancestors and spirits, and also malevolent ones linked to witchcraft.

**4. NAME GIVING AND TYPES OF BABY NAMES.** Traditionally, babies are not given names as soon as they are born. Among speakers of Eegimaa all babies, whether male or female, are called using common baby names, of which *Jiñappu* 'the little one' is the most common. Other common names include *apputi* 'the tiny one', *appu*, *fuppu* etc. All these common baby names share the root *-ppu* 'young, little' to which a noun class prefix is at-

tached; *ji-* in the case of *ji-ññabu* and *a-* and *fu-* for *a-ppu* and *fu-ppu*[5] respectively.

The name-giving time for individual babies may differ depending on the type of baby. For 'ordinary'[6] babies, i.e. those who are believed to have no link to the supernatural world at their birth, names are generally given by their parents when they begin to show clear patterns of behaviour, for instance around the time they start crawling, walking or uttering their first words. However, children who are believed to have supernatural links, like those who are believed to have the power to 'return' to the world of ancestors or spirits, or those who may die as victims of external forces, are generally named later than ordinary babies (see §4.3 and §6). Their names are generally given by people who provide protection and ensure they stay alive, as discussed in §6 below. This tends to be groups of women especially if the mother undergoes the 'birth giving ritual'. There are two main reasons why naming babies early is not common practice among Eegimaa people. The first may be attributed to a high rate of infant mortality and the uncertainty of whether the baby will live or not. Journet (1990, quoted in Valentine et al. 1996: 15) argues that this is linked to the identification of a child as a fully fledged human being as opposed to a spirit or an unsettled ancestor. The second main reason for not naming a child early in the traditional Eegimaa society is that the names of dead people, especially the young ones, are strongly avoided. When a child is given a name early, he or she is thereby anchored in society (Valentine et al., 1996). Thus if a child is named but dies, the name and any other name which may be a reminder of them, must as a result be avoided and will not be given to another individual.

In this paper we distinguish two main types of names: meaningless names whose meanings are not known or cannot be derived from the structure of the names, and meaningful names. Meaningful names can be further divided between circumstantial and descriptive names, and symbolic ritual names which we will refer to as death prevention names. We keep these two subcategories of meaningful names separate in our analysis, especially because of the particularity of the death prevention names, which involve ritual practices.

**4.1 MEANINGLESS BABY NAMES.** Meaningless names are those whose meaning cannot be traced. We include in this category names such as those illustrated in Table 1 below whose roots are not synchronically interpretable. These names may be innovated and there is no fixed inventory of these kinds of names. There is no evidence to show that some of

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[5] The prefix *ju-/ji-* attaches to nominal roots denoting small entities or to derive diminutive meaning. However it is not clear what the morpheme *-ña-* stands for. As for the noun class markers *a-* and *fu-/fi-*, they are used with nouns of human denotation for the first one, and with nouns denoting entities with a round shape, amongst other meanings. This suggests that the prefix *ju-/ji-* is used to describe the small size of babies, whereas *fu-/fi-* is used with the root *-ppu* for babies considered big. On the other hand, the name *a-ppu*, which takes the prefix of nouns of human denotation, suggests that the named child is grown and acts like other people.

[6] There are many signs which are believed to be indicators that a baby or child may have supernatural power. If the child who can speak says regularly that he or she will die, or talks about interacting with deceased people at night, there are chances that that child would be believed to have supernatural power. As a result the parents and relatives will begin to look for ways to save him or her. If a woman has had previous unsuccessful pregnancies, or has had newborn children who died in their infancy, any newborn who has a strange behaviour might be considered a spirit child who has the power to die and come back to life. A strange behaviour might be, for example, regularly letting out odd sounding cries at night, or giving the impression that he or she will die when ill.

these names previously had meanings which have now been lost. There is also no indication that they might have been borrowed from other speech communities before being phonologically integrated into the Eegimaa language. Notice that there is no grammatical distinction between male and female proper names in Eegimaa in that nothing in the form of the name itself indicates whether the name bearer is male or female.

TABLE 1. Meaningless names in Eegimaa

| *Dímban* | *Áre* | *Baindala* |
|----------|-------|------------|
| *Simaero* | *Alenda* | *Asungu* |
| *Jendena* | *Háresa* | *Yíwu* |
| *Bábo* | *Abbaa* | *Abibuli* |

**4.2 MEANINGFUL AND CIRCUMSTANTIAL BABY NAMES.** Most traditional Eegimaa names are meaningful. Meaningful names include ritual names like the death prevention names discussed in §4.3 and §6 below, and non-ritual names like those that describe physical characteristics or patterns of behaviour of their bearers. Non-ritual meaningful names can be further divided into different subcategories based on what they describe. First, there are names which describe physical characteristics of individuals who bear them. These can either point at a prominent aspect of the name bearer's physic, as in (1a) and (1b), or they may describe the complexion of a person, especially if the skin tone is considered more pronounced than that of the average person, as in (2a) and (2b).[7]

(1) a. A-mi-ga-at  
       CL1-thin-CL9-foot  
       'The one with a thin leg.'  
   b. Já-fi-riŋ  
       CL11b.POSS-CL7-forehead  
       'The one with a salient forehead.'

(2) a. Á-tuay  
       CL1-white  
       'The white one.'  
   b. A-ñuget  
       CL1-black  
       'The black one.'

Meaningful names may originate from nicknames used playfully to name children before they reach the stage when they can be given 'real' names. These nicknames, exemplified in (3), can become real proper names if they are established as the only names. However, as will be shown in §5, individuals may decide to change their names later in their life.

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[7] Abbreviations: AGT = agentive; Arabic number after CL = conventional class number; Arabic number after SG or PL = number marker; CAUS = causative; CL = class marker; CPL = completive; EXCL = exclusive; NEG = negation; OBJ = object; PASS= passive; PL = plural; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PREP = preposition; PRO = pronoun; REC = reciprocal; SG = singular; VEN = venitive.

(3)  a.  Á-ggu-bo                                    b.  A-bejul
         CL1-mess-CL5.PRO                                 CL1.pout
         'The one who messes his/her mouth (pouts).'      'The one who pouts.'

There are also names which are given to children based on patterns of their behaviour. Sometimes these names are joking names which end up being established as the only names. This is exemplified in (4a), which is the name of a child who seems to trivialise everything. For example, it could be a child who plays with dangerous things like fire despite his or her parents' attempts to stop them. Example (4b) is another illustration of a name which describes the behaviour of a child who is probably doing things that are not expected for her age. The names illustrated in examples (5a) and (5b) describe emotive reactions from children in their early infancy. Example (5a), repeated from (3a), is the name of a child who regularly spreads their lower lip (possibly when crying), while (5b) is the name of one who continuously gazes at people or things. Finally, examples (5c) and (5d) are names that describe children's early interactions with adults. In this case the names are those of children who give away anything they get hold of to people around them.

(4)  a.  A-lejeh-en                                 b.  A-jah
         CL1-trivialise-CAUS                             CL1-be.intelligent
         'The one who trivialises things.'               'The intelligent/clever one.'

(5)  a.  A-bejul                                     b.  E-perul-o
         CL1-pout                                        CL3-scream-AGT
         'The one who pouts.'                            'To scream at the top of one's voice.'

     c.  Jí-a                                        d.  Á-ssum-a
         offer-AGT                                       CL1-be.good-AGT
         'The giver (the unselfish one).'                'The nice one (unselfish).'

Some baby names are near homonyms with names of adults who are still alive or who have died old enough. Structurally, they are derived by alternating the prefix on an adult's name with the 'diminutive' singular prefix *ju-/ji-* (see Sagna (2008) for an account of the morphology of Eegimaa, including the noun class system). There are two main types of names in this subcategory of baby names. In the first case, the diminutive singular prefix is used on the name of an adult to indicate that one of the people who bears the name is smaller or younger than the other. This is exemplified in (6) below.

(6)  a.  Jí-jambaraŋ                                 b.  Ji-misa
         CL11-jámbaraŋ                                    CL11-misa
         'The small/younger Jámbaraŋ'                    'The small/younger Amisa.'

The second case where the diminutive prefix is found in meaningful names is with family names[8] like *Sámbu* and *Saña*. Here, the combination of the diminutive prefix with family names indicates that the name bearer is a child born from a family or lineage. Interestingly, with these names, there is a strong association of names to biological gender in the sense that some names are names for women whereas others are exclusively for men. Note that nothing in the structure of those names indicates the gender of the name bearer. *Jútom* 'The small/young Átom' and *Jissaña* 'The small/young Assaña' in (7a) and (7b) are names for women, whereas *Jísambu* 'The small/young Sámbu' and *Jitendeŋ* 'The small/young Atendeŋ' exemplified in (7c) and (7d) are male names.

Apart from the naming conventions outlined above, we are not aware of any other noteworthy naming conventions in the traditional Eegimaa society.

(7)  a.  Jú-tom  
         CL11a-Atom.lineage  
         'The small Átom.'

  b.  Ji-ssaña  
         CL11a-Sagna.lineage  
         'The small Asagna.'

  c.  Jí sambu  
         CL11a-Sambu  
         'The small Asámbu.'

  d.  Ji-tendeŋ  
         CL11a-tendeŋ  
         'The small Atendeŋ.'

**4.3 SYMBOLIC RITUAL NAMES FOR CHILDREN OR DEATH PREVENTION NAMES.** Symbolic ritual names are given to infants to prevent them from dying. These names are given to children who are believed to have supernatural power which enables them to come to life and die again and again from the same mother. We refer to these children, who are called úññil úila 'flying children' in Eegimaa, as 'spirit babies'. As pointed out above, children with supernatural power are identified through their unusual behaviour, for example producing very strange screams regularly during the night time only. If they are old enough to speak, the way they talk about their imminent death to join 'their real parents' from another world can also be an indication that they need special attention. Babies who need special names are those whose mothers have had many unsuccessful pregnancies or have had children who died very early in their infancy. Another subcategory of children who are given death prevention names is those who are victims of external malefic forces like witches, as discussed in detail in §6.3 below. Examples (8) and (9) below illustrate death prevention names for children. The forms and meanings of these proper names are discussed in detail in §6.3 below.

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[8] There is a fixed inventory of surnames among Eegimaa people. These are *Basen* (Bassène), *Manga*, *Sambou*, *Saña* (Sagna) and *Tendeŋ* (Tendeng). Eegimaa surnames are also found in other Jóola groups and in some other neighbouring ethnic groups of Southern Senegal. Their meaning is not known. Among Eegimaa people, surnames are always inherited from the children's father.

(8) a. Gu-yyah        b. Gu-ond-i-bo            c. A-fog-or-i
       CL8-grave        3PL-inter-2SG-CL5.PRO        CL1-bury-REC-PASS
       'Graves'         'They inter you there.'        'S/he gets buried around.'

(9) a. Ju-sotten              b. Ji-bbanno
       2PL-deceive               2PL.EXCL-return.VEN
       'You deceive.'            'We have come back.'

**5. NAME-CHANGING AMONG EEGIMAA SPEAKERS.** In the Eegimaa society, there is no restriction on the number of names that an individual may have. It is therefore possible for a person to have two, three or more names. In the past, name changing was common practice among Eegimaa speakers. Different situations in an individual's life could lead them to adopt a new name. Name changing is, however, less practised nowadays, partly due to the significant conversion of most Eegimaa people to Christianity, and to Islam to a lesser degree, and also because of possible administrative complications. The main situations that lead to changes of name are the following.

**5.1 HOMONYMY AVOIDANCE.** In the traditional Eegimaa society, one of the most radical changes of proper names took place to avoid homonymy between a living individual and a deceased person. Before the introduction of official registrations, and the mass conversion to Christianity and Islam, which required an individual to have a unique name or set of names throughout their life, people bearing the same name as a deceased person were required to change that name and take up a new name. If a young person died, any older member of the community who bears the same name would be required to change name by choosing a new name themselves. No specific ritual is associated with name changing to avoid homonymy with a deceased person. However, if a person died of old age, their younger namesakes could keep their name. Name changing to avoid homonymy is therefore done to help bereaved members of the community overcome the trauma of losing one of their relatives, especially if the latter dies too young. When a person changes their name, he or she informs other members of the community, and the new name spreads by word of mouth. Everyone who uses the old name is simply told about the new one. If the person who is changing their name has more than one name, only the one they have in common with the deceased person must change.

**5.2 NAMES REFLECTING A NEW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS**

**5.2.1 A NEW NAME FOR THE NEW KING.** When a man is enthroned as a king, he is given a 'royal name' which is chosen for him during the enthronement ceremony. It is not clear who exactly chooses the new name for the king, but the new name is announced to the assembly, which is composed of the inhabitants of all the villages of Mof-Ávvi. The king of Mof-Ávvi, the former kingdom of ten villages, which is the homeland of the

Eegimaa speakers, is a sacred person rather than a political leader. His main role is as an intermediary between humans and God.[9] Once a man is enthroned, he is symbolically considered as dead and born again as a king who is surrounded by a lot of prohibitions. For example, he has his personal roads, and cannot share a meal or drink with ordinary people. The king has the central role of ensuring that there are sufficient rainfalls for rice growing seasons, and in that sense, the people's lives are entirely dependent on him. It is because of his highly sacred status that the king is required to give up his old name or names, and take a new one to mark his radical change of status from an ordinary individual to a sacred entity placed between the world of humans and that of the ancestors. His new name must take over the old ones, and becomes the only term of reference and address. For example, the name of the last king of Mof-Ávvi, *Áfilejo*, before he became a king, was *Ñãtato*. His royal name took over the old one, to the point that very few people remember the latter today. The names of the kings of Mof-Ávvi generally have meanings. For example, the name *Síbbaysondo* 'there are spears in' has a meaning, which refers to the contention surrounding the choice of the name bearer as king. Similarly the royal name *Áfilejo* comes from *a-filet-jo* CL1-look.for-CL11.PRO 'He look for it (kingship)', and was given to a person who ended up becoming a king after the one who should have been enthroned ran away. There are reports that the name *Áfilejo* was borne by two different kings. This may suggest that the kings' names are taken from a closed set of names. However, because the set of kings' names that most speakers can remember is very small, it is hard to argue with certainty that the names given to kings come from a closed set.

**5.2.2 NEW NAMES FOR THE 'WEALTHIEST'.** Individuals whose hard work and know-how leads them to a significant increase in the number of their cattle can give themselves praise names which could end up becoming their main names, to praise their achievements or their wealth . The person who has just chosen a new name publicises it in their immediate environment and the name spreads by word of mouth from one village to another. Traditionally, wealth was evaluated by the amount of rice one had and by the amount of one's livestock. While the real amount of rice in a loft is often hidden once it is taken home from the fields, the livestock are more visible and give bragging rights on occasions where the hard work of individuals is publicly acknowledged. These new names are usually praise names which end up being the main names of address and reference. It is only when such a praise name takes over the old name that we can talk about name changing. But notice that even when these 'wealth names' take over the old ones, the latter can still be used interchangeably.

Proper names whose function is to praise an individual's wealth generally refer to cattle. They are morphologically complex, generally consisting of verbal stems to which subject prefixes and inflectional suffixes are attached. In all the examples in (10) below, the subject prefix *su-* indicates the class membership and the number values of the missing subjects – *sí-be* 'cows'. These proper names can also have a sentence-like structure with no overt

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[9] Eegimaa people practise a monotheistic religion and believe in one God called *Ala Émit* 'the owner of the sky'.

subject as in (10b) and (10d), where the underscore is used to link the verb and its object.[10]

(10)   a.   Sí-ilen-e                          b.   Su-kkob_e-bbag
             CL4-make.fly-CPL                        CL4-dent_CL3-bucket
             'They (cows) make (birds) fly.'         'They (cows) dent a bucket.'

       c.   Sí-pimbor-e                        d.   Si-mmen_n-aw
             CL4-face.each.other-CPL                 CL4-be.many_PREP-you
             'They (cows) face each other.'          'They (cows) are many with you.'

Example (10a) illustrates a new name chosen by an individual whose livestock are, according to the meaning of the name, so many that the loud sound made by the herd of his cattle when they move makes birds fly away out of fear. In (10b), the individual's name shows that the individual's livestock are so many that when his cattle come to drink at the well, much confusion is created by the large number of cows, so that they end up denting the bucket from which they drink. Example (10c) suggests that the individual's cows are so numerous that when they take one direction, a number of them get confused and end up taking a different direction, resulting in them facing the others later. Finally, the name in example (10d) is one which suggests that the name bearer has many cattle.

In summary, it was common practice among Eegimaa speakers to take a praise name to describe one's wealth in livestock. Much work was required to possess means to buy a cow. In such a context, individuals who had many livestock could choose to change their names to reflect their new status as wealthy people. Though some of the speakers who took wealth names were still alive at the time the data presented here was collected, this kind of name changing is not practised anymore. This is partly due to the fact that money has taken over successful cattle raising and rice growing as the main criteria for the evaluation of wealth in the community. Thus documenting proper names provides an insight into cultural practices which are becoming less and less relevant to current speakers of Eegimaa.

## 6. DEATH PREVENTION NAMES

**6.1 A SHORT TYPOLOGY OF DEATH PREVENTION NAMES.** Death prevention names are, as pointed out in §4.3 above, names given to a category of children who are believed to be at risk of dying in their infancy, to ensure that they survive. There are two categories of children who are considered to be at risk of dying. The first category is that of children who are believed to have supernatural power and a strong link to the supernatural world of spirits and ancestors to which they belong. As pointed out in §3.2, they are believed to have the ability to choose to return to the supernatural world by dying shortly after they are born. The fundamental difference between ordinary babies and those that may be called 'spirit babies' is that the latter have the power to choose to be born from the same mother, only to die when they choose to. It is not the case that these children are killed by an external spirit.

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[10] The underscore is used to indicate that the words it links could be separated or moved to different positions. However with proper names they are pronounced as part of one single word.

Rather, they are believed to have the power in themselves. As soon as that supernatural power is diminished or suppressed through a ritual, the link with the supernatural world is broken and the child is expected to survive. Giving those children death prevention names is part of the strategy to break the cycle of birth and death, and to ensure their long-term survival. The other category of children who are considered at risk is those who are victims of external forces such as witchcraft, as discussed below. These children are not believed to have any supernatural power. They are also given death prevention names as part of the strategy to protect them from malevolent forces.

The existence of death prevention names has been reported in a number of African societies including the Akan of Ghana (Agyekum, 2006; Obeng, 1998), the Yoruba (Oduyoye, 1982), the Efik and the Ibibio (Mensah & Offong, 2013; Mensah, 2009), and the Igbo in Nigeria, as popularised by Chinua Achebe's *Ogbanje* children in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958). In Northern Senegal death prevention names are also used in societies like the Wolof and the Seereer (Journet, 2001; Journet-Diallo, 2008). Names like *Yeggul-ngon* 's/he has not reached the afternoon', *Dematina* 's/he has left again' and *Sagar* 'floorcloth' serve as examples of children's death prevention names in Wolof.

Giving death prevention names to try and prevent the death of a child is common practice among the Jóola people (see 6.3 below) and their neighbours, including the Baïnounk and Manjaku who live in the Gambia, the Basse Casamance area of Senegal and Northern Guinea Bissau. Manjaku names like *Dikaya* 'is going nowhere' and *Kéehu* 'dead/ the one who dies' are examples of names given to children to indicate that these are 'spirit children' on the one hand, but also to assure their survival on the other hand.[11] The crucial difference between practices in the African societies mentioned above and those like the Jóola is the fact that, in addition to death prevention names for children, women who have difficulties having children are also given kinds of death prevention names, which may be referred to as child-bearing names, to help them solve problems of unsuccessful maternity. The death prevention names, or child-bearing names for women, are given to prevent the death of their children. As we show in the next section women who undergo the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' change their names to take child-bearing names.

Journet (2008) points out that giving child-bearing names to mothers is a practice which is peculiar to Jóola people. While the literature at our disposal shows that this is predominantly the case, it is nonetheless clear that other ethnic groups and neighbours of the Jóola people like the Baïnounk (see Lüpke & Storch, 2013), the Manjaku and also the Mandinka, whose practices are not studied here, also practise name changing for mothers. For example, in all cases where Baïnounk people have been involved in the *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' for an Eegimaa woman, both the mother and the child have been given protection names. While the extent of these practices in different ethnic groups still requires detailed accounts, it seems that name changing for women undergoing the birth ritual is an areal feature from the Gambia to Guinea Bissau through the Basse Casamance region of Southern Senegal.

In languages where they occur, death prevention names differ from other proper names, generally by their meanings, which are often characterised by reference to death or by denoting undervalued entities. Languages in which the structures of ordinary names differ

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[11] The information on the Manjaku names and their transcription was provided by Julienne Bith Gomis who is a native speaker of the 'Tiur' dialect.

from those of death prevention names are rare. Akan is an example of such a language. According to Obeng (1998: 165) Akan ordinary names have morphological markers of gender distinction. For example, *Pipim* and *Pipimaa* are masculine and feminine names respectively. Obeng argues that death prevention names do not have any formal markers of gender distinction. Thus a name like *Beyeeden* could be either a male or female name. In languages like Eegimaa, there are ordinary names which are traditionally known as men's or women's names, but there is no morphological distinction between male and female names. An ordinary name like *Barama* (unclear meaning) does not have any marker to indicate whether the name bearer is male or female. Likewise, a death prevention name like *Çetulo* 'died coming', whose actual bearer is a female, could also be given to a male person.

While names referring to death often describe aspects of the context in which a child is born, those denoting undervalued items simulate a lack of interest in the baby and its survival, or indicate an attempt to humiliate the spirit which inhabits a child, in order to expel it, and keep the child and his or her natural (as opposed to supernatural) human attributes alive. The typical functions of death prevention names include, amongst other things, as Obeng (1998) shows, hiding the victim's identity and shaming children who are believed to choose to die to return to their supernatural world, thereby making them stay alive.

In the next section, we investigate child-bearing names for mothers and death prevention names for children. We examine the meaning of the traditional names and argue that mothers' names differ semantically from those of their children in a predictable way. We also discuss some new naming practices among Eegimaa speakers.

**6.2 CHILD-BEARING NAMES FOR STRUGGLING MOTHERS.** Among the Jóola people, women who struggle to have children, either because they have recurrent miscarriages or because their children die in their infancy, can be given death prevention names if they undergo the *Gaññalen*[12] 'birth ritual' ceremony in an attempt to save their children's lives. Through this ritual, unsuccessful mothers seek protection from an entity of their choice, which may be a shrine owned by a group of women from a village, a district or an association of women. Protection may also be sought from an individual (a man or a woman) who owns a shrine which is powerful enough to discover and fight the malefic forces which are responsible for the unsuccessful pregnancies or infant mortality. However, in this case, there is generally no name-changing involved. Contrary to 'wealth names' discussed in §5.2.2 above, child-bearing names are not chosen by their bearers, but are given to them by people in charge of the birth ritu-

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[12] This ritual is known as *Kañalen* in Jóola Fogny and Jóola Kaasa which are the main *linguae francae* among the Jóola languages and most other languages of the Jóola area. The name *kañalen* is also used in languages like Manjaku where this ritual is also practised. The *Kañalen* with name-changing for women is a feature which Journet Diallo (2008) describes as a peculiarity of Jóola people. The information we collected from the Manjaku people indicates that name-changing is also practised, but generally by people who have relations with Jóola people. This suggests that name-changing as part of childbearing practices may well have been borrowed from the Jóolas. However, we do not have material on death prevention practices amongst the Manjaku people to confirm such a hypothesis. Questions regarding the origins of this ritual, and the similarities and differences of these practices between different ethnic groups who live in the same areas as the Jóola people, are left for future research.

al or the protection of the mother and the child. Failed pregnancies and infant mortality are believed to have different causes, most of which are outlined in the next section.

**6.2.1 PRINCIPLE CAUSES OF MISCARRIAGES AND INFANT MORTALITY.** Miscarriages and infant mortality are attributed to causes of various kinds. They are believed be due to witchcraft, in which case a person uses their supernatural power to act on the pregnant woman or to attack her infants, resulting in miscarriages or child death. They may also be a result of the *gánig* curse, which loosely translates as 'cursing with a stake'. This is a practice which consists of planting a stake of a chosen height in a secret place in the mangrove swamp, and uttering a curse which condemns the children of an enemy named there to die from the action of some supernatural force, when they reach the height of that stake. This is often done by people out of revenge for a very serious offence like being betrayed, humiliated or publicly dishonoured.

Unsuccessful pregnancy and infant mortality may also be due to maltreatment in the world of totems associated with each family lineage or sub lineage. Different lineages or sub lineages have a totemic animal and each individual human member of a kin group has an animal double of the same species as other members of the lineage or sub lineage (Palmeri & Gazio, 1995). Any illness or death of a totemic animal inevitably results in the illness or death of its human double. Members of a lineage have the capacity to negatively affect the fertility of a woman from their own lineage. This can happen, for example, when one or more members of that lineage feels disrespected or neglected when one of their female members marries into another lineage.

Last but not least, if a shrine is completely abandoned by a family or owed a debt,[13] it is possible that it impedes the ability of both male and female members of that family to have descendants, until it is taken care of again or until the debt is paid. Whatever the source of unsuccessful motherhood, the role of the protective entities is to identify the causes of unsuccessful pregnancies or infant mortality with the help of seers. Then an outstanding debt is paid, and any damage done to anyone is repaired, before the mother and the child are taken under the protection of the protective entity.

**6.2.2 *GAÑÑALEN* 'CHILD-BEARING RITUAL'.** We pointed out earlier that after losing several children or after having successive miscarriages, unsuccessful mothers can resort to an array of practices in an attempt to save their pregnancies or the lives of their newborns. One of the practices we identified is the *Gaññalen* 'child-bearing ritual'.[14] This consists of seeking protection from an association of women during pregnancy or after a child is born.

After getting pregnant a woman can leave her home (with her husband's support) to settle temporarily in another village in order to escape from the external forces which are responsible for her unsuccessful pregnancies and the recurrent loss of her newborns.

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[13] In the Eegimaa belief system, a shrine is an entity with a visible and an invisible part. The visible component is the altar where libations and sacrifices are made. The invisible part is composed of supernatural entities such as ancestors and spirits who give the shrine its power. If a debt is owed to a shrine, it means that it is owed to the forces which hold power.

[14] There are many practices used to fight miscarriages and infant mortality when they are believed to be due to supernatural forces. In this paper, we focus on those that require name-changing for mothers and giving death prevention names for their children.

In that village she seeks the protection of a shrine owned by a group of women who will adopt her and help her with her pregnancy and the early life of her child. Eegimaa speakers generally do their *Gaññalen* 'child-bearing ritual' in one of the ten villages of Mof-Ávvi or other closely related Jóola communities where varieties of Eegimaa are spoken. In recent decades, some Eegimaa women have sought help from other Jóola people such as the Jóola Fogny and also non-Jóola communities such as the Manjaku and the Baïnounk peoples.

In her new adoptive village, the woman seeking help is given a new name, which hides her identity from her supernatural tormentors. She is given a *fúññalenum* 'sacred stick' upon her arrival in that village, and another one when she is taken back to her home by her protectors and presented to her community of origin with her new name and her child.

When the child is born, he/she is given a death prevention name of the type discussed in §6.3 below by her protectors. After successfully giving birth, the woman lives among her protectors till her child is considered big enough and less vulnerable, before being taken back to her conjugal home. Both the woman and her child will remain under the protection of the shrine and their protectors throughout their lives.

Note that there are also cases where a woman seeking to protect her newborn can leave her home only after giving birth, to live in a village from which she will only return when her child is grown enough. If the child and the mother are entrusted to the shrine of a group of women the mother's name will be changed and her child is given a baby's death prevention name. Alternatively, the mother can use that time to elude the forces which threaten the life of her child and only come back when the child is deemed less vulnerable. In this case there is no need for the mother to change her name or for the child to be given a death prevention name.

It is also possible for a woman who struggles with motherhood to seek the protection of the shrine of women in her own village or district. Here again, the child is given a death prevention name, while name changing for the mother is also required. As pointed out above, mother's death prevention names are best categorised as child-bearing names. This is because the main reason for changing the names of the mothers is to ensure that they have successful pregnancies and that their children survive.

**6.2.3 THE NAMES OF MOTHERS.** The *Gaññalen* 'birth ritual' is common in the Eegimaa society, as it is among other Jóola people (Journet, 2001; Journet-Diallo, 2008; Sapir, 1993). Women are given new names by their protectors to hide their identity from bad spirits, witches or the entities responsible for their unsuccessful pregnancies or the death of their newborns. The meanings of their new names are testimonies of their individual struggles, which may be the inability to have successful pregnancies, their bad experiences at the maternity place if their babies do not survive the birth, or the repeated death of their children. The names may also indicate a resignation to the fact that their efforts to give birth seem to be in vain. Consider the examples in (11) to (13) below.

(11)  a.  Fi-litten-e                  b.  Fu-maccor-e
         CL7-learn-CPL                   CL7-mix.up-CPL
         'It (womb) learns.'             'It (womb) is confused.'

(12) a. Ké-ro-bi-(w)a?

go-CL14.PRO-for-what

'Why go there (maternity)?'

b. Waf-u-le(t)-bo

CL6.thing-CL6-not.be-CL5.PRO

'There is nothing there (maternity).'

(13) a. E-ccatt-i

CL3-pay.NEG-2PL.OBJ

'He (God) has not rewarded you.'

b. A-ccam_e-ttam

CL1-pay-CL3-earth

'The one who pays the earth.'

In examples (11a) and (11b), the prefixes *fi-* and *fu-* are subject prefixes which show agreement with the unexpressed subject *far* 'stomach/womb'. Thus the underlying full names are *f-ar fi-littene* 'the womb learns' and *f-ar fu-maccore* 'the stomach/womb is confused', in which case the noun *far* 'stomach/womb' triggers agreement on the verb. The examples in (11) suggest that women bearing these names have difficulties having successful pregnancies. Examples (12a) and (12b) have sentence-like internal structures. The name in (12a) is composed of the root *ke* 'go', the locative pronoun *ro* 'inside (maternity place)', the purposive preposition *bi* 'to/for' and the question word *wa* 'what'. This name is a rhetorical question, which captures the experience of a woman for whom going to the maternity place to give birth seems to be almost pointless because of repeated unsuccessful birth-giving attempts. Example (12b), on the other hand, is a declarative sentence-like[15] name composed of the subject noun *waf* 'thing', the inflected verb *u-le(t)* 'not be', which shows agreement in gender/noun class and number with the noun *waf* 'thing', and the locative pronoun *bo* 'there (general location)', which refers to the maternity place. It describes a frustrating situation in which, following unsuccessful attempts at giving birth, the woman is told that there is nothing for her to bring home from the maternity place. The name *E-ccatti* 'He has not paid/rewarded you' in example (13a) was given to the woman as a statement that God has not rewarded her struggles by giving her a child. The name is short for *é-mit e-ccati*, which loosely translates 'God (the owner of the sky) has not rewarded your efforts'. Structurally, this name is an inflected verb like those in (11), and shows grammatical agreement with the omitted subject *é-mit* 'God'. Finally, (13b) illustrates the name of a woman who seems to be continually paying a debt to the earth in which her newborn children who die soon after they are born are buried. This name is a sentence-like name which is structurally composed of an inflected verb *a-ccam* 'she pays' and its object *e-ttam* 'earth'.

In recent years, women from the Eegimaa villages and Eegimaa speaking migrants to cities who have founded associations to help unsuccessful mothers (see 6.2.4 below), have begun to use words from other languages as child-bearing names for mothers and death prevention names for their children (see 6.3 below). These include place names like *Dagana* 'name of town in Senegal' and the French loan *Turnal* (probably from *tournant* 'turning'). While the motivation for using a place name as a child-bearing name is not clear, the meaning of a name like *Tournal* comes from the fact that the woman bearing this name has been to many places seeking help, before coming to the place where this name was given

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[15] Names having a sentence-like shape are written as one word since this paper does not attempt to provide a description of the Eegimaa sentence structure.

to her.

As pointed out above, the meanings of Eegimaa child-bearing names for women are generally given to women to describe mothers' struggles and frustrations, but also their hopes as well as their state of mind and emotions. The recurrent themes revealed from an analysis of these mothers' child-bearing names also include the failure of a child to develop in the womb, and the inability to successfully give birth at the maternity place. It is important to bear in mind that the birth ritual described here takes place in a society in which a married woman who cannot give birth is viewed very negatively. The infertility of men is generally not recognised. As a result, there are no rituals for men which can be compared to birth rituals for women. As argued in Sagna (2008, 2012), in the Eegimaa noun class system, the noun denoting a sterile woman is assigned to Class 3, along with nouns denoting other special humans (including social deviants) rather than the normal humans from Class 1. Thus the inability to give birth is generally seriously traumatic for the woman, as suggested by names like *Jahali* 'worried' and those discussed above.

**6.2.4 THE *GAÑÑALEN* RITUAL IN THE CITY.** Rural exodus has been an important aspect of the lives of Eegimaa speakers in the last few decades. From a seasonal exodus in the first three decades following the independence of Senegal in 1960, rural exodus has become more and more permanent in the last thirty years, with more speakers settling in different cities of the country. The first generation of settling migrant women in the City of Ziguinchor founded an association from the Eegimaa-speaking villages with a view to help women facing maternity problems. This association was eventually split into two, reflecting affiliations to new religions. The separatist group was composed of women from new converts to Islam for whom the use of alcohol and the consumption of pork meat used in sacrifices to shrines are prohibited. This association was named *Bágarambuba* 'collection of small grand-boubou dresses', reflecting the dressing styles of local Muslims. The other group of women was composed of followers of the traditional religion, new converts to Christianity and some Muslim women. They continued to make offerings to their shrine in wine, and to sacrifice pigs when required. This association was named *Bateibas* 'collection of Teibas fabrics' because Christians commonly wore a kind of fabric called Teibas. Religious syncretism is common practice among Eegimaa people. It is common practice for practising Christians and Muslims to be involved in the traditional religion rituals such as libations and birth rituals.

The names given to women in these associations include Eegimaa meaningful  names such as *Jipareol* 'get ready for her (because her case is a difficult one)', but also names like *Lislam* 'Islam' and place names such as those illustrated in Table 2 below. The choice of place names as child-bearing names for women is not motivated by any characteristics associated to such places, as our interviewees from both cities and villages pointed out. But the name *Lislam* 'Islam' was given to a woman from one of the Eegimaa villages because her child-bearing ritual took place in an association run by Muslim women.

TABLE 2. Place names as child-bearing names

| Name | Meaning | Name | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Addean* | 'Name of village' | *Louga* | 'Name of a city in Senegal' |
| *Lislam* | 'Islam' | *Guinée* | 'Guinea' |
| *Mauritanie* | 'Mauritania' | *Sandaga* | 'Market place in Dakar (Senegal)' |

Notice that although migration to cities has strongly increased since the foundation of the women's associations in urban settings, very few recent migrant women have joined these associations. Most notably, children of members of these women groups do not appear to be part of them, possibly because of the increased influence of new religions or simply because of a lack of interest. This indicates a decrease in the *Gaññalen* practices in the cities, as is also the case in villages.

Overall, we have shown that names given to women who struggle to give birth encode aspects of their experience during pregnancy or as mothers who lose children regularly at an early age. Mothers' names are a kind of death prevention name, but contrary to children's death prevention names discussed in §6.3, it is not the death of the name bearer that such a name attempts to ward off, but that of their children. As we will see below mothers' names are also often given in different languages. This suggests a kind of language contact situation which can be classified as a religion-based one in that it involves a ritual to shrines, which are the main religious entities in the traditional religion of Eegimaa people as well as other peoples around them.

**6.2.5 CHILD-BEARING NAMES FROM OTHER LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES.** Most women from Mof-Ávvi (the homeland of Eegimaa speakers) who undergo the *Gaññalen* 'child-bearing' ritual generally do so in one of the ten villages of the Eegimaa speaking area, and are generally given Eegimaa names such as those illustrated in (11) to (13) above. It is, however, also common for women to do their rituals in another Jóola or a non-Jóola community. The names given to them in these cases are either in Eegimaa or they are names from the language of the community where the ritual takes place.

Communities that tend to give Eegimaa names to the Eegimaa *uññalena* 'mothers who did the birth-giving ritual' are immediate neighbours of Eegimaa speakers, who are generally bilingual in Eegimaa. These include speakers of the Bayot language and Baïnounk Gubëeher. For example, the Eegimaa names *Wafulebo* 'there is nothing there (maternity place)' and *Ebelembo* 'lit: throwing there (at maternity)' are names given to women by speakers of the neighbouring Bayot and Baïnounk Gubëeher languages respectively.

Communities that give names in languages other than Eegimaa are those whose languages are regional *linguae francae*. These include the Jóola Kaasa who are located to the west of Mof-Ávvi, and the Jóola Blouf and the Fogny, who live north of the River Casamance. Baïnounk people who are not immediate neighbours of Eegimaa speakers tend to give child-bearing names and also death prevention names for babies in Jóola Fogny. For example, a child-bearing name like *Abbukkakken* 'lit: She sends (someone) to care for (her child)' is an adapted (phonologically integrated) form of the Jóola Fogny name illustrated in (14a). This is a sentence-like name given by protectors originally from Niamone, a Baïnounk village located near other Jóola Fogny villages, and who live in Ziguinchor, the

main city of the Basse Casamance area in Southern Senegal. The name of the woman indicates that she has entrusted her child (a boy in this case) to someone, until the child reaches the point where he would be brought home. Example (14b) is an animal name from the Jóola Fogny language, which was given by Baïnounk people from Niamone to a woman after a few failed attempts at giving birth. Note that there is no special belief surrounding the use of different languages to name women who undergo the *Gaññalen* ritual. The most important requirement to successfully help a woman overcome infertility problems caused by external forces is to change her name.

(14)  a.  a boñ ka-woken                          b.  kumba
         CL1-send-CL9-hold                           pig
         'She entrusts (someone) to raise (her child).'   'Pig.'

(15)  a.  A-kam-bo-ñaa                          b.  Ka-ramben-i
         CL1-do-CL5.PRO-like.that                   CL9-help-2SG.OBJ
         'She does it there (tries it) for nothing.'    'To help you.'

Example (15a) is also a Jóola Fogny sentence-like name given by speakers from another Baïnounk village (Djifanghor) to a woman, suggesting that she gets pregnant in vain, because of her continual failure to give birth. Finally, example (15b) is structurally a non-finite verb with an object suffix. The name comes from Jóola Kaasa, and indicates the involvement of a community in helping a woman who is facing maternity issues.

Examples of women's birth-giving names in (14) and (15) above are evidence that Eegimaa speakers have recourse to other Jóola and also non-Jóola people to solve problems of motherhood.  The names given to women are, as pointed out above, either Eegimaa names or they are names from the major Jóola *linguae francae*.

Mothers' child-bearing names discussed in the sub-sections above are semantically different from children's death prevention names discussed below.

**6.3 DEATH PREVENTION NAMES FOR CHILDREN.** Children who are believed to be at risk of dying very young, and whose mothers have undergone the child-bearing ritual, are given death prevention names. Among Eegimaa speakers, when a child dies, it is said that he or she has 'returned' (to the world where he or she came from). Similarly to mothers' names, most death prevention names for children are given by women from Mof-Ávvi in Eegimaa. Children who die very young come in two main categories. The first category may be referred to as 'spirit children', called *uññil úila* 'flying children' in Eegimaa. These are children who are believed to have supernatural power and the ability to come to life, only to die and 'go back' to the supernatural world where they came from. They are seen as deceivers who make humans believe that they are normal human children when in actual fact they are spirits. Death prevention names are part of a strategy to break their cyclic trips between life and death.

The second category of 'dying' children includes those who are victims of external forces such as witches and shrines, or are victims of maltreatment from the world of totems,

as described in §6.2.1 above. The functions of children's death prevention names include hiding the identity of the newborn if it is believed that it is being stalked by malefic forces, or they serve to discourage them from dying if they are identified as spirit children who are believed to be behind their own death.

Newborn children who are identified as belonging to these two categories are given death prevention names, which amongst other things, describe their experience with death but also the impact they have on their parents and protectors, as well as the efforts made by their protectors to keep them alive. Death prevention names such as *Guyyah* 'graves', *Guondibo* 'they inter you there' and *Afogori* 's/he gets buried around' which are illustrated in (16) below indicate that the newborn children are believed to be spirit children who have already been born, died and buried a few times.

(16)   a.   Gu-yyah   b.   Gu-ond-i-bo   c.   A-fog-or-i

CL8-grave   3PL-inter-2.SG.OBJ-CL5.PRO   CL1-bury-REC-PASS

'Graves'   'They inter you there.'   'S/he gets buried around.'

The name *Jibbanno* 'we are back' in (17b) below is also a death prevention name given to a spirit child to suggest that he or she has been recognized from a previous birth into the humans' world before dying. As for the name *Jusotten* 'you deceive' in (17a), it is given to a spirit child who is believed to deceive its parents by raising hopes that it will live, only to die soon after it is born. This name, which is a way of stating that no one believes the child will stay alive, can be seen as a means of challenging the spirit child and discouraging it from 'going back' to the world of the dead.

(17)   a.   Ju-sotten   b.   Ji-bbanno

2PL-deceive   1PL.EXCL-return.VEN

'You deceive.'   'We have come back.'

The meaning of the death prevention names in example (18) indicate the effect that 'dying babies' have on their parents or their protectors. *Píbulo* 'screams reach us' describes a situation where screams from women alert other members of their group who are protecting the life of the child, that the latter shows worrying signs that may lead to his or her death. *Agalembo* 's/he ruins it (work)' is the name of a child who regularly shows worrying signs of death, thus preventing her parents and protectors from focusing on their work in their fields. Finally, *Akkalenjayi* 's/he torments her/his mother' is a name whose meaning describes the emotional and mental state of the mother in her attempt to keep the child alive.

(18)   a.   Píb-ulo   b.   A-galem-bo

scream-VEN   CL1-ruin-CL5.PRO

'Screams reach us.'   'S/he ruins it (work).'

    c.  A-kkalen-jay-i

        CL1-torment-mother-2SG.POSS

        'S/he torments her/his mother.'

Similarly to mothers' death prevention names, there are also children's death prevention names from languages other than Eegimaa, mainly Jóola Fogny and Jóola Kaasa. For example, the Jóola Fogny name *Ajaŋa* 'girl' was given by Baïnounk speakers from Niamone to an Eegimaa boy whose mother, *Abukkakken* 'she entrusts to raise (her child)', was losing female children. The strategy here consists of confusing the malefic force by pretending that the newborn is a female (assuming that the evil entity is looking for a female child), when it is actually a male. Another example is the name *Amenkuyaak* 'he has many graves', which is a name from Jóola Fogny given by Baïnounk people from the village of Niamone to a child from the Eegimaa community, where the name became phonologically integrated in the language as *Ammenguyyah* 'he has many graves', and eventually reduced to *Guyyah* 'graves'.

    Example (19) illustrates names that were given to Eegimaa 'spirit children' from the Jóola Fogny language. Example (19a) is a name given to shame a spirit child who is believed to have been born before, in order to show that it has been recognised and thereby discourage it from dying. (19b) is another name given in Jóola Fogny by Baïnounk speakers from the village of Djifanghor, further east from the homeland of the Eegimaa speakers,[16] to suggest that the named 'spirit child' is believed to be deceiving their parents and making them believe that he/she will stay alive.

 (19)  a.  Ji-lañ-ulo            b.  Ha-butt-a

         1PL.EXCL-return-VEN       CL9-deceive-AGT

         'We have come back.'         'The deceiver.'

The names in example (20) below are from Jóola Kaasa. The death prevention name in example (20a) is the name of a spirit child who is believed to be wasting people's time and efforts to save it because no one believes it will stay alive, whereas (20b) is the name of a child (original *ketugay* in Jóola Kaasa) who is believed to be a spirit child who has been coming and going between life and death.

 (20)  a.  a-yokk-en          b.  Çet-u-gay

         CL.a-tire-CAUS        die-2SG-tire

         'He tires (people).'       'Die till you get tired of it.'

As is the case for mothers (see 6.2.5 above), communities such as the Bayot and the Baïnounk Gubëeher who tend to be fluent in Eegimaa give death prevention names in Eegimaa. The names *Gubajuti* 'they (parents) do not have you' and *Jiçefullun* 'the little one

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[16] Note that these Baïnounk speakers are in contact with Eegimaa speakers who live in the village of Djifanghor.

who dies in Fullun (Brin)' are two death prevention names from the Bayot and the Baï-nounk Gubëeher respectively. Those whose languages are major *linguae francae* like the Jóola Kaasa, and minority groups who live in areas where those languages are *linguae francae*, tend to give names in these *linguae francae*.

In recent decades, women from the Eegimaa speaking villages have begun to give death prevention names in other languages in addition to the traditional names of Eegimaa. Those names include geographical names like *Conakry* 'Capital City of Guinea' and meaningful names like the Jóola Fogny inspired names such as *Eñakki* 'it (death) pulls you' and *Ak-kobeçet* (from Fogny or Kaasa Akobeket) 'he waits for death'.

Notice that generally, children's death prevention names are from the same language as that of their mothers. There are however, cases where the names of the mother and the child are chosen from different languages. The name *Ayokken* 'He tires' in (20a) is a Jóola Kaasa name given to a child whose mother has the Eegimaa name *Aannuliró* 'She was brought down inside (maternity)'. These names were given by speakers of Baïnounk Gabëeher from the neighbouring village of Djibonker. The death prevention name *Amul-yaakaar* 'he/she has no hope (of survival)' from the Wolof language was given to a child whose mother has an Eegimaa child-bearing name, *Jipareol* 'get ready for her.' Another example is *Alamuta* 'Put your faith in God', which is a death prevention name from the Mandinka language given to a child whose mother has a place name (*Dagana* 'Town in Senegal') as a child-bearing name. Note that no special significance can be attributed to the use of different languages to name a mother and her child.

In the next section we compare meaningful child-bearing names and death prevention names and show that, by analysing the meaning of those names, it is generally possible to tell whether the name bearer is a child whose life is being saved or a mother who is undergoing the *Gaññalen* ritual.

**6.4 COMPARING MOTHERS' AND CHILDREN'S DEATH PREVENTION NAMES.** Death prevention names are, as pointed out in previous sections, names given to children as part of the process of trying to prevent them from dying. We argued earlier that mothers' names, which we referred to as child-bearing names, are also a type of death prevention name and showed that in Eegimaa, death prevention names, in addition to their function of trying to assure the survival of children, also tell the story of those individual children or their mothers. Our analysis of Eegimaa death prevention for both children and their mothers shows that by examining the meanings of these names, it is possible to predict, without knowing the individual bearers of those names, whether the bearer of a particular name is a mother who is undergoing the child birth ritual, or a child born or kept alive through such a ritual.

Table 3 compares mothers' and babies' death prevention names in Eegimaa. It is important to bear in mind that the mothers and the children whose names appear in the same row in the table do not have a child-to-mother relationship. For example *Çetulo* 'died coming' and *Wafulebo* 'There is nothing there' are names of the same woman. The former is her death prevention name as a child, whereas the latter is her child-bearing name as a mother.

TABLE 3. Comparison between mothers' and children's death prevention names

| Mothers' names | | Children's names | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Wafulebo* | 'There is nothing there (maternity)' | *Çetulo* | 'Died coming' |
| *Jahali* | 'Worried' | *Habutta* | 'The deceiver' |
| *Kerobia* | 'Why go there (maternity)' | *Ajakkay* | 'He has left' |
| *Fumaccore* | 'It (womb) is confused' | *Jibbanno* | 'We have come back' |
| *Animeyyaŋ* | 'She stops the progeny of a family' | *Amatter* | 'He causes doubt' |
| *Ebelembo* | 'Throwing it away there' | *Gubajuti* | 'They don't have you' |
| *Farugaye* | 'Tired womb' | *Akkobeçet* | 'He waits for death' |

Table 3 shows that mothers' names tend to refer to their experience when they try to give birth at the maternity place, the failure of the womb to develop a successful pregnancy, but also their frustration and desperation as well as their mental and emotional state following repeated unsuccessful attempts to give birth, or recurrent loss of children in their infancy. Children's death prevention names, on the other hand, include themes such as departure (death), burial, return (re birth) and doubt about the survival of the child-bearing the death prevention name. Thus, mothers' names can be seen as life-giving names to help their maternity, whereas children are given what may be termed life-saving names to prevent them from dying. Notice that with new names like place names, it is not possible to predict which of the mother and the child bears the name of a country or a capital city. The reasoning behind the naming practices in Eegimaa and other familiar Jóola languages seems to be lost with place names when they are used in the birth-giving ritual.

**7. CONCLUSION.** Proper names in Eegimaa generally have meanings beyond their use as pointers to name bearers. We analysed different categories of meaningful names and showed that Eegimaa proper names include those that describes aspects of the bearer's physic and behaviour in their infancy. We also showed that name changing was common practice among Eegimaa people, especially to avoid homonymy with deceased members of the community. Name changing was and is still practised in the context of the *Gañ-ñalen* 'birth ritual', where women are required to change their names to hide their identity from external forces which are believed to be the cause of their miscarriages or the repeated death of their newborns. Our analysis of death prevention names, child-bearing names and other kinds of meaningful names has shown that many aspects of the Eegimaa world view are encoded in those names. We argued that understanding the meanings of those names therefore provides a good insight into the Eegimaa speakers' kinship system, especially the relationship between humans and their totems, as well as an understanding of the speakers' conceptualisation of aspects of their natural and supernatural environment, including spirits. Documenting proper names, as we have argued, goes beyond providing a simple list of names. It involves investigating aspects of the life, religion and social organisation of the speakers, and provides important resources for research in disciplines other than linguistics. Furthermore, such documentation provides insights into the language contact situation of speakers with other language communities with whom they interact as part of the birth ritual practice to save the lives of their newborns.

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**APPENDIX: A LIST OF NAMES IN EEGIMAA**

| Mothers' death prevention/child-bearing names | | Children's death prevention names | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Ebelembo* | 'Throwing it away there' | *Ayokken* | 'He tires' |
| *Akammboñaa* | 'She does it there (tries it) for nothing.' | *Akkalenjai* | 'S/he torments her mother' |
| *Fumaccore* | 'It (womb) is confused' | *Akkobeçet* | 'He waits for death' |
| *Akkakkanor* | 'She manages' | *Píbulo* | 'Screams reach us.' |
| *Farugaye* | 'Tired womb' | *Joutibo* | 'This has not worked for you' |
| *Kulayibo* | 'They pray around for you' | *Gabajuti* | 'They don't have you' |
| *Eccati* | '[God] has not rewarded you' | *Ajakkay* | 'He has left.' |
| *Wálalal* | 'Ideophone – crying for help' | *Firiso* | 'Eating it (rice)' |
| *Jipareol* | 'Get ready for her' | *Jibbanno* | 'We are back' |
| *Gucceŋori* | 'They fight over you' | *Ekketubo* | 'Died coming' |
| *Filittene* | 'The womb has learnt' | *Çetuolo* | 'Died coming' |
| *Fuanne* | 'It (the womb) has dropped down' | *Ammenguyyah* | 'Has many graves' |
| *Wafulebo* | 'There is nothing in the maternity' | *Guutemburo* | 'They hope for life' |
| *Abambaññil* | 'She finishes little children' (they all die) | *Gutebe* | 'They have carried [the child]' |
| *Jahali* | 'Worried' | *Afogori* | 'S/he gets buried around' |
| *Animeyyaŋ* | 'She stops the progeny of a family' | *Jiçebo* | 'You die there' |

| Meaningless names | | Ordinary meaningful names | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Asingina* | | *Gújjin* | 'Bulls' |
| *Ávva* | | *Jaare* | 'Little woman' |
| *Ávvavvae* | | *Jahojoma* | 'Little ugly one' |
| *Batojel* | | *Babúhoji* | 'That ugliness' |
| *Açaŋ* | | *Jaññil* | 'Little child' |
| *Bakkual* | | *Ñuoh* | 'Cold' |
| *Bañam* | | *Sibaŋiro* | 'They are put in' |
| *Cáwle* | | *Sibbay* | 'Spears' |
| *Egeb* | | *Sífenembo* | 'Make graze' |
| *Ákkakkae* | | *Síkki* | 'Deep' |
| *Húpira* | | *Lámutubo* | 'Did not suffer there' |
| *Bakkoja* | | *Esseni* | '[God] It empowers you' |
| *Kaneri* | | *Baraddagor* | 'Drag oneself about' |
| *Ñafa* | | *Batama* | 'Enormous navel' |
| *Heto* | | *Sibetomañ* | 'They drop iron there' |

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