

OUTLINE OF A LEXICOSTATISTICAL STUDY OF BASQUE AND THE MANDE LANGUAGES, WITH A NOTE ON FULA

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This paper does not claim to be a completed piece of work, but is simply a piece of information. So I have drafted the following lines rather quickly, just to give you an idea about this topic.

Lexicostatistics have been applied to Basque and various languages, but scarcely to languages of Africa. The Mande Languages form a coherent linguistic unit in West Africa. They number 30 to 40 distinct languages, or dialect clusters, and are spread from eastern Senegal to western Upper Volta, scattered groups being found still further eastward. Their speakers number several millions. They constitute the majority of the population in the Gambia, and foremost in Mali, and form important groups in several other West African countries.

Speakers of northern Mande Languages have, in the Middle Ages, formed the great Empires of Ghana and Mali, known to European geographers before the discovery of West Africa by sea. We may assume that they were descendants of an old Saharan population which has been driven southward by progressive desiccation. As they had moved into the Western Sahel and Savannah some of them penetrated the rain forest zone.

The Mande Languages were classified, in my opinion wrongly, among the Nigritic languages which cover the largest part of Africa south of the Sahara. In fact this view has already been abandoned by a part of Africanists. Others cling to the idea, that Mande has separated first, before any other linguistic entity, from the Common Nigritic stock. In any case the Mande Languages are fairly different, in lexis as in structure, from the 'Nigritic' Languages of West Africa.

I have tried to relate these languages to Basque as long time ago as 1964, but have not found much esteem for this idea. So I have left the question where it was and began to enlarge the field of comparison. The results of a

lexicostatistical test undertaken in 1966 convinced me that Mande must be related to Hamito-Semitic, and that it is closer to Cushitic and Chadic than to its northern branches Berber and Semitic. In a later study I have demonstrated, in 1972, that the common numeral system of the Mande languages strongly resembles to that of Central Cushitic.

Asserting the relationship of a group of West African with other African languages is not queer, but simply a case that has to be proven. The question is whether the proofs given are considered as valid and sufficient. But for us it involves another conclusion. If we accept that Basque is related to Hamito-Semitic it will follow that Basque is also related to Mande, whatever the level of that relationship is. Of course it should be higher than that of a simple family. This relationship can, however, become visible by applying lexicostatistics.

For this end I shall use here the well-known «100 diagnostics items test list» proposed by Maurice Swadesh. Occasionally references will be given also to his second list of «100 supplementary items».

Lexicostatistics has often been used for purposes of glottochronology. For that only one entry is admitted for every item which should be the term most used in the particular language to express the respective idea. As I do not intend to attain results of such kind, the choice between alternates for single items where such ones exist, can be avoided. Even cases of semantic change which put the respective item out of being counted, retain their informative value.

The Mande languages are presented as they are generally subclassified: Western and Eastern Mande languages, both of them consisting of Northern and Southern subgroups, one language, Bobo, standing apart. The numeration is that of Swadesh.

1. ni «I» Common Mande + ni. The pronoun is sometimes shortened to (syllabic) n, occasionally extended to nyá (Mende, Kpelle) and to an (Guro). In Bobo ne is preserved only in the possessive pronoun «my», otherwise + ni is replaced by ma.
2. (h)i «thou» Common Mande + i. The pronoun is extended to bi (in Mende) and be (in Bobo). Some South-Eastern Mande Languages employ a disjunctive pronoun ba against i as subject pronoun of the verb. Soninke and Bozo have aŋe and ā respectively. Though they also may go back to + i in compound forms + aŋg-i we list them as non-cognate.
3. gu «we» Common Mande + ke/ku. Some Mande languages employ two forms to express an exclusive and an inclusive («I and you») form of the pronoun.

Western Mande:			Eastern Mande:		
Northern Group:			Northern Group:		
	exclusive	inclusive		exclusive	inclusive
	(or common)			(or common)	
Soninke	o	qoro	Bisa	wo, o	
Bozo	ī	ke	Busa	wo, o	
Mandinka		n			
Khassonke	n-te-lu	alā			
Malinke	ne-lu	ilā			
Bambara		anu			
Dyula		an			
Vai		mu			
Kono	ni	mu			
Southern Group:			Southern Group:		
Susu	mukhu	won	Mano	ko	
Mende		mu	Dan	ko	
Bandi	ni	mu	Guro	ku	
Loma	ge	de	Yaure	ku	
Kpelle	ku	gu	Wē	ko	
Isolated:			Mwā	nu	wo
			Nwā	kan	
Bobo	me	ke	Bē	an	

We can conclude that Proto-Mande had probably two pronouns to be assumed as + ani/anu and + ke/ku.

12. bi (bida, biga) «two» Common Mande + pira. Found in all languages, e. g.

Western Mande, Northern Group		Eastern Mande, Northern Group	
Soninke	fillo	Samo	pra
Bozo	pende	Bisa	pia; hira
Mandinka	fūla	Busa	pla
Dyula	fila		
Vai, Kono	fela		
Southern Group		Southern Group	
Susu	firi	Mano	pédè
Mende	félé	Dan	pira
Kpelle	fele	Guro	fia
Isolated:			
Bobo	pla		

21. (h)or «dog». In Mande several word-stems are found:

Western Mande, Northern Group		Western Mande, Southern Group	
Soninke	wulle	Mende	ngilā
Bozo	gūū; koŋ.goro	Bandi	ngila
Mandinka	wulo	Loma	gile-woro

Khassonke	wulɔ	Kpelle	gila
Malinke	wulu, ulu		
Bambara	ulu	Eastern Mande, Northern Group	
Dyula	wuru		
Vai	wulu	Samo	gyin
Kono	wulu	Bisa	gi
Isolated:		Eastern Mande, Southern Group	
Bobo	gwege	Mano	gbā
		Dan	gben 2.kula
		Nwā	gbane

We get the common stems + gwuru, + gila and + gwane, and there seem to occur compound terms, as in Bozo, Bobo and Loma. If + gwuru and + gwane share in a common origin, it would be a proto-form + gura; (reflected by Dan kula?) if + gwuru and + gila derive from a same root, it would be + gwira.

24. (h)azi «seed». A common Mande stem is -si.

Western Mande, Northern Group: Southern Group:

Mandinka	sii	Susu	sansi (compound term)
Khassonke	si	Kpelle	si, siseŋ
Malinke	si		(cf. siŋ «to plant»)
Bambara	si, sey	Mende	cf. hiŋ «to plant»
Dyula	syɛ		

In Bozo sii means «race, kind»

30. odol «blood». A common Mande stem is dyoli:

Western Mande, Northern Group: Southern Group:

Bozo	dyolo; deu	Susu	wuli
Mandinka	yelo		
Khassonke	dyelo		
Malinke	dyoli		
Bambara	dyoli		
Dyula	dyori, dyoli	Isolated:	
Vai	woli		
Kono	wuli	Bobo	to

In Mandinka etc. the vowel -o- has become -e- under the influence of the preceding palatal, which latter, in other cases has developed dy > y > w before the back vowel. A rather tentative reconstruction would give + doli/toli with transition to + diul-.

45. az-kazal, azakal (compound of (h)atz «finger») «nail» (of finger, toe)

Western Mande, Southern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Susu	khale	Bisa	kasa
		Southern Group:	
		Guro	kese

46. (h)oin «foot» (in a compound word cf. Axular ort-khoi «form of shoe») Common Mande + kwani:

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Mandinka siŋo
Malinke siŋ
Bambara sen
Dyula sèn
Vai keŋ
Kono keŋe

Samo gwan, gwane
Bisa gan
Busa gba

Southern Group:

Mano gā «leg», gā-*le* «foot»
Dan gē » , gē-*le* »
Guro gane » , gane-*na* »
Bě gba » , gan »

Southern Group:

Susu sanyi
Mende kóó
Kpelle kò

Isolated:

Bobo kan

Note: Malinke, Bambara, Dyula siŋ, sen may as well mean «leg», but we find separate words in some languages, such as Bobo zogo which is somehow reminiscent of Basque zango, zank(h)o «leg» (Item no. 127 in Swadesh's supplementary list).

47. belhaun «knee». This is a compound term in many Mande Languages, the first part of which is a common stem + kwon (its meaning apparently being «leg»). The second segment which is -balin, -bere is oddly similar to its Basque counterpart.

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Mandinka kumbaliŋo
Khassonke kumbalin
Malinke kumbere
Bambara kumbere
Vai kumbele
Kono kumbali
Bozo kòbò or khumu

Bisa gan-kur (cf. 46)

Southern Group:

Susu khimbi
Mende ngómbí
Bandi ngumbi
Loma ŋuubi
Kpelle ŋúmbe

Southern Group:

Mano kpuo
Dan kpiego (or gēgbo, cf. 46)
Wě kpon
Nwā kpongboli

Isolated:

Bobo fungunu

48. esku «hand». Here two Mande stems must be quoted:

Western Mande, Northern Group: 2. Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Soninke	su	Samo	gō	«hand, forearm»
Bozo	sugú	Bisa	wo	» »
		Busa	o	» »
		Southern Group:		
		Mano	ko	» »
		Dan	ko	» »
		Wē	ko-kwe	» »
		Bē	wo	» »

In many African languages there is only one word for «hand» and «arm» (forearm). Curiously enough it is reminiscent of Basque uko «forearm» (Item no.128. in Swadesh's supplementary list).

51. k(h)olk(h)o «breast». The Common Mande root seems to be + kwan-/kwar-.

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Bozo	kanú	Bisa	kyē (kī in compound words)
Bambara	konko(n)		

Southern Group:

Susu	kanke
Kpelle	kaŋa

Southern Group:

Mano	gbina
Dan	kuu
Guro	gure, gòlè
Nwā	gō

72. eguzki «sun», connected with egun «day». We note in Mande:

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Bozo	suu	«day»	Samo	woso	«sun»
			Bisa	hūsu	
			Lebir	wusu	
			Busa	hūsun	

Southern Group:

Susu	sogē	«sun»
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- 72a. ek(h)i «sun».

Western Mande, Northern Group:

Soninke	kiē, kiye	«sun»
	cf.	

Bozo keú, khey «moon»

Numu kahi «moon»

Hwela kie «moon»

Southern Group:

Susu kike «moon»

77. (h)arri «stone». Common Mande + kwari, + kwati.

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Khassonke	koro	Samo	gyi
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Malinke	kuru	Bisa	gyer
Bambara	kuru	Lebir	gya
Dyula	kába kuru	Busa	gbe(re)
Southern Group:		Southern Group:	
Mende	kòtú	Mano	gɛk
Bandi	kótui	Dan	gwa
Loma	kot, kwótí	Guro	gure, gwek
Kpelle	kweni, koni	Nwa	kre
		Bě	gere

79. lur «earth, ground».

Western Mande, Northern Group:

Bozo du, dunə

Southern Group:

Mende ndōlɔ

Kpelle lwoe

Isolated:

Bobo lo

85. bide «path, way».

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Khassonke bɛda «large road» · Bisa pere «path»

Bambara bɛda » »

Southern Group:

Mende pélé «path, way»

Kpelle pélé, pele » »

Loma pélé

87. gorri «red». A Common Mande stem is + gwoli.

Western Mande, Northern Group: Southern Group:

Khassonke ulɛ Susu gbeli

Malinke ule Mende kpólú

Bambara ule Kpelle kpolu

Dyula wúlen

92. gau, gaba «night». The Common Mande root seems to be + kuani.

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Bozo gulu, guu Samo dyin-ti

Khassonke su Bisa gun

Malinke su Lebir gyin

Bambara su Busa guani

Dyula su

Vai su

Kono su

Southern Group:

Susu	kuē
Mende	kpíndí
Bandi	gbindi
Loma	kuuo
Kpelle	kpíní

Southern Group:

Mano	gbimiyā
Dan	gbinge, gbin
Yaure	péima
Wē	gbeygi

As Mende as also gbúò «last night», there may exist two different roots.

Aside of these 19 lexical roots which derive, or are at least likely to derive from Common Mande there are 3 cases where single Mande Languages display forms similar to their Basque counterparts:

10. asko «many» cf. Mende sogbo, and perhaps Bozo kusa
 35. buztan «tail» cf. Bozo pisa, pyēē
 55. jan «eat» cf. Bozo dyē

Supplementary Notes.

- ad 17) «man»: cf. Basque ak(h)etz «mal». Western Mande + kai- «man, male».

Western Mande, Northern Group: Southern Group:

Mandinka	ke-o	Susu	kheme
Khassonke	khē		
Malinke	ke		
Bambara	tye		
Dyula	kye, tye		
Vai	kai		
Kono	kai, ke		
Bozo	kaygu, khalu		
Numu, Ligbi	kini		

- ad 65) «march» cf. Basque ibil(1)-i. A similar Common Mande root means «to run» (The forms in - a are all verbal nouns.)

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Malinke	bori	Samo	bra-si
Bambara	boli	Bisa	bra-si (bure-si)
Dyula	bòli	Busa	bare
Vai	buri		

Southern Group:

Mende	pèlá
Loma	bi-se

Southern Group:

Mano	bala si, bera si
Dan	bia wure
Guro	vlā si
Mwā	bla sa
Nwā	bure ko
Wē	bra si

ad 93) «hot» cf. Basque k(h)ar, gar «flame; burning, hot».

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Mandinka kandi-ta Bisa kare

Malinke k̄ā, kala

Bambara ḡā, gala

Dyula gb̄an

Vai kpandi-le

Kono gb̄an

Southern Group:

Southern Group:

Mende kp̄andí

Mano kala

Bandi gb̄ande-ngo

ad 100) «name» cf. Basque toka «thou» (tutoyer, tutear), tokaio «namesake». Common Mande + toko «name» (Malinke-Bambara togo-ma «namesake»).

Western Mande, Northern Group: Eastern Mande, Northern Group:

Mandinka to Samo to

Khassonke tokho Bisa to

Malinke toko, togo Lebir to

Bambara togo Busa to

Dyula t̄ogo

Vai to

Kono too

Soninke tokho

Bozo too

Southern Group:

Southern Group:

cf. Susu tokho-ma «namesake» Mano to

Dan to

Isolated: Guro to

Mw̄ā to

Bobo togo Nw̄ā to

We to

For evaluating the results of this test we must bear in mind that not all 100 items of the list were checked. Others were disregarded: e. g. (h)au «this» corresponds to Western Mande: Bozo kw̄ō, k̄ō (or nw̄ō), Malinke, Bambara, Dyula wo and to Eastern Mande: Bisa k̄ō. But it would be arbitrary to decide whether these Mande and the Basque morphemes are cognates or not. The supplementary items are not counted at all, and alternates only under dubious cases, dealt with separately. Thus the following figures constitute lexicostatistical minima for:

Kpelle	with	14.1-15.2%	(13-14 out of 92 tested cases)
Bozo	»	13.2-10.5%	(12-15 » » 91 » »)
Susu	»	12.4-13.4%	(12-13 » » 97 » »)

Bambara	with	12.2%	(12	out of	98	tested	cases)
Mende	»	11.2-12.2%	(11-12	»	»	98	»
Malinke	»	11.2%	(11	»	»	98	»
Khassonke	»	11.2%	(11	»	»	98	»
Bisa	»	10.5-13.7%	(10-13	»	»	95	»

Comparative studies of the Mande Languages are not yet advanced very far. We cannot exclude at present that some similarities will turn out to be only superficial, and due to sheer coincidence. But certainly a certain percentage of them are valid, and sufficient to prove genetic relationship to Basque.

But perhaps you are puzzled how West African languages can display similarities to Basque to such an extent. I assume that the Mande Languages form another branch of the Macro-Erythraic linguistic network, just so as does Hamito-Semitic. Geographically their area is situated still nearer to South-Western Europe than any branch of Hamito-Semitic except Berber which has spread to the West of North Africa only from the second millenium B. C. on, while Mande has probably been spoken further in the North than it is to-day.

This has led me to assume the existence of a linguistic family which I have proposed to call Euro-Saharan, and which would have been a Western sister family of Hamito-Semitic. Basque and its relatives in Western Europe which have become extinct, as well as Mande and other African languages once spoken in North Africa and in the Saharan area were its members.

Note on Fula.

There exist, and have to be still explored in this respect, other African languages which are related to Basque. I shall conclude this paper by a short note on one of them.

Fula (or Peul in French terminology) is a very far-spread West African languages, spoken by several millions of people from the Senegal River to the East of Lake Chad. It is absolutely not related to Mande on a recognizable level, and its alleged relations to other languages of West Africa are uncertain. It forms a closer linguistic unit only with two other Senegalian languages, Wolof and Serer.

In the following I shall give a list of current Fula terms for some of the 100 diagnostic items of Swadesh which is, by the way, not exhaustive, citing also Wolof and Serer forms where this serves to explain Fula lexemes, and using Swadesh's numeration:

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------|--------|------|---|
| 20. | txori | «bird» | Fula | son- ⁿ du pl. tyol-li |
| 28. | larri | «skin» | Fula | lar-al pl. lar-e |
| 37. | bil(h)o | «hair» | Fula | bilee-wol pl. bilee-dyi «feather» (no.36); cf. Serer i wil ra «feather, hair» |

- 53a. bar(h)e «milt», but may mean «liver» too. Cf. Fula *ber-nde* pl. *ber-de* «heart» (no.52)
57. ik(h)us-i «see» Fula *yi'-a/'gi'-a* cf. Wolof *gis*
65. joha-n «go» Fula *yah-a/'jah-a*
77. harri «stone» Fula *hay-re* pl. *ka'-e* cf. Wolof *kheer*
82. su «fire» Fula *sum-a* «burn» (no.84) cf. Serer *sum*
85. bide «path» Fula *baru-wal* (which is, however, not the common term)
87. gorri «red» Fula *wody-/ gody-, 'gody-*
89. (h)ori «yellow» Fula *'ool-*
91. beltz, baltz «black» Fula *ɓalee-, ɓalw-* cf. Serer *ɓalig* «be black»
98. biribil, borobil «round» Fula *murl-* «be round» cf. Serer *murig*, Wolof *marog*
99. idor «dry» Fula *yoor-/ dyoor-, 'dyoor-*

Supplementary Notes.

- ad 11) «one» Basque *bat* cf. Fula *bady-dyo* «unique; the one» (e.g. *God*)
- ad 12) «two» Basque *bi, biga* cf. *biga, miga* «a two years old heifer»
= Fula *wiige* pl. *big-i* or *bidy-dyi*
- ad 35) «tail» Basque *buztan* cf. (Eastern) Fula *wity-o* pl. *bic-e*

Our count may be 13-14% of common basic vocabulary. The case of Fula is therefore as good as that of Mande, as far as lexicostatistics is concerned. But Fula and Mande are related to one another as much or as little as seem to be the North-Western and North-Eastern Caucasian languages which form distinct linguistic families.

I think that Fula is a descendant of another linguistic group that once existed in the Saharan area and which I call Mauretanian. That group, too, was a part of a linguistic continent forgotten for long which linked Europe and Africa at a remote time when the green Sahara still flourished.

LABURPENEA

Iker lan honetan, euskararen eta Afrika Sartaldeko Mande deitu mintzairaren arteko konparaketa egiterakoan, metodo lexiko-estatistikoak darabiltzagu. Mintzaira horiek ez dira Afrika-Beltzekoekin sailkatu behar, askok uste duen bezala, baina Kamito-Semitar hizkuntzen ahaide urrunak ditugu. Horren ondorioz Euskararen askazi dauzkagu Mande mintzairak eta hitz-estatistikaren bitartez argitara daiteke ahaidago hori. Maurice Swadesh-en ehun hitzen zerrenda «diagnostikaria» baliatuz ez du bada autoreak bere solasa ebakitzen «glotokronologiarekin».

Euskarazko 100 hitzetarik, 19 aski hurbil dauzkagu delako Mande arruntetik eta beste 3, Mande mintzairaren hizkelkietarik. Euskararen eta hautatu diren 7 Mande mintzairaren arteko eiteen porzentaia 10,5 % gutienaren eta 15,2 % gehienaren artean dabilta. Eta datu horietarik zenbait axalekoak izanik ere, ez dio horrek bere balioa kentzen gaineratikoari.

Harrigarri da ikustea nola hurbil dauden elgarretarik Euskara eta Africa Sartaldeko mintzaira horiek. Baina oroitu behar da lurrez ere elgarretarik hurbilago direla beste Kamito-Semitar edozein adar baino (Berebertarraren salbuespenarekin, hau gorago sartu baitzen, Afrika Iparreko Sartaldean, J.K.s.a. II. milakoan). Ohiko Mande mintzaira aldiz Sahara aldean mintzatu izan da gaur baino askoz ere gorago. Ulert erraz baita, Kamito-Semitar familiaren Sartaldeko ahizpa bezala, Euro-Sahariar mintzairen batasun bat, lehen, izan delako hipotesia onartuz geroz.

Afrika-Sartaldean mintzo da ere asko «Peul» deitu mintzaira, Mande mintzairekin, iduriz askazgorik batere ez duena. «Peul» horrek bizkitartean eta Euskarak badaukate oinarrizko hiztegi komuna 13 edo 14 % eko porzentaiara heltzen dena, Swadesh-en zerrendaren arabera. Euro-Sahariar mintzairen ume urrunetarik bat ez ote dugu hor ere ikusi behar, Sahara guzia oihan eta belar zen denboretara iganez geroz?

RESUMEN

En este estudio se aplican los métodos lexicoestadísticos al vascuence y a las lenguas mande del Africa Occidental. Estas lenguas son parientes lejanas de las lenguas camito-semíticas, contrariamente a las clasificaciones corrientes que las consideran como negro-africanas. De ahí se deduce que estas lenguas mande deban de ser emparentadas con el vascuence: la comparación lexicoestadística permitirá que esta relación se haga visible. Utilizando la lista «diagnóstica» de cien palabras de Maurice Swadesh, el autor no se propone concluir con una «glotocronología».

Entre las 100 palabras eúskaras respectivas, 19 pueden considerarse cercanas del mande común y, además, 3 de lenguas mande individuales. Los porcentajes de similitud entre el vascuence y cada una de las 7 lenguas mande escogidas oscilan entre un mínimo de 10,5 % y un máximo de 15,2 %. Y si bien cierto número de estas semejanzas no era sino superficial, esto no afectaría a la validez del resto.

Es sorprendente que este resultado muestre cierta proximidad entre el vascuence y las lenguas oesteafricanas; pero hay que tener en cuenta que entre ellas existe una cercanía geográfica mayor que entre cualquier rama del camito-semítico, excepción hecha del bereber que se interpuso secundariamente, ya que este último no penetró en el Noroeste de Africa hasta el segundo milenio a. de C., mientras que el antiguo mande fue hablado más al Norte que hoy en día, en las regiones saharianas. La hipótesis que sostiene la existencia anterior de una unidad lingüística euro-sahariana, familia hermana del camito-semítico, podría explicar este hecho.

La lengua pullo (fula) está igualmente muy extendida en el Africa Occidental, aunque por lo visto no está emparentada con las lenguas mande. Sin embargo el fula posee un vocabulario de base común con el vascuence de un porcentaje entre el 13 % y el 14 % según la lista de Swadesh. Así pues, el fula debe de ser considerado como otro descendiente más de una lengua euro-sahariana que data del tiempo remoto del Sahara verde.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette étude des méthodes lexicostatistiques sont appliquées au basque et aux langues mandé de l'Afrique occidentale. Contrairement aux classifications courantes qui en font des langues negro-africaines, ces langues sont des lointains parents des langues chamito-sémitiques. De cela il s'ensuit que les langues mandé doivent être apparentées avec le basque, et la comparaison lexicostatistique pourra rendre visible cette relation. En faisant usage de la liste «diagnostique» à cent mots de Maurice Swadesh l'auteur ne se propose pas à conclure à une «glottochronologie».

Parmi les 100 mots basques respectifs 19 peuvent être rapprochés du mandé commun, et de plus 3 à des langues mandé individuelles. Les pourcentages des ressemblances parmi le basque et chacune de 7 langues mandé choisies varient entre le minimum de 10,5% et le maximum de 15,2%. Même si un certain nombre de ce rapprochements n'était que superficiel cela ne toucherait pas la validité du reste.

Il est surprenant que ce résultat montre une certaine voisinage du basque et des langues ouest-africaines, mais il faut tenir compte de ce qu'elles sont plus proches géographiquement que n'importe quelle branche du chamito-sémitique, excepté le berbère, qui s'est interposé secondairement: il ne pénétra dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Afrique que dans le deuxième millénaire a.J. Chr., tandis que l'ancien mandé fut parlé plus au nord qu'aujourd'hui aux contrées sahariennes. L'hypothèse qu'il existait jadis une unité linguistique euro-saharienne, famille-soeur occidentale du chamito-sémitique pourra expliquer cela.

La langue peule est également répandue très largement en Afrique occidentale, mais autant qu'on voit, elle n'est pas apparentée avec les langues mandé. Cependant le peul possède un vocabulaire de base commun avec le basque, d'un pourcentage de 13 à 14% selon la liste de Swadesh. Il est à considérer comme un autre descendant d'une langue euro-saharienne, remontant au temps reculé de la Sahara verte.

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