

# DOCUMENTATION OF TWO WEST AFRICAN ATLANTIC LANGUAGES

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Starting in 2010 I started out to document the Guinean language Nalu as a post-doctoral fellow at the Center for African Studies, funded by the Endangered Languages Documentation Project (ELDP) at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. When the project finished in 2012, I was able to secure a second documentation project for Baga Mandori, a neighbouring Mel language. Thus I was able to continue my research activities at the Center for African Studies as a Visiting Research Fellow, thanks to the generous funding of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Readers of previous reports will know that the two projects I led focused on the production of annotated audio-visual language data. These data are made available in form of language archives which are hosted at the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) at SOAS. Local versions of these archives will be made available at the University of Florida Languages Archive

(TUFLA). It is my conviction that these language data will be highly valuable to future linguists as it widens our worldwide pool of language data. Reliable data on the world's languages is, in contrast to the abundance of highly elaborate language models of purported general relevance, quite scarce. In fact, research on Baga Mandori already calls the principle of phonology free syntax further into question. I have also collaborated with Guillaume Segerer, from the Centre National de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), Paris to include the dictionaries of these two languages into his digital reference lexicon RefLex.

Apart from the linguistic outcomes several ethnographic documentary films emerged out of the work on Nalu. Some of these films have been shown at ethnographic film festivals and international conferences. Martin Gruber (University of Bremen, Germany), the ethnographic filmmaker with whom I collaborated on these films, and myself are currently working on producing an English festival version

of another one of these films. We hope to have this ready by early 2016.

Finally, I would like to add that time my research has fed into teaching activities, such as the Language Documentation Track developed at the Department of Linguistics, and the organization of international workshops centered on problems of documentary linguistics, e.g. 'Creating and designing documentary linguistic outcomes' held in the spring of 2015 at the Center for African Studies.

All in all, as my time in academia nears its inevitable end, I am quite pleased with the outcomes of my work. This would, however, not have been possible without the support of several people (too numerous to name here) and I would like to thank everybody at the Center for African Studies, the Department of Linguistics, and the Department of Anthropology for all their support. Without them none of what I did at the University of Florida would have been possible. They made my final years in academia extremely pleasurable and fulfilling. I will be ever thankful.

*Frank Seidel is a post-doctoral research fellow in the Center for African Studies.*

