

# BORROWED WORDS AND SHARED OBJECTS

DAI Standort Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures

Projektart Teilprojekt einer Verbundforschung

Laufzeit 2019 - 2025

Disziplinen Afrikanische Archäologie

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## METADATEN



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Disziplin Afrikanische Archäologie

Förderer Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)

Projekt-ID 5828

## OVERVIEW

The population on the banks of the River Niger downstream from Gao is extremely diverse. From northern Mali to the Kainji dam in Nigeria, languages from three language phyla are spoken in a bewildering number of ethnic groups. How did this come to be? While historical sources point at early empires (Kawkaw, Kanem-Bornu, Songhai, Hausa, Oyo), oral traditions speak of migration, and the known archaeological sites have evidence of trade, the cultural dynamics and population history along the lower middle Niger remain underexplored. Yet from the available evidence, we can fully expect this region to have been of central importance to the political and economic history of large parts of West Africa. The Niger, we argue, functioned as a corridor of exchange of all forms, linking the Saharan fringes to the tropical forests, and enabling interactive cultural processes that continuously led to new languages, new identities, and new material expressions. Over the centuries, this has led to the complex ethnolinguistic situation we observe there today. In this project, we will explore the mechanisms and details of this cultural contact along the Niger between 800 and 1500 CE. We approach these questions from a joint perspective of historical linguistics and archaeology, applying a dynamic network approach to create a network model of regional interaction. Our use of recent advances in loan

word research and their connection to archaeological data means that this project pioneers a new form of co-operative research between historical linguistics and archaeology in Africa.

Link to the [Project-Blog](#).

## SPACE & TIME

## RESEARCH

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

## TEAM



# RESULTS



Feldborg, S. – Hounkpe, L. C. 2025  
Disappearing Traditions in a Globalized  
Society? Possible Mechanisms of Continuity  
and Loss of Pottery Traditions in Bénin. In:  
African Archaeological Review.

Gestrich, N. et al. 2021 Evidence of an  
Eleventh-Century AD Cola Nitida Trade into  
the Middle Niger Region. In: African  
Archaeological Review 38 (3): 403–418.

Gestrich, N. – Puerta Schardt, J.-M. 2024  
Pottery décor as networks on the Middle  
Niger, Mali. In: Azania: Archaeological  
Research in Africa 59 (3): 396–432.

Vernet, R. – Gestrich, N. – Coutros, P. R.  
2023 The Tichitt Culture and the Malian  
Lakes Region. In: African Archaeological  
Review 40 (4): 761–773.

# PARTNER & FÖRDERER

## FÖRDERER

*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)*

**TEAM**