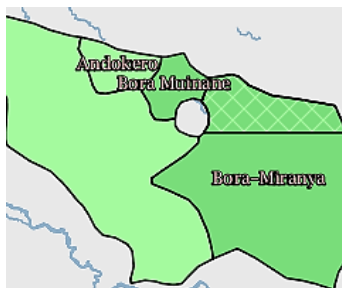


The Muinane or " men of the river mouths " belong Bora-Witótoan linguistic family, but they are consider as another ethnic group.¹ This group of indigenous people lives in the states Caquetá and Amazonas, in Colombia. Some of the individuals of Muinane community speak a language named the same as its spoken community. Muinane language is an indigenous South American language. The largest group of speakers of Muinane is settled next to the Cahunarí River's Savannah; furthermore, there are other groups reported in the area of the Caquetá River and in Peru. Originally Muinane community lived in the area of La Sabana.²

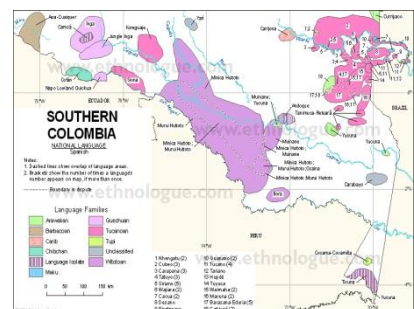
1. Geo-linguistic localization



The areas pictured display locations of where Bora-Witótoan languages were spoken when they were first encountered and knowledge of them was recorded. The population initially inhabited the Savanna site of the country; however, due to the exploitation committed by the rubber population declined and those who escaped were scattered in the southern area. Some Muinane family clans such

as piña Kíyeyimi, maguaré "Kimejo", gusano Chuumojjo, and coco Nejegaimjolive live in the Middle Caquetá while other lienages family clans inhabit in the Upper Cahunarí, Savannah and Araracuara River (Southeastern Colombian Amazonia)³.

The time of contact varied for each language. For example, most of the coastal languages were first identified during the 16th and 17th centuries although some languages in the interior of South America became known much more recently during the 20th century⁴. The Muinane language is only spoken in the southern of the country (upper Amazonas and lower Caquetá)



¹Pineda, 1987; Arango & Sánchez, 1997; Fabre, 2005.

²<http://www.lenguasdecolombia.gov.co/content/muinane-0> as seen at the 21st of November 2012, 14:46.

³LONDOÑO, Carlos David, Muinane: un proyecto moral a perpetuidad. Ámsterdam, Fundación para la promoción y la tecnología. 2001.

⁴Kaufam, 2007.

where the linguistic families are located. Although they lived in the Sabana of Colombia, their language is not spoken there anymore.

2. Status factors

Symbolic

Culture:

In the Muinane culture, there are different organizations form like men authority family and family structure. Muinane family consists of father, mother, sons and brothers. When some of the children marry his wife goes to live with her husband's family. Men authority is present in many aspects of Muinane Community, for example the foreign subsidiaries. It refer to when a child is born his father pick a name, among which have been designated and appropriate for your clan.

- “its rhetoric is represented in a theory centered on the moral and aesthetic. It shows its sociability, production activities, the subject, the agenciality and identity”⁵
- Su retórica manifiesta lo que se puede entender como una teoría centrada en lo moral y lo estético, que da cuenta de la sociabilidad, de las actividades de producción, del sujeto, de la fenomenología, de la agencialidad y de la identidad.” (Londoño, 2001. 9)

History:

Their population was estimated to approximately 2.000 people in previous centuries, but today there are not more than 500 people of that population left and just less than 200 of them speak Muinane language, yet the number of speakers is unknown.⁶Because of the continuing reduction of speakers, many Muinane dialects got lost in the last centuries; however, there are still some families who speak Muinane. The mainly differences between those families is shown in changes of vowels. The Muinane are multilingual speakers (at least two fluent and up to five different languages) and this aspect is very important in their cultural structure. Very interesting is the high rate or marriages with speakers of other languages and the significant low rate of marriages between speakers of Muinane.

⁵ LONDOÑO, Carlos David, Muinane: un proyecto moral a perpetuidad. Ámsterdam, Fundación para la promoción y la tecnología. 2001.

⁶WALTON, James W.; WALTON, Janice P., authors.1967. "Phonemes of Muinane." In Phonemic systems of Colombian languages, Viola G. Waterhouse (ed.), p.38.

Economy:

Muinane community is living in fragile ecosystems in the area of the Amazonas in which they developed systems of horticulture of lumbering and gathering as well as fishing and hunting.⁷ Nowadays, there are other activities for young people as teachers within the community or outside the village of Araracuara.

For the Muinanes, it is necessary to live from substances because those are the components of real people, people that have agenciality in society. The economic cycle is fulfilled after the consumption of various substances allows the production of new substances.

Society:

They are divided into three social unities:

- **Ethnicity:** It is the largest group. It comes from a common ancestral where everyone speaks the same language. Is the largest group and is composed of an association of descent groups that are identified by speaking the same language
- **Clan:** It is a group of kindreds that comes from a family tree to be known directly, which is also identified with a symbol. Clans are: Gaigo: m'who or "people of women"; tʃu: mold or "worm people" KW: mwho or "people manguare" kwédʒwmwho or "people pineapple" and néhegaimwho or "people coco ".
- **Patrilineage:** It is a family group that transmits culture through the father. • Each patrilineage corresponds to a particular speech and is part of the cultural heritage.

The Muinane are multilingual speakers (at least two fluent and up to five different languages) and this aspect is very important in their cultural structure. Very interesting is the high rate or marriages with speakers of other languages and the significant low rate of marriages between speakers of Muinane.

Language

1. Language:

Words: They are manifested in people and have an effect depending it's type.

Dialect: Within Muinane tongue is possible to distinguish several dialects, for there are different clans with different dialects. There are two phonemic tones in Muinane: high and low. The tone must necessarily be predicted from the morphology. The dialects include different word classes

⁷<http://www.lenguasdecolombia.gov.co/content/muinane-0> as seen at the 21st of November 2012, 14:46.

like nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns. Muinane typical order is: subject-verb-complement.

The language Muinane is very similar to the family of the language Bora, which includes Bora, Muinane and Miraña. The researchers the languages Miraña and Bora found that they both are very similar, nearly identically, while Muinane is different to them which would cause serious misunderstandings between speakers of Muinane and Bora.⁸

The Alphabet

The alphabet of Muinane is based on 26 simple letters and they use the Latin alphabet.

A a	I i	R r
B b	J j	S s
C c	L l	Sh sh
D d	M m	T t
E e	N n	U u
F f	Ñ ñ	V v
G g	O o	Y y
H h	P p	
I i	Q q	

Phonology

Phoneme Chart⁹:

Consonants						
	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal grooved		Velar	Glottal
Stops						
Voiceless	p	t	tʲ	tʃ	k	ʔ
Voiced	b	d	dʲ	dʒ	g	
Spirants						
Voiceless	ɸ	s	ʃ		x	
Voiced	β		y			
Nasals	m	n	ɲ			
Trills		ʀ	ʀʲ			
Vowels						
	Front	Central	Back			
High	i	ɨ	u			
Low	e	a	o			

Consonants¹⁰

⁸ <http://www.lenguasdecolombia.gov.co/content/muinane-0> as seen at the 21st of November 2012, 14:46.

⁹ Fig.1 by: WALTON, James W.; WALTON, Janice P., authors. 1967. "Phonemes of Muinane." In Phonemic systems of Colombian languages, Viola G. Waterhouse (ed.), p.39.

¹⁰ Chart taken from: <http://www.native-languages.org/muinane.htm>

Character They Use:	Sometimes Also Used:	IPA symbol:	How To Pronounce It:
b		b ~ p	Like <i>b</i> in <i>bin</i> or the unaspirated <i>p</i> in <i>pin</i> .
c	k, qu	k ^h	Like the <i>c</i> in <i>cat</i> . <i>C</i> and <i>qu</i> in this orthography are pronounced exactly the same.
ch		tʃ	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>cheese</i> .
d		d ~ t	Like <i>d</i> in <i>day</i> or the unaspirated <i>t</i> in <i>stay</i> .
dy	dj	d ^j	Like the way British people pronounce the <i>d</i> in <i>dew</i> . To Americans, it sounds like a <i>d</i> and a <i>y</i> pronounced together.
f		ɸ	A bilabial fricative, like an English "f" but pronounced without touching the upper teeth to the lower lip. This is the same Japanese "f" sound from the mountain name "Fuji."
g	gu	g ~ k	Like <i>g</i> in <i>gate</i> or the unaspirated <i>k</i> in <i>skate</i> .
h	´	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in the middle of the word "uh-oh."
j	h	x	Like the raspy <i>j</i> in Spanish <i>jalapeño</i> .
ll	j, dj	dʒ	Like <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> .
m		m	Like <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
ñ		n ^y	Like <i>ny</i> in <i>canyon</i> .
p		p ^h	Like <i>p</i> in <i>pin</i> .
qu	c, qu	k ^h	Like the <i>k</i> in <i>king</i> . <i>Qu</i> and <i>c</i> in this orthography are pronounced exactly the same.
r		ɾ	Like the <i>r</i> in Spanish <i>pero</i> , somewhat like the <i>tt</i> in American English <i>butter</i> .
ry	rj	r ^j	Like <i>ry</i> in the Japanese word <i>ryu</i> . To Americans, it sounds like an <i>r</i> and a <i>y</i> pronounced together.
s		s	Like the <i>s</i> in <i>sun</i> .
sh		ʃ	Like <i>sh</i> in <i>shell</i> .
t		t ^h	Like <i>t</i> in <i>take</i> .
ty	tj	t ^j	Like the way British people pronounce the <i>t</i> in <i>tune</i> . To Americans, it sounds like a <i>t</i> and a <i>y</i> pronounced together.
v		β	Bilabial <i>v</i> as in Spanish <i>navidad</i> . It resembles an English <i>v</i> sound but is pronounced between the two lips instead of with the top teeth against your lip.
w	kp, pk	kp	This is a coarticulated sound does not exist in English. It is actually <i>ak</i> and <i>p</i> pronounced simultaneously.
y		y	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .

Vowels¹¹

Character	Sometimes	IPA	How To Pronounce It:
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¹¹Chart taken from: <http://www.native-languages.org/muinane.htm>

They Use:	Also Used:	symbol:	
a		a	Like the <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
e		e	Like the <i>e</i> sound in Spanish, similar to the <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> .
i		i	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
ɨ	ĩ, y	ɨ	This sound does not exist in English. It sounds like the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> only pronounced further back in the mouth. If you've ever heard a Slavic language like Russian or Polish being spoken, it is the same "dark i" sound from those languages.
o		o	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
u		u	Like <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i> , only with the lips unrounded.

Tones

Muinane is a tone language. Some syllables are pronounced with higher pitch than others. In English, the last syllable of a question is pronounced with high pitch, so you can hear the difference between sentences like "You see a man." and "You see a man?" In Muinane, such high and low tones are used in nearly every word, giving the language a lively sound.

There are two tones in Muinane, high tone and low tone. High tones are marked with an acute accent, like this:

a	lowtone
á	hightone

Grammatical Structure:

The word order in Muinane is generally based on the "subject-object-verb"-Structure. The case making is referred to nominative-accusative-structure.¹² For example:

The sentence: My son respects his mother **becames** ÚuvII Séemene Díbóono SéejII BócII guehi

My: ÚuvII

Son: Séemene

His mother: Díbóono SéejII

Respects: BócII guehi

Written Muinane:

¹²WALTON, James W.; WALTON, Janice P., authors. 1967. "Phonemes of Muinane." In *Phonemic systems of Colombian languages*, Viola G. Waterhouse (ed.), pages 37-47. Summer Institute of Linguistics Publications in Linguistics and Related Fields 14. Norman: Summer Institute of Linguistics of the University of Oklahoma. <http://www.sil.org/acpub/repository/12603.pdf>

The writing system of Muinane is based on Spanish orthography. Therefore the sound “k” is written as “c” when it is located in front of an *a, i, o* or *u*. Furthermore it is written as “*qu*” before *e* and *i*. Before *e* or *i*, the sound “g” is written as “gu”, while it is written as “g” elsewhere.¹³

What to do?

The Muinane’s community is in danger for two different reasons:

1. The specific characteristics from the Muinane language community, like the social division they live with, have been a cause in the situation they are living now. There is a multiplicity of dialects that coexist in the same community. Each family has their own way to communicate, so it is hard to identify a unique language to learn, or to save. On this sense, the spread of the language will not be possible, for their own speakers do not have completely knowledge of all their varieties. Therefore, Intergenerational transmission will be the only possible way to continue with the language vitality.
2. On the other hand, the community in Colombia has been disappearing through history. Colombian violence and economy have been a factor of indigenous community’s disappearing. This small number of members in the community will make the language disappear as soon as the community disappears.

However, we need to look for an option to maintain our communities. Colombia is a multicultural country that needs to respect the diversity and to ensure their welfare, for it is our identity. Academics have been doing jobs to revitalize the language. There is material evidence on that. Therefore, it will be possible to revitalize Muinane’s language with time. Nowadays, it is possible to find dictionaries and translations of different Spanish texts in Muinane.

Indigenous languages are endangered because of the marginalization they have suffered. The bilingual project is focus on languages from abroad. Then, we think it is necessary to promote the learning of our own languages, so we could enforce our identity as Colombians. It is possible to do, having into account that there exist the tools to do it. There is the language community as well as the people that could teach it (students of linguistic).

Sources:

¹³Ibid.

PAKKY, Clementina; WALTON, James W.; WALTON, Janice P., compilers; MAXWELL, Michael B., editor. 1997. *Diccionario bilingüe Muinane-Español, Español-Muinane*. Bogotá: Editorial Alberto Lleras Camargo. v, 219 pages.
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