

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF ABAU

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0. INTRODUCTION

This sociolinguistic survey of the Abau language group is part of a continuing effort on the part of the Summer Institute of Linguistics to collect information on Sepik languages in which S.I.L. has not yet placed linguistic teams. The survey was conducted by Soren Årsjö, William Martin and John Champ during the period August 12-20, 1980. The S.I.L. helicopter (piloted by John Champ) was the primary means of transportation which enabled the survey party to gather information, covering 22 of the 28 Abau villages, which is approximately 85% of the Abau population.

The information gathered on the survey consisted of seven types:

- (1) The General Sociolinguistic Questionnaire administered in 18 locations.
- (2) The Questionnaire on Language Use and Attitudes administered to a total of 48 people representing 22 locations.
- (3) A 106-Item Word List elicited in 12 locations. The first 27 items of the word list were also elicited in 7 additional locations as a check on reliability.
- (4) A Tok Pisin Literacy Test (see Appendix C), administered to 14 people representing 10 locations. Both the reading of the text and the subsequent comprehension questioning were recorded on tape for later analysis.
- (5) Current 1980 Census figures obtained for all Abau areas from the government posts in Green River and Yapsie.
- (6) General observations recorded in diary of each day's survey-taking.
- (7) A selection of Abau vernacular materials provided by the Christian Mission in Many Lands (see Section 1.8).

Table 1 gives a summary of the data obtained during the course of the survey.

Table 1
Summary of Survey Data

Village	General Sociolinguistic Questionnaire	Language Use & Attitudes Questionnaire	Long Word List	Short Word List	Tok Pisin Literacy Test
Iburu	x	x	x		2x
Miniaburu	x	3x		x	
Simia		x			
Idam #1	x	3x	x		
Idam #2	x	2x		x	2x
Bisiaburu	x	3x	x		x
Hufi	x	2x		x	
Biake #1	x	x			
Kaseiru		x	x		x
Sugmayin		2x	x		
Kobraru	x	2x	x		
Imnai #1	x	2x			x
Wauru #1		x	x		
Ileis	x	x		x	
Iaburu	x	3x	x		2x
Mukwas	x	3x	x		2x
Abaru	x	x	x		
Dieru	x	3x		x	x
Ogru	x	2x	x		x
Bifro	x	3x		x	
Baio	x	4x		x	
Wagu	x	3x	x		x

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Language Classification and Location

According to Laycock (1973:69, 74), Abau belongs to the Upper Sepik Stock of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum of P.N.G. languages. The Abau language group is located in the southern portion of the Amanab Sub-district of the West Sepik Province. Abau villages are located:

along the Sepik River from longitude 141° 40' up-river to just beyond the Irian Jaya border; along the lower Green and Hauser Rivers; along the Idam River; along the August (Yapsie) River and in the villages in the vicinity of the Green River Government Station.

1.2 Number and Distribution of Speakers

Abau is spoken by 4,317 speakers in 28 villages which are located in five P.N.G. Census Divisions. In addition, there are some speakers (reportedly only a few) along the Sepik River beyond the Irian Jaya border. The 1980 Census figures organized by Census Division and village are presented in Table 2. Absentees are excluded from these figures since villagers reported that absentees seldom returned to their home villages.

Table 2
1980 Census Figures

<u>YABALHAI C.D.</u>		<u>GREEN RIVER LOCAL C.D.</u>		<u>IDAM C.D.</u>	
Baio	122	Iburu	238	Idam #1	322
Baiuwai	122	Miniaburu	167	Idam #2	255
Biake #1	25	Simia	34	Bisiaburu	106
Bifro	240	Dieru	207	Subtotal	638
Buna	117	Ogru	167		
Hufi	159	Abaru	179		
Iaburu	415			<u>YAPSIE C.D.</u>	
Sugmayin	111	Subtotal	992	Ileis	49
Kaseiru	137			Imnai #1	167
Kobraru	123	<u>ROCKY PEAK C.D.</u>		Wauru #1	162
Mahani	138	Beimap	88	Wauru #2	48
Mukwas	219	Wagu	113	Subtotal	426
Subtotal	1,939	Senou	76		
		Subtotal	277		

The government post at Green River currently administers all the Abau area within P.N.G. except the Yapsie Census Division, which is administered by the government post at Yapsie. A new government post near Idam #1 village is currently under construction.

1.3 Neighbouring Languages

According to Laycock (1973:69) and more recent S.I.L. sources, Abau is bordered on the north by Yuri (Karkar), Senagi (Anggor) and Busa. It is bordered on the east by Namie and on the south by Musian, Amto and Mianmin. To the west across the Irian Jaya border the situation is less certain, but the languages there would appear to be Biksi and Pyu. Abau is not closely related to any language which borders it.

1.4 S.I.L. Work in Related Languages

Sepik Iwam is related to Abau on the Stock level, but is not geographically contiguous with it. Marilyn Laszlo is currently involved in a translation program in Sepik Iwam.

1.5 Churches and Missions in the Area

The Christian Center at Green River is the largest functioning church in Abau territory. There are small churches in Iburu, Idam #2 and Mukwas. Most Abau villages have had church buildings in past years but have now abandoned them. Some reportedly conduct worship in the village "haus kiap" (Government Rest House); others said they now have church services outside on the ground only as they no longer have a church building.

Virtually all Abau villages identify themselves with the Christian Missions in Many Lands (C.M.M.L.) which has been working in the area for about 25 years. C.M.M.L. is a Brethren Mission and is the only mission which has had significant influence in the Abau area.

1.6 Schools and School Attendance

The first schools in Abau territory were mission schools operated by C.M.M.L. These were located at Green River and Idam #1, with their influence spreading to most Abau villages via C.M.M.L.'s "Kisim Save" instruction. Presently C.M.M.L.'s educational influence is primarily restricted to the Christian Center at Green River.

The government has primary schools now in Green River, Idam #1, Yapsie and Iaburu, the latter three operating only within the past few years. The first Grade 6 graduates from Idam #1 will finish in December 1980. The school at Iaburu has been in operation only since 1979. Table 3 gives an approximation of present and projected school attendance for the villages in the Abau area.

Table 3
Children in School

Practically None	Some	Many or All	
Hufi	Biake #1	Iburu	Imnai #1
Ileis	Kobraru	Miniaburu	Iaburu
Bifro	Ogru	Idam #1	Abaru
Baio	Mukwas	Idam #2	Dieru
Wagu		Bisiaburu	
(2-3 days travel from nearest school)	(1 day's travel from nearest school)	(zero to a few hours travel from nearest school)	

It appears that the school attendance of village children is a direct reflection of the travel time required to reach the nearest school.

Most of those in columns 2 and 3 of Table 3 claimed to have literate people in Tok Pisin and a scattered few literate in English. School-leavers were reported to usually return to their home villages after finishing school. Those who go far away to take work do not usually return to the village, though some do write letters back and a few send money home. Many of these also marry away.

1.7 Accessibility and Transportation

There are three airstrips within the Abau area. The airfield at Green River is quite large and able to accommodate virtually all types of aircraft. The airstrips at Yapsie and Idam #1 are much smaller but adequate for single engine aircraft. The airfield at Yapsie would not be close enough to any potential allocation sites to warrant its consideration as a possible supply route. At the time of the survey the airfield at Idam #1 was closed, but was to be inspected and reopened in the near future. Joseph Doguri, the D.O.I.C. at Green River indicated that he is determined to open the Idam #1 airstrip as an adjunct to the new government post under construction there.

Although there are a few "roads" linking up some areas, there are only two sections which are actually used for vehicular travel. The longest is about 25 kilometers long and extends from beyond Iburu village through Green River and Abaru out to Dieru village. The only portion of this road which is in fair-to-good condition is the section from the Green River Airstrip to Abaru village. The other sections were reported either impassable, or nearly so, even to four-wheel-drive vehicles.

There is a "felled-dog road" under construction from near Abaru southward about 8 kilometers through a swampy area to the Sepik River near Iaburu. Many Abau speakers have recently been employed in the construction of this road. It is not clear what its projected completion date is, or what sort of vehicles it would accommodate. Once completed it would provide an important supply link between Green River and Iaburu on the Sepik (and therefore practically all other Abau villages). At present, however, surface access direct to the Sepik River from the Green River airstrip is not easy and requires carriers to transport supplies for most of the 8 kilometers to the river.

A viable alternative to the Green River airstrip would be the Idam #1 airstrip. It is only a few yards from the Idam River, which is navigable down past Bisiaburu and to other centrally located points in the language group. The trip from Idam #1 to Bisiaburu is estimated to be 1½ to 2 hours by paddle canoe, and the trip from

Bisiaburu to Iaburu another 1½ to 2 hours. Most villages along the Sepik River are estimated to be 1½ to 2½ hours apart by paddle canoe when travelling with the current. Of course, if a powered boat were available, travel times would be reduced considerably.

At least three four-wheel drive vehicles operate in the Green River-Abaru area. One of these would probably be available for short-term hire between Green River and Abaru and perhaps even to Dieru, depending on road conditions. If the road to Dieru proved to be manageable, then supplies could be transported by vehicle to the Dio River (at Dieru) and then down the Dio by canoe or powered boat to the Sepik. This would be a good route if Mukwas were chosen as an allocation site.

1.8 Materials Published in and about Abau

All of the materials ever written in Abau vernacular were apparently done by David Bailey when he was working with C.M.M.L. there. Except for a few short Gospel portions, these existed only in unpublished manuscript or mimeographed copies. National pastors Hamino and Akaio of Green River were able to supply the survey party with a set of seven graded reading primers, a translation of the book of Jonah and a packet of six short scripture selections from the Gospels, published by the Bible Society in Australia (1972).

Kanapio, a translation helper from Abaru village who assisted Bailey, claimed that all of Mark, John, Acts, John's Epistles and parts of 1 Timothy, Romans and Galatians were translated into Abau. He was able to supply the survey party with a badly deteriorated mimeographed copy of Mark's Gospel. Some of the translated material, he claimed, was also recorded on cassette.

Material published about Abau, other than large-scale surveys of the P.N.G. linguistic situation, is limited to D.A. Bailey's monograph: Abau Language Phonology and Grammar, printed in Workpapers in Papua New Guinea Languages, Vol. 9, in 1975.

2. PRESENT LANGUAGE USE

2.1 The use of Abau

2.1.1 Oral Usage

Abau is the language of first choice by all villagers surveyed in this report. It is known well and used throughout the Abau area by male and female, young and old alike. Abau is generally the only language used by men over 50 and women over 35 years of age.

Virtually all respondents to the Language Use and Attitudes Questionnaire said that Abau is the primary language of the home, and the only language used when addressing parents and small children. Children learn Abau first in the home and continue to use it almost

exclusively until they reach school age, when they become more or less bilingual in Tok Pisin. Although most respondents claimed that the young people were bilingual in Tok Pisin, very few were actually observed to use anything other than the vernacular when conversing among themselves.

Except for the actual reading of Scripture, Abau was said to be used along with Tok Pisin in church worship, singing and public and private prayers.

Although virtually all agreed that Tok Pisin is often used when discussing government or council matters, most added that Abau is used much also, especially when the older men are present.

2.1.2 Abau Literacy

Although C.M.M.L. had produced a series of reading primers, it seems that few ever had opportunity to become literate in Abau. Out of 46 men interviewed only one man (in Bisiaburu, age 30) claimed to be literate in Abau tokples.

Pastor Hamino, who is literate in English as well as Tok Pisin, revealed some difficulty when orally reading some of the published Abau Scripture portions. It is not known whether the Abau orthography was ever checked or approved by an authority other than Bailey himself.

2.2 The Use of Tok Pisin

2.2.1 Oral Usage

Tok Pisin is undoubtedly the second most widely spoken language in the Abau area. Virtually all adult males under age 50 speak Tok Pisin well. The fluency of the female population is less certain since most women were too shy to speak directly to the members of the survey party. However, judging from the male consensus of opinion, Abau females over 35 are not fluent in Tok Pisin. Most under 35 are fluent, but not to the degree that the males are.

Children do not generally become fluent in Tok Pisin until they reach school age. Direct observation showed that even older children give preference to Abau above Tok Pisin while at play.

Tok Pisin is used together with Abau in all aspects of church worship. Scripture is reportedly read from the Nupela Testamen and translated into Abau during church services.

2.2.2 Tok Pisin Literacy

50% of the males interviewed indicated they could read and understand Tok Pisin. This figure does not, of course, suggest a literacy rate that high for the general population, which is likely to be 10% or less. Those who were literate were by and large males under the age of 30.

In order to obtain some idea of what level of reading ability constitutes a good reader in the eyes of people, a simple reading test (see Appendix C) was administered to the one or two individuals who were considered the best readers in the village at the time of the survey. The test was designed to measure reading speed, accuracy and comprehension. Two short texts of approximately 100 words were used, though only one text was given to each individual being tested. The individual was asked to read it twice, the second reading being recorded on cassette along with the comprehension questioning for later analysis. The analysis consisted of determining the average reading speed, the number of reading errors (which were not self-corrected) and the number of questions answered correctly out of four possible.

Both texts were chosen from Wantok, July 7, 1979 edition, and were part of an article about the work of S.I.L. in P.N.G. Text A dealt with general statistics about the language situation in P.N.G. and S.I.L.'s objectives. This text proved to be less useful and was only used on three occasions. Text B dealt with S.I.L.'s community development efforts and proved to be a better text, being used on 11 occasions.

The results of the Tok Pisin Literacy Test are tabulated in Table 4. Generally, those who read 100 words per minute or faster had had at least Grade 6 education and also did better on comprehension than the slower readers. In most locations the people claimed to have one or more books in their homes (usually the Nupela Testamen), and all claimed to read them at least some of the time if not regularly.

Table 4
Tok Pisin Literacy Test Results

Village	Text	Reading Speed (in wpm)	Reading Errors (not self-corrected)	Questions Answered Correctly (our of 4)
Iburu	A	46 wpm	8	2
	B	58 wpm	1	2
Mukwas	A	120 wpm	2	2
	B	100 wpm	1	4
Wagu	B	66 wpm	4	1
Idam #2	B	92 wpm	1	3
	B	46	3	4
Bisiaburu	B	61 wpm	3	3
Kaseiru	B	110 wpm	2	4
Iaburu	A	63 wpm	5	0
	B	123 wpm	0	4
Imnai #1	B	65 wpm	2	3
Ogru	B	79 wpm	4	2
Dieru	B	158 wpm	0	4

2.3 The Use of English

2.3.1 Oral Usage

Few people, other than Pastors Hamino and Akaio, were observed speaking English, in spite of the fact that several of those interviewed had attended high school in Aitape and said they knew English. Even the two pastors were noticeably more at ease in Tok Pisin than in English.

2.3.2 English Literacy

About 20% of those interviewed indicated that they could read and understand some English, all having had Grade 6 or higher education.

3. ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGES

3.1 Attitudes toward Abau

The attitudes expressed by practically all Abau speakers reveal a high degree of support for the continued use of Abau. Unsolicited statements like the following were commonly recorded:

"Tokples yet i namba wan."
 "Tokples i mas i stap yet."
 "Tokples em i bun bilong ples."

All observations made on the present use of Abau strongly confirm the attitudes expressed above.

3.2 Attitudes toward Tok Pisin

Initially two-thirds said they thought Tok Pisin was adequate to talk about anything they wished, the other third saying they sometimes needed to switch to Abau to clarify. 45% said the Nupela Testamen was difficult for them or others in the village to understand. Interestingly, many of those who said the N.T. was easy to understand were illiterate in Tok Pisin. Two-thirds felt that "Tok bilong God" would be clearer in Abau. All agreed that it would be clearer to the older people especially.

In the family, Tok Pisin is used as well as Abau between younger parents and school-age children, but not with the older members of the family, nor with the very young.

3.3 Attitudes toward English

Although English is the language of instruction in the government schools, it fell far below Abau and Tok Pisin in actual use, as well as in the parents' language preference for their children to learn to read and write.

4. PREDICTED CHANGES IN LANGUAGE USE

4.1 The Outlook for Abau

4.1.1 Oral Usage

The sociolinguistic data amassed in this survey indicates that the Abau language will continue indefinitely to be the language of first choice among its speakers. At present, neither English nor Tok Pisin offers any substantial social or economic advantages within the Abau area. Therefore, it is unlikely that either of these two national languages will become the language of first choice in the foreseeable future.

Out of 46 interviewees only three said they thought their native tongue was changing even just a little. All others were emphatic in their claims that Abau was not changing. In one village (Bisiaburu) the respondents felt that the overall dialect situation in their village was changing. They said that the dialect of the younger generation was becoming more like that of Iaburu village (probably due to marriage exchange), while the dialect of the older generation there was staying like that of the people up-river (Idam #1).

The overwhelming majority felt that their vernacular would never cease to be used, and only one third said that they thought Tok Pisin would become "equal" in use to Abau.

4.1.2 Abau Literacy

Although C.M.M.L.'s early attempts at Abau literacy ceased when Bailey left P.N.G., there seems still to be remarkably strong sentiment on the part of the people for their children to become literate in Abau as well as Tok Pisin. At present the national Abau pastors are very desirous of getting the Scriptures translated into Abau.

There are several very well-educated Abau speakers in the Green River area including Pastors Hamino and Akaio, Sam Baria (the headmaster of the Green River Community School), and Nanau, the Director of the Bible Teacher Training School in Amanab. All of these men have expressed strong interest in cooperating with S.I.L. and offering whatever help they can toward launching a program of vernacular literacy and translation.

4.2 The Outlook for Tok Pisin

4.2.1 Oral Usage

Tok Pisin will undoubtedly extend its usage into the ranks of the older men and women with time. By the time the present generation of children grows up, virtually all men will be fluent in Tok Pisin and probably most women. Although use of Tok Pisin will increase, there appears to be no threat of usurping the vernacular as the primary means of communication within Abau territory.

4.2.2 Tok Pisin Literacy

C.M.M.L.'s "Kisim Save" instruction has made it possible for some Abau speakers to become literate in Tok Pisin who have not otherwise had opportunity to attend government schools. As more Abau children become educated, there will probably be a gradual increase in the number of Tok Pisin literates. The continuance of this pattern will depend, however, on the extent to which education in English replaces education in Tok Pisin in the future.

4.3 The Outlook for English

4.3.1 Oral Usage

The present use of English is primarily restricted to the schools and government posts within the Abau area. Even there it is used mainly in formal settings. The oral use of English will no doubt increase as long as the government gives preference to it, but slowly, since the present strategy requires school children to make the large "jump" from vernacular to English without the benefit of Bridge Materials.

4.3.2 English Literacy

Like the oral usage, English literacy will come very slowly to the Abau area as long as it remains the exclusive possession of those fortunate few who can go on to high school. With the expressed interest in Abau literacy, it would seem wise to launch a widespread literacy program in the vernacular with accompanying Bridge Materials to English. This strategy would enable Abau speakers to preserve their high estimate of their own language and more quickly and fully enter into the national life of Papua New Guinea.

5. DIALECT SURVEY

5.1 Aim

The aim of the dialect survey was to make use of both objective and subjective criteria in determining the extent and distribution of dialect divergence in the Abau language.

5.2 Procedures

Two basic approaches were followed. The first was an objective approach, using the Standard SIL Word List, modified as suggested by Richard Loving in "Information for Conducting Sociolinguistic Surveys in Sepik Language Groups." The other approach was more subjective, using information supplied by Abau speakers themselves about perceived dialect differences. This information was elicited and recorded in Part D of the General Sociolinguistic Questionnaire.

The modified word lists were recopied onto a 106-word matrix containing the data from 19 villages in a form facilitating cognate comparisons and calculations. The complete 106-word list was obtained in 12 locations, and the first 27 words were obtained in an additional 7 locations as a check on the reliability of the subjective dialect information given by the Abau speakers.

On the longer lists, the 6 items considered least reliable were deleted prior to calculating the cognate percentages, resulting in a 100-Item word list for the 12 locations. On the shorter lists the two items considered least reliable were deleted prior to calculating cognate percentages, resulting in a 25-Item word list for all 19 locations.

A "cognate" in this paper refers to "phonetically similar word for which historical reconstructions have not been carried out." Cognates were determined by the inspection method and generally were considered cognates if 50% similarity was perceived, with more weight being accorded the consonants.

All word lists were elicited by the author using Tok Pisin. Helpers were all male, ranging in age from 15-50 (average 33), with generally two or three men forming a consensus before the helper acted as spokesman. Except for the Kaseiru and Wauru #1 data, all lists were elicited from speakers in their home villages (where they were born). The list from Wauru #1 was elicited from a man who had been residing in Yapsie (near Imnai #1) for two years, though felt to be a reliable helper. The list from Kaseiru was elicited from a man visiting Biake #1 who was regarded as only fair in reliability. Hence, the Kaseiru data may have some slightly deflated cognate percentages.

The subjective dialect information was all by consensus of the leading men of approximate age 35-45.

5.3 Analysis and Results

5.3.1 Objective Criteria

Table 5 shows the percentage of cognates between all 19 villages based on the first 25 words. This matrix has been permuted to show the villages with the highest average shared cognates near the middle of the diagonal, and those more distantly related on either end, according to the guidelines suggested by Simons (1977:125) for recognizing patterns in lexicostatistics.

There do not appear to be any decidedly clear patterns of convergence, divergence or chaining in the cognate percentages of Table 5. It may be observed, however, that within the Central and Down-River dialects the villages are fairly uniformly and strongly related to one another. Within the Up-River dialect, however, the relationships are more erratic and weaker between the villages. Peculiarly, Idam #2

Table 6

COGNATE PERCENTAGE MATRIX BASED ON THE LONG 100-WORD LISTS

<u>Wag</u>	← Down-River Dialect										
74	<u>Muk</u>										
73	85	<u>Ibu</u>									
79	86	87	<u>Ogr</u>								
74	89	84	87	<u>Iab</u>	Central Dialect						
79	86	89	89	86	<u>Aba</u>						
79	81	88	91	87	90	<u>Bis</u>					
73	78	80	78	82	77	81	<u>Kob</u>				
74	79	80	79	81	79	79	87	<u>Sug</u>			
75	75	79	75	79	79	79	88	87	<u>Wau</u>	Up-River Dialect	
71	71	72	68	71	74	72	82	79	88	<u>Id 1</u>	
64	73	71	71	70	71	68	77	80	75	73	<u>Kas</u>

Like Table 5, this data in itself does not offer any clearcut patterns for the establishment of dialects. The villages within the Central dialect and within the Up-River dialect show themselves to be more strongly related to one another than to villages in the other dialects. Here, Idam #2 shows no special tendency toward dominance as it did in Table 5.

5.3.2 Subjective Criteria

Determining dialect boundaries from the lexicostatistic data alone would not be easy or conclusive. However, by using some subjective sociolinguistic data in conjunction with the lexicostatistic data, fairly clear patterns emerge.

Table 7 is a compilation of the information on dialect differences, Part D of the General Sociolinguistic Questionnaire. This Table records what every village visited said about every other village they cared to mention when discussing dialectal differences. At the bottom of Table 7 is a summary of the data for each village mentioned, with percentages representing the following: the village was considered identical in dialect (A's only); the frequency that the village was considered either identical or varying only a little in dialect (A's plus B's), and; that the frequency that the village was considered either varying somewhat more or considerably more in dialect (C's plus D's).

The data on this Table is very useful in interpreting the emic dialect situation in the language. The percentages at the bottom of the Table may be taken to represent the degree of linguistic centrality (or lack of it in the case of the C's plus D's) for each village. Those with a high percentage (say above 90%, A's plus B's) can be taken to be at the heart of the Central Dialect. Thus, the speech of Iaburu, Buna, Dieru and Abaru all have a great deal in common with all other Abau villages, at least in the opinion of all Abau speakers interviewed. Although there are probably a number of non-linguistic factors that enter the picture in such a subjective analysis (e.g. prestige factors, alliance factors, etc.), it is noteworthy that Iaburu, Dieru and Abaru also have relatively high average shared cognate percentages according to the lexicostatistic data (Buna was not surveyed).

The information in Table 7 may also be used to construct a graphic picture of the dialect situation. This is accomplished in Figure 1. The contour lines enclose villages which are considered identical in speech or differ only a little in speech. The identical groupings are enclosed within dotted lines (A's in Table 7), and those which vary only a little are enclosed within dashed lines (A's plus B's in Table 7).

It is evident that three major dialect areas emerge on this graphic representation and arbitrarily have been given the following names in this report: The Central Dialect, the Up-River Dialect, and the Down-River Dialect. The villages of the Central Dialect have more in common with the other two dialects than either of the other two do with each other--hence the name, Central Dialect.

The Up-River Dialect includes all the Abau villages up the Sepik, Idam and August Rivers from the Central Dialect area. Bisiaburu is transitional. The younger generation there speaks the Central Dialect (like Iaburu), while the older generation speaks the Up-River Dialect (like Idam #1).

The Down-River Dialect includes all Abau villages down-river from the Central Dialect area. Mahani was not surveyed, but with more study may prove (like Bisiaburu) to be transitional between the Central and Down-River Dialects. The Map (Appendix A) summarizes the dialect situation and indicates the three major dialect areas, also with some indication of minor dialect differences within these three.

It is interesting that the dialect picture shown on the map is practically identical to one the survey party made after talking extensively with the two national pastors Hamino and Akaio. These two men have travelled extensively throughout the Abau area and claim to have a thorough knowledge of the dialect variations.

5.4 Evaluation

The lexicostatistic data alone proved insufficient in identifying the major dialects of Abau. Abau speakers, however, clearly perceived dialect variations which, though not clearly revealed in the cognate counts, fit within the lexicostatistic data. This fact would suggest the importance of not relying on lexicostatistic data alone in the determination of dialect areas within a given language group. The speakers themselves react to more and varied factors in their assessment of the dialect situation than what a survey team can discover in a few days of research. It is therefore recommended that all future dialect surveys collect this type of subjective information as an important supplement to the standard lexicostatistic data.

6. ALLOCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Assessing the Need

Abau national pastors have written several times asking S.I.L. to allocate a married couple in that area. The present report substantiates that a genuine and immediate need exists there for a full scale vernacular program of translation and literacy. Although the use of Tok Pisin has increased substantially in the past 25 years, there appears to be no threat of it ever usurping the vernacular in the foreseeable future as the preferred language of the family, the community and the church.

6.2 Possible Allocation Sites

6.2.1 Dialect Factors

In all villages surveyed there was unanimous agreement that the Abau language is a unity. None claimed to have any significant difficulty understanding or being understood by those of a different dialect area. Nevertheless, most reported that there was at least some difficulty in understanding rapid speech uttered by those speakers in the more remote parts of the Up-River Dialect and in most villages of the Down-River Dialect. On the other hand, none of these same speakers reported any difficulty understanding the speech of the Central Dialect. Therefore, the Central Dialect would be the best dialect for launching a vernacular literacy and translation program.

6.2.2 Village Factors

Within the Central Dialect there are several villages which could be considered good choices for allocations.

Iaburu on the Sepik is the largest population center, being twice to three times the size of the average Abau village. Iaburu is also prestigious as a frequently chosen site for exchanges, feasts, singsings and work parties. It has several trade stores, a new school, an aid

post and relatively many who have completed primary school and high school (in Aitape). On the minus side, accessibility from the Green River airstrip is not a simple matter and would require carriers to walk the 2-3 hours from the Green River airstrip plus a short canoe ride; or else a long canoe ride from the airstrip at Idam #1 (3-4 hours). Iaburu is also subject to flooding in the wet season, and the Sepik is their only source of water for bathing, drinking, etc.

Abaru is the village closest to Green River Station (15-20 min. walk) and has the easiest accessibility of any village in the Central Dialect. All services offered at Green River including the largest school, largest church, largest trade stores, the market and a small hospital are within easy walking distance. Many Abaru residents are employed at Green River Station and several are well educated. David Bailey had a house at Abaru and at least one of his translation helpers still lives there. Abaru is not subject to flooding and has some tank water. The C.M.M.L. house at Green River is presently unoccupied and would probably be available to rent during the initial phases of allocation and house building. On the minus side, Abaru is so close to the Green River station that there would probably be more distractions and interruptions there than in a village on the river.

Dieru is presently the second most accessible village within the Central Dialect. As mentioned in Section 1.7, there is a road from Green River out to Dieru, although presently in poor condition. Dieru is adjacent to the Dio River and reportedly does not flood during the wet season. The Dio River is navigable down to the Sepik River which makes it fairly accessible to other Abau areas, especially if a powered boat were available. Pastor Akaio is from Dieru, but presently resides at the Christian Center at Green River.

Bisiaburu, with its strong ties to Iaburu and its accessibility from the Idam #1 airstrip (1½ to 2 hours by canoe) would offer some allocation potential. As mentioned earlier the younger generation speaks the Central Dialect and the older generation the Up-River (Idam #1) Dialect. This situation would require care initially in language learning, but would perhaps be helpful afterwards in literacy and translation. The people at Bisiaburu expressed the strongest desire of any in the Central Dialect for a literacy and translation team.

Mukwas is located on the Simaia River near its confluence with the Sepik. Like Bisiaburu, it has access to cleaner water being on a tributary of the Sepik. Access to Mukwas would probably be easiest via the Green River airstrip, overland to Dieru or Iaburu, then down river by canoe to the Simaia River. The Mukwas villagers also expressed a strong desire for a team to allocate there.

Buna was not surveyed directly but from reports it would appear to be similar to Iaburu as far as linguistic centrality, accessibility and flooding conditions. Access by helicopter is presently difficult.

7. SUMMARY

There are at least three dialects in the Abau language, but one translation would probably be sufficient if done in the Central Dialect. The sociological information gathered in this report indicates that Abau will continue to be the language of first choice in the area and that neither Tok Pisin nor English will become the heart language of the family, the community or the church. There is strong indication that a widespread program of vernacular literacy and translation would greatly enhance the general educational level of the people as well as strengthen the national church.

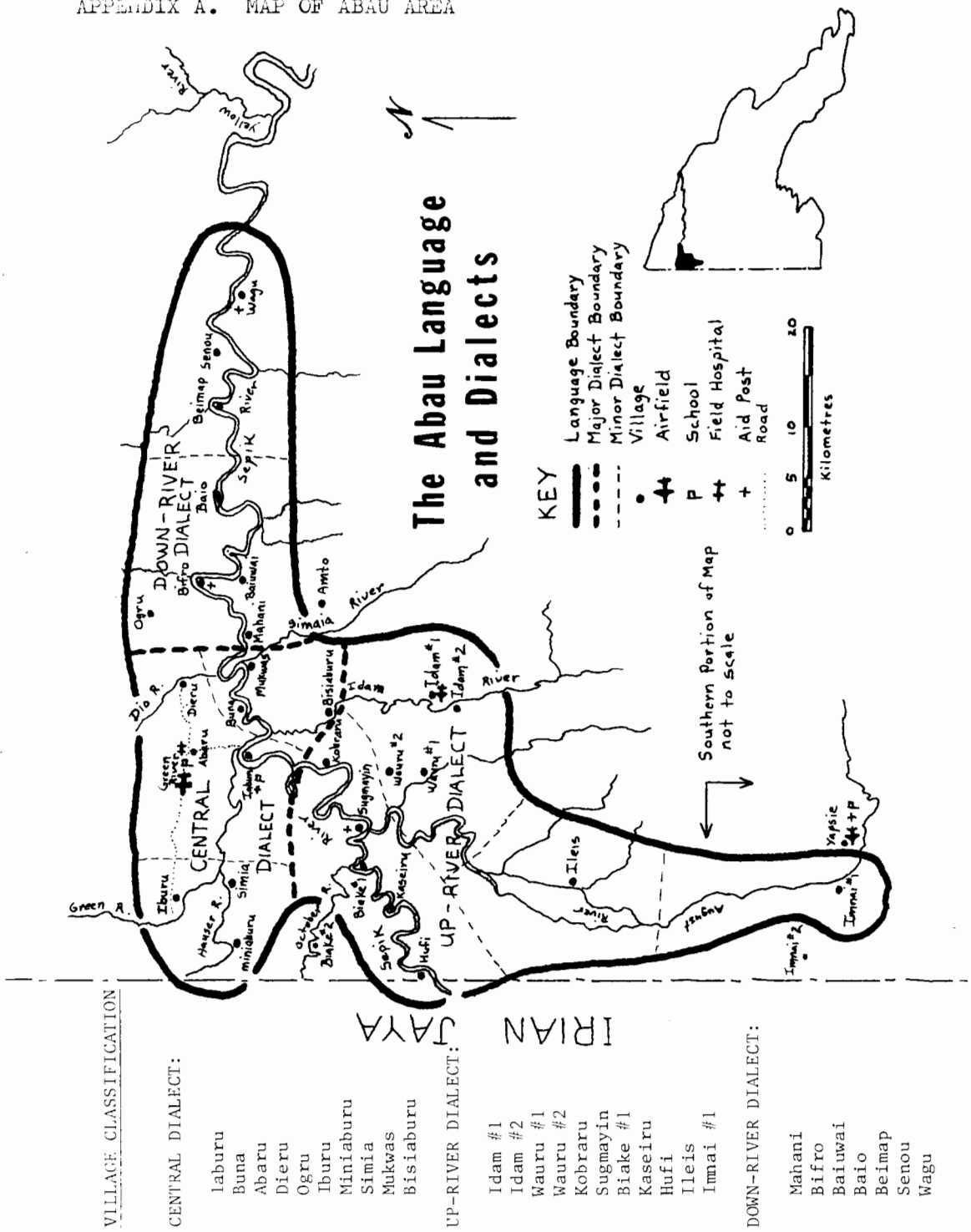
8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX C.

TOK PISIN LITERACY TEST TEXTSTEXT A

Insait long PNG i gat moa olsem 700 tok ples. Tasol yu no ken ritim 600 bilong ol dispela. Yu ken tokim ol tasol. Ol S.I.L. save-man i stadi hat moa na taitim bun bilong raitim daun moa olsem 100 dispela tokples nau. Na bilong wanem ol i mekim dispela wok? As tingting tru bilong ol, em i bilong helpim ol pipel i ken ritim Baibel long tokples bilong ol yet. Ol i filim olsem, ol manmeri i ken save mobeta long gutpela tok bilong Baibel, sapos ol i ken ritim long tok ples bilong ol yet.

Questions on Text A:

1. In sait long PNG i gat hamas tokples bilong ol?
2. Ol SIL i save stap na wok long hamas tokples?
3. SIL ol i laik helpim ol pipel long wanem?
4. Ol i laikim manmeri i ken ritim Baibel long wanem tokples?

TEXT B

Long ples ol SIL i bin skulim ol pipel long pasin bilong kamapim ol kau na pik na fis na kakaruk na meme an sipsip. Ol i bin skulim ol tu long pasin bilong fiksim olkain tul na masin bilong ol. Na ol i lainim ol pipel long pasin bilong bringim paip wara i kam insait long ples. Na ol meri i ken skul long kukim ol nupela kain kaikai long ol samting i stap pinis long gaden. Ol i skul tu long samapim klos na wokim bret na lukautim ol sikman.

Questions on Text B:

1. S.I.L. i skulim ol pipel long lukautim wanem kain abus?
2. Na ol i save lainim ol long bringim wara logn wanem kain samting?
3. Na ol meri i save skul long wanem samting?
4. Wanem samting moa ol i save skul long en?