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Bira survey report

Gert de Wit

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BIRA SURVEY REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The surveyors Alie de Wit-Hasselaar and Gert de Wit of the survey department of the Eastern Zaire Group (S.I.L.), together with Fred Frieke, an EZG colleague, visited several places in the Irumu zone of Upper Zaire between 6 and 17 December 1993 in order to conduct a rapid appraisal of the Bira language. They visited the following places: Bunia, Mudzi-Pela, Solenyama, Mwanga, Kunda, Nyankunde, Sedzabo, Ngbulanzabo, Gerechabo (Baywana), Badiya and the small villages on the countryside between Badiya and Kunda. This report summarizes their findings and conclusions.

1.1. Purpose of the survey

The purpose of the survey was to gather enough information to:

- (1) make a reasonably confident assessment of the need to produce literature or audio materials, including translated Scripture, in Bira;
- (2) outline the relevant factors in the local situation which would shape a program of literacy and Scripture translation in the Bira language;
- (3) evaluate the probable success of such a program.

1.2. Research questions

The survey had to answer the following questions:

- (1) Is Bira still a viable language? What are the patterns of language use?
What is the role of Swahili in the Bira society and to what extent is the Swahili Bible (protestant, 1976) understood?
- (2) If there is more than one dialect of the Bira language, which dialect would serve as the reference dialect?
- (3) What is the literacy situation among the Bira people?
- (4) How evangelized are the Bira people? Which churches work in the Bira area and what is their interest in a Bira translation of the Bible? What is the interest of the Bira people themselves?
- (5) If a project of literacy and Scripture translation would be undertaken, how could it be characterized?

1.3. Motivation

In the *Bible Translation Needs Bulletin 2*, Bira is listed as a "probable translation need" (Grimes 1992b:89). This qualification may come from the fact that in the past some Scriptures have been produced or from the fact that the Bira are the most populous ethnic group of the Irumu zone.

There is reason to doubt this assessment, however. According to Rietkerk (1990:4), the younger people show very little interest in their language. The secretary of the Catholic mission at Mudzi-Pela, Dachabo Bungamuzi, himself a Bira, has remarked that most Bira speak Swahili very well. This is probably related to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church has almost completely adopted Swahili for all church purposes. In light of this, SIL desired to clarify the translation need status of Bira.

If a translation project were undertaken, it would benefit from existing SIL projects in the related languages Komo and Bhele. Furthermore, SIL

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already has an agreement with CECA-20, one of the churches active in the area.

1.4. Methodology

The main emphasis of this survey was not on gathering linguistic information. Quite a lot has been written about the Bira language. For our purposes, sociolinguistic data were the most important. Literacy and church data were also needed.

This information was gathered through interviews, using prepared interview schedules. These were conducted both with groups and with individuals. Whenever possible, church leaders, missionaries and government and school officials were also interviewed.

Information about bilingualism in Swahili was sought through recorded text comprehension testing and Scripture testing. An attempt has been made to match the Swahili used in the recorded text with that of the Scripture passages (from the 1967 Protestant Bible in Zairean Swahili).

Lexical data were elicited using a 250-item wordlist. Many of the items had been elicited before by Constance Kutsch Lojenga and Timothy Raymond (1985), so these lists were used as guidelines and to refine them.

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2. FINDINGS

2.1. Glossonyms and Ethnonyms

Bira is a Bantu language and is therefore called Kibira by most of its speakers. The people call themselves BaBira (sg. MuBira). The same name is used by most of their neighbours. The name used by the government is WaBira. In this report, I have left out these common Bantu ki- and mu-/ba- prefixes and have used the root. In the literature, the name "Bera" is sometimes used instead of Bira. The spelling Bera for Bira is Swahili influence. Actually the first vowel is pronounced as [ʌ].

Perhaps the name Bira is given by the neighbouring Hema, meaning 'the people of the forest'. The Bira received this name because when they entered Zaire, they first settled some distance in the forest. After some time, they returned to the plains (Sedzabo 1990:5).

The *Linguistic Atlas of Zaire* (Kadima et al. 1983:28) calls the language Mbira, and notes that it is called Kibira by the administration. Alternate names for the Bira people used in the literature are "Gras-Bira" as opposed to "Wald-Bira" (Vorbishler 1966), or "Plains-Bira" versus "Forest-Bira" (Dz'ba 1974, Grimes 1992). With "Wald-" or "Forest-Bira" are meant the Bila, a related ethnic group living to the west of the Bira. All their neighbours use Babira and Kibira to refer to the Bira and their language, except the Ngiti. They call the Bira *Izé*, the word that they also use to refer to the Bira language.

2.2. Geography and population

2.2.1. Review of the literature

The *Report of the Linguistic Survey of the Northern Bantu Borderland* (1956) says that the Bira language is spoken on the Plains around Bunia and Irumu (i.e. in the Irumu zone) by 31,703 people. Bira is clearly distinguished from Bila, a related language spoken in the forest to the west, in the Mambasa zone. They write: "There is a marked difference between the speech of the Forest Babila and that of the Babira of the plain." (Van Bulck & Hackette 1956:84). Rietkerk (1990:4) notes that her Bira co-workers said that they could not understand the Bila. Voegelin and Voegelin (1977:61) have listed Bila and Bira as separate entries.

Vansina, on the other hand, has put the two together in one Bira group (Vansina 1966:chapter 6), probably following Guthrie (1948, 1953). This is echoed in the *Actes du Colloque sur l'Enseignement des Langues zairoises* (1981:28): "The Bira group consists of the Babila (or the Bira of the forest) and of the Babira (or the Bira of the plains)." The *Linguistic Atlas of Zaire* (Kadima et al. 1983, Carte Linguistique du Zaire) goes one step further and does not make a distinction between the Bira and the Bila at all. They mention one language, Bira, spoken immediately to the east of the Mbo and Ndaka peoples, mainly in the Mambasa zone, extending somewhat into the western side of the Irumu zone.

2.2.2. Location of the Bira people

The Bira people live in the Haut-Zaire Region, Ituri Subregion, Irumu Zone. Within the Irumu zone, they live on the Shari-plains, (+ 30,000

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km²), between 29.5 and 30.2 EL and 1.25 and 1.5 NL. See appendix 1, map 1 for an overview. The plains are bordered by the gold-bearing mountains of Nizi in the northeast, by the Blue mountains in the east, by some lower mountains (less than 1500 m) in the south and by the tropical rainforest in the west. The plains are on an average height of 1000 m. The main river is the Shari (with the important waterfalls at Kilo-Moto). The main tributaries are: Etomani, Tinda, and Loke.

The Irumu zone consists of 13 collectivities, 6 of which are traditionally inhabited by the Bira. The names of these six collectivities are: Basili, Babelébe, Andisoma, Mobala, Baboa-Bokowe, la ville de Bunia. There is some uncertainty whether Irumu is (still) a separate collectivity. In this report, it has been assumed that Irumu is part of the Mobala collectivity.

The main population centres in the Bira collectivities are: Bunia, Irumu, Nyankunde, Marobo, Makabo, Sodjabo, and Soleniana.

A part of the Basili clan lives to the west of the Ituri river. In this report, I will refer to them as 'western Basili' and, by consequence, to the Basili living in the Basili collectivity, as the 'eastern Basili'.

2.2.3. Neighbours of the Bira and other ethnic groups living among them

The neighbours of the Bira are: the Lese-Karo and the Mbuti in the west, the Nyali in the north, the Lendu in the north-east and east, the Hema-Sud and the Ngiti in the south, and the Lese-Vokutu in the south-west. The reader is referred to appendix 1, map 2 for the picture.

Relations between the Bira and the Lendu have never been very good. However, in Gerechabo, farther away from the Lendu area, we were told that the Bira intermarry mostly with Ngiti and Lendu women, if they do not marry among themselves. The Nyali, known for their agricultural skills, have taught the Bira how to make alcohol.

The Bira have the most contacts with the Hema-Sud people. They have good relations and there is frequent intermarriage. Some Bira herd cattle for the Hema. The Bira are said to have used the Hema language (maybe they still do) when they wanted to present a sacrifice to their ancestral spirits (Bungamuzi: *Punition and récompense chez les Bira* (mémoire de graduat E.N.M.), 1971:9. Cited in Sumaili 1980:11). On the other hand, groups of Hema people invaded the Bira territory from time to time.

The western Basili has developed a close symbiotic relationship with the Mbuti (Sumaili 1980:9,10). Also, a lot of these Basili marry with Lese women (Sedzabo 1990:28). In general, he says, when a western Basili man is too poor to pay the brideprice, he tries to find a Mbuti or Lese wife.

All over the Bira territory, the Bira are mixed with Hema, Ngiti and Alur. In the big(ger) centres, many other ethnic groups are present. This is especially true for places like Bunia (Bira in the minority), Nyankunde (22 ethnic groups present), Irumu (*grand prison d'Ituri*) and Kunda (gold found). The Bira welcome other ethnic groups to live among them. It is easy for people from other people groups to obtain land from the Bira, either as a gift or as something they are allowed to buy. This attracts many people from outside.

2.2.4. Census figures

We have not been able to obtain specific figures re. the number of Bira. The December 1992 census information we received only gave the total number of inhabitants and the number of people over 18 years, subdivided per collectivity.

<u>Collectivity</u>	<u>Inhabitants total</u>	<u>Above 18</u>	<u>'78 census</u>
Basili	21,320	11,300	13,792
Babelebe	22,781	12,100	13,968
Andisoma	24,737	13,200	21,981
Mobala	25,133	13,300	17,879
Baboa-Bakowe	34,359	18,300	28,947
Ville de Bunia	82,850	44,000	?
Total	211,180	112,200	96,567

Table 1: The 1992 population figures of the Bira collectivities

The Catholic Church has three parishes covering the six collectivities listed above, Badiya (north of Nyankunde), Nyakasanza (Bunia-town) and Mudzi-Pela (just north of Bunia). They are all in the Bunia diocese. We asked the priests at the Catholic Missions at Badiya and Mudzi-Pela to give us their estimates of the number of Bira people in their parishes. Father De Meijer who has been at the Badiya mission for more than 20 years, thinks that there are 60,000 Bira in the his parish. The curate Placide at the mission in Mudzi-Pela puts the number of Bira there at around 45,000 to 50,000. Father Bijvoet, who has been in and around Mudzi-Pela for some 30 years, estimates the total number of Bira at 50-60% of the total population outside Bunia. Within Bunia, there are not many Bira. 55% of the total population would be 116,149, which is close to the other estimates, 105,000 - 110,000. Abbot Buju Mhere, head of the Nyakasanza parish, said that it is impossible to say how many Bira live in Bunia. There are no statistics for the Bunia population that distinguish for ethnic group. In the two quarters where a lot of Bira live, Kindia and Simbilyabo, the 1992 census shows 4,702 people.

At the Catholic Missions of Mudzi-Pela and Badiya and at the office of the Nyakasanza parish, we obtained their detailed statistics of 1992.

	<u>Badiya</u>	<u>Mudzi-Pela</u>	<u>Nyakasanza</u>
1. Catholics	42,563	53,965	27,864
2. Catechumens	1,640	1,560	962
3. Protestants	25,500	10,711	9,345
4. Anglicans	6,000	330	742
5. Orthodoxes	-	1	27
6. Adventists	130	14	379
7. Kimbanguists	1,500	286	651
total 4-8	33,130	11,342	11,144
8. Muslims	800	357	2,050
9. Pagans	22,000	15,331	11,392
10. Other sects	2,000	1,367	4,068
total	24,800	17,055	17,510
11. Total population	<u>102,133</u>	<u>83,922</u>	<u>57,480</u>

Table 2: 1992 statistics of the Catholic parishes in the Bira area

2.3. History

The Bira recognize Bira as their common ancestor. Some Bira claim that they actually descend from Bira's father, called Medhu (Sumaili 1980:16). Bira is said to have had six sons: Mbali, Soma, Sili, Kowe, Kele and Boba. They became the founders of the six Bira clans. Later, the clans Baboa and Bakowe started living together. Presently, they live in one collectivity Baboa-Bakowe. The relation between Bira's sons and the present clans is as follows:

<u>Ancestor</u>	<u>Clan</u>
Mbali	Babelebe
Soma	Andisoma
Sili	Basili
Kowe	Bakowe
Kele	Mobala
Boba	Baboa

Table 3: The Bira clans and their ancestors

From Uganda, the Bira arrived at their present location between the 15th and the 18th century, together with the Kumu. At about the same time, the Nyali entered Zaire (Sumaili 1980:8). Possibly the Pygmies lived on the Shari plains before the Bira got there. According to Sedzabo (1990:5-8), the Bira first went into to forest, possibly as far as the Kumu. Later, they returned to the plains. Dudunyabo (1972:9) says that the Bira are a "sub-tribe of the Kumu". The *Actes du Colloque* put the arrival date in Zaire in the 16th or 17th century:

"Comme les Banyali, les Babira auraient habité le royaume de Bunyoro, avant d'être entraînés dans les mouvements migratoires généraux des populations se dirigeant vers le territoire zaïrois actuel au 16-17e siècle." (*Actes du Colloque*, 1981.)

Sedzabo (1990:8) believes that the Bira originally come from the Nile basin.

A piece of oral history is cited by Sumaili (1980:9). It was translated by Mateso Ngabange and published in L. Maeyens, "Gani a Babira Bandandele", in *Congo* (1936:6):

"Nous les Babira
Comme nous sommes actuellement
là où Shari coule
Nous sommes six grandes souches
les Babelebe et ceux de la forêt
Basili, Babukowe et les Babobwa qui ont construit à l'est,
et au nord,
les Babusoma et Babegbala qui sont restés au sud et à l'ouest.
Nous sommes venus en ce monde-ci, en provenance de là,
au delà des eaux, là bas,
de Ruwenzori la haute montagne.
Nous avons suivi le plus lointain chemin là dans la forêt.
Par ici, ce n'est pas la terre de nos aïeux.
Ici nous sommes arrivés,

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C'est le surpeuplement qui nous a fait déménager de là.
Mbelebe est le premier à arriver.
Il a marché dans la forêt, ainsi il parvint ici.
N'Sili et Mbombwa le suivirent.
Mbusoma sont arrivés avec les Bahema Bangombe.
Negbala sont arrivés avec les Bahema Babito."

In 1892 the Arab slave traders built a post in Irumu. Before the Belgian time, many Bira were taken and brought to the coast of East Africa as slaves. After the uprising in 1897 against the Arab oppressors, the Bira became divided into two groups: one along the Irumu-Penge road, the other in the direction of Beni (Sumaili 1980:45). This may be the origin of the distinction between the Bira clans living around Bunia and those living around Nyankunde/Irumu. From 1900 onwards, the Arabs had to abandon the Shari plains for good.

The Belgian rule came into effect in the Bira area around 1908. At that time, the Bira were (still) not united around one paramount chief. The highest unity was the clan (with a chief and a board of elders). The board of elders consisted of the brothers of the chief, the village chiefs, the renowned wise of the clan and the rich. Also during colonialisation, the Belgians did not appoint one chief for the whole Bira people. They left the clan-organization in place. In practice however, the hierarchy went only up to the village level.

In Bunia, growing from 1946 on, the Belgians appointed a chief who gradually gained influence outside the city as well. Usually a Hema was appointed, because they were the best educated people group in the region.

2.4. Economy

The Bira cultivate bananas, maize, sorghum, manioc, sweet potatoes, taro, potatoes, rice, beans, sugar cane, onions, tomatoes, leeks and tobacco. Traditionally, they keep dogs for hunting, chicken, goats, sheep and cats. Only a few Bira possess cows (as they could only be obtained from the Hema by serving them many years as a cattle herdsman or exchanging a very nice young girl). Fish was not a main source of food (rather game); only the women and the elder people went fishing. According to Sumaili, the reason is that the Bira believed that the Shari river was possessed by evil spirits. Sometimes men that had fallen into the river had been carried away by those spirits (Sumaili 1980:42).

Industry was that of the blacksmiths, carpentry, pottery baking and ceramics. In the colonial period, a small oil and soap industry was introduced. Some Belgians started cattle farms in Bira territory. Nowadays, outside Bunia virtually no industrial activity is left.

2.5. Traditional religion

The Bira believe traditionally in the existence of a Supreme Being, creator of the earth and life-giver to mankind, and in the spirits. The Supreme Being is called "Mbali" or "Sakana". It is possible that some Bira took the worship of *Sakana* over from the Lese (Sedzabo Makawani 1990). This worship is practised outside the village, at a distance, at a place called 'mbanda'. There the Bira spoke justice about cases of sorcery, poisoning etc. This worship was restricted to the men who need to be

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initiated to take part.

In case of illness, the *Lemba* (sorcery), the *Bulogi* (who revenge a wrong of which the person guilty is unknown), or the *Bagili* (displeased ancestral spirits) could be behind it. All the Bira women are considered to be possible sorcerers of some sort. (Dudunyabo 1972:15,16).

Maybe the suspicion towards women comes from the fear that the oppressed sex may want to take revenge. Dudunyabo (1972:31) writes about the status of women among the Bira:

"Le droit d'héritage est réservé aux garçons car les filles ne forment pas de clan; elles sont femmes esclaves. (...) La place de la fille n'est pas dans son clan d'origine, mais elle doit aller souffrir comme une esclave dans un autre clan."

2.6. Linguistic relationships: dialects and related languages

2.6.1. Review of the literature

Based on Guthrie (1948, 1953), Bira is a Bantu language, classified as D.32. The *Ethnologue* (1992) lists Bira as part of the Bira-Huku group: "Niger Congo, Atlantic Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Broad Bantu, Narrow Bantu, Central D, Bira-Huku (D.30)."

Many languages of this Bira-Huku group have been encountered by SIL-members. It has become clear that the Bira and the Huku group are distinct from each other and that they perhaps should not be grouped together. But for the sake of the overview, I list them all here, together with some information about the place where the language is spoken, the number of speakers, the language development status and their sub-classification (which is different from the one in the *Ethnologue*).

<u>language</u>	<u>region</u>	<u>zone</u>	<u>speakers</u>	<u>status</u>	<u>sub-classification</u>
Beeke	Haut-Zaire	Mambasa	1,000	survey completed	Bali
Bira	Haut-Zaire	Irumu	120,000	survey completed	Bira
Bhele	Nord-Kivu	Lubero	22,500	work in progress	Bira
Bila	Haut-Zaire	Mambasa	50,000	survey completed	Bira
Boguru	Haut-Zaire	Dungu ?	unknown	survey needed	Kari
Budu	Haut-Zaire	Wamba	180,000	work in progress	Huku
Kaiku	Haut-Zaire	Mambasa	2,000?	survey completed	Bira
Kari	CAR & Haut	-Zaire	5,000	survey needed	Kari
Komo	Maniema	Lubutu	150,000	work in progress	Bira
Kwamba	North Kivu	Beni	9,000	work in progress	Bira
Mbo	Haut-Zaire	Mambasa	11,000	survey completed	Huku
Ndaka	Haut-Zaire	Mambasa	25,000	survey completed	Huku
Ngbee	East Zaire	?	30,000	survey needed	Kari
Ngbinda	East Zaire	?	few	survey needed	Kari
Nyali	Haut Zaire	Djugu	43,000	survey completed	Huku
Vanuma	Haut-Zaire	Irumu	6,700	survey completed	Huku

Table 4: The languages of the Bira-Huku group according to the *Ethnologue*

The term "Huku" is used to cover the languages Nyali, Vanuma, Budu, Ndaka, and Mbo. Beeke does not belong to either the Huku nor the Bira group, but probably to the Bali group. The Beeke people now live in two small

villages among the Ndaka, having lived among the Bali for many years. The Beeke people that we talked to in the villages of Babeeke said that originally they descend from the Lika. Because of intensive contact and extensive intermarriage with the Ndaka, the Beeke people nowadays use more and more Ndaka in everyday life. A 250-item wordlist taken in the village of Babeeke shows 65% lexical similarity with Bali, 46% with Lika, 45% with Bila, 40% with Bira and 38% with Ndaka (De Wit-Hasselaar 1994). Note that Bryan (1959) and Voegelin and Voegelin (1977, p. 62) say that Huku is another name for Nyali. In Kilo, Constance Kutsch Lojenga was told that "Huku" is a name given by the Hema people to anyone who is not a Hema.

According to the *Report of the Linguistic Survey of the Northern Bantu Borderland*, the languages in the Bira group should be included in what they call the Kumu-Bira group: Mbuti, Kaiku, Bila, Kumu, Bhele, Ngombe, Bira (Western, close to Kisangani), Lengola and Kinya Mituku, Bira (Plains), Bira (Ruwenzori). (p. 82). Mbuti, the name of the supposed language of the Mbuti-Pygmies, does not belong here. It is still an unresolved issue whether the Pygmies have their own (secret) language, e.g. called Mbuti. But characteristically they adopt the language spoken by the group with which they have associated themselves. So the Mbuti who live close to the Bila-villages, for example, speak a close variety of Bila. Boone (1993:6) estimates the degree of lexical similarity between their version of Bila and Bila "proper" is close to 95%. Western Bira spoken close to Kisangani does not appear in recent literature about languages in Zaire. Kutsch Lojenga and Raymond say that this Western Bira would be better classified as a Komo dialect. Ngombe is classified with the C Group (*Ethnologue* 1992:428), and Lengola and (Kinya) Mituku belong to the Enya group, an ill-defined group apparently invented to have a place for the languages of the Ubundu Zone.

This leaves us for the Bira group with Komo (Kumu), Bhele, Bila, Kaiku, Bira (= Bira Plains) and Kwamba (Bira Ruwenzori). Other names for Kwamba are Amba and Humu. According to the *Ethnologue* (1992), there is 58% lexical similarity between Bira and Komo, 56% with Bhele, and 60% with Bila.

As far as Boguru, Kari, Ngbee and Ngbinda are concerned, we do not know whether they should be grouped together with the Bira or with the Huku group, if at all. Other linguists have grouped them together as the Kari group (Bryan 1959:86,7) and Voegelin and Voegelin 1977:60). It is likely that these languages are not viable and they may even be extinct as the people speaking them have adopted other languages (viz. Bryan says that already in the Fifties, the Ngbee (or Mangbele) people spoke Mangbetu or Mayogo (Bryan 1959:87)).

Within the Bira language, the *Report of the Linguistic Survey of the Northern Bantu Borderland* (1956:84) claims that there are no dialect differences: "The Bira are divided into five clans but this does not appear to correspond with any linguistic differences." However, when we set out on this survey, we expected to find two dialects of the Bira language, one spoken around Bunia and further north, the other spoken in the Irumu-Nyankunde area. In 1985 Constance Kutsch Lojenga and Timothy Raymond elicited two wordlists which they say represent 'Upper' and 'Lower Bira'. With their data, the two alleged dialects show 87% cognates.

Of the Bira neighbours, only Nyali and Hema-Sud are also Bantu languages.

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Nyali is rather distantly related to Bira (lexical similarity figures based on a 250 item wordlist (1993 data) show only about 20% similarity) and Hema-Sud (= closely related to Nyoro spoken in Uganda) is classified as J.10. The other three neighbouring languages are Central Sudanic: Lese, Lendu and Ngiti.

On the Bira language itself, there is some literature. Dz'ba Dheli Susa (1974) wrote a Bira grammar as his MA-thesis. Two Zairean ISP students have written their *Travaux de fin d'études* on Bira: Mangilyo (1986) and Sedzabo (1990). There is a Bira-French dictionary made by Brisson (s.d.). Maeyens (1938a) and Rzewuski (1988) wrote articles on the Bira language. In 1990, Rietkerk wrote an MA-thesis about relative clauses in Bira.

2.6.2. Present situation

2.6.2.1. The dialect situation

Bungishabako, the director of the Compassion literacy project in Nyankunde, said that there are three Bira dialects: the first spoken by the clans Andisoma, Mobala and the eastern Basili, characterized by the use of /r/, the second spoken by the western Basili, Babelbe and Baboa-Babokowe, which also has an /r/ but has some tone and lexical differences from the first one, and the third dialect, spoken by the Bira who live close to the Nyali, characterized by the loss of the phonetic distinction of the /r/ and the /l/. Influence of the Nyali language is plausible since the distinction does not exist in Nyali. Basically, he made a north-south distinction between the first two Bira dialects.

In Gerechabo, in Babelbe land, the people that we spoke with said that there were no dialectal differences between Gerechabo, Sodjabo, Irumu and south of Nyankunde. Only with the Bira spoken around Solenyama, there were a few small differences. In geographical terms, they said that only in the north-east of the Bira territory, the Bira speak a little different. Dachabo Bungamuzi, secretary at the Catholic Mission in Mudzi-Pela, said the same: there are some differences in pronunciation between the Bira from Solenyama and those from Irumu, but it is not difficult to understand each other.

Pelekabo Gayo, one of the elders from a village close to Solenyama confirmed that there were small differences between the Bira spoken at his place and around Sedzabo. But he commented that the differences between the Bira speech varieties are very small. "We all speak the same language." He did not have a preference for either the Sedzabo or the Solenyama variety.

According to the youth in Mwanga, Bira begins to change around Baywana (Babelbe area). They still can understand Bira from Kunda (+ 10 km west of Mwanga), but farther away it becomes difficult. When they meet Bira from Sedzabo, they speak Swahili rather than Bira. That the Bira of Sedzabo is very different from the Bira spoken around Mwanga and Solenyama was contradicted by the older people from Mwanga and Solenyama and by the Bira from Sedzabo. What is probably happening is, that these young Bira people around Mwanga use Swahili so much that they feel uncomfortable when they meet fellow Bira from around Sedzabo, where the Bira still use their language quite a lot among themselves. When we asked what is so difficult in the Bira spoken by the Sedzabo villagers, they answered that the Bira

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used in Sedzabo was the real Bira spoken in the past, that the pronunciation was different, and that they use Bira proverbs that they do not know. They added that older people from Mwanga do understand them well.

We took a supposedly Bira-Lower 250 item wordlist in Ngbulanzabo, south-west of Nyankunde. We checked it in Gerechabo and in Sedzabo. We also elicited a Bira-Upper wordlist in Solenyama and checked it in Mwanga. A comparison of the result does not support a clear or big dialectal variation in the Bira language. We found more than 95% lexical similarity between the two varieties.

The few differences between the various wordlists that we elicited indicate the idea of the people about language variation in Bira is right: it is small but it exists. Of the whole wordlist, there are 9 instances of different words. In each case, Ngbulanzabo, Sedzabo and Gerechabo represent one variety, whereas Solenyama and Mwanga represent the other.

	Sedzabo	Gerechabo	Solenyama
70. louse	mpámbá	mpámbá	sírì
72. bark	kílò	kílò	kìkóbá
101. charcoal	mbílò	mbílò	kálà
130. five	ítánò	tánò	dzòmbè
138. cold	híd	híd	kèlèlá
192. to ask	úlífè	úlífè	hùlá
217. journey	gèndò	gèndò	hòóngò
227. to rub	h ^w èlé	h ^w èlé	hòlá
243. to tie	òól ^y á	òól ^y á	tòól ^y á

Table 5: Lexical differences between the two Bira varieties

This basic distinction is supported by phonetic differences, although the boundaries between the two varieties become less clear: Ngbulanzabo and Sedzabo still stay together, but Gerechabo is situated in the transition area: sometimes it goes with the southern Bira area, other times with the north-east. Note that the vowel changes can be described as a regular difference in vowel height.

	Sedzabo	Gerechabo	Solenyama
1. [i] / [e]			
65. egg	lìkí	lèké	lèké
71. tree	mílí	mèlé	mèlé
162. yesterday	álìká	àlèká	àlèká
137. hot	kìtínèkà	kìtínèkà	kìténèkà
235. to cut	tíná	tíná	téná
2. [e],[ɛ] / [a]			
196. to hear	ókè	ókè	yóká
203. to hold	gbéhè	gbéhè	gbáhá
246. to dress	j ^w érè	j ^w árè	j ^w érá
183. to suck	nùngé	nùngá	lùngá

3. [ɲ] / [y]			
212. to marry	ámá	àmá	yámá
239. to heal	ángísà	ángísà	yángísà

Table 6: Phonetic differences between the two Bira varieties

There is free variation between [z] and [dz] and between [s] and [sy].

83. village	mùzì	mùdzì
91. canoe	zàbó	dzàbó

Table 7: Examples of free variation

Linguistic differences are magnified in the minds of people because of other cultural differences. The following interesting practice of burying the dead, told by Dudunyabo (1972:24), serves as an example. According to him, the Bira around Bunia buried their dead with the head to the west and the feet to the east (to symbolize the correspondence between life and the sun: it comes up in the east and goes down in the west). The Bira around Nyankunde/Irumu did it just the other way around: with the head to the east and the feet to the west. By them, the west is seen as the low side of the world, for all rivers stream from east to west (on the Shari-plains) - the feet are at the lower side of the body, so they should be at the lower side of the grave as well.

2.6.2.2. Relatedness with other members of the Bira and the Huku group

According to Bungishabako (Compassion, Nyankunde), within the Bira group, Komo is the closest relative to Bira. It was his impression, though he had no data to support it. Looking at the lexical similarity percentages matrix of the languages of the Bira group for which we have data, it seems more adequate to say that Komo is as different from Bira as the other languages in this group are.

Bira				
59	Bila			
55	81	Kaiku		
56	72	82	Bhele	
57	70	72	80	Komo

Table 8: Bira compared with other languages in the Bira group

Bila, Kaiku, Bhele and Komo display a nice chain of closely related languages, each sharing about 80% of cognate words with their neighbours (give or take 3%). Bira still has a considerable percentage of cognates, but is clearly distinct from the rest of the group. The figures 55, 56, 57 and 59 are not significantly different and suggest that each of the four other languages is approximately 55-60% similar to Bira.

Table 9 presents a similarity tree of which we can be reasonably confident.

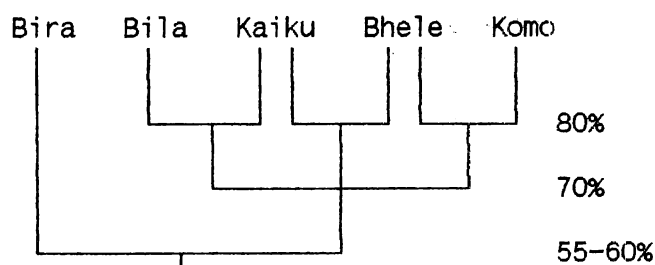


Table 9: Similarity tree of the languages in the Bira group

When we compare now the languages of the Bira group with those of the Huku group, the lexical similarity percentages appear to be very low: between 20 and 30%. Table 10 below shows that the languages in both the Bira and the Huku group closely group together in each respective group, but that the two groups should not be grouped together.

Bira										
59	Bila									
56	81	Kaiko								
57	72	82	Bhele							
58	70	72	80	Komo						
23	23	21	25	28	Budu - Ibambi					
22	21	21	24	28	92	Budu - Wamba				
22	23	22	23	29	85	86	Ndaka			
24	26	25	26	30	78	78	87	Mbo		
22	21	21	21	27	74	75	76	77	Vanuma	
22	21	20	22	27	74	73	73	76	85	Nyali

Table 10: Languages in the Bira group compared with those in the Huku group.

Finally, table 11 presents a similarity tree of the languages in the Huku group of which we can be reasonably confident.

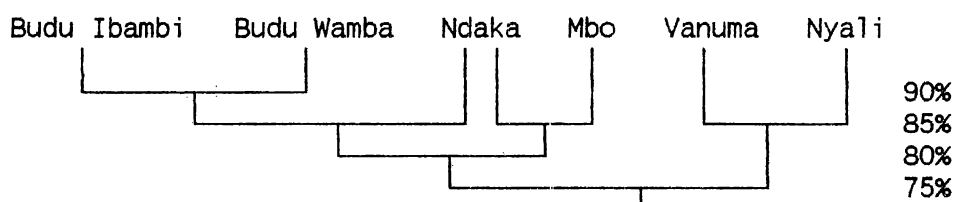


Table 11: Similarity tree of the languages in the Huku group

It would be very interesting to compare syntactic and morphological data between the languages of the Bira group to see if that would confirm the distinctions made on the basis of lexical similarity figures and to see if a further subdivision would be possible. But this is outside the scope of the present survey, since the main emphasis of this survey was not on gathering linguistic information.

2.7. Language use

2.7.1. Young people

Concerning the first language that the children learn, the older men in

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Gerechabo told us the following. The children learn Bira first, then, when they are around three years of age they start to speak Swahili. When they are six years old, they speak Swahili quite well. When they are ten, they can follow the church services well and they can come to faith using and listening to Swahili.

In case of intermarriages (customarily, the wife moves to the place where the husband lives), the mother has to learn Bira and the children learn first the language spoken by the mother. With the first child, that may be the mother's own language, but after that she speaks Bira well enough to speak to her children in Bira. The younger men at Gerechabo commented on the situation after intermarriage, that the children first learn Swahili, after that Bira (the language of the father) and then the language of the mother.

According to the older men again, the children speak Bira when they play. The younger men said that the children rather use Swahili. While we were in Gerechabo, we listened to the children's speech: indeed, it was Swahili.

In Mwanga, we actually had a chance to talk with a group of young people, without older people being around. They told us that among the youth, Swahili is almost the only language used. Even if only Bira are present they often speak Swahili. The older people use Bira among themselves, but when one person from another ethnic group arrives, they switch to Swahili. Children learn Bira alongside Swahili.

In Sedzabo, we interviewed two older men and one older woman and asked them which language they use when they speak with their children. The men use Swahili, the woman Bira. This indicates that even in the heartland of the Bira language, the young people are moving towards Swahili.

2.7.2. In school

As is the rule throughout this part of Zaïre, Swahili is used as medium of instruction for the first two grades of school and French is used thereafter. At Gerechabo, we asked about the language practice in the primary school there. The people that we talked to first quoted the official policy on this, but then went on to say that what language is used in reality depends on the teacher. In schools in Nyankunde, only French is used. Primary schools start in French from first grade on.

2.7.3. In church

In line with the official policy of the Catholic Church, only Swahili is used for all church purposes. Only in some places, an exception has been made for an early Sunday morning prayer in Bira. But only a handful of old people attend.

At the Catholic Mission in Badiya we talked in Dutch with three Fathers, one from the Netherlands and two from the Flemish speaking part of Belgium. Van de Ven and Deneckere had been working in the Lendu territory before, and had just recently come to Badiya. De Meyer has been in Badiya for over 20 years.

In the past, the church language has been Bira (services, catechism,

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prayerbook), but already when De Meyer came to Badiya, that was changing. Nowadays as an official policy only Swahili is used. The three priests support this: they see no value or even a possibility to go back to the use of Bira in the church. In a mixed society like the Bira, the use of Bira in church could even stimulate tribalism, because people from other groups would feel excluded.

The same picture is given at the Catholic Mission in Mudzi-Pela. In the past (i.e. before the change of Catholic language policy in the Sixties), only Bira was used in and around Mudzi-Pela. Catholic missionaries and other foreigners learned Bira when they came to live in the area. In the church services, only Bira was used. Nowadays, the only church activity in Bira is the Sunday morning prayer at Mudzi-Pela, which is attended by some 20 old people.

In Sedzabo, Tuzabo Mufano, a Catholic teacher, said that the priest has forbidden people to pray in Bira in the services, because other people in the church cannot understand it.

In the protestant churches, only Swahili is used in the church services. We have not come across any activity in Bira. During the services, the message is not translated in Bira.

In the CAFEZA chapel in Mwanga, it would be impossible to use Bira in the service, since the overall majority of church attenders are Hema. On a given Sunday, only three or four Bira would be present.

We had a long interview with Uchay Jalwiny Wo-Dolo, *secrétaire administratif* of CAFEZA, based in Nyankunde, about language use in the CAFEZA churches and about the chances of using Bira literature in the churches. The day before our appointment with him, Uchay had been talking with two CAFEZA pastors about the possibility of having a Bible in Bira. According to them, almost everybody uses Swahili and in the churches, Swahili will continue to be used. But they very much would like to have the Bible in Bira. They could use it for evangelism. (The day after our meeting with Uchay we found that every year the German mission Diguna (Die Gute Nachricht) together with CAFEZA organises a month-long evangelism campaign among the Bira. The only language used: Swahili.)

There are very few Bira pastors in the CAFEZA church. Uchay estimates that they constitute between 10 and 20% of all the pastors in the Bira area. Marabo and Ngbulanzabo, for example, have Bira pastors. Two leaders in the CAFEZA church are Bira as well, i.e. the *pasteur responsable de sous-district ecclésiastique* of CAFEZA (living in Ngbulanzabo) and the director of the CAFEZA Bibleschool in Ngbulanzabo is Bira. The name of the latter is Lebabó. If Uchay (himself a Hema) were to serve as pastor in one of the off-the-road Bira villages, he would not learn Bira. Besides the fact that most Bira understand Swahili well, there are always people from other ethnic groups in the church. In general, the Bira are perhaps 30% of all the church goers. This means that on a total of 20,000+ CAFEZA members in the Bira area, there are about 7,000 Bira believers in this church. Uchay thinks that the use of a Bira Bible would be limited to a prayer meeting with only Bira present.

2.7.4. Other

In the hospitals in Bunia and Nyankunde, French and Swahili are used. In the dispensaries, people mainly speak Swahili. In the markets, Swahili is used, except by some women when they interact only with other Bira. All communication with government officials is in Swahili or French.

Radio CANDIP (*Centre d'Animation et de Diffusion Pédagogique*) has a 30-minute broadcast in Bira every Wednesday. In the past it was 1 hour. The content focuses on development, how to improve the house, the garden, or how to take good care of the domestic animals. In the villages people said that occasionally, they listen to the radio broadcast in Bira. But there are not many radios (or enough batteries) around and when we asked in Gerechabo on which day the Bira broadcast was, some said it was on Tuesday, others guessed Thursday.

2.8. Language attitudes

2.8.1. Attitudes towards dialects and related languages

Many Bira agree that the best Bira is spoken south of Nyankunde, because there the Bira live more by themselves. The mountains in the south prevent intensive contact with the neighbouring Ngiti. People who voiced this opinion include Bungishabako, director of the Compassion literacy project in Nyankunde, and Dachabo, secretary in Mudzi-Pela. Even the older people from Mwanga and Solenyama agreed that the 'pure' Bira was spoken south of Nyankunde.

There is not so much contact with speakers from the related languages in the Bira group: Bila, Kaiku, Bhele and Komo; thus there was little basis for opinions on this matter. When they meet with people who speak these languages, Swahili is used, since it is too difficult to understand each other when they all speak their own language.

2.8.2. Attitudes towards languages of wider communication (LWC)

The Bira people live in the Swahiliphone part of Eastern Zaire and unsurprisingly, this language of wider communication is used extensively. It is almost considered to be 'their' language as well. That is to say, they feel their identity in both. And with reason, because more and more Bira children learn Swahili as their first language. French and also Lingala are not generally mastered and are little used. Somebody who knows Lingala or French is considered to have a higher social status than others, because it is assumed that he/she has had further education.

2.8.3. Attitudes towards language development

According to Sedzabo (1990), the 'pure' Bira is still spoken by older people only. He said that these will pass away one day and then the next generation would not like to speak the original Bira any more, but a language (Swahili) that contains some Bira words.

Dachabo thinks that a Bira Bible would be good for children and grandchildren, to teach them proper Bira. Adults do not need a Bira translation to understand the Bible better, because even in remote villages all Bira speak Swahili well. Dachabo does not know of any Bira

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priests, but there are some Bira who study theology and/or philosophy at the Catholic Seminary.

The youth in Mwanga did not believe that the Bira language would die out. They said that it will continue to function in conjunction with Swahili. For newcomers like us, it would be best and most appreciated if we learned Swahili (not Bira). It would not be a good idea to start using Bira in school. It would be too much for the children to cope with three languages at the same time. If there were a Bira Bible, the youth said they probably would neither buy nor use it.

Pelekabo Gayo, an old man from close to Solenyama, agreed with the youth in Mwanga that using Bira in school should not be favoured. He said: "It would disturb the children. There is no value in learning Bira; Swahili and French are important."

Apart from Tingityabo (Papa), 2e *Réprésentant Suppléant* (of CAFEZA), with whom we briefly talked in Nyankunde, we did not find influential people with much enthusiasm for developing the Bira language.

2.9. Literacy

There are a good number of primary and at least 7 secondary schools in the Bira area (see appendix 1, map 3 for their locations). There are very few Bira teachers, both at primary and at secondary school level. Few girls go to school and the ones that do go often do not finish their education because they marry young (at the age of 15 to 17). People who have finished higher education generally leave the Bira country. Some people say they leave because they are afraid of the witchcraft going on among the Bira, since as prominent or "different" people they are the likeliest targets.

"Many Babira are illiterate, especially older people and women." (Rietkerk 1990:4). Father Bijvoet of the Catholic Mission in Mudzi-Pela estimates that 30% of the Bira are literate.

2.10. Scripture Comprehension Testing

Information about bilingualism in Swahili was sought through recorded text comprehension testing and Scripture testing. An attempt has been made to match the Swahili used in the recorded text with that of the Scripture passages (from the 1967 Protestant Bible in Zairean Swahili). Before the survey, we were aware that this might be to a disadvantage of the testees who adhere to the Catholic Church, but it did not seem practical at that point to develop a Protestant and a Catholic version of the test and to administer them separately according to the belief of the testee. If the Catholic testees would score significantly less than the Protestants, then we could start thinking about developing a Catholic version. On the other hand, if the scores would not differ greatly, then the Protestant Swahili Bible apparently is equally difficult for both Catholics and Protestants.

This was the first time some formal kind of comprehension testing was done by the survey department in the Swahili speaking part of Zaire. Therefore the results do not carry a lot of weight as far as measuring the ability of the Bira to understand the Swahili Bible. But they are helpful in solving several problems connected with this formal comprehension testing.

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We tested 20 people, 5 older men, 5 older women, 5 younger men and 5 younger women. 'Young' was up to 35 years of age. We had to disqualify the results of one of the younger women (P 17), because apparently her score was very low due to too much distraction.

First, the results of the testing show that using a Protestant translation did not put the Catholic testees to a clear disadvantage. Apparently, the Protestant Swahili Bible is equally difficult for both Catholics and Protestants. The 8 Protestant testees scored an average of 56.0% on the Scriptures tests, whereas the 11 Catholics had a score of 54.4%.

Second, it became clear that education should be included as one of the variables in sampling. For the Bira survey, we only distinguished for gender and for age (+/- 35 yrs). If having finished primary school would qualify for being 'educated', then the average score of the 11 educated testees is 65.7%, whereas the uneducated only have 40.4%.

The general picture is that the younger people do the test better than the older ones. In part, this may be because for the young people doing a test like this was not so strange. We have not tried to single out this factor. The scores were: younger men 70%, younger women 60%, older men 48% and older women 44%. All the younger men had completed primary school, whereas none of the older women had more than 4 years of primary school. When we look at the educated testees, subdivided by age and gender, we get the following figures: the five younger men 70%, three younger women 68% and three older men 58%.

Tentatively, we might say that older people and younger women, who have not finished primary school, are likely to have difficulty with understanding the Swahili Bible.

See appendix 2 for the Swahili texts used and for the actual test results.

2.11. Institutions

2.11.1. Church presence

The principal churches in the area are the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant churches CAFEZA-39 and CECA-20. The Bunia diocese of the Catholic Church has three parishes, Mudzi-Pela, Nyakasanza and Badiya. Mudzi-Pela is a big mission station as well. As far as CAFEZA is concerned the two biggest CAFEZA districts are both in the Bira area, the district of Nyankunde, with 41 assemblies, and the district of Rwampara, with 39 assemblies. (An assembly is a congregation with the right to organize Holy Communion. Congregations which are not allowed to do this are called *chapelle évangélique*.)

Looking at the census figures of the Catholic parishes, we could guess that about 50% of the Bira people are Catholics. Father Bijvoet, at the Catholic Mission in Mudzi-Pela, thinks that only 20% of the Bira who adhere to the Catholic Church are real believers. Unfortunately, I do not know how he would define a 'real believer'.

Uchay Jalwiny Wo-Dolo, at the CAFEZA office in Nyankunde, estimates the number of Bira in the congregations at 7,000 (see section 2.7.3.). As a fraction of the total Bira population, this would represent about 6.5%.

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Several pastors in the CECA-20 church told us that there are very few Bira in this church. So probably the number of Bira Protestants will not exceed 10% of the Bira population.

Other churches and sects include CEPZA (in Mwanga), the Kimbanguists, Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

2.11.2. Schools

There are secondary schools in Bunia, Mudzi-Pela, Solenyama, Baywana, Badiya, Nyankunde and Irumu. Not counting Bunia and Nyankunde, there are about 20 primary schools in the countryside. At the time of this survey, most of the schools were not operational. But early 1994, the problem of the salaries of the teachers was sorted out to some extent and many schools seem to have started again.

Many schools are subsidized and run by the Catholic Mission. On the Protestant side, Compassion is helping certain schools and pupils.

Both Nyankunde and Bunia offer possibilities for higher education. For example, Nyankunde has a secondary school, a Medical School and a Home-Economics School. Close to Nyankunde is a Bible School to train CAFEZA pastors. Bunia has its *Institut Supérieur Pédagogique*, several 'post-primaire' courses, and institutions for higher theological training, notably the *Institut Supérieur Théologique à Bunia*, the *Institut Supérieur Théologique Anglicain* and the *Petit and Grand Séminaires*.

2.11.3. Other institutions

With two bigger places in the Bira territory, Bunia and Nyankunde, there is no lack of institutions: the well-known CME (Centre Médical Evangélique) hospital in Nyankunde, the government-run general hospital and the good CECA-20 dispensary in Bunia, the markets in Bunia and Nyankunde, government offices, libraries, etc. There are many other places where there are smaller dispensaries and markets.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1. Vitality of the Bira language and patterns of language use

One of the first things that strikes the traveller in the Bira area, is how heterogeneous the people of the Shari Plains are. Of course in centres like Bunia, Nyankunde and Irumu one would expect many people from other ethnic groups. But even in the smallest villages, the Bira are mixed with Hema, Ngiti, Alur, etc. There are even three areas in the rural parts of the Bira territory, that are considered Hema country because of the concentration of Hema people. These people from other ethnic groups living among the Bira hardly ever learn the Bira language. The main exception are the women from outside that marry Bira men; some of these learn Bira.

As a result of this mixing, the main language used in interethnic contact is Swahili. The Bira young people use Swahili more than their own language. To such an extent that even in Sedzabo, one of the villages where Bira is still used a lot, two fathers told us that they speak Swahili with their children. Swahili is also the main language used in mixed marriages, it is used in school (together with French) and it is almost the exclusive language of both the Catholic and the Protestant churches. In the churches, the Bira are either a small majority (Catholic Church) or a minority (Protestant Churches). That implies that Bira cannot serve as the language used in church services. The church leadership of the various churches is unwilling to consider using Bira (again) as one of the languages in church. There still is a short radio program in Bira, but very few people listen to it. Only at home, when only Bira people are present, is Bira used. An experience in Sedzabo would serve as an example. While I was talking with somebody, a snake entered the house of his neighbour. Five or six men went into the house to find the snake and kill it. In their excitement they spoke: Bira. This is an indication that the Bira language is not yet dying out, but is holding out next to Swahili, that is used for most purposes.

The reason why Bira is preserved best south of Nyankunde, in the Sedzabo - Ngbulanzabo area, tells at the same time how threatened Bira is. In this area, the Bira live more by themselves because the mountains in the south prevent intensive contact with the neighbouring Ngiti. In all other places where the Bira are less isolated, e.g. in the centres of activity, Bira has had to give way to Swahili.

The decreasing vitality of the Bira language is further indicated by the absence of a government attitude towards the Bira language, by the absence of religious influence of Bira, by the absence of socio-economic importance of the language and the fact that documents written earlier in Bira are no longer in use. This, of course, is true for many languages in Zaire and does not necessarily mean that the language is losing out.

In an article describing three socio-economic factors affecting the nature and development of language programs (Watters 1989), Watters points to the importance of the presence or absence of middle-aged leadership and the openness towards development. Absence of middle-aged leadership and lack of openness towards development generally counter-indicate success of a language program. It is difficult to state how much middle-aged leadership is still in place in the Bira community. Traditionally, the leadership hierarchy did not exceed the village level. Nowadays, most of the official

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authority is given to the government officials: chiefs of villages, of groups of villages and of collectivities. In the rural area these people are often Bira. Even in Nyankunde, the chief of the collectivity is a Bira. On the other hand, the human resources for middle-aged leadership are drained by the many people with higher education who leave or have left the Bira country.

This may be one of the reasons why there is little development among the Bira. Dz've Makuru (1974/5:12) elaborates on this theme and says:

"La société chez les Babira est du type patriarcal. Compte tenu de la lignée masculine, le clan est la réunion des descendants d'un même ancêtre. Ce clan, subdivisé en familles, est une source de secours pour l'individu. Le système clanique développe chez ses membres une mentalité passive. Son égalitarisme constitue un obstacle sérieux au progrès social et surtout économique. Tous les membres du clan veulent et doivent avoir un même niveau de vie. C'est une sorte de communisme familial. Un membre du clan qui devient un peu plus riche que ses frères fait l'objet d'une grande jalousie qui prend parfois une allure agressive. Le plus riche se verra volé ou sa case incendiée pendant la nuit. Ou bien une mauvaise langue lui jettera le mauvais sort; il en sera malade, ou un malheur quelconque devra lui arriver. Ainsi, par peur de tous ces malheurs, le Mbira ne déploie aucun effort de progrès ou d'amélioration de son niveau de vie."

3.2. Reference dialect

It is generally perceived that there are two dialects, and the linguistic data support this. Let us therefore call them dialects for convenience. For ease of reference, I will use "Sedzabo dialect" for the Bira spoken south of Nyankunde, in the Sedzabo - Ngbulanzabo area and "Solenyama dialect" for the Bira spoken in the north-east of the Bira country.

The Sedzabo dialect is the clear choice for reference dialect. It is the area where Bira is still more in use than in the other parts of the Bira territory. The Bira in all places that we visited agree that the Bira of Sedzabo is the 'pure' Bira. For that reason, it has dialect prestige. Because of the small differences with the Solenyama dialect, the Bira spoken south of Nyankunde is said to be understood without any problems by all those who speak the language well. This supports the high degree of predicted understanding on the basis of lexical similarity figures (more than 95%). The weakness of the Sedzabo dialect, i.e. its lack of an advantageous geographical position, is at the same time its strength: its relative isolation enhances its preservation.

3.3. Literacy situation

In the Bira collectivities, there are many opportunities for children to go to school. The majority of the Bira children seems to start primary school, but we do not know what percentage of those who begin actually finish primary school.

3.4. Church interest in a Bira translation

If by definition a Bibleless group is unreached, then the Bira are an

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unreached group. However, for the Bira to be evangelized, there is less and less need to cross cultural boundaries. The answer to the question 'how evangelized are the Bira people?' depends on one's criteria for being evangelized. If "evangelized" people are only to be found in the Protestant churches, then not more than 6,5% (or 7,000 Bira) can be said to be evangelized. If all adherents to the Catholic Church are included, 53% of the Bira population would be evangelized. I rather include those Catholics of whom one of the priests say they are 'real believers'. This would amount to about 20% of the Bira population (see section 2.11.1). So, roughly speaking, a quarter of the Bira are evangelized in the sense of 'believers'. Many more, probably most Bira, have heard the Gospel being preached to them.

The CAFEZA and Catholic Churches, to which most Bira believers adhere, do not see great benefits in a program of Bible translation in Bira. Representatives of both churches have said that it would be impossible to use the Scriptures in Bira in the church (services). Among the main arguments are the following: the official church language policy is otherwise (Catholic Church), there are too many people from other ethnic groups in the churches, there are too few Bira pastors, favouring one ethnic language in church could kindle tribalism and almost all Bira speak and understand Swahili very well.

The Bira people who were asked their opinion about the development of the Bira language, said that they would like to see something written in their language, mainly to preserve the language for their children and to teach the young people 'proper' Bira. But generally, they did not become very enthusiastic about the idea of having the Bible in Bira.

3.5. Characterization of possible project

When there is a need for a project of literacy and Bible translation, this is the place where we try to characterize a possible project. In this case, it is very unlikely that a Bira project would ever succeed (see section 4.2 below), so that there is no need to describe the outline of a possible project.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Translation need

According to SIL's definition in Eastern Zaire, a speech variety is a translation need if there is currently inadequate access to the Scriptures in any other language or dialect due to inadequate comprehension or mastery of the second language(s), inadequacy of the translation(s) in the language(s), or negative attitudes to the language(s) or translation(s). Classifications of "definite" (versus "probable") or "no" (versus "unlikely") need are based on the degree of completeness of the information on which the judgment is based.

As Boone (1994) remarked, this definition leaves important questions open, like: How proficient does the Bira community need to be in Swahili in order to remove the need for vernacular Scriptures, Are the Swahili Scriptures adequately intelligible to people who are proficient in local oral Swahili, Do Scriptures in Swahili have the spiritual impact they must have for the church to be strong?

The present survey cannot answer these questions, because the Eastern Zaire Group has not yet adopted a policy re. the first issue and the EZG Survey Department does not have the tools to research the other questions in a sound manner. So one solution would be, as Boone (1994) proposes, not to base the judgment of need on considerations of proficiency in a language of wider communication, like Swahili. I agree with this.

It is a fact that the Swahili Bible is not well understood by all Bira people. Especially the women over 35 years of age understand only a little. The impression of the present surveyors is that the majority of the people under 35, in particular the ones who have had education, seem to understand the Swahili Bible well.

The Bira people cannot use Scriptures in other vernaculars, whether related languages (Bila, Komo) or neighbouring languages (Nyali, Hema-Sud). For this reason, under the present SIL definition, there would be a probable translation need.

One interesting aspect of SIL's definition is that translation need is determined solely on linguistic grounds. Issues like the following technically do not bear on the determination of translation need. Do the churches in the area express the need for translated Scriptures? What is the interest of the people themselves? Even if the church does not see the need for Scriptures in the local language, what kind of possibilities would there be for translated Scriptures to be used?

In the course of this report, it has become clear that these questions mentioned above do not support the translation need according to SIL's definition. The main use of translated Scriptures would be in the church. Without the support of the church, a translation project is not likely to succeed. However, the churches say that they do not need Scriptures in Bira. The Bira people themselves are not really interested and the younger generation says outright that in case a Bira Bible was available, they would still buy a Swahili one. Outside the church and without the cooperation of the church there are virtually no other possibilities to use translated Scriptures. Ideally, people would read the Bible for

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themselves at home, but in an African context that would be a rare exception.

In closing: yes, linguistically speaking there is a need for a Bira translation, but in the reality of Bira life I think one needs to say that the time in which Bira Scriptures may have been useful lies behind us.

4.2. Predicted success of a Bira project

Summing up the discussion in section 3.1., the Bira society can be described as heterogeneous, lacking clear middle-aged leadership and hindered from becoming open to development. In his article about socio-economic factors affecting the nature and development of language programs, Watters (1989) argues that this type of society is not likely to exist: "A community whose middle-aged leadership has largely left the local area is probably a community that has also been open for development." (Watters 1989:6.7.5) However, it may be necessary to add a condition: ... if there are no other factors in the culture that work against development. In the light of what is said above, Bira may be a case in which this condition is necessary and true.

The homogeneity or social cohesion of a community seems to be the decisive factor in Watters' classification. When a community has lost its homogeneity, then the chances for a successful language program are very slim. The Bira community in addition lacks clear middle-aged local leadership and lacks the mental climate necessary for development. Therefore the Bira society can be characterized as a "disintegrating society". In Watters' words (1989:6.7.8):

"In many cases, the individual members of the community have adopted a second language and are well on the way to being integrated into the larger, dominant community. In these cases, implementing a literacy program is highly questionable and at best requires a program for specialized groups or isolated individuals. In the most extreme cases, there would be serious questions as to the viability of the language into the next generation."

Taken into account, finally, that none of the churches sees real possibilities to use Bira Scriptures, "little success" can be predicted for a Bira language project.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Bira should be classified as an "unlikely translation need" based on the fact that the churches in the Bira area do not see the need for Bira Scriptures and on the unlikelihood that they in the future could or would support a project of Scripture translation.

The CAFEZA church in particular could consider inviting Gospel Recordings to make some new tapes in the Bira language that could be used for evangelization.

The *Ethnologue* entry for Bera should be changed to read as follows:

Bira (Kibera, Plains Bira) [BRF] 120,000 (1992 SIL). Haut-Zaire Region, Ituri Subregion, Irumu Zone. Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Broad Bantu, Narrow Bantu, Central, D, Bira-Huku (D.30). Most closely related to Bila, Bhele, Kaiku, Komo and Kwamba. Bible portions 1930.

The *Bible translation needs Bulletin 2* entry for Bera should be changed to read as follows:

Bira [BRF] Bible portions 1930. Unlikely translation need. CAFEZA/CMML, CECA-20/AIM, RC.

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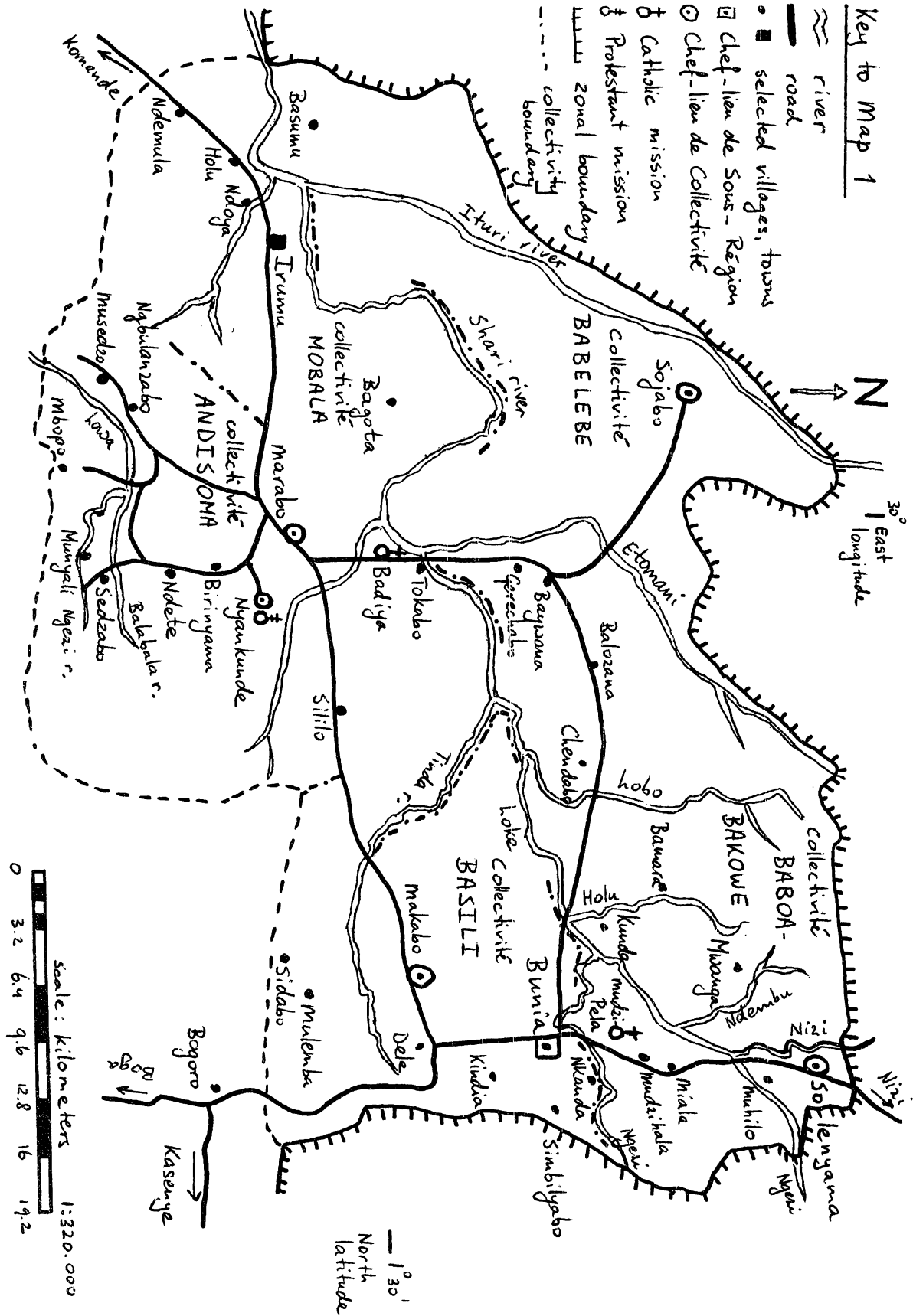
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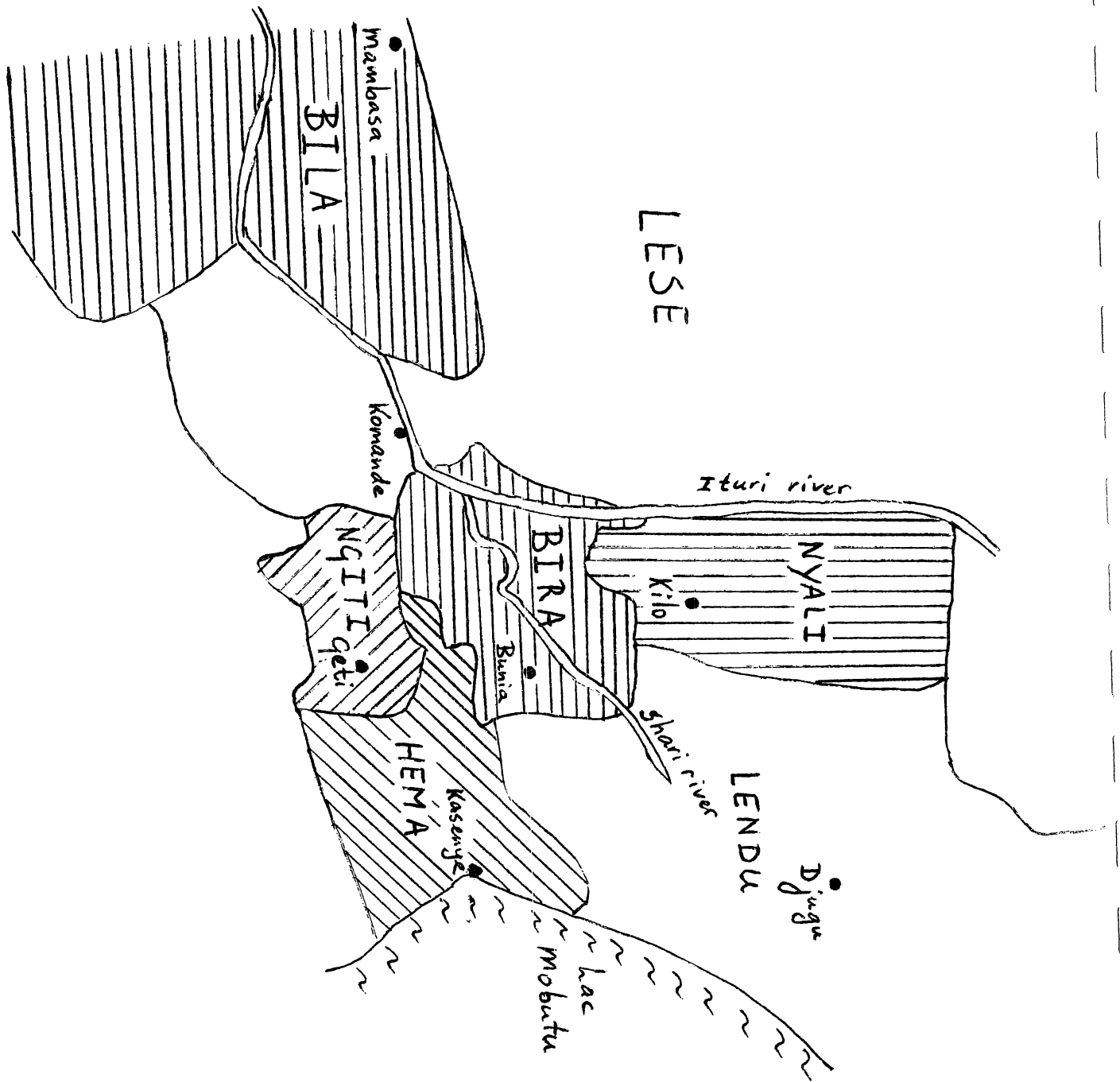
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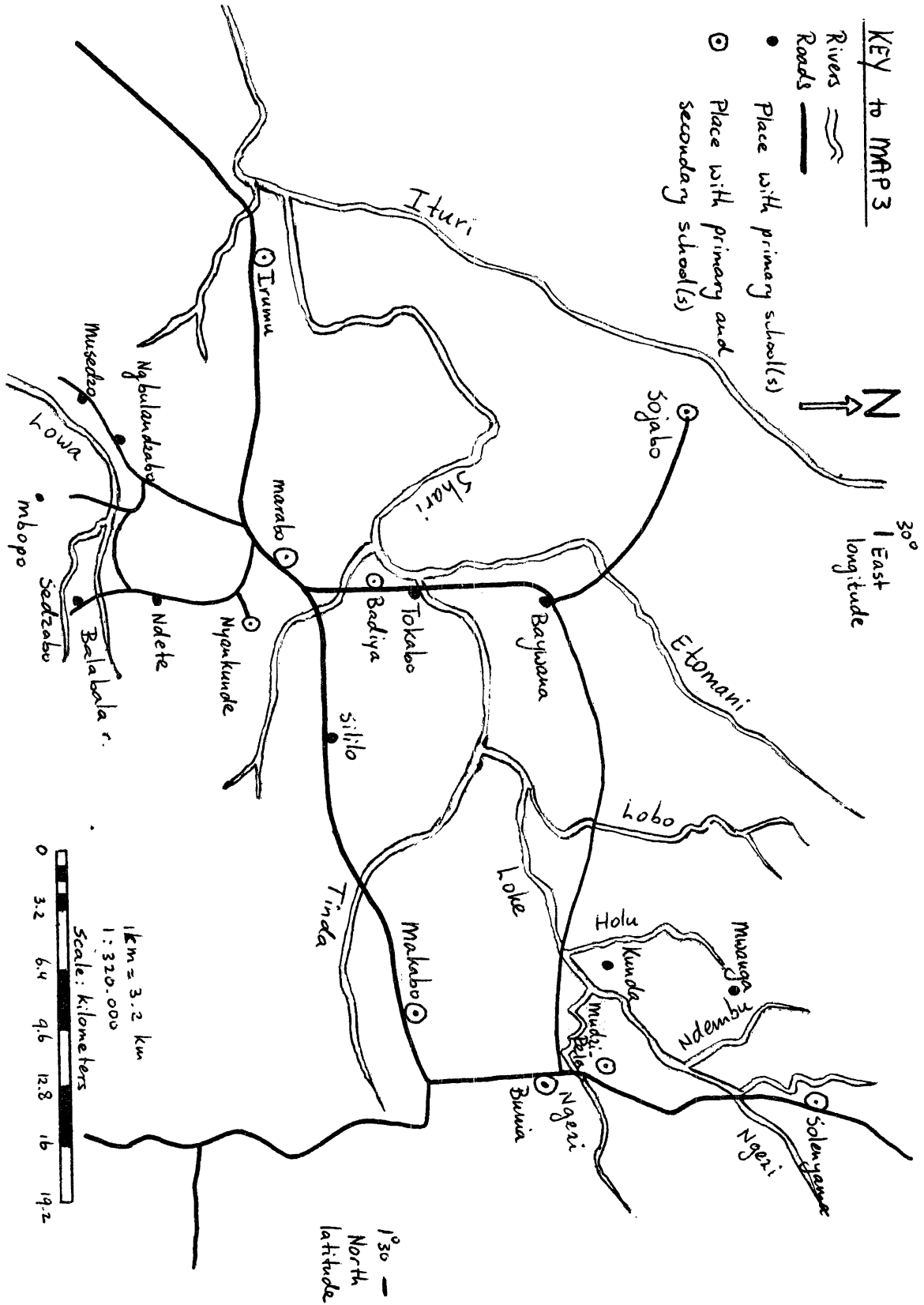
Map 1: General



Map 2: Bira and its neighbours



Map 3: Schools in the Bira area



Scripture comprehension testing

December 1993, Bira survey

Used: - Swahili Bible, Protestant translation of 1967
- Story in Swahili, in about the same variety of Swahili as used in the 1967 Bible

1. Texts
2. Questions and answers
3. Results

1. Texts

1.1. Text A: Swahili text

Kisezo na bibi yake Mainaro

Hapo zamani katika mujini mwa sultani Sezabo, kulikuwa baba moja jina lake Kisezo na bibi yake Mainaro. Kila siku Kisezo alimupiga bibi yake Mainaro kwa sababu ya kutokufanya kazi za nyumba.

Basi siku moja, Mainaro akamwambia bwana wake Kisezo, akasema: "Tangu leo ninataka kubadilisha kazi. Nitafanya kazi yako ya shamba na kujenga nyumba. Nawe utafanya kazi za nyumba." Bwana akajibu, akasema: "Ndiyo ni hivi", na akubali.

Kwa sababu ilikuwa siku ya Mungu, wote wawili walipumzika na siku ya kwanza asubui, kila mumoja alijitayarisha kwa kazi yake. Bibi alishika jembe na upanga, alienda shambani. Na bwana alibaki na kazi za nyumba: kubeba mbuzi fasi ya majani, kufungulia kuku, kunawisha watoto, kupiga chakula, kufagia nyumba na kazalika.

Basi alianza kwa kupiga chakula. Aliwasha moto na akatia maziwa juu yake. Alipoanza kufagia, kuku iliingia nyumbani, ikamwanga maziwa. "Ai", alianza kulia. Basi alitwa jiwe na kutupia kuku. Lakini jiwe ilipata kuku juu ya kichwa na kuku ilikufa. Huzuni ya baba iliongezeka. Akaanza kufikiri chakula imemwangika basi alikamata mipango mupya na kuanza kupiga ile kuku. Akaitia juu ya moto na aliuliza mutoto kuchochea moto na alienda kutafuta maji. Lakini alipofika ku maji, watu walikuwa wengi, hakuweza kuteka maji na haraka. Hivi, alikawia. Mutoto vile alianza kuchezeza na tena chungu ilianza kulungula (= kuungua). Chungu ya kuku yote ikalungula. Kisezo aliporudia alikuta chungu yote imelungula. Alikamata fimbo na kukimbisha mutoto, lakini hasara ilipitika tena. Wakati alianza kukimbisha mutoto, mutoto alianguka, akavunjika mkono.

Na ni hivi alimukamata tena, akamubeba ku muganga. Alikuwa vilevile kwa muganga mpaka midi. Na wakati midi ilienea mama alirudia. Kufika nyumba aliona kwanza chungu ya maziwa iliomwanguine kiisha anakuta sahani hazikusafisha na watoto wanalia njaa na huzuni ya kuna ndugu yao alivunjika.

Basi mama alikimbia kuona mutoto kwa muganga na alipofika kwa enye (?) muganga alikuwa baba alianza kulia na kusema: "Mama unihurumie, nimesikia sasa kama Mungu aliumba muke tafauti na mume na kila mutu ana kazi yake." Tangu siku hile Kisezo alifahamu ya kwamba kazi ya baba ni ya baba na kazi ya mama ni ya mama. Na mugini yote walifahamu ya kwamba Mungu aliumba mume tafauti na mwanamuke na kwamba ndani ya jamaa watu wote ni kusaidiana.

1.2. Text B: NT text, 1 Yoane 3:11-24

11. Na hizi ndizo habari mulizosikia tangu mwanzo, ya kwamba tupendane sisi kwa sisi: 12. tusiwe kama Kaina aliyekuwa wa yule mwovu, akaua ndugu yake. Naye alimwua kwa sababu gani? Kwa sababu matendo yake yalikuwa mabaya, na ya ndugu yake yalikuwa ya haki. 13. Ndugu zangu, musishangae, kama ulimwengu ukiwachukia ninyi! Sisi tunajua ya kuwa tumepita toka mauti kuingia uzima, kwa maana tunapendandugu. Yeye asiyependa anakaa katika mauti. 15. Kila mutu anayechukia ndugu yake ni mwuaji: nanyi munajua ya kuwa kila mwuaji hana uzima wa milele ukikaa ndani yake. 16. Kwa hivi tumefahamu mapendo kwa kuwa Yesu alitoa uzima yake kwa ajili yetu, imetupasa sisi kutoa uzima wetu kwa ajili ya ndugu. 17. Lakini kama mutu akiwa na mali ya dunia, kisha akaona ndugu yake ni muhitaji, akamufungia huruma zake, namna gani mapendo ya Mungu yanakaa ndani yake? 18. Watoto wadogo, tusipende kwa neno, wala kwa ulimi lakini kwa matendo ya kweli. 19. Kwa hivi tutafahamu ya kwamba tuko wa kweli, nasi tutatuliza mioyo yetu mbele yake, 20. ikiwa mioyo yetu inatuhukumu; kwa maana Mungu ni mukubwa kuliko mioyo yetu, naye anajua yote. 21. Wapenzi, mioyo yetu isipotuhukumu, tuna imani mbele ya Mungu; 22. na lo lote tunaloomba, tunalipokea kwake, kwa kuwa tunashika amri zake, na kutenda maneno yanayoperendeza machoni mwake. 23. Na hii ndiyo amri yake, kwamba tuamini Mwana wake Yesu Kristo, na kupendana sisi kwa sisi, kama alivyotupa amri. 24. Naye anayeshika amri zake Mungu, anakaa ndani ya Mungu, na Mungu ndani yake. Na hivi tunajua ya kuwa Yesu anakaa ndani yetu, kwa Roho aliyetupa sisi.

1.3. Text C: OT text, 2 Kings 12:1-12

1. Katika mwaka wa saba wa Yehu, Yoasi alianza kutawala; akatawala miaka makumi ine kule Yerusalema; na jina la mama yake aliitwa Sibia wa Beri-Seba. 2. Na Yoasi alifanya maneno yaliyo mema mbela ya macho ya BWANA siku zake zote Yehoyada kuhani aloyomufundisha. 3. Lakini pahali pa juu hapakuondolewa; watu wakaendelea kutoa sadaka na kuchoma uvumba katika pahali pa juu. 4. Yoasi akawaambia makuhani: Feza yote ya vitu vitakatifu iliyoletwa nyumbani mwa BWANA, feza ya kila mutu anayepita kwa wale waliohesabiwa, feza ya watu kadiri alivyoandikwa kila mutu, na feza yote iliyoletwa kama mutu ye yote anavyoona katika moyo wake kuileta ndani ya nyumba ya BWANA, 5. makuhani waitwae, kila mutu kwa hawa anaowajua; nao watatengeneza pahali palipobomoka pa nyumba, kila pahali palipoonekana pamebomoka. 6. Lakini ikiwa, mwaka wa makumi mbili na tatu wa mufalme Yoasi, makuhani hawajatengeneza bado mabomoka ya nyumba. 7. Basi mufalme Yoasi akaita Yehoyada kuhani, na makuhani wengine, akawauliza: Kwa sababu gani hamutengenezi mabomoko ya nyumba? Basi sasa musipokee tena feza kwa hawa munaowajua, lakini mutoe kwa ajili ya mabomoko ya nyumba. 8. Na makuhani wakakubali kwamba wasipokee feza kwa watu, wala wasitengeneze mabomoko ya nyumba. 9. Lakini Yehoyada kuhani akatwaa sanduku, akatoboa tunda katika kifuniko chake, na kuiweka karibu ya mazabahu, upande wa kuume pahali mutu anapoingia nyumbani mwa BWANA; na makuhani waliolinda mulango wakatia ndani yake feza yote iliyoletwa nyumbani mwa BWANA. 10. Na ilikuwa wakati walipoona ya kuwa feza nyingi ni ndani ya sanduku, mwandishi wa mufalme na mukubwa wa makuhani wakapanda, wakaifunga katika mifuko, wakahesabu feza iliyoonekana ndani ya nyumba ya BWANA. 11. Na feza iliyopimwa wakawapa mikononi mwa wale waliofanya kazi, waliosimamia nyumba ya BWANA; nao wakatolea maseremala na wajengaji waliofanya kazi katika nyumba ya BWANA, 12. na kwa waashi, na wakata mawe, tena kununua miti na mawe ya kuchongwa, ili kutengeneza mabomoko ya nyumba ya BWANA, tena vitu vyote vilivyohitajiwa kwa kutengeneza nyumba.

2. Questions and answers

2.1. Text A: Swahili text, questions

1. Baba Kisezo alikaa wapi?
2. Sababu gani baba Kisezo alipiga bibi yake?
3. Mama Mainaro alitaka bwana yake afanye kazi gani?
4. Wakati mama Mainaro alizungumuza na bwana yake ilikuwa siku gani?
5. Siku ya kwanza, mama Mainaro alibeba nini ku shamba?
6. Nani alihitaji kunawisha watoto?
7. Baba Kisezo alitupa nini juu ya kuku?
8. Sababu gani mutoto alivunjika mukono wake?
9. Mama Mainaro alienda wapi akaisha kusikia habari za mutoto aliyevunjika?

Disqualified questions:

1. Ile jiwe ilikuwa na matokeo gani?
2. Baba Kisezo alipigia kuku ndani ya nini?
3. Sasa, baba Kisezo anafahamu nini?

Text A: Swahili text, answers

1. (Muji wa sultani) Sezabo.
2. ... ya kutokufanya kazi ya nyumba/ kutokujua kazi ya nyumba.
3. ... afanye kazi ya nyumba/ afanye kazi yake.
4. Siku ya Mungu/ siku ya jenga.
5. Jembe na upanga/ jembe na machete.
6. Bwana Kisezo/ Baba.
7. Jiwe/ majiwe/ mawe.
8. ... baba alikimbisha mutoto/ baba alimutukuza mutoto
9. Kwa muganga/ kwa hospital.

2.2 Text B: NT text, 1 John 3:11-24, questions

1. Habari mulizosikia tangu mwanzo ni nini?
2. Kaina aliuu nani?
3. Sababu gani Kaina aliuu ndugu yake?
4. Nini inaotokea kwa yeye asiyependa?
5. Mutu anayechukia ndugu yake ni nani?
6. Kwa hivi, sisi tunapashwa kufanya nini?
7. Inafaa tusipende namna gani?
8. Wanasema nini juu ya Mungu?
9. Wakati gani tuna imani mbele ya Mungu?
10. Tunashika nini?

Disqualified questions:

1. Nani alitoa uzima wake kwa ajili yetu?
2. Amri yake ni kuamini nani?

Text B: NT text, 1 John 3:11-24, answers

1. ... tupendane sisi kwa sisi.
2. Ndugu yake.
3. Kwa sababu matendo yake yalikuwa mabaya, na ya ndugu yake yalikuwa

- ya haki.
4. Anakaa katika mauti. (mauti only = 1/2 point)
 5. Ni mwuaji.
 6. Kutoa uzima wetu kwa ajili ya ndugu.
 7. Kwa neno wala kwa ulimi. (one of the two = OK)
 8. Mungu ni mukubwa kuliko mioyo yetu (naye anajua yote).
 9. Mioyo yetu isipotuhukumu.
 10. Amri yake/ sheria yake.

2.3. Text C: OT text, 2 Kings 12:1-12, questions

1. Yoasi alitawala Yerusalema miaka mingapi?
2. Nani alifundisha Yoasi?
3. Watu walifanya nini katika pahali pa juu?
4. Watu walileta feza ku nyumba ya Bwana. Wanani waliotoa ile feza?
5. Makuhani walipashwa kufanya nini na ile feza?
6. Sababu gani mufalme Yoasi aliita makuhani?
7. Mufalme Yoasi alisema nini na makuhani?
8. Makuhani walikubali nini?
9. Yehoyada kuhani aliweka nini karibu na mazabahu?
10. Nini ilitokea wakati waliona ya kwamba feza nyingi ni ndani ya sanduku?

Disqualified questions:

1. Mama ya Yoasi alitoka wapi?
2. Makuhani walitumia sanduku kwa nini?
3. Wanani walipokea ile feza?

Text C: OT text, 2 Kings 12:1-12, answers

1. Makumi ine.
2. (Kuhani) Yeyohada.
3. Waliendelea kutoa sadaka na kuchoma uvumba katika pahali pa juu. (one of the two = OK)
4. Makuhani.
5. ... kutengeneza pahali palipobomoka pa nyumba.
6. ... makuhani hawajatengeneza bado mabomoko ya nyumba.
7. ... musipokee tena feza kwa hawa munaowawajua (lakini mutoe kwa ajili ya mabomoko ya nyumba).
8. ... wasipokee feza kwa watu wala wasitengeneze mabomoko ya nyumba.
9. sanduku.
10. ... (mwandishi wa mufalme na mukubwa wa makuhani walipanda na) wakaweka pesa katika mifuko na wakaihesabu. (one of the two = OK)

3. Results

1. Control test:

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	
A:	9	9	9	8	8	=> 95.6 %
B:	10	10	10	9	9	=> 96.0 %
C:	9	10	10	10	10	=> 98.0 %

2. Actual test results

2.a. Men > 35 yr:

	P2	P13	P14	P15	P16		
A:	4	4	8	3	6	=>	55.6 %
B:	4	3	6	4	5	=>	44.0 %
C:	3	5	8	2	8	=>	52.0 % (B and C: 48.0 %)

2.b. Women > 35 yr:

	P1	P3	P4	P5	P20		
A:	8	5	7	6	6	=>	71.1 %
B:	6½	2	4½	4½	4	=>	43.0 %
C:	7	2	4	6	3½	=>	45.0 % (B and C: 44.0 %)

2.c. Men < 35 yr:

	P6	P8	P9	P12	P18		
A:	8½	6	6½	6	6½	=>	74.4 %
B:	8½	6	7	5	9	=>	71.0 %
C:	9	4	7	4½	9	=>	69.0 % (B and C: 70.0 %)

2.d. Women < 35 yr:

	P7	P10	P11	P17	P19		
A:	5	6	4	4	7	=>	57.8 %
B:	6	8	5½	0	9	=>	57.0 %
C:	3	8½	2	0	6	=>	35.0 % (B and C: 46.0 %)

2.e. Education < P6

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P11	P15	P20		
A:	8	4	5	7	6	4	3	6	=>	59.7 %
B:	6½	4	2	4½	4½	5½	4	4	=>	43.8 %
C:	7	3	2	4	6	2	2	3½	=>	36.9 %

2.f. Education ≥ P6

	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P12	P13	P14	P16	P17	P18	P19		
A:	8½	5	6	6½	6	6	4	8	6	4	6½	7	=>	68.1 %
B:	8½	6	6	7	8	5	3	6	5	0	9	9	=>	60.4 %
C:	9	3	4	7	8½	4½	5	8	8	0	9	6	=>	60.0 %

2.g. Member of CAFEZA

	P1	P5	P6	P7	P9	P12	P13	P20		
A:	8	6	8½	5	5½	6	4	6	=>	69.4 %
B:	6½	4½	8½	6	7	5	3	4	=>	55.6 %
C:	7	6	9	3	7	4½	5	3½	=>	56.3 %

2.h. Member of Catholic Church

	P2	P3	P4	P8	P10	P11	P14	P15	P16	P17	P18	P19	
A:	4	5	7	6	6	4	8	3	6	4	6½	7	=> 61.6 %
B:	4	2	4½	6	8	5½	6	4	5	0	9	9	=> 52.5 %
C:	3	2	4	4	8½	2	8	2	8	0	9	6	=> 47.1 %

Testees:

P 1:	Penina,	woman,	1948,	Nyankunde,	P?,	CAFEZA
P 2:	Mulakana,	man,	1933,	Nyankunde,	P2,	Catholic
P 3:	Narcella Tollagani,	woman,	1942,	Mbopo,	P3,	Catholic
P 4:	Sambakukua,	woman,	1950,	Marabo,	P0,	Catholic
P 5:	Anna Nyumba,	woman,	1952,	Mbulanzabo,	P3,	CAFEZA
P 6:	Tebabo Nyamalabo,	man,	1962,	Mbulanzabo,	P6S1,	CAFEZA
P 7:	Makanzala,	woman,	1972,	Mbulanzabo,	P6,	CAFEZA
P 8:	Basilisa Sezabo,	man,	1971,	Mwanga,	P6,	Catholic
P 9:	Buzabo,	man,	1967,	Gerechabo,	P6,	CAFEZA
P10:	Tebakukwa,	woman,	1974,	Kasegwa,	P6,	Catholic
P11:	Bogatai Maria,	woman,	1967,	Gerechabo,	P4,	Catholic
P12:	Mateso Tonabo,	man,	1963,	Gerechabo,	P6,	CAFEZA
P13:	Tandishabo Mugenja,	man,	1950,	Sedzabo,	P6S1,	CAFEZA
P14:	Makizala Jean-B.,	man,	1955,	Sedzabo,	P6S6,	Catholic
P15:	Kakani,	man,	1932,	Sedzabo,	P1,	Catholic
P16:	Tuzabo Mufano,	man,	1947,	Sedzabo,	P6,	Catholic
P17:	Musika ?,	woman,	1974,	Nyankunde,	P6,	Catholic
P18:	Kodabo Munganga,	man,	1973,	Nyankunde,	P6S5,	Catholic
P19:	Likabindo,	woman,	1969,	Sedzabo,	P6,	Catholic
P20:	Sesekana Diabo,	woman,	1950,	Nyankunde,	P4,	CAFEZA

Names of educated and other Bira:

Bungishabako, *licencié français/linguistique*, director of the Compassion project in Nyankunde. (Bira)

Chwekabo's brother, *licencié français/linguistique*, living in Nyankunde. (Bira)

Dachanzabo Rubi, does the CANDIP Bira radio program.

Diabo Jean, chauffeur M.A.F. Nyankunde. (Bira)

Mrs. Haas, married to VAC pilot, did research about the courtesy among the Bira. She is living in the USA now.

Lebiliabo Ananias, Laborantin C.M.E. Nyankunde. (Bira)

Matthysen A., former Catholic bishop of the Bunia Diocese. He may have left some books in the library of the Catholic Seminaries in Bunia.

Mr. Selyabi Hatari, Préfet Lycée Nyankunde. (Bira)

Miss Tabo Lumbana, teacher at Uji wa Heri (a secondary school). She has done a study about the school system among the Bira: "La déperdition scolaire sur les Babira." (1986)

Tingityabo, working with Compassion Bunia. (Bira)

Tingityabo (Papa), 2e *Représentant Suppléant* (of CAFEZA), Nyankunde. (Bira)

Zitono (Brother Pello), Préfet of secondary school in Mudzi-Pela.

Bira CAFEZA pastors:

Pasteur Bakwegi, Nyankunde.

Pasteur Lebabo, Ngbulanzabo

Pasteur Yakobo, Baywana

Pasteur Sikilabo, Sililo

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Spoken with:

19 November 1993, in Mudzi-Pela:

1. Dachabo Bungamuzi Charles, catéchist and secretary, Mubira, born in 1948.
2. Curé Placide, previously worked in Djugu, Hema.

6 December 1993, in Nyankunde:

1. Marian Baisley, CAFEZA missionary, more than 30 years in Zaire. Profession: accountant, presently mainly involved in young people's work.

7 December 1993, in Nyankunde:

1. Uchay Jalwiny Wo-Dolo, *secrétaire administrative* of CAFEZA, Nyankunde, studied theology in Nairobi for three years, came back April 1993.

7 December 1993, in Ngbulanzabo:

1. Lelabo Mungimbo, from Ngbulanzabo, born in 1936, CAFEZA.
2. Kulyabo Kabuyeno, from Ngbulanzabo, born in 1936, CAFEZA.
3. Lyake Mudha, from Mwanga, born in 1951, CAFEZA.
4. Tebabo Nyamalabo, from Nyankunde, born in 1962, CAFEZA.

8 December 1993, in Gerechabo (Baywaria):

1. Ngwera Gamiliabo, from Sodjabo, born in 1925, Catholic.
2. Kindiabo Mulabani, from Kabungani (close to Shari river), born in 1921, pasteur, CAFEZA.
3. Mateso Tonabo, from Gerechabo, born in 1963, CAFEZA.
4. Mateso Mitiabo, from Badiya, since 1970 in Gerechabo, born in 1961, CAFEZA.

8 December 1993, in Badiya (Catholic Mission):

1. Harry van de Ven, Catholic Father
2. De Meyer, Catholic Father, head of the Badiya Mission
3. Mark Deneckere, Catholic Father

9 December 1993, in Sedzabo:

1. Lihabo Ngele, from Sedzabo, born in 1928
2. Tuzabo Mufano, from Sedzabo, born in 1947

15 December 1993, in Mudzi-Pela:

1. Julien Dereymaker, director of the Interdiocesan Centre for Pastoral Care, Catechism and Liturgy in Bukavu (BP 162 Bukavu, BP 2 Cyangugu, lives in the Catholic Mission of Buriba; office in Lycee Wima).
2. Père Armand Bijvoet, White Father from Belgium, more than 30 years in Mudzi-Pela.

15 December 1993, in Solenyama:

1. Pelekabo Gayo, from Mwanga, born in 1927.

16 December 1993, in Mwanga

1. Baseger Mblamba, Hema, born around 1970.
2. Bahati Musafiri, Gegera, born around 1970.
3. Tinabo Dwabo, from Mwanga, born around 1970.
4. Kababo Nzikitabo, from Mwanga, born around 1970.

Wordlists

#	gloss	Bira-Sedzabo	Bira-Solenyama
001	eye	ísò	ísò
002	ear	kìtòì	kìtòì
003	nose	lólò	lolò
004	mouth	nòkò	nòkò
005	teeth	míjò	míjò
006	tongue	ǎkà	ǎkà
007	beard	ndèlù	ndèl ^w à
008	head	mòhó	mòhó
009	hair	kìfámòhó	kìfámòhó
010	neck	kíngó	kíngó
011	breast	ǒéìè	ǒéìè
012	chest	gòngó	góngó
013	belly	sòhó	sòhó
014	navel	kóvò	kóvò
015	back	yéné	yéné
016	buttocks	hétà	hétà
017	knee	kòlì	kòlì
018	leg	gbàtá	gbàtá
019	foot	-	-
		(= leg)	
020	hand	kìbókò	kìbókò
021	finger	-	-
		('fruit of the hand')	
022	fingernail	bàsà	bàsà
023	body	ngbòlò	ngbòlò
024	skin	ngòvò	ngòvò
025	hide	-	-
		(= skin)	
026	wound	hólá	hólá
027	bone	nkúwà	nkúwà
028	blood	màgìlá	màgìlá
029	saliva	sókì	sókì
030	urine	màjé	màjò
031	urinate	jél	jél
032	heart	mòlémà	mùlímà
033	kidney	híkò	híkò
034	intestines	sòósòó	sòósòó
035	person	mbóòhó	mbóòhó
036	man	mòlókó	mòlókó
037	woman	nkálì	nkálì
038	child	mìíkí	mìíkí
039	father	bàbá	bàbá
040	mother	màmá	màmá
041	brother	námá	námá
042	older brother	yàyá	yàyá
043	younger brother	-	-
		('my younger one')	
044	friend	mùjàn ^k író	mùjàn ^k író
045	uncle	nòk ^w áyò	nòk ^w áyò
046	twins	bàròngò	bàròngò
047	chief	nkámá	nkámá
048	God	mbàlì	mbàlì
049	name	línà	línà
050	voice	mòyò	mòyò

#	gloss	Bira-Sedzabo	Bira-Solenyama
051	story	mákágàní	mákágàní
052	animal	jàmàísò	jàmàísò
053	meat	kìsòkò	kìsòkò
054	dog	úmvwá	úmvwá
055	tail	kúlwángà	kílwéngè
056	leopard	òngwè	òngwè
057	rat	bílì	bílì
058	elephant	mbòngò	mbòngò
059	goat	mémé	mémé
060	horn	ndíkà	ndíkà
061	bird	mbòlò	mbòlò
062	hen	kókó	kókó
063	wing	-	-
064	feather	sálá	sálá
065	egg	lìkí	lèké
066	tortoise	bátòí	bátòí
067	crocodile	ngòndé	ngòndé
068	snake	nzókà	nzókà
069	fish	úsú	úsú
070	louse	mpámbá	sìrì
071	tree	mìlì	mèlé
072	bark	kìlò	kìkóbá
073	leaf	kásá	kásá
074a	branch	tàkpá	tàkpá
074b	branch	kpàtá	kpàtá
		(no apparent difference in meaning)	
075	root	mìlì	mìlì
076	fruit	mbòkà	mbòkà
077	seed	mbólò	mbólò
078	banana	dìdí	dìdí
079	straw	sòlú	sòlú
080	the "bush"	sóbé	sóbé
081	field	tíkò	tíkò
082	tribe	-	-
083	village	mùzì	mùzì
084	house	ndábò	ndábò
085	path	ʃìó	ʃìó
086	thing	kímà	kímà
087	affair	gàní	gàní
088	clothing	ngómbé	ngómbé
089	rope	mpòngò	mpòngò
090	drum	kìlèmbé	kìlèmbé
091	canoe	dzàbó	dzàbó
092	basket	mbòmbò	mbòmbò
093	salt	mùkwá	mùkwá
094	fat	dílì	dílì
095	fishhook	mùróbò	mùróbò
096	knife	mbàkò	mbàkò
097	axe	lúkà	lúkà
098	hoe	lùdù	lùdù
099	spear	kùngá	kùngá
100	war	òilá	òilá
101	charcoal	mbílò	kálà
102	fire	mósá	mósá

#	gloss	Bira-Sedzabo	Bira-Solenyama
103	firewood	- (= fire)	-
104	smoke	makìlì	makìlì
105	ashes	bùlú	bùlú
106	night	kìlìà	lìlìà
107	moon	sóngé	sóngé
108	star	tàngátàngà	tàngátàngà
109	sun	m ^w áné	m ^w áné
110	day	gòndó	gòndó
111	sky	kùbà	kùbà
112	cloud	ndùlù	ndùlù
113	fog	kìndùbù	kìndùbù
114	wind	sòmbò	sòmbò
115	rain	mbùlà	mbùlà
116	to rain	lók	lók
117	water	lìbó	lìbó
118	dew	lìṅó	lìṅó
119	river	-	-
120	lake	ṅànzá	ṅànzá
121	hill	ṅímbá	ṅímbá
122	stone	tálì	tálì
123a	earth	bùtākà	bùtākà
123b	earth	('country') dòdó ('soil')	dòdó
124	sand	mbúm ^v á	mbúmè
125	year	kèlángà	kèlángà
126	one	ngílìní	ngílìní
127	two	ṅàlì	ṅàlì
128	three	sáàlò	sáalò
129	four	ínì	ínì
130	five	ítánò	dzòmbè
131	six	má ^v à	má ^v à
132	seven	sòb ^v á	lòdú
		(probably this is the word for 'nine')	
133	eight	làlò	làlò
134	nine	sòb ^y á	sòb ^y á
135	ten	kòmì	kámì
136	half	gbút ^v ò	gbút ^v ò
137	hot	kìtínèká	kìténèká
138	cold	hídò	kèlèlá
139	tall	kùlà	kùlà
140	long	-	-
141	deep	-	-
142	short	gbútù	gbít ^v ò
143	big	bàbó	bàbó
144	small	pídò	pídò
145	good	ṅòṅgá	ṅòṅgá
146	bad	zánà	zánà
147	all	básè	básè
148	many	gbókà	gbókà
149	red	tánà	tánà
150	black	índà	índà
151	white	ùká	ùká
152	who?	màmó	màmó
153	I	èmè	èmè
154	you sg.	òwè	òwè

#	gloss	Bira-Sedzabo	Bira-Solenyama
155	he, she	yéyì	léyì
156	we	ḡésú	ḡésú
157	you pl.	ḡénú	ḡénú
158	they	ḡólì	ḡólì
159	what?	èkí	èkí
160	where?	káwà	káwà
161	today	lèlóní	lèlóní
162	yesterday	álìkà	àlèkà
163	tomorrow	húmá	húmá
164	to dry	ómísá	ómísá
165	to fill	túmísá	túmísá
166	to rot	hòlá	hòlá
167	to sit	kěḡúná	kěḡúná
168	to stand	máhá	máhá
169	to lie	làḡgá	làḡgá
170	sleep	sìḡgá	sìḡgá
171	to dream	ndót	ndót
172	to fear	mán	mán
173	fear	ḡókó	ḡókó
174	hunger	nzàlà	nzàlà
175	shame	sónì	sónì
176	joy	mùhìmbò	mùhìmbò
177	doubt	-	-
178	to bite	ḡáḡúlá	ḡáḡúlá
179	to eat	lʋá	lʋá
180	to drink	mʋá	mʋá
181	to vomit	lóká	lóká
182	to cough	kpólá	kpólá
183	to suck	núḡgé	lùḡgá
184	to spit	súá	súá
185	to sing	lím bá	lím bá
186	to play	tújá	tújá
187	to dance	ḡíná	ḡíná
188	to laugh	tòlá	tòlá
189	to weep	ḡǎmá	ḡǎmá
190	to say	yòmbá	yòmbá
191	to call	éléká	wèléká
192	to ask	úlífá	hùlá
193	to ask	kúḡgá	kúḡgá
194	to see	léḡá	léḡá
195	to show	tàndífá	tàndífá
196	to hear	ókè	yóká
197	to smell	ḡùká	ḡùká
198	to know	íbá	íbá
199	to read	sómá	sómá
200	to write	kèká	kèká
201	to love	ḡònzá	ḡònzá
202	to take	ìḡá	ùḡá
203	to hold	ḡbéhè	ḡbáhá
204	to give	péfá	péfá
205	price	súbá	súbá
206	to steal	íbá	íbá
207	to hide	sòmá	sòmá

#	gloss	Bira-Sedzabo	Bira-Solenyama
208	to lie	-	-
209	lie	mbélá	mbélá
210	to buy	-	-
		(= price)	
211	to sell	súmbísá	súmbísá
212	to marry	àmá	yàmá
213	to bear	òókót	òókót
214	to die	k ^w á	k ^w á
215	to kill	ólá	ólá
216	to go	já	já
217	journey	gèndò	hòóngò
218	to come	bìká	bìká
219	to return	sìkílá	sìkílá
220	to send	téká	téká
221	to fly	sìndá	sìndá
222	to walk	húngá	húngá
223	to run	cécá	cécá
224	to flow	kèléká	kèléká
225	to fall	g ^w á	g ^w á
226	to scratch	kpàlá	kpàlá
227	to rub	h ^w èlá	hòlá
228	to wipe	bòlá	bòlá
229	to pour	dùká	dùká
230	to wash	-	-
231	to sweep	kómbá	-
			(= to wipe)
232	to open	kúdá	kúdá
233	to shut	dàká	dàká
234	to split	hàlvá	hàlvá
235	to cut	tíná	téná
236	to pierce	túmá	túmá
237	to beat	òétá	òétá
238	to fight	sàní	sàní
239	to heal	ángísá	yángísá
240	to throw	màká	màká
241a	to push	tíngítá	tíngítá
		('to push something')	
241b	to push	tútá	tútá
		('to push a car or a bike')	
242	to pull	òùlá	òùlá
243	to tie	òólVá	tòlvá
244	to do	kórá	kórá
245	to sew	sùná	sòná
246	to dress	j ^w érè	j ^w érá
247	to cook	lámhá	lámhá
248	to plant	kúná	kúná
249	to dig	túngá	túngá
250	to bury	lúmbá	lúmbá
251	to burn	sùmbá	sùmbá
252	to swell	òímbá	òímbá

Note: with infinitives, usually the verb root is given.