MINISTRY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF HINA SUBDIVISION, MAYO-TSANAGA DIVISION, EXTREME NORTH PROVINCE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

According to the Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun (Dieu and Renaud 1983:92), hereinafter referred to as ALCAM, the language which occupies the largest section of the Hina Subdivision is "Besleri" (251). This is supposedly the name the people themselves give ("le glossonyme propre") for Daba-Hina or Hina (Dieu and Renaud 1983:92). Ethnologue (Grimes 1988:170), using ALCAM as its source, follows suit in referring to the language as "Besleri (Hina)." During the survey described in this report, however, we found no one (Hina people or their neighbours) who had heard of the term "Besleri." In this light it is interesting to note that ALCAM lists the language of Besleri as having a "total absence of linguistic studies on the language" (1983:160). In this report we will refer to this language as "Mina," as this is considered the "real name" for the language of the Hina people by all Hina informants and interviewees. The only exception was a young woman who runs the pharmacy in Hina-Marbak and had lived outside the region for a number of years. She argued that the name of the language is the same as the name for the people, Hina.

The Mina language is spoken in Hina Subdivision, Mayo-Tsanaga Division, Extreme North Province in Cameroon. According to ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983:36) and Ethnologue (Grimes 1988:170), there are three dialects of the language we have chosen to call Mina:

- 1. Besleri
- 2. Jɨŋjɨŋ/Jingjing (Dzumdzum)
- 3. Gamdugun

In this report, the meaning of "dialect" is as it is defined in ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983:19).

There are many variations in spelling for the reported dialects of Mina. We refer to the main dialect as Mina, not Besleri, for the reason cited above. The dialects reportedly spoken in the villages of Gamdougoum and Djoum-Djoum (spellings taken from Map of Cameroon, published in Yaoundé by the National Geographic Centre), will be referred to as Daba Gamdugun and Dzumdzum respectively. Gamdugun is the name given by ALCAM, and Dzumdzum is an optional name given by ALCAM for Jinjin (Dieu and Renaud 1983:36). We chose these forms because they resemble the phonetic pronunciation given by the speakers themselves. Gamdugun is further clarified as Daba Gamdugun because the people of Gamdougoum said the language they speak is called "Daba." The spellings and names were chosen for reporting purposes and are by no means definitive.

The population for Mina's three dialects is listed as 8,800 in Ethnologue (Grimes 1988:170) and 5,000-10,000 in ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983:160). The Hina divisional officer ("sous-préfet") gave us the population figure of 24,000 for the subdivision from the last census. This last figure would include non-Mina speakers but does not entirely account for the differences in the figures with ALCAM and Ethnologue.

The traditional Muslim chief of Hina Canton, the Laamido, lives in Hina Marbak. He said he became chief in 1962.

A Roman Catholic priest, Father Adrian Edwards, currently lives and works in Hina Marbak. Father Edwards is learning the Mina language. He has received assistance from Jim Pohlig of SIL (Société Internationale de Linguistique) in writing a preliminary phonology of the language (cf. Pohlig 1992). There are also two Catholic sisters at the Catholic centre in Hina Marbak who are teaching adult literacy in French. No alphabet has been produced, there is no language committee, and there are no definitive efforts toward standardization of Mina.

1.2 The Survey

The rapid appraisal survey of the sociolinguistic situation in Hina Subdivision was conducted May 6-7, 21, and 25, 1992. The survey team consisted of Jürg Stalder (May 6-7 only) and Lawrence Seguin of SIL and Bradley and Tammie Harvey of Pioneer Bible Translators, seconded to SIL.

1.3 Objectives

This rapid appraisal survey was conducted in order to confirm the dialect situation as described by ALCAM and assess the need for standardization of the Mina language, taking into consideration reported intercomprehension among dialects as well as any possible bilingualism in surrounding languages and languages of wider communication. The sociolinguistic situation is a factor in this determination as well. Our approach (described in 2.0 "Procedures") attempts to discern the attitudes of Mina, Daba Gamdugun and Dzumdzum speakers toward languages of wider communication and their own mother tongues, as well as their attitudes toward one another's speech forms. Our approach also tries to ascertain whether or not Mina speakers could satisfactorily utilize any other already standardized speech variety. In this case, we would be interested in the possible use of materials from the Daba language which have been standardized in the Pologozom dialect (what we referred to in our questions as "Daba of Douroum").

2.0 PROCEDURES

This survey was carried out utilizing the method of "Rapid Appraisal." This method, though limited in its scope, can provide a general overview and preliminary insight into the sociolinguistic situation of the area in question. The advantage of this method is that it is comprised of specific, non-technical procedures which allow the field work to be completed in anywhere from one day to a week. It also allows for the evaluation of data while still in the field.

The data is collected through the use of conversations and informal interviews with political and traditional authorities as well as church and mission leaders, combined with group and individual questionnaires conducted strategically within or around the language group in question. The survey questions target the level of comprehension and attitudes toward any dialects or related speech forms; possible bilingualism and corresponding attitudes with neighbouring languages and languages of wider

communication, especially Fulfulde and French in this case; and the viability of the language as well as the feasibility of a language development project.

On this particular survey, informal interviews were conducted with the Laamido, the divisional officer of the Hina Subdivision, and Father Edwards and his language assistant, Amadou. Group interviews were carried out in Hina Vindé, Hina Marbak, Gamdougoum, Mayo Kaba and Djoum-Djoum with village chiefs and leaders. A word list was collected in Hina Marbak as well as a set of individual questionnaires (see appendix and Table I). Though an attempt was made to vary the sample according to age and sex, our sample should not necessarily be considered representative of the population.

Table I Questionnaire III Sample

	Men	Women	TOTAL
Young (under 30)	3	3	6
Middle Aged (30-50)	1	1	2
Old (over 50)	2	2	4
TOTAL	6	6	12

3.0 RESULTS AND EVALUATION

3.1 Dialects

3.1.1 Intercomprehension

The group interviewed at Hina Vindé, in addition to the three dialects listed in ALCAM, indicated two additional possible dialects of Mina:

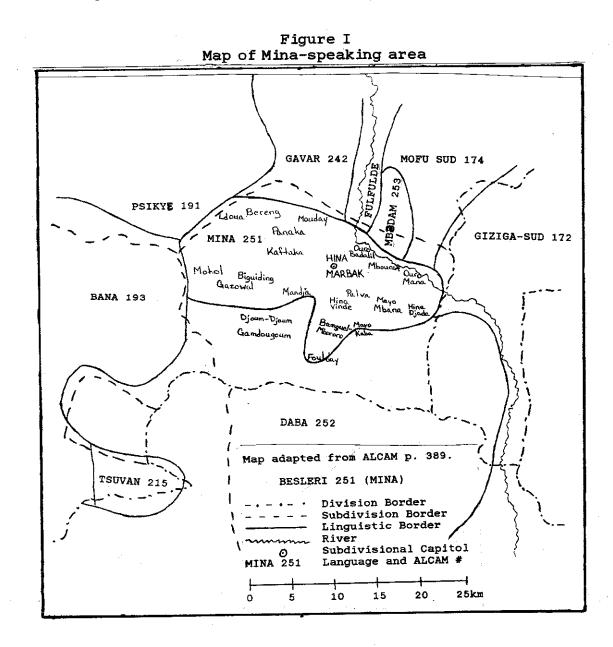
- 1. Zouwoul, Mayo Kaba
- Daba Panai (close to Gamdougoum)

By asking questions 2.9 and 2.10 from Questionnaire III (see appendix), we examined perceived intercomprehension between Mina (spoken in Hina Marbak and Hina Vindé) and the speech varieties spoken in Gamdougoum, Mayo Kaba and Djoum-Djoum and in other surrounding language groups such as Daba, and Gawar. Because the speech variety of a particular village often bears the same name as the village, asking for the "name" of a language is often not revealing, which is why questions 2.9 and 2.10 are worded accordingly.

Group interviews revealed the following communication practices. What the interviewees called "pure Mina" is spoken at Hina Marbak, Hina Vindé and other smaller surrounding villages (cf. Figure I). Mayo Kaba is made up of Mina, Guidar [a dialect of Kada, language 102 in ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983:33)], and Giziga (c.f. Figure I) mother tongue speakers. From our group interview in Mayo Kaba, contrary to what we were told in Hina Vindé, we discovered that there is no speech variety peculiar to Mayo Kaba that can be called "Mayo Kaba" or "Zouwoul." The Mina spoken there is the same as that spoken at Hina Marbak, but with some reportedly slight variations. We were

told by the Mina speakers of Mayo Kaba that in the village of Zouvoul, the people speak Daba and Guidar; there was no evidence that Mina, a dialect of Mina, or a speech form called "Zouwoul" is spoken there.

People from the village of Djoum-Djoum said they speak a language of their own called "Dzumdzum." The Dzumdzum speakers consider Mina to be a separate language. Dzumdzum speakers speak Mina at Hina Marbak and among other Mina speakers, and speak it with an accent which reveals they are from Djoum-Djoum. Their children learn Dzumdzum first, then Mina at age five. Though Dzumdzum speakers understand and speak Mina, Mina speakers do not speak or even understand Dzumdzum. All Dzumdzum, except some elderly people, speak Mina, but the group said Mina must be learned. In other words, the apparently high level of comprehension is acquired and not inherent. This rapid appraisal survey did not reveal enough information to determine the exact linguistic relationship between Dzumdzum and Mina.



In the village of Gamdougoum, the men interviewed said that in no other village do people speak the same as in Gamdougoum. They said Gamdougoum village is comprised primarily of mother tongue speakers of Daba Gamdugun with some mother tongue speakers of Dzumdzum. In addition, Mina, Daba Musgoy (called "Tpala" in ALCAM), Daba Douroum and Fulfulde are used, but no one can speak all of these speech forms. All Daba Gamdugun speakers reportedly understand Dzumdzum, but only some speak it. All Daba Gamdugun can understand and speak Daba Musgoy, but the Daba Musgoy can only understand, not speak, Daba Gamdugun. Some but not all Daba Gamdugun understand Mina. A small Daba Gamdugun child can understand Daba Musgoy and Daba Douroum, but not Mina or Dzumdzum. Therefore, the Daba Gamdugun have intelligibility with Daba Musgoy and Daba Douroum, but must acquire any comprehension they have in Mina or Dzumdzum. It appears then that Daba Gamdugun is not a dialect of Mina, but rather should be taken into consideration as a dialect of Daba. Daba Panai is considered a part of the village of Gamdougoum, not a separate speech variety.

To summarize, it appears that Mina has to be learned by speakers of both Dzumdzum and Daba Gamdugun. More Dzumdzum and Daba Gamdugun speakers appear to learn Mina than vice versa. Daba Panai is part of Gamdougoum. Mayo Kaba is not a dialect of Mina; it is just a border village where Mina comes together with at least two other languages. The relationships between these speech varieties cannot be further determined without more in-depth linguistic testing.

3.1.2 Attitudes

The villages of Hina Marbak, Hina Vindé, Mayo Kaba, Gamdougoum, and Djoum-Djoum are all in Hina Subdivision under the same Laamido. Though they feel unified because of this, the Dzumdzum consider themselves to be a different "race" than the Hina. The Hina originated in Hina Mandja (about 4 km northeast of Djoum-Djoum) and spread out from there, whereas the Dzumdzum have always been located in their current area. Though the Dzumdzum prefer to have Dzumdzum taught in school if given the choice, they would accept it if Mina were used instead. They consider the second choice of Mina as a good thing since they call Hina Marbak their "capital" and look there for leadership. In fact, the chief of Djoum-Djoum is a mother-tongue speaker of Mina and the "brother" of the Laamido.

At the first group interview in Gamdougoum, Daba Gamdugun speakers said that "ethnically" they see themselves as Hina. At the second group interview in Gamdougoum, Daba Gamdugun speakers said they were descendents of the Daba, originally from Zaga Darba, which was once in Hina Subdivision but is now in Guider Subdivision. They call themselves Hina "people" but Daba descendents, and yet consider Daba and Hina as two "races." Without deeper investigation, it is difficult to determine just what is meant by "races," "people" and "ethnically," but it can be seen that they feel some relation to both Daba and Hina. As previously stated, they appear to be linguistically most closely related to the Daba groups to the south, but socially and "ethnically" it appears they consider themselves more Hina.

Despite their identification with Hina, the Daba Gamdugun refused the idea of having Mina taught in schools as a choice for them. They also did not like the idea of using Daba Musgoy or Daba Douroum in the first years of school,

even though the children can readily comprehend these latter two speech forms. When asked why they wanted only Daba Gamdugun to be used as an option for the first few school years, the interviewees answered that they were afraid their children might forget Daba Gamdugun if one of the other Daba speech forms were to be used in the schools.

The Mina speakers at Mayo Kaba are Hina people who have Guidar and Giziga speakers living among them. They prefer Mina over any other language to be used in their schools if given the choice. Their ability to understand and speak Guidar and Giziga is acquired due to proximity and does not exist as widely among Mina speakers outside Mayo Kaba.

Mina speakers in Hina Vindé consider Daba Gamdugun, Dzumdzum, and Mayo Kaba to be Hina people because they all live in Hina Subdivision and have the same chief. Yet these same people said that they have different customs and cultures because they are "different races." They may have shared a common ancestor long ago, but no one with whom we spoke was certain about this.

3.2 Multilingualism

3.2.1 Intercomprehension

Based on responses from interviewees and reported absence of inherent intelligibility, it appears that Dzumdzum and Daba Gamdugun are different languages from Mina. This conclusion should not be considered definitive however, unless more in-depth linguistic testing concurs with this result. This section will discuss each of these speech varieties' relation with languages of wider communication (Fulfulde and French) and some other neighbouring languages.

According to all the interviews, it seems that everyone speaks at least some Fulfulde (some very well), except some of the old people. In Hina Vindé, for example, people over fifty do not speak it. Children sometimes learn it at the same time as their first language, or at least by age fifteen, within their own village, informally. If someone goes to another village where his mother tongue is not understood, Fulfulde seems to be the next language tried in the endeavour to communicate. For example, a Mina speaker from Hina Vindé speaks Fulfulde when among people who speak Daba Gamdugun, Gadala and Mbədam.

French is spoken by those who are or who have been in school, and the level of French corresponds to the level attained in school. Few children go to school, and often, due to the expense or other reasons, few of those who do go to school finish. Even fewer go on to secondary school.

3.2.2 Attitudes

Fulfulde was consistently seen as a good language to learn, being especially useful in places of contact with speakers of other languages, such as at markets and dispensaries. Children are encouraged to learn Fulfulde, though it is not used at home except in cases of exogamy (cf. section 3.3.1). In none of our interviews was Fulfulde selected over a mother tongue to be used in school or seen as a threat that would replace a mother

tongue. In Mayo Kaba, Fulfulde was even called a "national language," in other words, one that is widely known.

Those we interviewed were not willing for their children to learn Fulfulde in school, but wanted them to learn French, even if the first few grades were to commence in their mother tongue. It is considered good that the children learn French and are instructed in French. Therefore, French appears to be more highly respected than Fulfulde, though few people seem to know French. Like Fulfulde, French is not seen as a threat to the mother tongue.

3.3 Viability

3.3.1 Language Use

None of the mother tongues surveyed appears to be experiencing language shift. They continue to be used in crucial domains such as the home, the field, and village life. The mother tongue of the father, be it Mina, Dzumdzum or Daba Gamdugun, is used predominantly in the corresponding families. In the case of exogamy, the husband and wife speak Fulfulde, or the wife's mother tongue if the husband knows it, until the wife learns the husband's language (one to five years depending on how much of it she already knows and how closely related her mother tongue is to the husband's). Generally, the wife learns the husband's language rather than vice versa because it is customary for the wife to live among the husband's family, though a man may decide to live among his wife's people.

Fulfulde is often used at the local markets and dispensaries because Fulfulde speakers and people from a variety of different language groups frequent them. Fulfulde is also used in the mosques, with Arabic used for prayers only. Adults and children both will change to Fulfulde if someone is involved in the conversation who does not comprehend their language and there is no other language of mutual understanding. For example, the Daba Gamdugun use some form of Daba with Daba speakers; the Dzumdzum speak Dzumdzum with the Daba Gamdugun who know Dzumdzum and Mina when Mina speakers are present; but in other situations Fulfulde is reportedly used.

Children speak French at school and use Fulfulde and the local language(s) after school. The young people who leave the village for higher education, or those who go to big cities in search of jobs and city life, sometimes prefer French over their mother tongue and may try to speak French as often as possible even when they return to their home village.

In the only church situation we studied, a brief interview with the Baptist catechist in Gamdougoum, we were informed that scripture portions of Daba (Pologozom) are used in the church service, but the people still prefer written materials in Fulfulde over those in Daba. The catechist feels that this is because the people are more accustomed to Fulfulde material and have not yet learned how to read Daba. Perhaps this is simply an issue of literacy and not necessarily of language preference or proficiency.

3.3.2 Attitudes

According to the expressed attitudes of the Mina, Dzumdzum and Daba Gamdugun, the viability of each of these respective languages appears

strong. Mina, Dzumdzum, and Daba Gamdugun speakers all feel their respective languages will never be forgotten or replaced. They all agree that the ability to read and write in their own mother tongue would be a good thing. Some even mentioned it would make learning to read and write easier if these skills were taught first in the mother tongue rather than in French. Almost everyone chose the mother tongue as the first choice of instruction in school. The only exception was one Mina youth well advanced in French. Dzumdzum speakers said that if Dzumdzum were written, it would be easier for others to learn their language; considering there are only a little more than 600 Dzumdzum speakers, this statement seems to reveal a very positive attitude toward their own language.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary

The present survey revealed a linguistic situation different from that given in ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983:36). Within Mina, there appear to be no significant dialectal variations, only slight regional or village variations which reportedly do not interfere at all with comprehension. The term "Besleri" seems to be completely unknown.

The second language which the interviewees said almost everyone could speak is Fulfulde, though our findings did not reveal much evidence of generalized Fulfulde bilingualism in the region. French is spoken only by those who have gone to school or to a big city where French is primarily spoken, such as Yaoundé or Douala.

There is a definite desire expressed by those Mina speakers interviewed to see Mina standardized and to have books written in Mina. The Dzumdzum speakers also expressed the desire to see Dzumdzum standardized, but with only a little over 600 speakers, their self-reported bilingualism in Mina, and their expressed willingness to utilize Mina if standardized, the subsequent standardization of Dzumdzum would be a comparatively low priority. More in-depth study is necessary concerning the linguistic relatedness of Dzumdzum to Mina to determine whether inherent intelligibility is such that even Dzumdzum speakers who have had little or no contact with Mina could easily and effectively learn to read and write Mina. If this is not the case, then bilingualism testing should be done to determine if bilingualism in Mina is actually as generalized as reported.

The primary focus of this survey was the Mina language. All other speech forms discussed have been evaluated according to their relationship with Mina. Therefore, once it was ascertained from the interviews that Daba Gamdugun is linguistically more closely related to Daba to the south and not inherently inter-comprehensible with Mina or Dzumdzum, no further information was sought on this speech form.

4.2 Recommendations

Because of the desire expressed by the Mina-speaking people themselves to have Mina used in school as a language of instruction and to see written materials in Mina, and given the fact that no other already standardized

form seems to adequately fulfill this desire, we recommend that a standardization project be strongly considered for the Mina language. Due to the unfamiliarity among the Hina people of the term "Besleri," we recommend that in the next editions of ALCAM and Ethnologue consideration be given to changing the name of this language to Mina, the autoglossonyme. Consideration should also be given to excluding "Gamdugun" as a "dialect" of Mina in these two publications and including it instead as a "dialect" of Daba. This preliminary survey also indicates that Dzumdzum should possibly be considered as a separate language from Mina, though the need for a separate standardization project would be unlikely if bilingualism testing concurs with the level of self-reported bilingualism in Mina. More in-depth linguistic studies would be required before a final determination could be made however.

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ADDENDUM TO THE HINA CANTON SURVEY REPORT

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At the Cameroon Language Assessment Committee (CAMLAC) meeting held in Yaoundé on October 15, 1992, it was decided that sufficient information was available to classify Mina as a "definite translation need."