A sociolinguistic survey of the Gbe language communities of Benin and Togo
Volume 3
Kotafon language area

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A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF THE GBE LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES

OF

BENIN AND TOGO

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Abstract

This paper presents a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the Kotafon language communities (Kwa language family) of Benin. The Gbe languages continuum is situated in the southeastern part of West Africa. Expanding westwards from southwestern Nigeria, the Gbe communities occupy large areas in southern Benin, Togo, and southeastern Ghana. To date in Benin, as far as Gbe varieties are concerned, Aja, Fon, Gen and Gun have undergone language development on a larger scale. A survey of the Kotafon communities was conducted to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Fon and Gen could extend to the Kotafon communities and to determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities.

After a general overview of the taxonomic and geographic language situation, test results are reported. Survey interview and group test results are presented on comprehension of Fon and Gen. Results are given on language attitudes toward both written and oral forms of Fon and Gen and toward the development of Kotafon. In addition, the following topics were investigated: language vitality and the relationship of Kotafon to related Gbe varieties in terms of comprehension and language attitudes. Also, information by local leaders on the literacy and religious situations and on migration history is given.

The test results show, at least preliminarily, that the Kotafon have high a level of comprehension of both Fon and Gen. Attitudes toward Gen appear to be slightly more positive than those toward Fon. The survey findings suggest that Gen and possibly Fon literacy is a workable solution for literacy needs in the Kotafon speech communities provided there is adequate institutional support. Regarding Kotafon language vitality, the data indicate that Kotafon is in use in all village domains.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the Kotafon speech communities of Benin. The Kotafon speech variety belongs to the Gbe language continuum (Kwa language group) which is situated in the southeastern part of West Africa. Expanding westwards from southwestern Nigeria, the Gbe communities occupy large areas in southern Benin, Togo, and southeastern Ghana.

Among the Gbe varieties, five have thus far undergone language development on a larger scale: Fon, Gen and Gun in Benin, and Ewe in Togo. To assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in these Gbe speech varieties could extend to the remaining Gbe communities, or whether additional language-based development programs in some of the remaining communities would be beneficial and to determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities, a sociolinguistic study of the Gbe communities of Benin and Togo was launched in the late 1980s.

The sociolinguistics survey reported here is part of this larger study and was carried out in June 1998 by Michael McHenry and Bonnie Henson, researchers of SIL. The survey data reported here results from community interviews administered in the villages of Agamé, Hounkpon and Possotomé, as well as two Rapid Appraisal Recorded Text Tests (RA-RTTs) in Fon and Gen administered in these four villages.

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1 All town names are spelled according to the Carte générale for Benin (IGN France and IGN Bénin 1992) or the sous-préfecture maps of the 1992 Benin Census Data (Ministère du Plan 1994).
2 Gen is also known as Mina.
In Section 2, pertinent background information on the Kotafon speech variety is presented. Some of these data were gathered during the field interviews with members of the Kotafon language community. This section is followed by information on previous linguistic research (Section 3), a presentation of the research questions (Section 4) and a description of the methodology as applied during this survey (Section 5). In Section 6, the findings are discussed, followed by a set of conclusions (Section 7). The report closes with a set of appendices and a list of references.

2. Background

2.1. Language name and classification

The *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996:168) lists Kotafon as Ko-Gbe [ISO code: kqk] and gives the following classification:

- Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Kwa, Left Bank, Gbe

Alternative names are:

- Ko (Grimes 1996:168)
- Kotafohn (Capo 1986:13)

In *Renaissance du Gbe* (1986) and *A comparative phonology of Gbe* (1991), H. B. C. Capo classifies the Gbe lects (Kwa language family) into five groupings based on shared phonological and morphophonological characteristics: Aja, Ewe, Fon, Gen and Phla-Phera. Kotafon is classified as a dialect in the Phla-Phera group which is comprised of: “Alada, Ayiza, Phla, Təli, Phelá, Təfín, Tsáphɛ, Kotafon, Gbesi” (Capo 1991:14, see also 1986:101). According to Capo (1986:100), the Phla-Phera varieties are similar phonologically, but they differ substantially in their vocabulary; nevertheless, there is a rather high degree of intercomprehension between the speakers of these varieties.

The *Atlas sociolinguistique du Benin* (CNL du Bénin 1983:55) reports that there is a striking level of intercomprehension between Ayizo, Kotafon and Ci (“entre les langues de ce sous-groupe ou continuum existe une intercompréhension si frappante ...”). Ci is not included in any of Capo’s (1986, 1991) five groupings, even though it is listed as one of the Gbe lects (1986:13, 1991:3).

2.2. Language area

The Kotafon area is located in western Benin, in the Mono département, specifically in the sous-préfectures of Lokossa, Athiémé, Grand-Popo and Bopa. (For a map of the area, see Appendix A.)

According to the information obtained during the survey, the boundaries of the Kotafon language area, roughly delineated, are as follows: Agamé to the north, the Mono river to the west, Gnito to the south, RN (Route Nationale) 2 to the south-east, and the eastern border of the palm plantation outside of Lokossa to the northeast. There are a few Kotafon communities separated geographically from the

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1[Editor: See also the current version of the *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009) for an updated entry on Kotafon.]
2Capo (1986:96ff) refers to Ewe as Vhe, to Aja as Ajá, and to Phla-Phera as Phla-Pherá.
3The *Atlas sociolinguistique du Benin* (CNL du Bénin 1983:55) refers to Kotafon as Kogbe and to Ci as Cigbe.
Previous linguistic research

main language area: Kotokoli and Tokpa-Aizo towards the coast and a row of villages along the western edge of Lake Ahémé, including Possotomé.

There were some discrepancies in information obtained during the survey versus that in previously published reports:

- The *Atlas Sociolinguistique* (CNL du Bénin 1983) lists Oumako as being Kotafon, but informants in Houkpon, close to Oumako, reported that the people there speak Waci.
- Possotomé was listed in the *Atlas Sociolinguistique* as a Kotafon village, along with Agbodji and Djidjazoun to the north of the lake, but Capo (1986) lists Possotomé as being Ayizo and Agbodji and Djidjazoun as being Saxwe speaking. In the *Atlas Sociolinguistique*, Bopa is described as being an Ayizo community. However, the community in Possotomé reported that the same language variety is spoken in Possotomé, Bopa, Agbodji and Djidjazoun, which they called Ayizo or Kotafon, and that Saxwe speakers are also present in these villages.
- The *Atlas Sociolinguistique* lists Tokpa-Aizo and Kotokoli as being Ayizo-speaking, but the informants in Hounkpon declared that the same speech variety was spoken in Hounkpon, Tokpa-Aizo and Kotokoli, which they called Kotafon.

2.3. Population

Using the population figures of the 1992 Benin Census (Ministere du Plan 1994:8–21), the towns reported to be mostly populated by Kotafon speakers have a combined population of 75,000.

2.4. History of migration

According to Pazzi (1979:18,124,253), when Allada was invaded by the Fon in 1724, a group of Ayizo fled from Toffo to the Ko region, located to the west of the Kouffo river. They did not have much contact with surrounding peoples who thought they were Fon and were, therefore, suspicious of them. The name “Kotafon” means “the Fon of Ko.”

The information collected during the survey in the communities of Agamé and Possotomé agrees with this report, with informants claiming that the Kotafon are descended from the Toffo of Allada. However, the people of Hounkpon report that they are descendants of the Fon of the Dahomey kingdom, which was centered around present-day Abomey, Benin.

2.5. Presence of other ethnic groups

In the wider Kotafon language area, Kotafon villages are interspersed with Aja, Saxwe, and Waci villages. There is a strong local presence of Aja to the north and south near Agamé and Hounkpon. Wací villages are located to the west and Saxwe villages to the east with Possotomé almost completely surrounded by Saxwe villages. None of the Kotafon villages visited are isolated from contact with other ethnic groups. The community of Agamé reported that there were first language (L1) speakers of Yoruba living among them in the village, and the informants from Possotomé stated that there were L1 Saxwe speakers living in Possotomé. Hounkpon alone was purely Kotafon.
Mixed marriages are also common. In Agamé the community reported that most Kotafon men marry Kotafon women. However, where there is intermarriage, there do not seem to be any restrictions as to ethnic groups. Most intermarriages occur with the Saxwe, but they also reported marriages with Aja, Gen and Fon. The people of Hounkpon reported that they also have no ethnicity-based restrictions for marriage and that intermarriages are common with most local groups, including the Xwela. The community of Possotomé also reported on ethnicity-based restrictions for marriage and stated that most of the intermarriages in their village are with the Saxwe.

2.6. **Regional language use**

The communities of Agamé and Hounkpon both stated that Kotafon was the language most widely used in their area. For the Agamé region, the next most frequently used language is Aja. The community of Hounkpon reported that after Kotafon, people in their area use Gen the most. In the Possotomé region, the most widely used language is Saxwe, Possotomé being one of a few pockets of Kotafon speakers in that region.

French is the language of the Beninese educational system. Fon is currently used for literacy classes. Churches in the Kotafon area use Gen, Gun, Fon, Ewe and/or French in their services/mass.

2.7. **Non-formal education**

Literacy in the region where classes are being held, is done in Fon. No literacy materials in Kotafon were available at the literacy center in Lokossa.

2.8. **Religious situation**

The Kotafon people are traditionally animists, although there is also a Christian and Muslim presence in the area (Vanderaa 1991).

The survey informants reported the existence of Roman Catholic, Neo-Apostolique, Pentecostal, Methodist, La Foi, Renaissance, Christianisme Celeste, Miracle, Jehovah’s Witnesses, SIM-UEEB, and Assemblées de Dieu churches. According to Rice (1998, personal communication), a Southern Baptist missionary, the following churches are present in Lokossa: Assemblées de Dieu, Pentecostal, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Deeper Life, UEEB, Baptist, Renaissance, Christianisme Celeste, Apostolic and Eckankar.

3. **Previous linguistic research**

The Gbe language continuum has been the subject of much research, especially over the last 20 years.
3.1. Comparative studies

Capo began an extensive comparative study of the Gbe language continuum in 1971. His phonological and morpho-phonological comparisons were the basis for his doctoral dissertation and were later published under the title *Renaissance du gbe* (Capo 1986) and *A comparative phonology of Gbe* (Capo 1991).

Focusing on phonological and morpho-phonological characteristics, Capo (1986:99ff, 1991:11ff) arrives at five basic Gbe clusters: Aja, Ewe, Fon, Gen and Phla-Phera. However, even though Capo (1986:13, carte 1a, 1991:xxiii, 3) mentions Ci as a variety of Gbe, it is not listed within any of the five clusters.

Based on Capo’s (1986) study and information provided by the language map of Benin (CENALA 1990), SIL chose 50 varieties of the Gbe continuum for the elicitation of word and phrase lists. These elicitations, done between 1988 and 1992, constituted phase one of the larger study of the Gbe language continuum. The elicited word lists were analyzed according to prescribed methodology in order to determine the degree of lexical similarity between these varieties. (See Kluge 1997.)

Table 1 shows the percentage matrix which reports the number of lexically similar items as a percentage of the basic vocabulary. (Wimbish 1989:59; for the variance matrix showing the range of error for each count, see Table 3, Appendix B.)

Table 1: Percentage matrix

|   | Gen | Fon | Tofin | Toli | Set | Xwla (from | Alada | 67 | 87 | 74 | 79 | 82 | 77 | 89 | Kotafon | 62 | 79 | 66 | 76 | 74 | 71 | 79 | 82 | Ayizo | 69 | 87 | 77 | 81 | 75 | 89 | 94 | 78 | Gbokpa | 61 | 79 | 70 | 74 | 77 | 69 | 78 | 85 | 72 | 92 | Gbé | 62 | 78 | 79 | 82 | 73 | 79 | 78 | 67 | 85 | 79 | Xwela | 65 | 77 | 77 | 76 | 77 | 73 | 81 | 78 | 69 | 86 | 77 | 85 | Xwla (from | 69 | 80 | 69 | 69 | 73 | 65 | 79 | 80 | 70 | 87 | 77 | 75 | 82 | Saxwe | 61 | 81 | 69 | 72 | 72 | 66 | 75 | 76 | 70 | 77 | 75 | 77 | 80 | 78 | Raxe | 59 | 79 | 67 | 70 | 70 | 64 | 74 | 75 | 69 | 77 | 74 | 74 | 79 | 77 | 98 | Se |

In addition to the Phla-Phera varieties, a number of Gbe varieties, have been added to the computation due to their high lexical similarities to the varieties of the Phla-Phera cluster: Gbokpa, Raxe and Seto.

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6Capo (1986:99ff) refers to Ewe as Vhe, to Aja as Ajá, and to Phla-Phera as Phla-Pherá.
7The National Linguistic Commission has also collected word lists for selected Gbe varieties (CNL du Bénin, n.d.).
8For details see Appendix B.
9No results from phrase list analysis are included in this report.
10For this computation, morphemes that are apparently affixed to the form used in another variety are ignored if they occur always in the same position. Including all morphemes in the analysis results in an overall lower degree of lexical similarity, as shown in Table 4 and Table 5, Appendix B.
These varieties are not classified by Capo (1986) in any of his proposed Gbe clusters. Fon and Gen have also been added to the table, given the focus of the current study, i.e. levels of comprehension of Fon and Gen among the Kotafon communities.

The results of the wordlist analysis show an overall degree of lexical similarity of >74% at the upper confidence limit\(^{11}\) of the calculations between Kotafon and the Phla-Phera varieties as listed by Capo (1986) as well as between Xwela and Gbokpa, Raxe and Seto. Regarding Fon and Gen, the degree of lexical similarity is also >87% between Kotafon and Fon, whereas it is only 67% between Kotafon and Gen at the upper confidence limit.

If these figures are a true reflection of the linguistic situation, a high level of intercomprehension among these varieties would not result from linguistic similarity alone. It would appear that contact would be necessary for intercomprehension to take place.

3.2. Ayizo sociolinguistic survey

A survey was conducted among the Ayizo people of southern Benin by SIL researchers in early 1998 (Voume 2). Based on Capo’s (1986) claim that there is a rather high degree of intercomprehension between Ayizo and Kotafon speakers, and a similar statement in the Atlas Sociolinguistique du Benin (1983), questions were posed to the Ayizo subjects as to their comprehension of Kotafon.

The villagers of Kpodji-Denou (Ayizo-Kogbe area, northwest of Allada, close to the Kotafon area) said that they would use Ayizo-Kogbe to communicate with the Kotafon. They added that when the Kotafon come among them, they are unable to recognize where they come from by their speech. The people of Yékon-Aga, in the Ayizo-Séto region (near Abomey-Calavi), reported that they use Ayizo-Séto to talk to Kotafon speakers and that the Kotafon respond in Kotafon. In Tori-Kada (near Tori-Bossito), where Ayizo-Tori is spoken, the informants said that they find Kotafon harder to understand than Ayizo-Kogbe, and that in interacting with Kotafon speakers, both use Fon.

This implies that the Ayizo dialect which is found the closest geographically to the Kotafon area, that is, Ayizo-Kogbe, is the one most similar to Kotafon, followed by Ayizo-Seto, and finally by Ayizo-Tori. Hence, there is a continuum of degree of comprehension among speakers of these Gbe varieties.

4. Research questions

The purpose of this survey is twofold: (1) to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Fon and Gen could extend to the Kotafon communities, or whether an additional language-based development program in Kotafon would be beneficial, and (2) to gather data that would help determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities.

For the current study, the evaluation of need for separate literature is based on criteria established by Marmor (1997). More specifically, the evaluation of literature development needs is based on the factors of dialect intercomprehension, language vitality and language attitudes. Pertinent to the issue of a potential reference dialect for the Phla-Phera cluster, information regarding the Kotafon dialect

\(^{11}\)Upper confidence limit = percentage + range of error (variance).
situation and the relationship of Kotafon to other Gbe varieties (dealt with under dialect intercomprehension and language attitudes) was collected.

1. Dialect intercomprehension
   - What are the geographical boundaries of the Kotafon speech variety, which dialects of Kotafon, if any, exist?
   - What are the Fon and Gen comprehension levels throughout the Kotafon communities and might these levels be adequate for the use of Fon or Gen written materials?
   - Are there any other developed Gbe varieties that are understood at high levels throughout the Kotafon community and which Gbe varieties would the Kotafon communities choose to group themselves with in terms of comprehension?

2. Language vitality
   - Are there indications of occurring or impending language shift?

3. Language attitudes
   - What are the Kotafon community’s attitudes toward the oral and written forms of Fon and Gen?
   - What are the Kotafon community’s attitudes toward other related Gbe varieties?
   - What are community attitudes toward the development of Kotafon?

There are some additional questions, most of which are directly related to the priority and strategy criteria outlined above and which provide updated information for the area. These questions are:

   - What is the ethnic identity of Kotafon speakers?
   - What is the size of the Kotafon population?
   - Are there already literacy classes in the Kotafon area? If so, in which language(s)?
   - What is the religious make-up of the Kotafon communities and which languages are used in the religious domain?

5. Methodology

5.1. Assessment techniques

The survey approach was based on Stalder’s description of Rapid Appraisal Survey (Stalder 1996a). The main research techniques used were the community interview and Rapid Appraisal Recorded Text Tests (RA-RTTs).

Community questionnaires were used to explore the following topics: dialect intercomprehension, language vitality, language attitudes, ethnic identity, literacy situation and religious make-up. RA-RTTs were administered to investigate for Fon and Gen comprehension. (See Appendix C for an example of the questionnaire and Appendix D for the RA-RTT texts.)

RA-RTTs allow for a general indication of comprehension, either good, partial or no comprehension. These levels are defined by Stalder (1996b:26) as follows:
Level 3  Good comprehension: The story is retold accurately and the people are able to give details.
Level 2  Partial comprehension: When retelling the different sections, people invent and add to the story. If asked, they are not able to answer details.  
Level 1  No comprehension: The group is not able to respond even to the general story lines.

The Gen text was developed in 1997 by an L1 speaker of Gen, a national linguist. The Fon text was elicited in 1998 from an L1 speaker of Fon, a translator for Alliance Biblique. This translator was assisted by another Fon translator for the word-by-word and free translations into French.

Baseline calibration was performed by administering the tests to five native speakers of Fon and three native speakers of Gen, respectively, playing two or three sentences at a time, and asking the L1 speakers to report what they had heard. Only those items which were retold accurately were retained on the tally list for that particular test. During the calibration of the three texts, the researchers were assisted by the two L1 speakers from whom the texts had been elicited.

This survey’s modifications to Stalder’s (1996b) method are the baseline calibration and shorter replay sections.

Before the survey was commenced, a preliminary interview was held with H. Rice, a Southern Baptist missionary working in Lokossa, to obtain pertinent background information about the Kotafon language situation.

5.2. Implementation

The research was conducted in four villages, initially chosen based on information taken from the Atlas sociolinguistique du Bénin (CNL du Bénin 1983; see also Section 2.2 ‘Language area’) with an effort being made to have a geographically representative sample. During informal interviews held with the chief of each village in order to make arrangements for the official community interviews, it was confirmed that these villages were Kotafon-speaking. The following villages were selected:

1. Agamé
   − Located in the sous-préfecture of Lokossa
   − Chosen because of its location at the northern extreme of the Kotafon language area

2. Hounkpon
   − Located in the sous-préfecture of Athiémé, commune of Atchannou
   − Chosen because of its location in the southern region of the Kotafon language area and because of its fairly remote location

3. Possotomé
   − Located in the sous-préfecture of Bopa

Stalder (1996b:26) adds that “it is interesting to observe attitudes and to compare what the same people expressed about intercomprehension in the context of the enquiries based on questionnaires.”
Methodology

— Chosen due to mixed reports regarding the language spoken in Possotomé (Ayizo or Kotafon) as well as its relative geographical isolation from the rest of the Kotafon language area, to see if language behavior remained consistent with the rest of the Kotafon area.

The community interviews were conducted in all three villages. In Agamé, both RA-RTTs were administered. In Hounkpon, the Fon RA-RTT and the following abbreviated version of the Gen RA-RTT were administered. In Possotomé, the Gen RA-RTT and an abbreviated version of the Fon RA-RTT were administered.

An abbreviated version of the RA-RTT was administered in two communities. In Hounkpon, the researchers felt pressured by time constraints imposed by the informants, and in Possotomé, an impending funeral made it difficult to retain the audience for both tests. In order to administer the abbreviated version, the story was played in its entirety to the whole group, with care being taken to observe the crowd’s reactions as an indication of their comprehension. Then one person was appointed by the group to retell the story.

The respondents for the community interviews consisted of the chief or délégué and his elders (except in Possotomé where the chief was otherwise occupied), as well as people from each of the following “social groups”:

— Women of about 20 years of age (“younger women”)
— Men of about 20 years of age (“younger men”)
— Women of about 40 years of age (“older women”)
— Men of about 40 years of age (“older men”)

In general, there were at least five people from each “social group”, if not many more. The exception was Possotomé where only two older women were present, while the rest of the older women were occupied with preparations for a funeral. All subjects reported that they were Kotafon.

The RA-RTTs were executed by first playing the whole narrative to the group, and then replaying it section by section (a section being about 2 or 3 sentences). During replay, after each section, one social group was to retell the contents of the section in Kotafon. Beforehand, a tally list containing salient content elements of the text portions had been prepared and calibrated, and during retelling, a tally was taken. If necessary and feasible, the social group was asked to furnish more details. If requested, the section was replayed. Some care was taken to include the whole social group in the process, e.g. by each time asking a different person from the targeted social group to retell the narrative section.

During the field research, the researchers were accompanied by an interpreter provided by the sous-préfet of Lokossa.

5.3. Terminology and presentation

In discussions of the questionnaire results, “everybody” means all interviewed persons, i.e. the communities of Agamé, Hounkpon and Possotomé, in as far as the question under consideration has been posed to them. If no specific informants are mentioned, the same three groups, that is, all those interviewed in those three villages, are implied.

In the questionnaire results, it is understood that all data are reported, even if not explicitly stated as such.
6. Results

In the following sections, data gathered from community interviews and informal interviews with regional literacy coordinators, village literacy workers and church leaders, as well as the results from the RA-RTTs, are presented according to the following topics: Kotafon language situation (Section 6.1), Kotafon and related Gbe varieties (Section 6.2), tested comprehension of Fon and Gen (Section 6.3), language vitality (Section 6.4), literacy situation (Section 6.5) and religious situation (Section 6.6). Language attitudes toward Kotafon, Fon, Gen, and other Gbe varieties will be discussed under pertinent sections as appropriate.

6.1. Kotafon dialect situation

All interviewees gave the name of both their group and their language as “Kotafon.” When asked whether they would refer to their language as Ko-Gbe, the survey interpreter maintained that it was linguists who had decided that all language varieties in the Gbe language family should have -gbe as a suffix, and it was they who were encouraging the people to say they speak Kogbe instead of Kotafon.13

In all three survey locations, the interviewed communities agreed that there are no dialects of Kotafon, though the people of Hounkpon and Possotomé stated that there are some small differences on the level of accent and intonation which allow them to identify from where people originate. For example, they were able to tell that the survey interpreter came from Lokossa and not from nearby.

All the Kotafon consider each other to be brothers, though they may not all share the same origin. That is, the people of Hounkpon claimed to be descended from the Fon of the Dahomey kingdom instead of from the Toffo of Allada, as are the people of Agamé and Possotomé.

The community of Agamé stated that the best Kotafon is spoken in Adjohoun, in the Ouémé département. The people there are apparently descended from a later emigration from Toffo. They did not give a basis for this opinion. The community of Hounkpon did not know where the purest Kotafon would be spoken, while the people of Possotomé reported that it would be found somewhere to the west of them, between Se and Athiémé.

6.2. Kotafon and related Gbe varieties

In order to arrive at some indication of which other Gbe varieties the Kotafon would choose to group themselves with, the communities surveyed were asked to classify related Gbe varieties as being “like” or “unlike” Kotafon. They were also asked which varieties they found easiest, and hardest, to understand, as well as to describe which varieties they would choose to use when faced with a need to communicate with a speaker of another Gbe variety.

The reported data are presented following with the speech varieties included in Capo’s (1986) Phla-Phera grouping discussed first in alphabetical order, followed by Ci, Fon, Gen, Aja and Waci.

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13The suffix -gbe means “language” throughout the speech varieties now classified as the Gbe language family (see Stewart 1989: 229f).
6.2.1. Ayizo

It was unanimous agreed upon that Ayizo and Kotafon are the same language. The people of Agamé reported that it is the Fon who originally made the distinction between the two speech communities. The Kotafon have kept this distinction because the Ayizo are separated from them geographically. The two regions converge, however, in the area around Possotomé where the community use the names Ayizo and Kotafon almost interchangeably.

6.2.2. Tori

Tori turned out to be an ambiguous term. Throughout the survey there was some confusion among respondents to distinguish between the Ayizo dialect Ayizo-Tori and the Gbe variety Toli which is spoken in the Porto Novo area (maybe the confusion was due to the r/l distinction). The respondents in Agamé stated that Tori resembles Kotafon and just has a different accent. This different accent, however, reportedly limits comprehension in that a Kotafon speaker has difficulty understanding a Tori speaker. The community in Hounkpon rarely has contact with Tori speakers but stated that they do understand them when they encounter them. The group in Possotomé, who have some contact with Tori speakers, reported that Tori is a little bit different but that they understand each other anyway. They went on to say though that a Kotafon will not be able to speak just like a Tori speaker and vice versa.

6.2.3. Saxwe, Xwela, and Xwla

The community in Possotomé reported that Saxwe, Xwela and Xwla are different from Kotafon. However, when the Kotafon speakers of Possotomé have contact with speakers of Saxwe, Xwela or Xwla each continues to use his own speech variety, and they are able to communicate.

The people of Agamé grouped Saxwe, Xwela and Xwla together and reported that they are different from Kotafon. The Agamé community reported that between Saxwe, Xwela and Xwla they have the most difficulty understanding the Xwela. This is reportedly due to the fact that they have more contact with Saxwe and Xwla speakers. There are Saxwe villages in the region, and Xwla speakers come to Agamé to have children there, presumably at the maternity clinic.

If a Kotafon speaker and a speaker of Saxwe, Xwela or Xwla want to communicate, they will be able to, because of their mutual ability to speak Gen. To simplify things, the people of Agamé said that they usually speak Gen to speakers of Saxwe, Xwela, and Xwla, and their interlocutors respond in the same manner. They added, however, that if speakers of these varieties want to deceive or confuse a Kotafon speaker, they could talk in such a way that the Kotafon speaker would not understand them.

The people of Hounkpon reported that out of the Gbe varieties in the region, they find Xwela and Xwla the hardest to understand. However, they reported that there is intermarriage between the Xwela and the Kotafon of Hounkpon, in spite of the language difficulty, and that when a Kotafon speaker meets a

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14This confusion might be an indication that there is not much difference between both speech varieties, a hypothesis to be explored in a future survey in the Porto Novo area.
Xwela or Xwla speaker, each will continue to speak his own variety, and they will be able to communicate.

6.2.4. Ci

All three communities also agreed that Ci is similar to Kotafon and that they understand Ci well. When a Kotafon meets a Ci speaker, each speaks their own speech variety and they are able to communicate. The people of Agamé described Ci as being another “variante” (variety) of Ayizo /Kotafon, while those of Possotomé said that it is close to Kotafon, but that the Ci speak with a different accent (“on the edge of their lips”).

6.2.5. Fon

There was some disagreement as to whether Fon is “like” Kotafon or not, but the communities of Agamé, Hounkpon and Possotomé all agreed that they understand Fon well, and that they speak it as well. The people of Agamé reported that no matter what a Fon speaker said, they would understand. Those of Hounkpon stated that they both understand and speak Fon, and the people of Possotomé reported that while the Kotafon could manage to both understand and speak Fon, a Fon speaker could not speak like a Kotafon, even though he would understand what the Kotafon speaker said.

6.2.6. Gen

The community of Possotomé reported that Gen does not resemble Kotafon but that they understand it clearly anyway. They also stated that this comprehension is not necessarily mutual. The Kotafon understand the Gen more than the Gen understand the Kotafon. The people of Hounkpon stated that Gen is the related language they understand best and that they both understand and speak it well. An elder in the village of Agamé reported that not only did they all speak and understand Gen, but that “even if a baby was born in the village today, he would speak Gen.” Those present agreed.

6.2.7. Aja

There is a strong Aja presence throughout most of the region. The people of Agamé said that there were accent and vocabulary differences between Aja and Kotafon and reported that they occasionally have difficulty understanding words if they are out of context. (They gave the example of plant names.) However, when the Kotafon of Agamé speak to their Aja neighbors, each uses their own speech variety, and they are able to communicate. The community of Hounkpon reported though that they switch to Aja to communicate with their Aja neighbors. The people of Possotomé said that Aja and Waci (see Section 6.2.8) were the languages in the region that they found the most difficult to understand.
6.2.8. **Waci**

The attitudes toward, and use of, Waci, in the south, mimic those toward Aja. The people of Hounkpon switch to Waci to speak with their Waci neighbors, and the community in Possotomé finds Waci hard to understand.

6.3. **Tested comprehension of Fon and Gen**

RA-RTT testing was conducted in two Gbe varieties: Fon and Gen. As explained in Section 5.1 ‘Assessment techniques’, RA-RTTs result in an assessment of comprehension on a three-level scale as defined by Stalder (1996b): good, partial or no comprehension. Because of considerable differences in tape quality, story structure and content, it is not possible to compare exactly the relative understanding of Fon and Gen from the tally results.

Overall, the RA-RTT results indicate “good comprehension” of Fon in Agamé and Hounkpon by all social groups, and “good comprehension” of Gen in Agamé and Possotomé. There was no indication of “partial comprehension” which would be signaled by interviewees inventing and adding to the story (Stalder 1996a).

Throughout the testing, in all three villages, a few items were missed and some changed, but there were no major semantic differences between expected and reported items. The changes could possibly be attributed to the difficulties in a multilingual testing situation: that is, the people were hearing the stories in Gen and Fon, retelling them in Kotafon, and their answers were then being translated for the researchers into French. This could result in slight semantic changes in reported items.

6.4. **Language vitality**

Everyone uses Kotafon (or Ayizo for Possotomé) in all domains. The only exceptions are where external pressure (the use of French in the education system) or necessity (speaking with non-Kotafon speakers) is present.

6.5. **Literacy situation**

There was a literacy class in Fon in Agamé, but it was abandoned after eight months. The informants stated that they would be interested in literacy in Fon, but that it would be better to have classes in Ayizo or Kotafon. In Hounkpon, Fon literacy efforts were also started, but there was not enough interest to continue the classes. However, the community of Hounkpon reported that they would be interested in literacy in Ayizo or Kotafon. The community of Possotomé would like to have literacy classes start in their area, but they have requested that the teacher be a Kotafon speaker.

Only a few attempts of someone writing in Kotafon were known.
6.6. Religious situation

In the Agamé region, there are both churches and mosques. The following churches were reported as being in the area: Roman Catholic, Apostolic, Assemblées de Dieu, Pentecostal, Christianisme Celeste, Renaissance, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. The first three use Gen for all aspects of their services/mass. The Christianisme Celeste church uses Gun. The Renaissance church uses French, Gen, Ewe and Fon, reportedly without having a preference for one over another. The informants were not sure of the languages used in the local mosque.

In the Hounkpon area, there are no mosques. However the following churches are present: Methodist, Assemblées de Dieu, Pentecostal and la Foi (“Faith”). The Methodists use Kotafon, Gen and French for the sermon; Gun, Gen, and French for the songs and Scripture readings; Gen, and Kotafon for praying; Gen and Kotafon for announcements; and Kotafon for women’s meetings and prayer meetings. The Assemblées de Dieu and Pentecostal churches use Ewe for all aspects of their services and have the Ewe Bible.

Around Possotomé, there are several churches represented but no mosques: Roman Catholic, Eglises Evangéliques Universelles de Benin (EEUB), Protestants, Miracle, Christianisme Celeste and Renaissance. According to the informants in the Roman Catholic church, Gen is used for all aspects of the mass, although in the past they used Fon. Ayizo is occasionally spoken at prayer meetings. The EEUB congregations use Gun for the sermon, songs and prayer time and switch to Ayizo for announcements and prayer meetings. The Christianisme Celeste churches use Gun for all aspects of their services, and the people present thought that the Renaissance churches use Fon.

The reported information shows that Gen is the language used the most widely in the churches in these three villages, with some use of Fon, Gun, French and Ewe. Kotafon or Ayizo are also used in some contexts, mostly for meetings, praying and announcements.
7. Summary and conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to assess whether and to what extent existing literature and literacy efforts in Fon and Gen could extend to the Kotafon communities, or whether an additional language-based development program in Kotafon would be beneficial, and to gather data that would help determine the nature and extent of SIL’s possible involvement among these communities. The following areas were investigated:

1. Comprehension and language attitudes with regard to Fon and Gen
2. Language vitality of Kotafon
3. Language attitudes towards Kotafon language development

Pertinent to the issue of a potential reference dialect for the Phla-Phera cluster was the issue of the Kotafon dialect situation and the relationship of Kotafon to other Gbe varieties (comprehension, language attitudes and use regarding related Gbe varieties). In the following, this issue will be summarized under ‘Kotafon and other related Gbe varieties’ (Section 7.4).

7.1. Comprehension and attitudes with regard to Fon and Gen

The results for Fon will be summarized first, followed by those for Gen.

7.1.1. Fon

In regard to comprehension of Fon, the RA-RTT results for Agamé and Hounkpon indicate “good comprehension”, among all social groups. That is, the testees were able to tell the story accurately, giving details and did not add to the story. The community of Possotomé participated in an abbreviated version of the Fon RA-RTT. While this cannot result in a strong indication of their level of comprehension, the person assigned to re-tell the story demonstrated “good comprehension”. Also, the other Kotafon speakers who were in attendance at the session seemed to understand the story well, and laughed at all the appropriate points in the story. All interviewees reported the ability to both understand and speak Fon, indicating not only a receptive, but also productive knowledge of the language. The question remains as to whether there is a competence in Fon in all language domains, particularly at higher levels, and for all social groups in the region – a factor which cannot be examined by the research methods employed here.

It was not clear how much Fon language contact actually occurs in the Kotafon area that might actually contribute to Fon comprehension. Fon is, however, used in some churches and on the radio.

Kotafon speakers’ attitudes toward Fon appear to be mixed. While there were no overtly negative attitudes expressed during the survey, literacy courses in Fon in Agamé and Hounkpon have not met with success, and informants reported that written materials in Ayizo or Kotafon would be preferred. In Agamé, the interviewees expressed the feeling that the Fon consider themselves to be superior.

7.1.2. Gen

With regard to comprehension of Gen among the surveyed Kotafon communities, the RA-RTT results show “good comprehension” for all social groups in Agamé and for the the men and younger women in
Possotomé (no older women were tested in this location). The community of Hounkpon participated in an abbreviated version of the Gen RA-RTT with the person appointed to re-tell the story again demonstrating “good comprehension”. The interviewees of Agamé and Hounkpon reported the ability to speak Gen when interacting with Gen speakers, and all three communities reported high comprehension of Gen. As with Fon, it remains open as to whether there is competence in Gen in all language domains for all social groups.

There does not appear to be a large population of Gen speakers in the Kotafon language area. However, contact was reported with merchants who pass through, especially in the south (in the area around Hounkpon). Gen is the language used most widely in churches.

In general, Kotafon speakers’ attitudes toward Gen seem to be positive. However, questions regarding written materials in Gen were not asked, and it is not known whether people would be opposed to literacy in Gen or not.

7.2. Kotafon language vitality

Kotafon is in use in all village domains and shows no immediate danger of being replaced by Fon or Gen.

7.3. Attitudes towards Kotafon language development

Everyone interviewed would prefer literacy in Ci. However, as of yet, there are no written materials available in Ci. The government-sponsored literacy program in the area is focusing on expanding the Fon literacy classes which apparently have not met with success.

7.4. Kotafon and other related Gbe varieties

With respect to the Kotafon language situation, no dialectal differences among Kotafon speakers were reported, though some differences in accent do exist.

Kotafon and Ayizo are considered to be the same language by all Kotafon interviewees. However, the findings of a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the Ayizo area (Voulme 2) suggest a continuum of degree of reported comprehension among speakers of these Gbe varieties. The Ayizo dialect which is the closest geographically to the Kotafon area, that is, Ayizo-Kogbe, was found to be the most similar to Kotafon, and Ayizo-Kogbe speakers reported the highest level of comprehension of Kotafon, followed by Ayizo-Seto and Ayizo-Tori.

As to comprehension of the neighboring Gbe languages, speakers of Kotafon reportedly have high levels of comprehension of Ci. The informants of Hounkpon and Possotomé also understand Saxwe, Xwla and Xwela speakers. All three communities also reported good comprehension of Tori, although it remains unclear whether they were referring to the speech variety Ayizo-Tori (located around Tori-Bossito) or the variety Toli, found near Porto Novo.
With respect to Fon and Gen, there was some disagreement among the interviewees as to whether these Gbe lects are “like” Kotafon or not. All three interviewed communities agreed, however, that they understand both Fon and Gen well, and that they speak both varieties as well.

Concerning Aja and Waci, the Agamé respondents reported good comprehension of Aja, but were not asked about Waci. The people of Hounkpon reported good comprehension of both Aja and Waci, while the informants in Possotomé reportedly have low comprehension of both Gbe lects.

### 7.5. Conclusions

The Fon and Gen comprehension test results demonstrate “good comprehension” in the limited contexts in which they were examined for this survey.

In addition, the interviewees reported the ability to speak and understand both languages. Therefore, it appears likely that written materials in Gen and in Fon would be adequately comprehended in the Kotafon community. However, with the attitudes more positive toward Gen than Fon, Gen materials may be more widely accepted than those in Fon. Indeed, Gen is already being widely used in the churches. These findings suggest that Gen or Fon literacy might be a workable solution for the literacy needs of the Kotafon-speaking region provided there is adequate institutional support, with Gen possibly the favored option due to attitude.

As stated above, the SIL strategy is to encourage the use of already developed language materials as widely as possible. In light of this, it appears that there is currently no need for SIL-related Kotafon language development.
Appendices

Appendix A. Map of the Kotafon language area

Figure 1: Map of the Kotafon language area (based on Microsoft Corporation 2002)\(^a\)

\(^a\)The data contained in this map represents the information presented in Section 2.2 ‘Language area.’
Appendix B. Lexical similarity

The following percentage and variance matrixes for lexical similarity were computed by the computer program WORDSURV (Version 2.4 – Wimbish 1989). The program performs a count of shared vocabulary between lists based on similarity groupings as determined by the researcher. Thus, it does not apply a linguistic comparative method to the data and therefore, does not determine cognates based on historical analysis.

The Gbe word lists were analyzed according to two different sets of criteria with both computations following the principles described by Blair (1990:30–33), allowing for a few modifications though as outlined by Kluge (1997). For the first computation, morphemes that are apparently affixed to the form used in another variety are ignored if they occur always in the same position. For the second computation a stricter set of criteria is applied with morphemes apparently affixed to the form used in another variety being included in the analysis.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15}See Kluge 1997 for further details regarding a preliminary evaluation of the analysis of word and phrase lists elicited for the current study.
1. **Computation: Affixed morphemes are ignored**

For this computation, morphemes that are apparently affixed to the form used in another variety are ignored if they always occur in the same position.

Table 2: Percentage matrix

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<th>Tofin</th>
<th>Toli</th>
<th>Seto</th>
<th>Xwla (from Djeffa)</th>
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<th>77</th>
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Table 3: Variance matrix

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2. **Computation: Affixed morphemes are included**

For this computation, morphemes that are apparently affixed to the form used in another variety are included in the analysis.

Table 4: Percentage matrix

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<th>Toli</th>
<th>Seto</th>
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Se
Appendix C. Community questionnaire

(rev 11/96, SIL T/B)

Effectué le _____________ à ____________________ par ______________________

Identité ethnique du chef: _______________; des vieux: ________________________

Abréviations:

K=la variante kotafon sondée, Aj=Aja, Ay=Ayizo, C=Ci, E=Ewe, F=Fon, Fr=Français,
G=Gen, Pl=Phla, Pr=Phera, S=Saxwe, T=Toli, O=Oui, N=Non

1. LA LANGUE DE L’ENQUÊTE ET LES LANGUES VOISINES

1.1. Comment vous appelez votre propre langue?

1.2. Quelle est l’origine du peuple de ce village?

Pour trouver l’étendue de la région où la langue est parlée, montrez une photocopie d’une
carte de la région, et posez les questions suivantes. (Utilisez les feutres en couleur.)

1.3. Dans quels villages votre langue (kotafon) est-elle parlée? (demandez pour chaque village)
(Encerclez les villages où la langue est parlée; mettez des parenthèses autour des noms des
villages où il n’est pas certain que la langue soit parlée)

1.4. Y a-t-il des villages où plusieurs langues sont parlées?
(Encadrez les villages où l’on trouve des locuteurs de plusieurs langues différentes)

1.5. Dans quels villages parle-t-on une langue différente que la vôtre? Quel est le nom de cette
langue / ces langues? (Soulignez les villages où il est certain que l’on parle une langue différente que celle en
question, et écrivez le nom de celle-ci à côté du village – ceci pour déterminer les frontières
de la langue étudiée)

2. DIALECTES DE LA LANGUE DE L’ENQUÊTE ET INTERCOMPRÉHENSION ENTRE
LES VARIANTES

2.1. Parmi les villages où votre langue (kotafon) est parlée, où est-ce qu’ils parlent exactement
comme vous?

2.2. Dans quels villages est-ce qu’ils parlent un peu différemment, mais vous les comprenez quand
mêmes?

2.3 Dans quels villages est-ce qu’ils parlent très différemment?

2.4 Est-ce qu’il y a des dialectes de kotafon? O N

(Selon les renseignements fournis par l’enquête, l’enquêteur devrait ... 

– mettre la lettre A à coté des villages qui parlent la langue de l’enquête, B à coté des
villages d’un autre groupe, C, etc.;)
– tracer les lignes des frontières dialectales avec les lignes continues et pointillées.

2.5 Comment appelle-t-on les variantes qui parlent:

A? ________________________  B? ________________________
C? ________________________  D? ________________________

2.6 Quelles sortes de différences existent entre votre variante et les autres (prononciation, vocabulaire emprunté)?

Variety A – B: ______________________________________________________________
Variety A – C: _____________________________________________________________
Variety A – D: _____________________________________________________________
Variety A – E: _____________________________________________________________

2.7 Quelle variante avez-vous le plus de difficulté à comprendre? _______________________

2.8 Laquelle comprenez-vous la plus facilement? _________________________________

2.9 Tous les enfants ici au village comprennent-ils bien les locuteurs ...?
A:  O  N
B:  O  N
C:  O  N
D:  O  N

2.10 Est-ce que vous avez tous les mêmes origines?

2.11 Est-ce qu’ils sont comme des étrangers ou comme vos frères?

2.12 Où parle-t-on votre langue le mieux?

3. LES RÉLATIONS AVEC D’AUTRES LANGUES

3.1 Quelles autres langues se ressemblent à votre langue?
Ay  F  C  T  S  Pl  Pr  G  E  Aj  Autres: __________
(Sonde les autres possibilités)
3.2 Est-ce vous avez jamais parlé avec quelqu’un de:

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a) Vous parlez quelle langue avec eux?  
   ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ 

b) Ils vous répondent en quelle langue?  
   ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ 

3.3. La langue que vous comprenez le mieux, c’est laquelle?  
   F Ay G C T S E Aj

3.4. C’est quelle langue que vous comprenez le moins bien?  
   F Ay G C T S E Aj

3.5. Est-ce qu’un enfant de six ans de ce village (nommez le nom du village) peut comprendre 
   le fon?  O N 
   le gen?  O N 

3.6. Sinon, quand il grandit, c’est à quel âge qu’il va comprendre  
   le fon? ________________  
   le gen? ________________

4. L’USAGE DE LA LANGUE/VARIANTE

4.1. La majorité de la population ici sont de quelle langue? _____________
   Les minorités? _______________

4.2. Il y a des mariages mixtes?  Oui  Non  Si oui, avec qui?  ________________________________
   La plupart des mariages mixtes sont avec quelle langue  ________________________________

4.3. Quelle langue utilisez-vous pour:
   Annonces dans le village  K F G __
   Rites de coutumes  K F G __
   Jugements dans la famille  K F G __
   Jugements au village  K F G __
   Conseils d’anciens (au village)  K F G __
   Réunions du conseil traditionnel (régionales)  K F G __

4.4. A part votre langue, quelle langue est utilisée le plus souvent 
   ici dans votre village?  ________________________________ 
   dans la région?  ________________________________

5. ALPHABÉTISATION

5.1. Est-ce qu’il y a des classes d’alphabétisation au village?  O N ________________
   Dans quelle(s) langue(s)?  ________________________________
   Ça se passe combien de fois chaque année?  ________________________________
Dans la région?  O  N ________________________________________________

Dans quelle(s) langue(s)? __________________________________________

Ça se passe combien de fois chaque année? _____________________________

5.2. Est-ce que vous avez jamais vu quelque chose écrit en kotafon?  O  N ______________________

5.3. Est-ce que vous connaissez quelqu’un qui écrit en kotafon?  O  N ______________________

5.4. Si on va commencer un programme d’alphabétisation en fon, est-ce que les gens d’ici vont
s’intéresser

   et s’inscrire pour la classe?  O  N _____________________________________________

   et pour l’ayizo?  O  N ________________________________________________________

6.  INFORMATION GÉNÉRALE SUR LA COMMUNAUTÉ

6.1. Est-ce qu’il y a des églises ici?  O  N __________________________________________

   Si oui, quelle langue est utilisée pour:
   le sermon/l’homilie?  K  F
   pour les chants?  K  F
   les prières?  K  F
   les annonces?  K  F
   les réunions de prière ou des autres rendez-vous?  K  F

6.2. Est-ce qu’il y a des mosquées ici?  O  N __________________________________________

   Si oui, quelle langue est utilisée pour:
   prêcher?  K  F
   interpréter la lecture du Coran?  K  F
Appendix D. RA-RTT narratives

1. Fon RA-RTT

The following lines are in Fon, interlinear French and standard French.

1. hwenu e un do kpé ví á, un nó kplá tó ce yi gle ta.
   Moment que je être petit je accompagne père mon aller champ sur.
   Quand j’étais petit j’accompagne mon père au champ.
   un nó yi xwa gbé xú e.
   Je vais sarcler herbe avec lui.
   Je vais sarcler herbe avec lui.

2. enj më xwa gbé fó á, é je hweleko á, cóbónú më nà leko yi
   Si nous sarcler herbe terminer, il arriver après-midi avant que nous futur retourner
   Quand nous finissons le sarclage, dans l’après-midi avant de rentrer
   xwé gbe á, më mc yɔkpóvé lé, më dò féca kpéví kpéví délé lé bó nó dò,
   aller maison dans, nous petit plur., nous tendre piège petit petit plur.
   à la maison, nous les enfants,
   bó nó dò wlí afin, ogbéja ná dò gle mc.
   et tendre et pour attraper souris rat avec être champs dans.
   nous tendons de petits pièges pour attraper des souris, des rats.
   ényí dò j lé më dò á, më wà gle ta zãnzãń á, më nó yi kpón.
   Si nous tendre, nous venir champ sur matin, nous aller voir.
   Si nous tendons les pièges, le matin quand nous revenons au champ, nous les contrôlons.

3. é wá je gbe dɔkpó bɔ un dò féca ce.
   Il arriver tomber jour un et je tendre piège mon.
   Un jour, j’ai tenu mon piège.
   un mɔ dɔ afin wà ṣu finlinnye dọ fí dẹ, bó dò féca ɔ dò finë.
   Je vu que souris venir manger manioc être endroit et tendre piège le là endroit
   J’ai constaté que les souris ont mangé le manioc sans un endroit et j’ai tendu là mon piège
bó blá finlínnye kpëvi d'éj; hún afin we un ṭó féca 5 ná.
et attacher manioc petit un sur donc souris c’est je tendre piège le pour
et attaché un petit morceau de manioc là-dessus;

4. gbe éné gbe 5, síbigbe we, gbadanu, bó éé un ṭó féca 5, mì wá yi xwé,
Jour ce jour samedi c’est, soir et lorsque je tendre piège le, nous venir aller maison
C’était un samedi soir, quand j’ai tendu le piège nous sommes retournés à la maison
be je aklunzángbe zânzân bô nyi ọkpóno sô nô bó wá
et il tomber seigneur jour matin et moi seul apprêter
et le dimanche matin, je suis parti seul (dans le champ)
xwe yi gbe féca ce kpó gn gbé. aklunzángbe 5, mdébù lecn nô wá gleta â.
et venir aller aller piège mon regarder. Seigneur jour personne ne venir champ sur
pour aller regarder le piège. Le dimanche personne ne va au champ.

5. hún nyi ọkpóno géé we sô nô bó yi gle 5 ta, bó ná yi kpó féca ce bó ná wá yi.
Donc moi seul c’est apprêter et aller champ le sur, pour aller regarder piège mon
Donc je suis allé seul au champ pour aller regarder le piège pour revenir
xwé nû é gbe un tôn kpówun é jên né,
maison. Chose que je sortir seulement – ça
à la maison. Voilà le seul but que j’ai visé.

6. bó éé un yi gle 5 ta 5, un mlé odogbó
et lorsque je aller champ le sur, je suivre frontière
Arrivée dans le champ, j’ai pris par la frontière sur

e j un ṭó féca 5 ṭó 5, bó ṭó jiji we. ée un sekpó féca
rel sur je tendre piège le – et être aller c’est. Lorsque je approcher piège
laquelle j’ai tendu le piège. Lorsque je m’approche du piège

5 lê 5, bó kpó sédô lê kpówun 5, azëxe jèn un ko mô ṭó
le aussitôt, et regarder de loin aussitôt seulement, sorcellerie-oiseau je déjà vu être
je l’ai regardé de loin, à une grande surprise, j’ai vu un hibou
féca ce j nukún klolo duu,
piege mon sur oeil “klolo duu”
sur mon piege, avec des yeux gros, arrondis (assortis),

7. bo xesi di mi bo un hon qo un kpo qo vu; nukún ton z, é kló din,
et peur ressembler moi et je fuir, car je encore être petit; oeil son – il gros trop
j’ai pris peur et j’ai pris la fuite parce que je suis encore petit, ses yeux sont trop gros,

un no se azexe xo, amà un mo eédécédé mò kpôn gbedé ã;
je entendra sorcellerie-oiseau parole mais je voir clairement ainsi jamais négatif;
j’entends parler d’hibou mais je ne l’ai jamais vu correctement,

8. nukôn nukonton z ne un mo né, bo nukún ton qo duu qo féca z j.
premièrement cela, je voir là, et oeil son être “duu” être piège le sur
c’est pour ma première fois et ses yeux sont assortis sur le piège.

é bé afo ton we lea do féca z me, bo qo féca z j qo te lè;
Il ramasser patte son deux piège le dans et être piège le sur être debout
Il a mis ses deux pattes dans le piège, et il est debout sur le piège,

ëé un mo mòs, un hon, bo je sésosœis j;
lorsque je voir ainsi je fuir et commencer trembler –
lorsque je vois ça j’ai pris la fuite et je commence à trembler

9. bo un qo xe élôs, jô un kà ná jô dô a? un qo ná hu i jen we hùn.
et je dire oiseau ce laisser je laisser ques je devoir fut tuer le obliger
et j’ai dit cet oiseau, faut-il le laisser? Mais je does quand même le tuer.

Nê un ná wá gbou? nye qokpona géé we qo gle z ta fi.
c’est donc comment je? faire Moi seule c’est être champ le sur ici
Qu’est-ce que je vais faire? Je suis seul ici dans le champ.

10. éne z, un wá yi gbo kpo, kpo gaga dé bo un sixú kpôn nukún ton me à.
Alors je venir aller couper bâton bâton long un et je pouvoir regarder oeil son dans neg
Alors je suis parti chercher un long bâton, et je ne peux pas regarder son visage.
Il être debout être piège le sur et regarder chose oeil “duu”
Mais il est debout sur le piège et il regarde avec des yeux assortis,

11. bôné 5, nyi lô un qô kô zo; un qô kô ce zo bô qô fêca 5 kôn
et ainsi moi aussi je tourner cou loin je tourner cou mon loin et être piège le près de
alors moi aussi j’ai tourné mon regard ailleurs et je m’approche du piège

yi we òdë, òdë, bô un nô fini kôn bléwun, un nô fin kôn bô
aller c’est doucement doucement et je voler le regarder vite je voler le regarder et
très très doucement, j’essaie de l’épiller (je ne le fixe pas), lorsque je suis

dée un sekpô è gângi kpowun 5, un bô kpo 5 qô n i;
 lorsque je approcher lui bien seulement je rouer bâton lui
 bien proche de lui, je lui donne des coups,

12. un dó kpo 5 è. kükà nû un nà dó we, òtôn kpowun 5, è nyî kâyè, bô nukûn,
je taper bâton le lui avant que je taper deux, trois seulement, il est écrouler et oeil
je lui ai donné des coups. À peine il a reçu un ou deux coups, ils’est écroulé, et ses yeux

5 bú bô un qô éé nè, un hu lan égbe.
le disparaître et je dire voilà je tuer viande aujourd’hui
sont fermés et j’ai dit voilà “très bien” j’ai tué un gibier aujourd’hui.

13. ée é kû nô 5 nukûn 5 bodô, bô un wà yi fêca 5 kôn bô ke bô
lorsque il mourir ainsi oeil le fermer et je venir aller pièce le près de et ouvrir et
Quand il est mort comme ça ses yeux se ferment (reserrer), je m’approche du piège, je
l’ouvre,

dë e sín me bô jô fêca 5 myi do 5 nu finè, bô zé wà yi xwè;
enlever le dedans et laisser pièce le être trou le bord là et prendre venir aller maison
je le sors et j’ai abandonné le piège à la place et j’emporte mon gibier à la maison

un zé wa yi
je prendre aller venir
j’emporte mon gibier à la maison
14. xwé ³ un wá yì ma náví ce lec bɔ mǔ sun, mǐ sun bǐ bó bó,
maison, je venir aller voir frère mon pl et nous déplumer, nous déplumer tout et et
Quand je l'amène à la maison, j'ai vu mes frères et nous l'avons déplumé, nous l'avons
complètement déplumer.

ɗa ɗu bɔ lan tɔn víví ɗésú.

prepare manger et viande son doux beaucoup
Nous l'avons préparé, et sa viande est très douce.

amɔ nya ɗé yì ta ³ bó ɗɔ lé ta ɔ émí ná dó wa nũ ná.
Mais homme un recevoir tête et dire que tête le lui avec faire chose avec.
Mais un homme a pris sa tête, il a dit qu'il va faire gris-gris avec la tête.

15. mǐ déɛ lea ɗu ta ³ ɔ; amɔ nũ e kpo ɗɔ wùtu tɔn bó kpo lea bũ ³,
Nous autres manger tête non; mais chose qui reste corps son et rester plu tout,
Nous n'avons pas mangé la tête, mais nous avons mangé tout le reste;

mǐ ɗu;é víví sin gɔŋj.

nous manger; il doux eau bien
Il est très succulent.

16. lẽe un hu azẽxe gbnɔ ³, éé né, bɔ un fln le ³,
comment je touer sorcellerie-oiseau ainsi, voilà, et je rappeler aussitôt,
Voilà comment j'ai tué un hibou. Chaque fois je me rappele cette histoire,

é nɔ hwɛn nú mi kũká bɔ un nɔ ko, ɗɔ éé un mɔ e ³, xesi e ɗi mì é
il rire pour moi tellement et je rire, car lorsque je voir lui, peur qui ressembler moi,
ça me parait ridicule et je ris (même) parce que quand je l'ai vu j'ai pris peur

syɛn bɔ un nɔ sœsœ ɗɔ te, bɔ un ka ɗɔ dandan me ³, un ka ná hu.

il est et je trembler debout, et je dire obligatoirement, je fut tuer
et j'ai tremblé. Mais j'ai dit que je dois forcément le tuer.

17. hũn sánnu ³, sũnnu jɛn nyí.

Donc garçon le, garçon effectif être
Donc il n'y a pas un homme petit; l'homme est l'homme.
Il non être garçon force c'est je taper je laisser oiseau le être piège le dans
Si je ne mets pas en jeu la force d'un homme (si je n'agit en tant qu'homme), je vais
laïsser l'oiseau dans le piège

bɔ é sixú wá zɔ̀n yì
et il pouvoir avenir voler aller
et il peut s'envoler.

hûn lê un hu azẽxe gbɔ̀n ɔ̀ nɛ.
donc ainsi je tuer sorcellerie-oiseau ainsi
Donc voila comment j'ai tué un hibou.
2. **Gen RA-RTT**

The following lines are in Gen, interlinear French and standard French.

Akpeje be funkpekpe wo
Akpeje de souffrances les
Les souffrances d’Akpeje

1. \[\text{Nyònuvi òè tòna Akpeje. E lè axwe kudo etò a ènò a} \]
   Une jeune fille s'appelait Akpeje. Elle était à la maison avec père son mère sa

2. \[\text{gbakudo nòvia nyònu wo. Epè nyi kpo ye be ò.} \]
   Elle n'avait que huit ans.

Akpeje be amè woa wamènò ye wo nyi
Akpeje de parents les pauvres que ils sont.
Les parents d’Akpeje sont des gens pauvres.

3. \[\text{Gbè òekaa, nyònu jè tugbe òè so Lome, va pònupo na ebe amè wo} \]
   Un jour, une dame est venue de Lomé parler à ses parents

4. \[\text{E wòna mü be Akpeje bi nywède. Ehlon nyc òeka ke alònu nyòna} \]
   Il me semble que Akpeje est très éveillée. Une de mes amies qui est riche,
Akpeje be amè wo xɔgbe eye nyɔnu a kplɔ e yi Lome.
Akpeje les gens Pl accepter et femme la amener la aller Lome.
Les parents d’Akpeje ont accepté et la femme l’a emmenée à Lomé.

Lè ébé axwe yeyea mɛa, Akpeje wɔna dɔ so ŋudɛken mɛ kaka
Dans sa maison nvele dans, Akpeje fait travail depuis matin dans jusqu’à
Dans sa nouvelle maison, Akpeje travaille du matin jusque

yi zan mɛ. E wɔna enu kewo kpata wo dɔnna e nywɛde;
aller nuit dans Elle fait chose que tout on demande à elle bien;
dans la nuit. Elle fait bien tout ce qu’on lui demande de faire.

5. voa ebe nuwɔwɔ ɖekpekpe mu jena amɛ kewo gbɔ be lea tɔ ji ɔ.
mais ses actes aucun ne plait aux gens qui chez elle est eux sur Neg.
Mais, rien de ce qu’elle fait ne plait à ceux chez qui elle se trouve.

Wo zunna e ɡasyagame; gbà pona e.
Ils insultent elle tout le temps; aussi frappe elle.
Ils l’insultent tout le temps et la frappe aussi.

6. Gbè ɖekaa, é hwe biene le aði ke Akpeje sanaa be
jour un il manque vingt francs dans savon que Akpeje vend
Un jour, il a manqué vingt francs du prix de vente des savons qu’elle vend

gà mɛ. Wo po e ku ataŋu bla e kudo kulanka na ɛŋukeke ɖeka
argent dans. Ils frappé elle avec cravache attaché l’ avec fil de fer pour journée une.
Ses tuteurs l’ont battue avec une cravache. Ils l’ont attachée avec du fil de fer pendant
un jour

Akpeje sè veve lè lan mɛ, gba sè veve lè ji mɛ.
Akpeje senti douleur -- corps dans encore senti douleur -- coeur dans
Akpeje a souffert dans son corps et dans son âme.

7. E kpɔ ebɛ kɔpe mɛ be amɛ ɳusu ɖeka le afi ke be lea gbe ɖeka
Elle vit son village dans de personne garc%oon une est là où elle était jour un.
Elle vit un jour, un homme de son village dans le quartier où elle se trouvait.
A sociolinguistic survey of the Kotafon language area

Elle prit maison lequel dans elle restait -- montrer lui demandant instamment
Elle lui a montré, la maison dans laquelle elle vivait et l’a vivement supplié
be yebe ame wo nè va kplɔ ye.
que ses gens les que viennent chercher la.
d’avertir ses parents pour qu’ils viennent la chercher.

8. E nɔ zaan, Akpeje be etɔ va. E gbłɔŋ kpowun
Peu de temps après Akpeje son père venu. Il dit seulement
Peu de temps après, le père d’Akpeje est venu. Il a simplement dit

be Akpeje ɖo la trɔ yi axwe eye wo la wo nuɖe wo na e.
que Akpeje doit retourner maison. et on va faire choses certaines à elle.
qu’elle doit retourner au village pour qu’on lui fasse quelques cérémonies.

9. So gaŋuamea, le axwea, Akpeje be ame wo gbłɔnna na ame ðeawo
Depuis ce temps, au village, Akpeje ses parents Pl. disent aux gens autres
Depuis ce temps, dans le village, les parents d’Akpeje exhortent tous les autres

kpata be: «Miabe vi wo nɛ nɔ mìa gbo. Wo mu kplana wo nywɛɖe
tous que: «Vos enfants Pl. que restent vous chez. On ne éduque les bien
autres en leur disant: «Gardez vos enfants chez vous. On ne les éduque pas bien

le du gan wo mɛ ɖ. 
villes grandes les dans Neg.
dans les grandes villes.
References


