

MINISTRY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH

A RAPID APPRAISAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY  
OF MUNDUM [ALCAM: 911]

(Northwest Province)

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A rapid appraisal (RA) language survey, including a modified Group Recorded Text Test (the RA-RTT) with Bafut [ALCAM 912] and Mankon [ALCAM 913] texts, was carried out February 15 and May 25, 2001 in the Mundum [ALCAM 911] language community of the Northwest Province of Cameroon. Research was done at the suggestion of SIL linguist Dr. Joseph MFONYAM who had come to believe during his development of his Bafut mother tongue that Mundum-speakers understood Bafut better than Mankon. Coming to an accurate conclusion about this was important since sociolinguistic field researchers surveying the Ngemba sub-family of languages in 1991 had come to a different conclusion (Sadembouo and Hasselbring 1991). Their research, which was only partial due to time constraints and difficult travel conditions (and a visit only to Mundum I), had led them to conclude that Mundum-speakers could probably use Mankon more readily than they would Bafut.

We are grateful for the welcome received from regional and local government, church, and traditional leaders, without whose cooperation and participation this mission would not have been possible.

### 1.1 Names

The residents of Mundum II call themselves and their language "Ba-Ndom" but when speaking English they refer to themselves and their language as "Mundum II." Residents of Mundum I refer to themselves and their speech variety as "Mundum."

For the purposes of this report, both the people and their language—whether from Mundum I or Mundum II—will be referred to as "Mundum."

### 1.2 History of the Mundum People

Mundum I interview participants (15 men and 2 women were present) at Nebeba say they originated in Widikum, later moving to Mankon where today there remains a Mundum-speaking quarter called Ala-Mundum. Some left this location and eventually split into two groups; one group settled in Mundum I, and the other went to Mundum II.

Mundum II ancestors are said to have passed through Oshie after the split prior to settling at their present location. Fon Ngufor of Mundum II stated that World Wars I and II drove them to Beba near Bafut where they eventually had a land dispute<sup>1</sup> with Beba settlers and moved to Ntamanji. Then they finally moved to their present site to cultivate its fertile soil. Today, the residents of Mundum II say they share common origins with the Mankon people.

### 1.3 Location and Population

Administratively, the villages of Mundum I and Mundum II are found in the Bafut Subdivision, Mezam Division, of the Northwest Province of Cameroon.

The following table presents both census and reported populations:

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<sup>1</sup> Mundum II has also disputed boundaries with Mundum I.

<u>Village:</u>	<u>1987 Census</u>	<u>2002 Extrapolation<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Local Estimate</u>
Mundum I	2153	3122	9,000 <sup>3</sup> (village census)
Mundum II	400	580	900 (village census)
TOTAL	2028	3702	6750 (fon's census)

Mundum II consists of the following quarters:

1. Nyang
2. Mekuru I, II, and III
3. Menyaw
4. Ntinafon
5. Anayakara
6. Za

Mundum I has 9 quarters. They are listed according to size from largest to smallest:

1. Nebeba
2. Mberemi
3. Munam
4. Aloni
5. Njanki
6. Ntubah
7. Sugeteb
8. Ntebumn
9. Nteteberekma

#### 1.4 Linguistic Classification

The Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun [ALCAM] (Dieu and Renaud, 1983) lists Mundum II under the language code of [911] and with the following classification: Niger-Congo, Atlantic Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mban-Nkam, Ngemba, Anyang (Mundum II Bamundum II). Anyang may constitute a separate language.

According to Grimes (2000), Mundum I and Mundum II are classified with the Ngemba Cluster, as follows: NGEMBA (MEGIMBA, MOGIMBA, NGOMBA, NGUEMBA) [NGE] 70,000 (1982 SIL). Tuba and Western Bamenda Subdivisions, Mezam Division, North West Province. Linguistic affiliation: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mban-Nkam, Ngemba. Dialects: BAGANGU (AKUM), NJONG (BANJONG), MBUTU (BAMBUTU, ALAMATU, MBOTU), SONGWA (NSONGWA, BANGWA, NGWA), MANKON (BIDA), MOMBU, SHOMBA (BAMECHOM, ALMATSON), MANGKUNGE (NGEMBA, BANDENG, BANDE, BANDE', NKUNE, MUKOHN), MBREREWI (MUNDUM 1, BAMUNDUM 1), ANYANG (MUNDUM 2, BAMUNDUM 2), ALATENING (ALATINING). Related to Bafut, Mandankwe, Pinyin, Awing. Distinct from Ngyemboon (Nguemba). Bilingualism in Cameroon Pidgin. Investigation needed: bilingual proficiency in Pidgin, intelligibility with Mundum, Mberewi, Anyang.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 1987 Census Publication (Demo 87:5), between 1976-1987 Cameroon experienced a 2.9% annual growth. If this rate continued in both Mundum-speaking villages from 1987 to the present, then Mundum I could now number over 3000 with Mundum II being nearly 600, for a total village-based population of roughly 3700.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Peter Fobang, the quarterhead of Nebeba Quarter, said that there were 9,000 from the last census but that the population of Mundum I could now be as many as 12,000.

### 1.5 Previous Research

In 1989 Lawrence Seguin and Dr. Domche-Teko gathered wordlists and did a lexicostatistic analysis of the Ngemba speech forms, producing the following lexical similarity percentages:

#### Anyang (Mundum II) [911]

87	<u>Mberewi (Mundum I) [911]</u>		
78	72	Beba' [912]	
78	77	76 Bufe-Bafut [912]	
81	83	74	82 <u>Mankunge (Mankon-North) [913]</u>

In 1991, one question Sadembouo and Hasselbring sought to answer about the Ngemba Cluster languages was, "Are Mankon and Mundum dialects of the same language?" (p. 6). They carried out recorded text testing [RTT] in order to help them answer this question. Their findings were that speakers from the village of Mundum I correctly answered comprehension questions about a Bafut text for a score of 65% (with a standard deviation of 18%) while scoring 75% (s.d. 15%) on the Mankon text. In other words, Mundum-speakers enjoyed only a slightly greater comprehension of the Mankon text than they did of the text of Bafut.

Sadembouo and Hasselbring determined that not all Ngemba varieties needed to be tested using RTT, since the group questionnaires had indicated that certain pairs were sufficiently similar. One such pair was of Mundum I and Mundum II. They therefore interpreted the RTT results from Mundum I as applying also to Mundum II. They concluded:

"The results of the RTT indicate that none of the dialects tested [including Mundum I] have inherent intelligibility high enough that they could use either the Bafut or Nkwen standard which are already being developed. However, both Mundum and Nkwen understand Mankon at a level above<sup>4</sup> 75%. In each case, the standard deviation is below 15% but above 12%, indicating that the intelligibility may not be entirely inherent. In addition, Mankon speakers' comprehension of Mundum is more than 30% lower than the intelligibility in the reverse direction. This may indicate acquisition on the part of Mundum speakers, or extralinguistic factors that affected the performance of the Mankon speakers on the Mundum test."

"In general, when adequate intelligibility is acquired, not inherent, the two forms would not be grouped together. But the fact that even children of Bafut, Nkwen and Mundum have fairly consistently acquired (if indeed the ability is not inherent) a relatively high level of comprehension indicates that if Mankon was a standard, Bafut, Nkwen and Mundum could possibly use the materials. Sociolinguistic factors need to be carefully considered in order to make final conclusions." (1991:10)

On p. 13 of their report, Sadembouo and Hasselbring conclude that based on their criteria (stated on page 12 of their report), the Mundum (at least those of Mundum I) are able to understand either Bafut or Mankon.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This should have said "at" rather than "above."

<sup>5</sup> But of interpreting RTT scores Joseph Grimes states, "At threshold levels high enough to guarantee good communication from the central dialect to its periphery (usually 85% or above), it is reasonable to speak of the dialect cluster as a single LANGUAGE from the linguistic point of view. Speech varieties that come together at only 70% or below are too distinct to qualify as the same language. In between, 70% to 85%, is an area of MARGINAL intelligibility where some communication is satisfactory and some is not. The threshold depends on the risk associated with not communicating well; the final criteria are not purely linguistic." (J. Grimes 1995: 22)

## 1.6 Purpose of this Research

In light of the aforementioned facts, the research team's objectives were to:

- Assess sociolinguistic factors, as recommended by Sadembouo and Hasselbring (1991).
- Make a preliminary assessment based on the perceptions of village-based Mundum-speakers' representatives, of the comprehension of Bafut and Mankon and other languages adjacent to Mundum.
- Identify the attitudes of village residents about reading and writing the language(s) of their choice.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 The Rapid Appraisal

The surveyors employed the sociolinguistic research approach called the "Rapid Appraisal" [RA] (see Bergman 1991 and Stalder 1996) for assessing dialectology, multilingualism, and language viability and vitality based on word list comparisons and interviews of select individuals and groups.

After carrying out RA procedures, the team employed a modification of the recorded text testing method (the RA-RTT), based on the intelligibility testing method documented by Eugene Casad (1974), to quickly measure Mundum-speakers' understanding of Mankon and Bafut recorded texts.

According to Stalder (1996:26), the Rapid Appraisal can be expanded to include Recorded Text Testing (RTT) called RA-RTT for groups. Stalder proposes evaluating the group's comprehension using a three-level scale:

Level 1: No comprehension. The group is unable to respond correctly to general questions about the story.

Level 2: Partial comprehension. Retelling of the different sections is done but people invent or add to the story. But if probed for details, they answer incorrectly.

Level 3: Good comprehension. The story is retold accurately and the people are able to supply details.

Using the RA-RTT, the research team was able to estimate an upper limit of the group's comprehension of the languages of the texts.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.2 The Survey of Mundum

Sociolinguistic field researchers surveyed Mundum in two phases. The first phase involved a visit to the village of Mundum II on February 15, 2001. The language surveyors were doctoral linguistics students Pius Akumbu, Flora Bolima, and Roseta Swiri of the Department of Linguistics and African Languages at the University of Yaounde I; and Edward and Elizabeth Brye of SIL. Research at Mundum I was carried out on May 25, 2001 by Edward Brye, Heidi Anderson, and Suzanne Krueger of SIL and Pius Akumbu and Roseta Swiri.

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<sup>6</sup> Simons (1979:25) states that the group testing method is appropriate for finding the "upper potential" of the group.

After landing at the primary school of Mundum II, our team trekked 45 minutes to the fon's palace. There Fon Ngufor assembled eight men and women between 20-65 years of age in his palace where he answered most questions himself. Individual interviews were carried out with Mr. Kevin Suh Ambe, the headmaster of the primary school in Mundum II, and with Mr. Afouh John Forkwa, the catechist of the Catholic Church. Roseta Swiri, a mother tongue speaker of Mankon, verified a list of words of Mundum II that had been phonetically transcribed previously for comparison with the list of the Mankon language.<sup>7</sup> To update the estimates of comprehension levels of Mankon and Bafut done through the individual RTT method in 1991, we administered a RA-RTT in the fon's palace at the same time that the RA group interview was being conducted in a separate room. We played two test tapes for a group of three women (two older and one younger) and a man (age 30+), but we asked each participant to give their responses to each question individually. We did not ask them to retell the story as is sometimes done in administering the RA-RTT. The Bafut text was the same one that had been used in the 1991 survey. We were unable to locate the Mankon text used in the previous survey, so Roseta Swiri, the Mankon-speaker on our team, narrated a two-minute text for us and helped us construct appropriate comprehension questions.

On February 15, on the way to Mundum II, the team landed by helicopter in Mundum I, mistakenly thinking that this was Mundum II. We had a 15-minute interview with two village leaders: Mr. Peter Fobang who is quarterhead of the Nebeba quarter and Mr. Joseph Ngyie, the headmaster of the Roman Catholic Primary School. (Forty others were present, but only a few leaders responded in an official capacity in the fon's absence.)

In the village of Mundum I on May 25, 2001, 15 men and 2 women gathered in Nebeba Quarter for a group interview. Three leaders were primarily responsible for providing responses to the interview questions. These included both the quarterhead of Nebeba quarter and the headmaster of the Catholic school who had also been present for the brief interview on May 15. Joseph Ngyie, the school headmaster, translated for us. The sub-chief of Mundum I who lives in Nebeba quarter, Mr. Atancho Musuh, also contributed to the interview. The information gathered in both the February 15 and the May 25 interviews is included in the summary of results presented below.

### 3. RESEARCH RESULTS

#### 3.1 Dialect Situation

In both Mundum I and Mundum II, the people agreed that their language is spoken without variation among the various quarters of each village.

Representatives of the Mundum I group interview described their language as being spoken in nine quarters of Mundum I plus in Mundum II. They included Mundum II in the larger Mundum language community. Mankon, they said, is a different language.

In the group interview at Mundum II, the people indicated that they understand Mundum I well, but one of the interviewees stated: "Mundum I resembles our language just a bit."

There is an 87% lexicostatistical similarity between the ALCAM wordlists of Mundum I and Mundum II, confirming that the Mundum language probably consists of two mutually intelligible dialects.

#### 3.2 Multilingualism

In this section of the report, we will examine the degree of intercomprehension reported by Mundum-speakers about the languages of the people around them, with special attention to Bafut and Mankon. In addition, we will present a summary of the results of the RA-RTT carried out in Mundum II.

<sup>7</sup> The standard wordlist is taken from ALCAM (see Dieu and Renaud 1983: 132-133).

### *3.2.1 Languages Linguistically Close—Bafut and Mankon Reported Comprehension in Mundum I and Mundum II*

Of the large language groups of the Ngemba linguistic sub-family, Bafut is adjacent to the Mundum region. The other large language within the Ngemba language cluster is Mankon, which is further away and borders neither Mundum village. Mundum and Mankon speakers use their mother tongue whenever they communicate with one another. Mundum-speakers are increasingly acquiring the language of the Bafut community. They now prefer Bafut above Mankon as a language worth learning.

In Mundum I, when interviewees were asked to list the languages they are exposed to, they listed only Bafut, Beba (which is currently classified as ALCAM 912 with Bafut), and Meta' [ALCAM 864]. They did not mention Mankon, perhaps because it is more geographically removed. They stated that Mundum I residents, including children from the age of 10 and up, are able to understand Bafut and Beba and also to be understood by speakers of these languages when they speak Mundum. However, they felt they were not "one people," nor did they share the same origins with speakers of Bafut or Beba. Later, when asked to list in order of preference the languages which they would like to learn to read and write, after their mother tongue of Mundum, the interviewees listed first Bafut and then Mankon. The reason they gave for listing Bafut was that they have the most contact with Bafut speakers and that they are learning their language. For Mankon, they said that they are "brothers" and they share "the same pronunciation with them."

In Mundum II, when asked what languages they would like to learn to read and write, the fon (who was representing the others in the group interview) listed Bafut, Mundum, and then Ngemba (Mankon). During the Mundum II interview, the fon asked the Mankon-speaking member of our research team, Roseta Swiri, a few questions. Each using their own mother tongue, there was sufficient similarity of speech between them that the two understood each other during their exchange of about a minute.<sup>8</sup> On arrival in the village, she also greeted the Mundum II speakers using the Mankon language, exchanging several phrases in the two languages with the young pupils.

#### *RA-RTT in Mundum II*

Participants listened to the Mankon text first. While the text was being played, their faces lacked expression except for the occasional smile from the women. As individuals, their responses to the comprehension questions ranged from 60% correct (the young woman) to 82% correct (the man). As a group, they averaged 71% correct responses. If we were to evaluate their overall comprehension using the scale proposed by Stalder (see Section 2), we would probably place their comprehension of the Mankon text somewhere between Level 2 (Partial comprehension) and Level 3 (Good comprehension).

We played the Bafut text for the same group, but this time comprehension was so good that once one person responded to a question, the others all agreed with the response. For the most part, as a group they answered every question correctly.<sup>9</sup> Using Stalder's scale, we would place them solidly at Level 3 (Good comprehension) for their comprehension of the Bafut text.

As we mentioned in section 2.1, these results give us only an estimate of the upper limit of the group's comprehension of the languages of the texts. In order to evaluate comprehension of the community as a whole, we would need to do Recorded Text Testing with individuals.

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Ms. Swiri believes that Mankon and Mundum are two languages.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed list of the responses to both texts, see the appendices.

### 3.2.2 *Language of Wider Communication [LWC]—Cameroon Pidgin English*

Cameroon Pidgin English (or "Pidgin") is the major language of wider communication (LWC, also called the "trade language") in the Northwest Province of Cameroon.

According to the Mundum II group interview responses, residents must use Pidgin to communicate with speakers of most adjacent language groups. Almost daily, the residents speak Pidgin most in the various markets, church, regional council meetings and also with any Nigerians, Meta'-speakers, or other visitors who happen to come to their village to trade, graze their cattle, or farm. Reportedly, the adult women and the young speak it the most. Catechist Afouh John Forkwa said that Pidgin is used in the church for the sake of any foreigners.

The fon of Mundum II says that he does not feel negatively when children or other Mundum-speakers combine Pidgin and Mundum during speech since the use of Pidgin enables the people of his village to learn English more easily. To him, the mother tongue is useful only when the topic of discussion is supposed to be private. (He is himself a fluent speaker of English and, he says, also of Bafut.)

In Mundum I, interviewees indicated they do not use Pidgin daily in the village. However, the school headmaster, a Mundum-speaker, qualified this statement by saying that he uses Pidgin with the children who come to his school from elsewhere. He also said that it is his observation that children in the village start learning Pidgin from the age of two (their mothers speak it with them), and that children are speaking Pidgin increasingly to the point where they are now using it more than the mother tongue. He stated, "If you don't make a child learn Pidgin, he won't be able to communicate and speak fluently with others." However, although the young may be using Pidgin increasingly, he said, the older residents continue to use the Mundum language primarily.

### 3.2.3 *Other Languages*

As referred to above (section 3.2.1), Mundum I residents listed Meta' as a language group with which they have contact. However, they said that they must speak Pidgin with Meta' speakers in order to communicate with them. Only a few Mundum speakers have acquired an understanding of the Meta' language, which is of the Momo sub-family and not Ngemba.

Likewise in Mundum II, the people report that they do not understand Meta' or any other Momo language well. When we asked them to list for us the languages that they do understand, besides Mundum I, Mankon, Bafut and Fombe (Beba), they referred to two villages called Barumbum and Ntabiza. In both cases, they said that in spite of some differences, they understand people from these locations. We have been unable to locate these villages on any map, including the one drawn for us by a Mundum II speaker. We would guess that the people in these locations probably speak some variety of Mundum, Bafut or Beba, but this would need to be verified.

In spite of the fact that at one time the Mundum people from Mundum II once lived in the main Ngishe-speaking village of Oshie, few from Mundum II understand and fewer yet speak Ngishe today. This was substantiated in a conversation between Flora Bolima, a Ngishe-speaker on our research team, and a man and woman from Mundum II.

### 3.3 *Language Vitality and Viability*

The mother tongue is vital in the Mundum language community. The people we interviewed reported using it for all domains of daily life.



### *3.3.1 Language Use at Home, with Friends and in the Community*

In both villages Mundum is used at home and in conversations with friends of the same age group and other mother tongue speakers. But in Mundum I the people also use Pidgin during conversations between friends.

Mundum II interviewees also reported that their mother tongue is the only language used for public announcements, local council meetings, and traditional religious ceremonies. It is only during regional council meetings that both Pidgin and Mundum are used.

### *3.3.2 Language Use during Work*

The only language used for communication when working in the fields and on the farms is the mother tongue.

### *3.3.3 Language Use at the Markets*

Two main languages are used at the markets: Pidgin and Mundum. In Mundum I, there are two markets. Pidgin is used at both the local and larger markets. Mundum II residents go to the local, a larger, and an area market. Those who are outsiders from Nigeria and elsewhere who do not understand Mundum II use Pidgin at these markets.

### *3.3.4 Language Use at the Health Center*

Mundum I has a health center in the quarter of Munam and residents are able to use the mother tongue when they visit there. Mundum II, however, has no health center. When ill, residents trek to the neighboring health center at Njubu where most health workers do not speak Mundum and they therefore must use Pidgin.

### *3.3.5 Language Use at School*

Mr. Kevin Suhambe is the headmaster of the only school in Mundum II, the Government Primary School. English is the only language used for class instruction. But during recreational (recess) periods, the pupils speak their mother tongue or Pidgin. The fact that they would choose to use Pidgin when there are no students from other language groups in the school (i.e., there is no real need to speak Pidgin), may be an indication that language shift is beginning to occur.

Although the Bafut-speaking headmaster has taught in this school for only four months, he said that he sees the value of introducing the mother tongue as a language of instruction in the first years as this might help students understand basic concepts. But he acknowledges his personal limitations to advance such a program since he understands little of the Mundum language.

The headmaster stated that he believes that most children of the village attend school. He reported that all pupils who attend the school are from Mundum II. Students trek 1.5 - 8 kilometers to school. He gave us the following enrollment numbers for the Mundum II Government Primary School: Class 1: 16, Class 2: 17, Class 3: 13, Class 4: 14, Class 5: 16, Class 6: 22, and Class 7: 10 for a total of 108 students.

All these students are mother tongue Mundum-speakers; no students come from outside of the Mundum II village.

However, in Mundum I, which has six schools including a secondary school, there are a number of children who come from other villages to attend school, even at the primary level.

### *3.3.6 Language Use in Church*

In Mundum II, Mr. Afouah John Forkwa, a catechist of the Catholic Church and a mother tongue speaker of Mundum, told us that Christians make up 75% of the village population. He said that the Roman Catholic Church has the highest number of Christians in the village

with a weekly average attendance of 35. The mother tongue, along with Pidgin or English, is used for church announcements, sermons, songs, and youth group meetings. Bible studies are conducted in English and Pidgin, but are interpreted into the mother tongue. Pidgin is used for the sake of outsiders.

Mr. Forkwa stated that everyone in church understands Pidgin or Mundum. He stated that in all domains of Roman Catholic group life there is a mix of the mother tongue, Pidgin, and English, and that it is therefore unnecessary for there to be a translation of the Scriptures into Mundum. Nevertheless, he would cooperate with representatives of the other denominations if a Bible translation project into the mother tongue were to start. Only a few Christians own a Pidgin New Testament or an English Bible, and no religious materials exist in Mundum although use of the MT is encouraged by church leaders for services and church meetings.

There is also a Presbyterian Church in Mundum II, but since no leader of this denomination was available for us to interview, we have no information on language use in this church.

Traditional religion is also practiced in the village, and the most prominent type is "Kwifo" of which the fon is the leader of a special group of 15 - 25 adherents. He said that it was a taboo to tell us more about Kwifo.

In Mundum I, we interviewed Roman Catholic Headmaster Fidelic Ngwa and Presbyterian Sub-chief Ephraim Azangi. Both men are Mundum-speakers. Three denominations are present in the village: Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran<sup>10</sup>. Presbyterians form the largest group and are found in all quarters. Roman Catholics are found in five quarters. The Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches use English during the services, but only a few from the congregations own Bibles. Language use patterns in both churches are similar to those described for Mundum II. However, in the Mundum I interview, we also asked about language use for prayer. The Roman Catholic leader said that prayers are memorized in English. The Presbyterian leader said that prayer is done primarily in the mother tongue in his church. Both men said they felt it would be important for church members to have religious materials in the mother tongue and be able to read them for the sake of effective communication. They both agreed as well that they would be willing to work in close collaboration with other denominations on a Bible translation project.

### 3.4 Language Attitudes

#### 3.4.1 *Towards the Mother Tongue*

For the most part, the Mundum-speakers we interviewed expressed positive attitudes towards their mother tongue. But Fon Ngufor of Mundum II expressed his opinion that there would be little value in learning to read and write their mother tongue. Although there might be value in protecting their privacy and culture by learning to read and write their language, he said, they and their children would do better to learn to read and write Bafut. The reason he gave for his opinion is that the Bafut language group is nearby and is much larger and politically stronger, and they have already developed their language significantly. (The Mundum II administrative headquarters is located in Bafut.)

The Catholic catechist and the headmaster (a Bafut-speaker), however, expressed the opinion that the mother tongue should be encouraged. However as we reported in section 3.3.6, the catechist disagreed that a translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue would be necessary, since the people understand Pidgin (although most don't have the New Testament in Pidgin).

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<sup>10</sup> No one from the Lutheran Church was present to be interviewed.

In the interview, Fon Ngufor also expressed the opinion that mixing the mother tongue with other languages such as Pidgin was not bad "except for private reasons." When a woman spoke up to say that children were speaking Pidgin "all the time," the fon conceded that he does not always like it when people respond to him in Pidgin when he is speaking to them in the mother tongue.

In the village of Mundum I, the people said that mother tongue usage is "mixed" with Pidgin, resulting in laughter when this phenomenon occurs. Although the mix is considered bad, it is also entertaining!

#### *3.4.2 Standardization Efforts*

There have been no attempts to develop the Mundum language in Mundum II. The people reported that some are interested, but financial constraints keep them from carrying it out. Nothing has been written in Mundum II. The reason given was that no financial sponsors were available to start such a project.

At Mundum I, however, there has been an attempt to develop the language by writing up a calendar/diary. Mr. Awambeng Stanislaus Asah initiated this effort by translating the names of the days and months and then printing the diaries. The school headmaster, Mr. Ngyie Joseph Sanga, went to a language course in Mambu Quarter of Bafut that was led by a group from Yaounde (including Joseph Mfonyam), but he didn't finish it. There is currently no language, translation, literacy, or development committee.

Following the surveys in Mundum, Mr. Santer Patrick Ngu and Mr. Ngyie Joseph Sanga have contacted SIL on separate occasions with an interest in receiving training to develop their language.

#### *3.4.3 Migration and Intermarriage*

There are indications that a rural exodus may be occurring among Mundum speakers. The interviewees at Mundum II reported that after all children of school age complete primary studies at the Government Primary School, those who can afford to will attend a secondary school while the rest leave the village in search of employment in the big cities. The rural exodus means Mundum-speakers usually end up getting married in the cities to people of other languages.

There are only a few outsiders who come to the village to do farming, grazing of cattle, business, or to marry. Nigerians come to Mundum II to buy and sell their articles. Some of the outsiders stay and eventually start speaking the language. Those who come to Mundum II to marry may eventually learn Mundum also, but until they do they use Pidgin. Mundum II residents are allowed to marry whomever they wish, and they marry people from all nearby groups. When asked if there are any restrictions regarding intermarriage, they referred to "land disputes," which they apparently have with people from Babadji and Mundum I.

### **3.5 Language Maintenance or Shift**

Factors pointing to maintenance of the mother tongue by Mundum speakers include the following:

- Use of the mother tongue in the main domains of daily life
- A generally positive attitude towards the mother tongue and some interest in seeing it written. Church representatives in Mundum I felt it would be important for church members to have religious materials in the mother tongue and be able to read them for the sake of effective communication. They also agreed that others from their denominations would be willing to work in close collaboration on a Bible translation project.

Other factors indicate that language shift may have already begun among Mundum speakers:

- The increasing use of Pidgin, particularly among the children
- The reported "mixing" of Pidgin with the mother tongue
- The Mundum II fon's expressed preference for using Bafut (a major neighboring language being developed) over Mundum for literacy purposes
- Church leadership in Mundum II does not see a mother tongue translation of the Bible as necessary.
- A high incidence of rural exodus and intermarriage with other groups.

3.6 Language Development Potential: Watters' socio-economic factors.

John Watters (1990:6.7.1) in his article "Three Socio-economic Factors Affecting the Nature and Development of Language Programs" states the following as being important:

- Homogeneity of the linguistic community (social cohesion)
- Openness of the community to change and to better living conditions
- Presence of the local level of middle-aged leadership

In addition, it is important to consider attitudes within the community and on the part of the leadership towards language development.

In this section, we will consider all these factors based on the information gathered from our interviews.

#### 3.6.1 *Social Cohesion: homogeneity of the linguistic community*

Residents of Mundum I expressed a more positive attitude in terms of seeing themselves as forming a linguistic unity with Mundum II. They indicated that Mundum II spoke the same language as they do without any dialectal variation. Mundum II residents, however, said that the language in Mundum I "resembles our language just a bit," although they also admitted that they understand speakers of Mundum I well. The word list comparison confirmed that there are some lexical differences between the two varieties. Mundum II interviewees referred to a land dispute with Mundum I, which would indicate that there might be some tension between the two groups.

The Mundum villages are relatively isolated. Our team used a helicopter from Bamenda because to reach either village would have required many hours of driving and trekking combined. Mundum II is a 2.5-hour trek from the nearest village on a motorable road. (Even using the helicopter, our team had to trek 45 minutes from the primary school grounds where the helicopter landed to reach the fon's palace where we conducted the interview.) During the rainy season, the people said, it is very difficult to trade or to participate in celebrations with neighboring villages. A lot of trekking (or cycling for those who can afford bikes) is required to reach the nearest neighbor.

Rivers separate certain Mundum I quarters and also Mundum I from Mundum II.

#### 3.6.2 *Openness to Change*

The Mundum Cultural and Development Association contributed toward the construction of the primary school at Mundum II. The association is currently working on a program to raise funds for the construction of roads and the rebuilding of the fon's palace.

In Mundum II, interviewees said that the only people who go to the health center are those who can afford to do so. Those who do not have money visit the traditional doctors. Some people sell medicines in the village. But for the delivery of a baby, for example, a woman will go to the health center.

As stated in section 3.3.5, the headmaster of the Government Primary School in Mundum II reported his belief that most children of the village attend school. He also said that upon

completion of their primary studies, those financially able to do so will attend a secondary school, the nearest being one at Mundum I.

Mundum I has six schools, three of which are Roman Catholic. In the interview, village leaders reported that more than half of the children attend primary school, but very few who complete primary school continue their studies at the secondary level even though there is a secondary school in the village

### *3.6.3 Village-based Leadership*

The leaders of Mundum II are between 40 and 80 years of age. Those interviewed stated that families would appoint successors to the current leaders when they die. All leaders of the village of Mundum II live in the village. The fon lives in Mundum II with three of his wives (although one wife resides in the town of Mankon, so at times he goes to Mankon town). The other heads of the 10 quarters all live in the village.

The fon of Mundum II is opposed to the development of the mother tongue and favors the utilization of the already developed Bafut language. In Mundum II, those who complete their studies at the primary level (there is only one primary school) must leave the village if they are to continue their studies. Since most who go off to study do not return to the village to live, this leaves little potential within the village for developing the language.

The leaders of Mundum I are between the ages of 55-80. For personal reasons, the chief lives in a private residence in the quarter of Aloni rather than in the palace. The people feel assured that there will be leaders to take the place of current leaders when these pass on. The chief will appoint successors based on family line.

### *3.6.4 Attitudes towards language development*

Mundum I and II interviews revealed that Bafut and the mother tongue would be the languages of choice for reading and writing. In both villages, the third preference was Mankon.

The Fon of Mundum II realizes that his language group is small, and that Bafut is the nearest major language group in the region. He encourages the development of Bafut above his own mother tongue. He also stated that he would like to see Bafut rather than Mundum II taught in schools because it is a bigger nearby language group and, administratively, Mundum II is located in the Bafut Sub-division. But Mundum II would be a second choice because it is their mother tongue that's needed for maintaining their culture and for discussing private topics. Mankon could be the third choice for language development due to their history of migrating through this region.

There is neither a literacy program nor an interest or perceived need in having one, according to Catholic catechist Afouh John Forkwa (mother tongue Mundum-speaker) who also said that there is no need for Bible translation since people understand Pidgin (though most don't own a New Testament). People in the church at Mundum II have expressed no interest in reading and writing, and there are no religious materials in the mother tongue. According to the catechist, translation into the mother tongue is unnecessary since everyone who attends church can understand Pidgin well enough. (Even a small child can understand Pidgin.) Nevertheless, were there to be a Bible translation project he would be willing to work with other denominations.

In our first brief interview on February 15 in the village of Mundum I, Mr. Joseph Ngyie, the school headmaster, volunteered that he believed it would be better to teach Mankon than Mundum if given a choice between the two. However, in the group interview only three months later, the group listed their language preferences for reading and writing as follows (in the order given):

1. Mundum, since it is the mother tongue.
2. Bafut, because Mundum I residents "deal with them [Bafut-speakers] more than any others, and some [of us] are already starting to learn it."
3. Mankon, because "we [Mundum I] are brothers and we don't have much difference with them—the same pronunciation with them."
4. Meta' because of intermarriage (yet Mundum-speakers need Pidgin to communicate with Meta'-speakers).

When asked if it might be sufficient just to speak any of these languages, the response was negative. The headmaster gave as a reason the fact that the Meta' are their neighbors with whom they intermarry and that Bafut is becoming an "international" language.

At Mundum I, although those present for the group interview expressed an interest in developing the mother tongue there was cautious hesitation and a reluctance to comment authoritatively without the voice of the village chief, who was absent, and who should have the final say.

### 3.6.5 Summary

The homogeneity of the Mundum community is somewhat tenuous due especially to geographic isolation. In the Mundum II interview there was also mention of a land dispute with Mundum I. There are some differences in their speech, but this variation does not seem to inhibit inter-comprehension between the two villages. As a whole, the Mundum community seems open to change and development. However, financial constraints keep many of their children from continuing their education beyond primary school, and those who do go on to secondary school often do not return to the village. This could imply a lack of qualified people present in the villages to participate in a language development program. In terms of leadership, though, there is a strong middle-aged leadership presence in both villages and the people believe that there will be successors for the current leaders.

Although some interest was expressed in developing the mother tongue, particularly for the purpose of maintaining their culture, during the various interviews the fon of Mundum II, a Catholic catechist, and a school headmaster (i.e., three significant leaders) all expressed opinions against pursuing the development of Mundum. In Mundum I, however, representatives from the churches indicated an openness to have religious materials translated; yet there was a hesitation to speak authoritatively since the fon must represent the official position.

In both Mundum villages, group interviews revealed that Bafut surpasses Mankon as a language preferred for reading and writing. Lexicostatistically, Mundum is closer to Mankon but sociolinguistically the Mundum language community feels closer to Bafut due to proximity and appears to increasingly acquire the language.

## 4. SIL, CABTAL, NACALCO ACTIVITIES AND PLANS

None of these organizations has plans to work on the Mundum language.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the Mundum language appears to still be vital as a mother tongue, the viability of a project to develop the language looks questionable. There are indicators that language shift may be beginning to occur. The fon of Mundum II has expressed a firm opinion in favor of promoting Bafut literacy over developing Mundum, and this combined with the RA-RTT results showing good comprehension of the Bafut language, would seem to suggest that developing the Mundum language is not a high priority right now. However, the situation needs to be monitored.

One strategy might be to introduce the Bafut New Testament into the churches on an oral basis and also to offer Bafut literacy classes, at least one class in each Mundum village. Depending on the response to this approach, a RTT could be carried out in each Mundum village to further evaluate the level of comprehension of Bafut across the community.

Since two individuals have recently approached SIL expressing an interest in developing Mundum, it might be that interest and local initiative will grow. There is no language committee at present, but if the leaders from both Mundum I and Mundum II were to form a language committee and be recognized by NACALCO, then SIL could consider offering part-time consultant help in the area of orthography development.

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7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LINGUISTIC MAP (Mundum and Adjacent Languages) Dieu and Renaud 1983: 401



APPENDIX 2: GROUP RTT Results of Mankon Text

Location: Fon's Palace of the village of Mundum II

Participants: 3 women, 1 man (those who didn't travel much).

50 year old women (had some some travel) [OW]

20 year old women (nursing mother) - had done some travel [YW]

30+ year old man - traveled some [M]

Older woman - [OW2]

The first three participants said that they go to Mankon occasionally.

The tape was played by sections with Roseta asking questions in Mankon at times.

Question 1: When did she have to go home?

OW - correct; YW - "Sunday"; M - didn't answer

Question 2: Where did she go?

M - correct; YW - no response (taboo?); OW - correct

Question 3: Who had already left?

M - correct; YW - correct; OW - correct; OW2 (joined at this point) - correct



Question 4: What did she do with the transport fare?  
M – correct; YW – correct; OW – correct; OW2 – correct

Question 5: The person who started the conversation was sitting where?  
OW – correct; YW – correct; OW2 – correct; M – correct

Question 6: Why was the man angry?  
OW – correct; YW – incorrect; M – correct; OW2 – incorrect

Question 7: Cameroonians bear their names without knowing what?  
M – correct; OW – incorrect; YW – incorrect; OW2 – incorrect

Question 8: Where exactly did the bus have a flat tire?  
OW – correct; YW – correct; M – incorrect; OW2 – correct

Question 9: What did she buy?  
M – incorrect; OW – incorrect; YW – incorrect; OW2 – incorrect

Question 10: What did the person who left the bus want to achieve?  
OW2 – correct; OW – correct; YW – correct; M – correct

Question 11: When did the journey end?  
YW – correct; M – incorrect; OW – correct; OW2 – correct

When the text was played, faces were fairly expressionless, although there were slight smiles from the women. We did not identify the cause of their smiles.

#### APPENDIX 3: Group RTT of Bafut

Question 1: All correct - OW, M, YW, OW2

Question 2: OW2 – correct; OW

Question 3: All answered correctly

Question 4: All answered correctly (simultaneously)

Question 5: All answered correctly

Question 6: Three women answered correctly. But the man responded incorrectly.

Question 7: OW answered correctly, and the other three agreed

Question 8: OW and the man answered correctly, and the others agreed

Question 9: All four answered correctly

Question 10: OW answered correctly.

Question 11: Didn't ask this question

Question 12: All responded correctly.

#### BAFUT TEXT (est. date: November 5, 1990)

It is about two years since this happened, in the month of dry season, two months after Christmas. My wife, my child, and I went towards Mbunti (Wum) to prepare a farm.

QUESTION 1: Why did he go to Mbunti?

ANSWER 1: to prepare a farm

On our way, we had a tire puncture. When the puncture happened, I got someone to go and have it repaired. (We started going again) and we had a tire puncture again. I didn't know what to do. I asked my wife to go ahead and I would stay to fix the tire. We took off the tire (removed the leg of the moto) and carried it to a tire repairer.

QUESTION 2: Who removed the leg (tire) of the moto?

ANSWER 2: the narrator?

He (the tire repairer) said he knew how to drive.

QUESTION 3: What did the man who fixed the moto leg/tire say?

ANSWER 3: that he knew how to drive

He took the tire that he had repaired earlier and went (to where the car was) to put it on. He put the tire on and asked the boy to get into the care with him, but the boy refused. He said he would stay there and wait for his father to come and take him.

QUESTION 4: Where did the child say he would stand and wait for his father?

ANSWER 4: where the tire puncture took place

The repairer entered the car and since he did not know how to drive, he entered the car and was driving very/too fast.

QUESTION 5: How did he drive?

ANSWER 5: very/too fast

And when he was about to go around a bend, he went off the road and fell into a ditch. When he fell into the ditch, he came out and he had bruises/scratches on his face.

QUESTION 6: Where was he scratched?

ANSWER 6: on his face

One side of the care was shattered. The window glasses (windshield) was shattered and the eyes of the moto (lights) were also shattered.

QUESTION 7: What happened to the eyes (lights) of the moto?

ANSWER 7: they were shattered

He left the car in the ditch and ran and came to me. He said to me, "Father, the brakes of the car do not hold." So I asked, "Where is the car?" He said, "It is lying by the gutter there." I asked him, "How many people should I bring to push the car (out of the ditch)? He said, "About 3 people."

QUESTION 8: How many people did he say could push the car?

ANSWER 8: about 3

I took three people and we went to get it. We went for a long distance and stood. And when I stood and I asked, "Where is the car?" He said, "It is there very far away in a ditch. If you lift up your head, you will see that the ditch is very deep."

QUESTION 9: How will he be able to see the car?

ANSWER 9: by lifting up his head

I asked, "You said I should bring three people to bring a car out from such a ditch?!" He stood looking at me, and the people sighed. And they went and looked for many people while I went to look for the chief of the area.

QUESTION 10: What did the people do?

ANSWER: Signed. Looked for many people

I (or the chief) sent many people to clear a path toward the pit.

QUESTION 11: What did the people who the chief called come and do?

ANSWER 11: cleared a path towards the pit

I looked for a bigger truck to pull out the car. I looked for a rope and tied it to the car and pulled it.

QUESTION 12: What did they use to pull the car out?

ANSWER 12: a rope

When it was pulled out, we tried it. I went into the car and saw that it was still working. I went in and I was driving without a wndshield. And a lot of dust came in and covered me all over. My wife and my child took another car--a truck carrying sand. I brought up the car and repaired it.

#### APPENDIX 4: MANKON RTT TEXT By Roseta Swiri (January 2001)

Yesterday, I had to go home. I packed my luggage...(marantz mtr 1.5).

QUESTION 1: When did she have to go home?

ANSWER: yesterday

...and I went to the bus stop. (marantz mtr 2.0)

QUESTION 2: Where did she go?

ANSWER 2: bus stop

The friends I had to travel with had already left (mtr 4.5)

QUESTION 3: Who had already left?

ANSWER 3: friends

After paying the transport, I entered the bus. (5.5)

QUESTION 4: What did she do?

ANSWER 4: paid the transport

I didn't know with whom I would be conversing (talking with) (6.5/7.0) Somewhere when on the road, the person sitting beside me started conversing. (9.0)

QUESTION 5: What did the man next to her start doing?

ANSWER 5: conversing.

He was angry about why people outside of Cameroon come [to Cameroon] but didn't bear/adopt Cameroonian names. (12.0)

QUESTION 6: Why was the man angry?

ANSWER 6: People outside of Cameroon come but don't bear Cameroonian names.

But we Cameroonians bear/adopt their names without knowing what they mean. (14.0)

QUESTION 7: Cameroonians bear/adopt their names without know what?

ANSWER 7: the meaning(s) of the name(s)

He felt that Cameroonians should bear/adopt only their own names. (17.0) Somewhere along the road, the bus had a flat tire. (18.5) It took us some time to replace the tire. (20.0)

QUESTION 8: Where exactly did the bus have a flat tire?

ANSWER 8: along the road

When we arrived where we could buy something to eat, I didn't buy anything to eat but bought something to drink. (23.5)

QUESTION 9: What did she buy?

ANSWER 9: something to drink

Somewhere on the way, the person sitting beside me left the bus on his way to school where he wants to achieve a higher level of study. (28.0)

QUESTION 10: What did the person who left the bus want to achieve?

ANSWER 10: a higher level of study

We continued the journey until we reached our destination/home. (30.0)

QUESTION 11: When did the journey end?

ANSWER 11: upon reaching their destination/home

Upon arriving, we continued with what we came to do. (31.5)

APPENDIX 5: Previous RTT Results (Mundum re: hometown, Bafut and Mankon)

The following is an extract from page 9 of Sadembouo and Hasselbring's 1991 report:

COMPREHENSION OF: (as mean % and standard deviation %)

LOCATION

<u>TESTED:</u>	<u>Mundum</u>	<u>Bafut</u>	<u>Mankon</u>
Mundum	95 (6.5)	65 (18)	75 (15)
Bafut	44 (15)	98 (4.6)	73 (21)
Mankon	22 (12)	62 (21)	98 (4.4)