

MINISTRY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH

A RAPID APPRAISAL SURVEY OF TUKI (ALCAM 551)  
MBAM ET INOUBOU & MBAM ET KIM DIVISIONS  
CENTRE PROVINCE

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**1. BACKGROUND**

This report describes a preliminary rapid appraisal survey of Tuki, an Mbam language of the Central Province, carried out from 25-30 July 1994 by Joseph Mbongué of CABTA (Cameroon Bible Translation Association), Paul Huey of SIL (Société Internationale de Linguistique), and Dr. Engelbert Domche-Téko of the Department of African Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Yaoundé I.

The Tuki language is mostly spoken in the Mbam and Kim Division and also in some villages of the Mbam and Inoubou Division, from Ntui to Mbangassina up to Ngoro. (See map in appendix A: Tuki speaking villages). There are approximately 26,000 speakers (Grimes 1992b:205).

A noun class sketch has been done by Hyman (1980) as well as phonological and morphological studies by Essono (1975 and 1980). Also, during the survey, the team was shown a booklet produced in the Tutsingo dialect, by the Catholic priest of Nyamanga.

Tuki is listed as code 551 in the *Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun* (Dieu and Renaud 1983; henceforth ALCAM:), and code BAG in the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1992b:205). ALCAM lists 6 dialects of Tuki. The *Ethnologue* lists 7 dialects of Tuki, and Essono also lists 7 dialects. The last column indicates the dialects visited on the present survey.

ALCAM	ETHNOLOGUE	ESSONO	Survey
Tukombe (Wakombe, Bakombe, Kombe)	Kombe (Tukombe, Wakombe, Bakombe)	Kombe	Tukombe
Tungoro (Uki, Ngoro)	Ngoro (Tungoro, Uki, Aki)	Ŋgoro	Tangoro
Tutsingo (Batsingo)	Tsinga (Chinga, Tutsingo, Batsingo)	Tutsinggo Tsiŋgo	Tutsingo
Tonjo (Bunju, Boudjou)	Tonjo (Bunju, Boudjou)	Bondzo	Tonjo
Tucenga (Tiki, Bacenga)	Tocenga (Tiki, Bacenga)	Batsenga	Tocenga
Tumbele (Mbele, Mvele)	Mbere (Tumbele, Mbele, Bambele)	Bambele	Tumbele
	Bundum		
		Bongidzo	
			Tucangu

The Tuki linguistic classification as given in ALCAM and Ethnologue is as follows:

**ALCAM:** Niger-Kordofan, Niger-Congo, Bénoué-Congo, Bantoïde, Bantou, Mbam, Tuki.

**Ethnologue:** The linguistic classification used here follows Bendor Samuel (1989), and is as follows: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Broad Bantu, Narrow Bantu, Northwest, A, Sanaga (A.60).

## 2. THE SURVEY

### Goal of the Survey and Procedures

The goal was to clarify the need for codification of the Tuki language, to assess the vitality of the Tuki speech forms, to discover the speakers' interest in the development of their language, and to find out their attitudes concerning a possible reference dialect. This research was carried out as part of a larger program to ascertain more precise information about the language situations throughout Cameroon.

Rapid-appraisal survey is based on the use of specific, non-technical means that take relatively little time, primarily interviews with groups and individuals. Thus, useful information can generally be acquired in one or two days per village visited. Rapid-appraisal methods provide an overall impression of potential needs for codification through limited subjective reports from local inhabitants, and this may be sufficient for ascertaining need. In-depth linguistic and sociolinguistic research would yield a more comprehensive picture if unanswered questions were left after the survey. The weaknesses of self-reporting have been well documented (e.g. see Seguin 1991).

Three major areas are considered in a rapid-appraisal survey:

- a) **Dialect situation:** What are the perceived mutually comprehensible dialects of the language and the perceived level of intercomprehension between them? It is assumed that two speech varieties may be dialects of the same language if: 1) speakers perceive them as such, and/or 2) children are reported already to understand the other speech variety by age 5 or 6. Otherwise, it is possible that the other speech variety is a separate language, comprehension of which is more or less easily acquired depending on linguistic similarity and the speaker's exposure to it.
- b) **Multilingualism:** What is the level of oral and comprehension proficiency in languages of wider communication (LWCs) as well as geographically neighbouring and linguistically related languages?
- c) **Language vitality and viability:** What is the potential for success of a language development project in given language, as indicated by reported patterns of language use? A key indicator of vitality is that the mother tongue (hereafter referred to as "MT") is actively used in the home (between parents and children and among siblings) and in the village setting (conversation between MT speakers, traditional gatherings).

Consideration is also given to the attitudes of the community under study towards the MT, other dialects, related languages, or LWCs with which they have contact. Attitudes help predict the acceptability of literature.

The specific procedures used during this survey were as follows:

**Word List:** One 120-item ALCAM word list was collected in Tumblele, Tocenga, Tonjo, Tustingo, Tucangu, Tukombe, and Tangoro for lexicostatistic analysis.

**Group interviews:** One standard rapid-appraisal group interview was conducted with leaders of each dialect community. More specifically: in Ntui, with the chief and community leaders of the Mvele people; in Koussé, with the chief and elders; in Biakoa, with some elders; in Mbangassina, with the chief and some elders; in Bialanguena, with the chief and the community leaders; in Egona I, with the community leaders; in Angadjimberete, with the chief and the community leaders. We also held some conversations with the Tuki paramount chief, Mr. Katou Ndengue. We spent a half day in some villages, and a full day in other villages.

Tumblele — visit to Ntui; interview with chief and community leaders and collection of word list.

Tocenga — visit to Koussé; interview with chief and elders and collection of word list.

Tonjo — visit to Biakoa; interview with some elders and collection of word list.

Tustingo — visit to Mbangassina; interview with chief and some leaders and collection of word list.

Tukombe — visit to Bialanguena; interview with chief and community leaders and collection of word list.

Tucangu — visit Egona; I interview with community leaders and collection of word list.

Tangoro — visit to Angadjimbéréte; interview with chief and community leaders and collection of word list.

Besides the three areas of concern described previously, questions were asked concerning migration patterns, intermarriage, and local development, where relevant to MT vitality and the potential success of a language development project.

Owing to SIL's and CABTA's specific interest in Bible translation, interviews were also held with leaders of Christian churches in Ngoro with Mr. Eloundou Bella Simon Pierre elder of the E.P.C. (in the absence of the pastor), and with the Catholic priest Father Janusz; in Mbangassina with the catechist, in Ntui with the Catholic priest Father Jean Gabriel Borner and in Biakoa with the Catholic catechist. The major denominations being the Roman Catholic church and the Eglise Presbytérienne du Cameroun (EPC). The pertinence of church use of local languages to future language development lies in the fact that in other communities, churches have been the primary users of materials written in the local language.

The analysis will be presented as follows:

- Dialectology (see appendix B)
- Multilingualism (see appendix B)
- Language Vitality and Viability
- Summary and Recommendations

### 3. DIALECTOLOGY

#### 3.1 Report of dialect situation

In the interviews carried out during the survey, the people reported 7 different dialects for the Tuki language: Tocenga, Tumbele, Tonjo, Tutsingo, Tukombe, Tucangu, and Tangoro. The maps in Appendices A and B show the geographic location of villages in the Tuki-speaking area.

In Koussé in Cenga canton, people consider themselves Bacenga people and the language is called Tocenga. The villages where Tocenga is spoken are: Nachtigal, Ehondo, Njame, Essougli, Nguété, Odon, Bétamba, Koussé, Kéla, Edjindigouli, Koro, and Mbanga.

In Ntui canton, people call themselves Mvele and the language is call Tumbele. The Mvele villages are Bindandjengué, Biatsota I, Biatsota II, Ntui, Bindalima I, Koundoung, Bindalima II, Kombé, Bilanga and Ossombé.

In Biakoa, people call themselves the Bonjo people and the language is Tonjo. The other Bonjo villages are Bindamongo, Endingué, Tchamongo, Talba, Biatenguéna, Goura, and Nyambala.

In Mbangassina people call themselves Tsinga people and they call their language Tutsingo. The other Tsinga villages are, Enangana, Bilomo, Biapongo, Assola, Badissa, Nyamanga II, Nyambala, Biatombo, Yanga, Yébékolo, Etoa, and Esséré.

In Kombe canton, people call themselves Bakombe and the language is called Tukombe. The Bakombe villages are Bialanguena, Boura I and Boura II.

In Egona I, people call themselves Acango and they call their language Tucangu. The other Acango villages are Ngomo, Nyatsota, and Nyamongo (to the south of the Mbam River). Note that this is a new distinction not previously recorded in ALCAM, Grimes (1992b), or Essono (1980).

In Angadjimberete, people consider themselves to be Angoro people and the name of the language is Tangoro. The other Angoro villages are Ngoro, Ngamba, Moungo, Egona II, Bakouma, Massassa, Mbengué, Ngoro-Nguima, Nyamongo (to the north of the Mbam River), and Djara-Kanga.

It should be noted that the Tucangu speakers interviewed perceive that Tucangu is spoken in Angadjimberete, Egona II, and Ngoro, as well as in the villages listed above (Egona I, Ngomo, Nyatsota, Nyamongo). The Tangoro speakers, on the other hand, perceive that

these three villages speak Tangoro. Given this conflicting information, it is difficult to determine exactly the dialect boundaries. However, the people in Egoni I perceived their speech variety to be distinct; also, they included as part of their speech variety three other villages (Ngomo Nyatsota, and southern Nyamongo) that were not otherwise included in Tangoro or any other dialect group. In addition, a comparison of the word lists for Tucangu and Tangoro revealed a number of differences (see Section 3.4, below). As a result, we suggest that Tucangu and Tangoro should be recognised as separate dialects.

In general all these people grouped together consider themselves to be Oki people and they speak a common language called "Tuki". In all the interviews, the Bundum dialect quoted by Ethnologue was not mentioned, and the Borogidzo dialect mentioned by Essono (1980: 5) is actually the Leti or Mangissa language (ALCAM No.403).

### 3.2 Dialect groupings

Concerning dialect similarity, those interviewed grouped themselves as follows: Tangoro with Tucangu and Tukombe; Tucangu with Tangoro; Tutsingo with Tonjo and Tukombe; Tocenga with Tutsingo; Tumbela with Tutsingo and Tocenga; Tonjo with Tutsingo and Tocenga; Tukombe with none.

Chart 1: Dialect Groupings

<u>Interview group</u>	Consider the closest dialect to be:
1 Tangoro	2, 7
2 Tucangu	1
3 Tutsingo	4
4 Tocenga	3
5 Tumbela	3, 4
6 Tonjo	3, 4, 7
7 Tukombe	None

### 3.3 Intercomprehension

We also found that the people report little hindrance between the seven dialects as far as intercomprehension is concerned. Lexical differences do exist; however, the majority of villages reported that even children as young as 5 easily understand the other dialects. Exceptions were reported with respect to the Tangoro dialect; in that case children need to be about 10 years old, or have had contact to understand the dialects of Tocenga, Tumbela, and Tutsingo well. Also, Tutsingo speakers claim that a child should be 10 years old in order to fully understand speakers of Tangoro and Tucangu. These exceptions do not appear to affect intercomprehension significantly.

The following chart shows the reported intercomprehension between Tuki dialects. The vertical axis refers to the dialects of the interview groups; the horizontal axis refers to the dialects themselves. For example, according to Tangoro speakers, when one of them meets a Tumblele speaker, they both speak their MT and can fully understand each other (as indicated by the code "MT"). Also, children from Tangoro can already fully understand a Tumblele speaker by age 5 (as indicated by number "5").

Chart 2: Intercomprehension

Comprehension of:

	Tangoro	Tumblele	Tocenga	Tonjo	Tukombe	Tutsingo	Tucangu
Tangoro		MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 10	MT 5
Tumblele	MT 10		MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5
Tocenga	MT 10	MT 5		MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5
Tonjo	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5		MT 5	MT 5	MT 5
Tukombe	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5		MT 5	MT 5
Tutsingo	MT 10	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5		MT 5
Tucangu	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 5	MT 10	

According to the above chart, it is clear that there is reported mutual comprehension between all of the 7 Tuki dialects.

### 3.4 Lexicostatistic analysis

A synchronic lexicostatistic analysis of the word lists collected was done and the results (below) appear to confirm what the people reported to us, that there is mutual comprehension between all the dialects. The margin of error is between 5% and 7%. The threshold level used for determining possible intercomprehension is 70 % Gary Simons (1983: 57).



Chart 3: Lexical Similarity Percentages for Tuki Dialects

Tumbele						
82	Tocenga					
82	91	Tonjo				
83	91	88	Tutsingo			
83	78	80	82	Tucangu		
84	86	82	84	89	Tukombe	
85	82	81	80	93	90	Tangoro

It should be noted that Tucangu perceives Angadjimberete and Ngoro as villages where Tucangu is spoken. Tangoro perceives these villages as speaking Tangoro. Results appear to confirm the people's reports because the numbers are above 70 %.

We note that Tucangu and Tangoro show 7% lexical differences, which supports our claim that these two speech varieties should be recognised as separate dialects of Tuki.

### 3.5 Choice of reference dialect

When we posed the question about which of the dialects they would prefer to see as the standard, they appeared not to understand why that was important, since all of the dialects are the same anyway. They appeared ready to accept whichever dialect should be proposed; nevertheless, they did give their preferences when asked. The chart below shows the tally of choices. For example, among the 7 dialects asked about, Tutsingo was mentioned as a first choice by 2 groups and as a third choice by 2 two other groups. Each group was given equal consideration in this tally; however, Tocenga and Tutsingo were the largest groups numerically. Some villages did not volunteer a 2nd and 3rd choice on this question, so the numbers in the chart do not always add up to the same total.

Chart 4: Number of Votes Received

Dialect	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	Total
Tutsingo	2		2	4
Tangoro	3			3
Tumbele	1	1		2
Tukombe		2	1	3
Tocenga		2	1	3
Tonjo		1	2	3
Tucangu	1			1

The chief in Koussé (Cenga Canton) indicated that Tangoro could be chosen because it is the most difficult for young people and is faithful to the origins of the language. In Egona I

(where Tucangu is spoken), the group interviewed referred us to the paramount chief, who would be able to make a choice for the whole Tuki people. In turn, the paramount chief (where Tangoro is spoken) recommended that the survey team would be the best one to choose a reference dialect.

In conclusion, there are two village/dialect areas that appear as most suitable choices for a possible reference dialect: Tutsingo and Tangoro. Of the two, Tutsingo is perhaps the better choice. First, because it was mentioned by more people as a choice for standardisation that they could accept. Second, Tutsingo is geographically central in the Tuki language area, falling between 3 dialects to the south and 3 to the north. Third, considering the word list analysis, Tutsingo is not lexically too dissimilar from any of the other 6 dialects. Fourth, Tutsingo is one of the largest group in term of population.

Tangoro would be the second choice, mainly for two reasons. First, it is the seat of the paramount chief. Second, it was mentioned by 3 villages including the most numerous group (Cenga) as being their first choice for standardisation.

### **3.6 Attitudes towards MT development**

In response to the question "Would you like to see your MT be taught in the first two classes of the primary school", all seven group interviews revealed that there is a keen interest toward developing the Tuki language. The groups interviewed had a very positive attitude concerning the use of Tuki in primary classes 2 and 3 using the PROPELCA model. They added that they would be willing to learn to read and write the developed dialect in literacy courses.

## **4. MULTILINGUALISM**

In this section, we will look at the use of and attitudes towards neighbouring languages and LWCs in the Tuki language area.

### **4.1 Neighbouring Languages**

#### *4.1.1 Comprehension and Oral Proficiency*

The Tuki-speaking area is surrounded by 8 other languages (see map in Appendix B): Vute [720/VUT] to the north, Bavek [403/EWO] to the southeast, Eton [403/ETO] and Mangissa [403/MCT] to the south, Yambassa [542/YAS] to the southwest, Nugunu [541/YAS] and Rikpa [584/KSF] to the west and Lefa [581]/[KSF] to the northwest. According to the groups interviewed, none of these surrounding languages is widely spoken

among the Oki people. They mentioned that one must have contact with these languages in order to speak them, which implies that adequate comprehension is acquired and not inherent. They also claimed, however, that many of the Oki have frequent contact with speakers of neighbouring languages, so that some Tuki speakers speak more than one language. Specific reports are as follows:

#### *Nugunu*

All the villages reported that they use French to communicate with Nugunu speakers. Tutsingo and Tumblele added that they also use Ewondo, and Tangoro said that besides French, Pidgin English is sometimes used.

#### *Rikpa*

Every village reported that they prefer to use French with Rikpa (Bafia) speakers except for Tucangu, which claimed to speak Rikpa with Rikpa speakers. Tucangu, which consists of 3 villages, borders the Rikpa language area. On the other hand, Tucangu people expressed a great desire to have Tuki developed and do not appear to have any interest in Rikpa. The group showed us a letter in which they expressed to the authorities that they were a different culture and dialect from Rikpa.

#### *Yambassa*

All villages claimed to use French to communicate with Yambassa speakers. Tangoro, Tutsingo, Tucangu, and Tumblele also speak Ewondo with Yambassa speakers and occasionally Pidgin English.

#### *Bavek*

Tangoro, Tucangu, Tukombe, and Tonjo use French with Bavek speakers. Tumblele claimed to use Ewondo, and Tutsingo was the only group that said they speak Bavek with Bavek speakers. Tocenga reported that they can speak Tuki with Bavek speakers, however, it takes years of contact between the two groups in order for Bavek speakers to learn Tuki. Tucangu reported that some can speak Tuki with Bavek speakers. Tangoro was the only village that mentioned they use some Pidgin English with Bavek speakers.

#### *Vute*

All villages use French to communicate with Vute speakers. The exception is Tumblele, which prefer to use Ewondo. Tangoro also use Pidgin English and Ewondo but prefer French.

#### *Mangissa, Eton, Bulu*

When asked what language a Tuki speaker would use to speak to a Mangissa, Eton, or Bulu speaker, Tukombe said that the young people use French. The old people are able to speak Eton with Eton speakers. Some Tocenga people claimed to use Tuki with Bulu speakers though one must have contact. This is possibly due to the great amount of Bulu that is used in the Eglise Presbytérienne du Cameroun. Tucangu reported that they can speak Tuki with Mangissa speakers.

#### 4.1.2 Attitudes towards neighbouring languages

Attitudes towards the neighbouring languages appear negative, in that they would not like to see their language displaced by the others. Nevertheless, they find themselves compelled to learn their neighbours' languages, as we were told that outsiders do not want to learn Tuki. One reported that when an Eton woman marries a Tuki man, the children will learn both Eton and Tuki and be considered equally Eton and Tuki.

As was mentioned above, the Tucangu speakers reported that they did not want to learn Bafia. Rikpa speakers are of a different culture, dialect, and customs and consider the Tuki language foreign. They insisted, however, that Rikpa has not been successful in influencing their language.

The Tucangu speakers in Egona I told a story about how the Bafia people invaded their area but they fought them back and did not allow them to take over. This explains why Egona I is surrounded by Bafia-speaking villages. The Tucangu consider themselves as one with the Tangoro speakers, which is why some people even said that there is not much difference between the two dialects.

Tocenga said that they are surrounded by many people who could make them forget their language, which is why they have to defend their language. They were not in favour of learning to read and write in neighbouring languages except for Ewondo.

Tuki speakers' attitudes concerning the use of written materials in neighbouring languages were generally not positive. Tumbele said that they would *perhaps* be willing to learn Ewondo, in a written form, but would prefer to concentrate their efforts on French and English since they are official languages. Only two of the villages interviewed, Tocenga and Tumbele, showed interest in learning to read and write Ewondo.

#### 4.2 Languages of Wider Communication (LWCs)

French, Ewondo, and Pidgin English are used as LWCs by Tuki speakers. In fact, the usage of these languages is a bigger factor in the sociolinguistic situation of the Oki people than the usage of the neighbouring languages.

##### *French*

French is spoken by most of the youth and adults in the Tuki area. French is used in both domestic and non-domestic domains. Most villages reported that French is spoken more than the MT and that they are concerned about this encroachment of the French language. French is used as the language of instruction in schools as well as in churches. Though an official language, French is not the first language of the Oki people and they wish their language to be developed. Attitudes toward French were both positive and negative. Many of the people interviewed commented that they see the value of being able to speak French and that knowing French can be an asset economically. However, some expressed concern that too much French was being spoken. Therefore it is necessary to find out if there is evidence that French is replacing the MT, and this issue may be an important factor in determining the success of a development project in the Tuki language.

## *Ewondo*

Ewondo is also spoken by most Tuki people, particularly the old people. According to people interviewed, this is because the Beti people originally came from the Tuki area. One must, however, have contact with Ewondo speakers in order to speak their language. Tangoro, Tutsingo, Tucangu, Tonjo, and Tumbele use Ewondo with Ewondo speakers. Tukombe also uses Ewondo; however, its use is limited to the old people, while the young speak French with Ewondo speakers. In Tukombe they said that the elderly learned Ewondo in school.

## *Pidgin English*

Pidgin English has limited usage, being spoken in the market place and with field workers who come down from the Northwest Province to work in the fields during harvest. Attitudes toward Pidgin are similar as toward French, though Pidgin has such a low profile in this area that it did not appear to be a significant factor to those interviewed.

## **5. LANGUAGE VITALITY AND VIABILITY**

According to Decker (1993:1), language vitality can be defined as "the presence of factors which maintain a language community as a separate and united societal group, who perceive of their language as an important part of their identity. When a group has linguistic vitality, the individuals in the group behave in a manner which maintains group linguistic unity and distinction as separate from other linguistic groups."

It is possible that French is gaining or will gain greater usage in the future but this cannot be assumed. Further testing will be needed to verify if language shift is indeed occurring and if it will continue. It was reported that the MT is used in many domains, there is pride in the MT, and French will be spoken alongside the MT, church leaders are positive towards its use in the local assembly and there is a cohesiveness evident among the different dialect areas.

### **5.1 Language Use**

#### *5.1.1 General Community*

Primarily the MT is used in the home in all the 7 villages where the survey was conducted. French is also reported to be spoken in (almost) all homes in Tocenga, Tucangu and Tutsingo. Eton is also spoken in the home at Tonjo. The MT, however, is the preferred language. Among friends of the same age, the MT is the language of choice in all 7 villages. French is sometimes used among friends in all dialect areas except Tukombe and Tangoro. While at work in the fields, all villages reported themselves as using the MT. Tocenga was the only village that said they used some French in the fields.

Due to the variety of languages represented at the local and main markets, the Oki people will converse in whatever language is necessary to communicate: the MT, French, Eton, Ewondo, Pidgin, Bafia, or Vute. The Oki people generally speak other languages

because most outsiders seem unwilling to learn to speak Tuki. We are uncertain at what level the Oki speak these other languages, but it appears limited.

In the primary and secondary school classrooms, French is the language of instruction. French and the MT are both spoken during the recreation time. Two villages, Tucangu and Tutsingo, reported that only French is used during the play time, while Tumblele said that only the MT was used. Three villages claim that both French and the MT are used during play. In Tukombe there is no school.

At the clinic, French is the language of communication. However, only 3 villages have clinics: Tutsingo, Tangoro, and Tumblele. In Tumblele they said that sometimes the MT is used and occasionally Ewondo, Pidgin, or English.

### *5.1.2 Religious Domains*

The Roman Catholic church and the Eglise Presbytérienne du Cameroun (EPC) are the two largest denominations in the Tuki language area. The MT is used in both churches for singing, preaching, and announcements. Many languages are used for singing, such as the MT, French, Ewondo, Bafia, Yambassa, Basaa, and Bulu. The EPC originally evangelised this area in Bulu and for that reason Bulu still plays a major role there. In the Catholic churches the primary language is French. All of the pastors and priests that we interviewed said that the sermons are done in French and then translated into the MT. In Ngoro, the Catholic mission has decided to alternate the interpretation of the sermon between Vute and the MT, i.e. one Sunday in Vute, the other Sunday in the MT, due to a desire voiced very strongly by the Tuki speakers. None of the pastors or priests are native speakers of Tuki.

In the churches, youth meetings and Bible studies are held in French. A few churches do hold them in French and in the MT. The scripture reading is always given in French. The announcements are done in French and also in the MT. We asked pastors and priests how they felt about the use of the MT in the church service and all the responses were very positive. One church worker in Ngoro said that it is very important to talk to "your Father" in your own language. It was also mentioned, by some pastors, that the older women have a hard time understanding French. For this reason, use of the MT would be very helpful for them. Also, someone commented that even if 20% of the congregation were Tuki speakers, it would be good to translate the scriptures. All the people interviewed were willing to work in conjunction with any denomination in the task of Bible translation. In fact, the EPC has invited the Catholic church to preach in their services before.

In summary, it can be said that the Tuki language is in its daily use vital. The language is used in the most important domains of the home, with friends of the same age, at work in the fields, in the local and main markets and in the church. Church workers are also positive towards the MT's use in the service and the use of a MT translation.

### *5.1.3 Attitudes toward the Mother Tongue*

As mentioned in section 3.6, the attitude towards development of the MT was very positive in all the villages that we visited. We did not get an indication in any of the interviews

that there was one dialect that must be used as the standard because it is the best dialect. Everyone agreed that all 7 of the dialects are exactly the same language even though there may be some differences in the way some words are pronounced.

As far as accepting written materials in another dialect, there were no villages which refused to accept another dialect besides their own. According to the interviews, each village also appeared eager and willing to have their children learn to read and write the MT. They said that the adults would also like to learn to read and write their MT. Additionally, every village agreed that it would be good to have the MT taught in the primary school for the first 2 years. These responses appear to reflect a positive and willing spirit among the people as a whole.

## **5.2 Language Maintenance and Shift**

In assessing the viability of the Tuki language, we found two general indicators to evaluate: attitudes of the interviewees, and patterns of language use. Unfortunately, these two indicators sometimes gave conflicting results. The attitudes of the people were almost always positive, but their reports of language use raise some doubts as to the long-term viability of the language. Further study of this question is needed.

The attitudes toward the development of the MT are positive. There does not appear to be much concern that MT will disappear altogether. One village said that Tuki will exist "until the end of the world", while another claimed that Tuki will be here "as long as the earth remains". The overall attitude is, however, that the MT will always be spoken.

However, there are some negative indicators of the viability of the Tuki language based on present patterns of language use. Three out of seven villages claim that there is at times more French being spoken than the MT. These people did express a fear that the MT would be taken over by French. Tukombe reported that 3 out of 5 sentences are in French. They feel that a child should master the MT before learning French. Tonjo acknowledged that there was a risk of losing the MT, perhaps in 30 years, considering how the youths do not speak it much. Many conceded the usefulness of French as a LWC and for its possible economic benefits.

## **6. Language development programs**

### **6.1 Socio-economic factors**

According to Watters (1990:6.7.1), there are three factors that affect the nature and development of language programs: the homogeneity of the linguistic community, their openness to change and development, and the presence at the local level of a middle-aged leadership. The following includes a discussion of these 3 factors in the context of the villages surveyed.

### *6.1.1 Homogeneity of the linguistic community*

Watters (1990:6.7.3) writes: "The more homogeneous a given community is the more chance there is for success in motivating broad based participation in the development of the language and in a mass literacy program in that community." The Tuki language area is truly homogeneous.

Primarily, they are linguistically homogenous. Each dialect reported that they understood the other dialects without problem. As seen in chart 2, a 120-word ALCAM word list was taken at seven villages, each representing a different dialect area. A lexicostatistic comparison was done and the results do not cause us to question what the people reported, that there is mutual comprehension between all the dialects.

Culturally speaking, the Oki people maintain a cultural identity and unity. They consider all Tuki speakers, whatever their dialect, as one people. The importance of being identified as different from the other surrounding cultures was evidenced in a letter sent from the Tucangu speakers at Donenkeng I to the government. In this letter, requesting status as an autonomous canton, they specified how they are very different from the neighbouring Bafia speakers. They said that the Oki are different in culture, dialect and customs and that the Bafia ways are considered foreign to them.

Administratively, the Tuki language is spoken in two divisions, the Mbam and Inoubou and the Mbam and Kim. This, however, is a recent development dating from 1992 and has probably not affected the group's homogeneity.

Concerning geographical homogeneity, the Tangoro dialect area is separated by the Mbam River and the people have to cross by boat as there is no bridge. However, this area is not inaccessible. The paramount chief lives in this area, in Ngoro. None of the dialect areas is inaccessible by foot. Many, however, are inaccessible by car in the rainy seasons.

Religious homogeneity exists in that the majority of people, as reported by our interviewees, are of the Christian faith. There is, however, a strong Muslim presence in Tonjo (40%). Other reported percentages of Christian/Muslim were 98/2, 90/few, 90/<1, 50/40, 95/5, 90/10 and 80/15.

### *6.1.2 Openness to change*

All the villages surveyed appeared open to change. We find indications of this attitude in the areas of health, education, and community development.

There is widespread use of the local dispensary, in the villages that have dispensaries. The people would choose to go to the traditional healers only if they could not afford to go to the dispensary.

Education is important to the Oki; however, the depressed economy keeps many students out of secondary school. The primary school attendance rate is high, with most villages reporting close to 100% attendance. Secondary attendance ranges from 60-99%. Again, finances prevent many youths from furthering their education.

Three of the villages reported the presence of a development committee, one of those being in its beginning stages. Tukombe and Tocenga appear to have active development



committees, with Tukombe realising projects such as a school and a dispensary. Tumbela and Tucangu reported no committee but they do have an agricultural association that meets regularly. The lack of development committees in the Tuki area was one of our concerns that we presented to the paramount chief in Ngoro. He was encouraged to begin a development committee and if not, at least a language committee.

### *6.1.3 Middle-aged leadership*

An important factor in determining the success of a language program is whether the leadership in the village is middle-aged. At this time, middle-aged leadership appears strong in the villages that we surveyed. The leaders range in age from 25-80 years old and all live in the village. Every village asserted that there would always be someone present to take over the leadership role in the village, even when the children are old.

Most of the youths, however, leave the village after secondary school to look for work. When asked whether the youth return, one man responded, "For what?" One man in Tocenga said that only the lazy ones do not return to the village. Overall, some young people leave for the city and only return if they are unable to find work.

## 6.2 Conclusion

In summary, then, the Tuki language area appears to be homogenous and open to change. The attitude toward language development is very positive. There is also an adequate presence of middle-aged leadership at this time. However, the current exodus of youth to the city is a concern. If this trend continues, it could introduce difficulties in a language program.

## 7. SUMMARY

The present survey established that the Tuki language has seven distinct dialects. All claim to understand each other without much problem. The people recognise that there are lexical and tonal differences between the dialects. However, they said that none of the differences impedes comprehension. Though some people expressed preferences for the choice of a standard reference dialect, no one dialect was clearly superior to the others for the purposes of standardisation. Attitudes towards standardisation of the MT, whichever dialect is used, are very positive.

Though surrounded by many languages, most Tuki speakers do not understand these languages well and do not use them very much. French is the dominant LWC and many feel that the young people are speaking French more than the MT. Some are concerned that French could overtake the mother tongue but many people expressed their desire to see the language flourish. Ewondo is also used as LWC though many do not speak it well. It is possible that written materials in neighbouring languages would not be accepted and used by Tuki speakers.

According to Watters (1990), the Tuki language area appears to be homogenous, and open to change. There is an adequate presence of middle-aged leadership. The attitude toward language development is very positive.

The Tuki language is used in domestic and non-domestic domains. Church workers are positive towards the MT's use in the church and towards a MT translation of Scripture.

A variety of factors show that the Tuki language is vital, but questions remain about its viability, because of current patterns of language use and the increasing use of French in the community.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Tuki appears to meet some criteria for a language standardisation project: All the groups interviewed reported that the language is in daily use, despite of the use of French in Tonjo and Tukombe, and in certain homes of the area. The population is over 26,000 people, the language area is linguistically and culturally unified, and the attitudes toward MT development are positive. On the other hand, it is possible that the use of French is gaining or will become greater in the future. Further testing will be needed to verify if language shift is indeed occurring, and if it will continue.

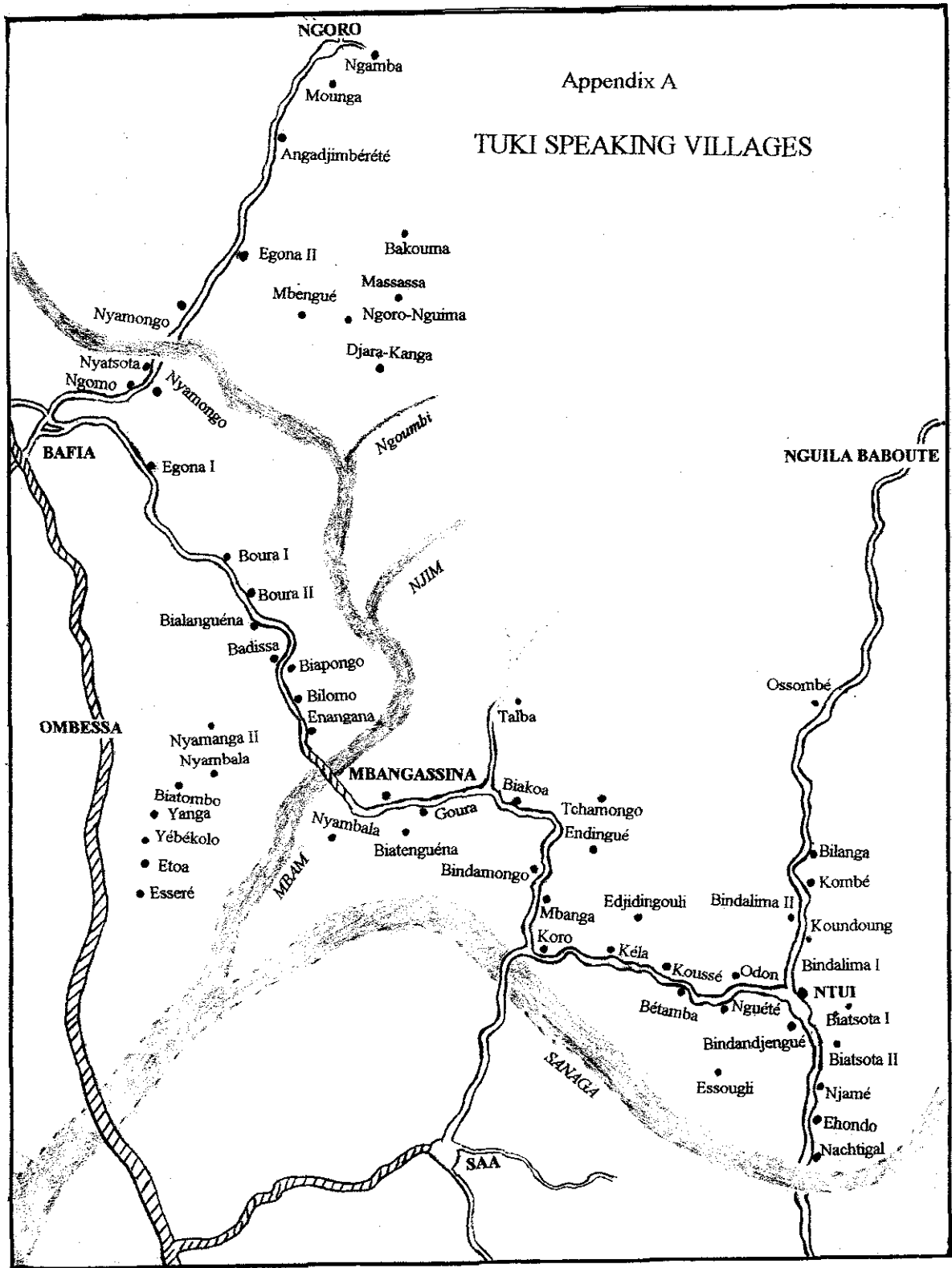
Considering the apparent high comprehension of French among the young people as people reported, a more in-depth study of bilingualism in French is recommended (for example, by means of a Sentence Repetition Test), in order to determine the overall level of fluency in French throughout the community. Because of questions about bilingualism in French, we are not able to make clear decision about translation need status at this time.

### *ALCAM changes*

ALCAM lists only six Tuki dialects: Tukombe (Wakombe, Bakombe, Kombe), Tungoro (Uki, Ngoro), Tutsingo (Batsingo), Tonjo (Bunju, Boudjou), Tucenga (Tiki, Bacenga), and Tumblele (Mbele, Mvele). It is recommended that Tucangu be added to the list as a seventh Tuki dialect.

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Appendix B

NEIGHBOURING LANGUAGES AND TUKI DIALECT AREAS

