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PRE-SURVEY REPORT - INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS

by J.C. Callow*

The Institute of Linguistics is currently considering an expansion of its research and translation work in languages spoken in the North of Ghana. Before any definite decisions can be reached, surveys are planned in areas where it seems likely that such an expansion would be needed. In preparation for these surveys, a pre-survey report has been drawn up, summarising information currently available. In particular, I have drawn heavily on C. Painter's 'Linguistic Field Notes from Banda and Language Maps of the Guang Speaking Areas', Collected Language Notes, No.7, Institute of African Studies, 1966; J. Goody's 'The Ethnology of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, West of the White Volta', London (mimeo), 1954; and information provided privately by A.W.W. Wilson. It was anticipated that the surveys would take place in November and December of last year (1969).

This pre-survey information is presented below, together with four sketch maps (see page 65) indicating the areas concerned. The first map gives the approximate areas covered by the other three, which are drawn to the same scale of approximately 35 miles to the inch. All figures are taken from the 1960 Census reports, but it should be remembered that as the annual rate of growth is about 3 per cent, it is likely that all such figures should be increased by one quarter to one third.

WEST-CENTRAL GHANA

NB: The languages are listed alphabetically.

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1. CHORUBA. This language is spoken in a small group of villages to the East of Bole, on the Bamboi-Sawla road. The language is a member of the Guang language group, and so is fairly closely related to Gonja. There are probably not more than 1,000 speakers, and the main village appears to be Senyon (474).
2. DUMPO. Dumpo is another Guang language, spoken to the West of the Kintampo-Tamale road, near New Buipe, where the road crosses the Black Volta. It is also confined to a small group of villages with a total population of between 1,000 and 1,500. The main villages are Kadelso (the one village South of the Volta) and Jembito.
3. PANTERA. This language is spoken by the Jamang people, and occupies a small area in the North-west corner of the Brong Ahafo Region, along the border with the Ivory Coast. The principle town appears to be Sampa (3036), which is about 50 miles by dry-season road from both Wenchi and Berekum, though the nearest major town is probably Bondoukou in the Ivory Coast, less than 10 miles away. The language is classed as a Gur language, but it is more closely related to the Senufo dialects spoken in the Ivory Coast than to any language in Ghana (except Pantera, q.v. below). The population appears to be about 8,000, mostly resident in larger centres, such as Sampa.
4. MO. Mo is actually the name given by the Gonja to a language which the people themselves call Deg; they call themselves the Yanela. The majority of the Mo live in the Brong Ahafo Region, but there are speakers in the Northern Region as well. The language area stretches North of Bamboi for about 30 miles, and East from Bamboi to the Kintampo road on both sides of the Black Volta. The Census of 1960 gives the population as about 9,000. The language is most closely related to Vagla, in which research is currently being undertaken.

5. PANTERA. As might be expected from the name, Pantera is closely related to Fantera (see above) - Painter indicates a cognacy of about 80. The speakers of Pantera are called Nafana, and occupy an area between the Fantera and the Mo in the Brong Ahafo Region. There are about 7,500 speakers, with two main groupings round Kabrunu (510) and Adadeem (646). The area is rather remote, and would almost certainly have to be entered from the South, much as the Fantera will.

6. SAFALIBA. The Safaliba are found on the opposite side of the road from the Choruba, to the South-west of Bole. Again, the language is spoken in a small group of villages, with a population of about 3,000, including those that live in Bole itself. Like the Vagla, they have Gonja chiefs, but linguistically they are closest to Wali and Dagaari. The largest village is Mandara (1113).

NORTH-WEST GHANA

1. CHAKALI. The speakers of Chakali occupy an area about 40 miles to the South-east of Wa, South of the Sisala, Northeast of the Vagla, and Northwest of the Tampulma, and they speak a Grusi language similar to all three of these, although current information would indicate that Wali is also widely understood as the Chakali area falls within the area administered from Wa. They number about 1,500 to 2,000 and the biggest village is Ducie (529), though there are also Gonja and Vagla speakers there. They would have to be reached by dry-season road from Wa.

2. DAGAARI DIALECTS? On the borders of the Dagaari-Wali area, there are small groups of speakers of what may prove, on further investigation, to be dialects of Dagaari or Wali. Three such are known, and are listed below.

2a. BATIGE. Only the anthropologist Goody has mentioned this language, and he identifies only three villages, Kunfosi, Kalba (part only), and Tantama. They are in an area due West of Tuna, not too far from the Black Volta, with Tantama across the border in Upper Volta. Goody says that they are very similar to the Nome (q.v. below) and are under Gonja chiefs in Ghana. Kalba is the biggest village (740), but there are Gonjas and others resident there. The total number of Batige is unlikely to exceed 1,000.

2b. NOME. This dialect of Dagaari is called 'Mara' by Painter on his maps, and is closer in to the road to Wa and nearer the Southern boundary of the Wa Administrative District. According to a Wali speaker, the Nome understand Wali, but not vice-versa. They, too, have Gonja chiefs. The biggest village appears to be Kulmasa (654), but as this is on the Wa road, it probably includes Wala, Dagaaba and Birifor. Off the road, the biggest village is Nahari (301). The Nome probably number between 1,000 and 1,500 altogether.

2c. NURA. The Nura are more commonly known as the 'Lawra Lobi', as they occupy the area between Lawra and the Black Volta, and are closely related to Birifor, often called 'Lobi' in Ghana. Cognacy figures would indicate that Nura is probably a dialect between Birifor and Dagaari, and mutual intelligibility would have to be carefully checked. There appear to be about 4,000 speakers, with Birifor (Burufu on maps) and dependent villages, as the main centre.

3. HANGA. The Hanga occupy the villages found in the area between the Damongo-Tamale road and the Tampulma area, i.e. the 'back-route' into the Tampulma area to the West of the White Volta. Their biggest village appears to be Murugu (821), and it is known that there are boys from Murugu at middle school in Damongo, where there is said to be a Hanga community of about 1,000. They number about 3,000 altogether, and are most closely related to the Eastern Mole-Dagbani languages such as Kusal and Mampruli.

4. KOMA. The existence of the Koma (named after one of their villages) has only recently come to light, probably because they occupy a small area (4 villages on the map) in a remote part of Ghana, with not even a dry-season road marked to any of the villages. They occupy a sort of 'no man's land' to the South-east of the Sisala and to the West of the Mamprusi. André Wilson says that the language is most closely related to the Mole-Dagbani languages but not closely enough to assign to them, so he gives it a separate sub-group. I have figures for only two of the four villages, but this would indicate a population of somewhat over 1000, with Nangurima at 563.

5. MARA. Very little is known about this group at all, who occupy a couple of villages (Larabanga and Nabori) some miles along the road North of Damongo, and who are also found in Dokrupe, a village shared with Choruba speakers near Bole. They are said to be very similar to the Hanga, but no details are available. Most of the speakers appear to live in Larabanga itself (822).

CENTRAL UPPER REGION

1. GURENNE. This is the proper name for a language more commonly known by the names of its Eastern and Western dialects, Frafra and Nankani (1b and 1a on the map). The Frafra are found mainly North and East of Bolgatanga, and the Nankani South and Northeast of Navrongo. The two dialects are about as close as Mampruli and Dagbani, i.e. mutually intelligible. They also closely resemble the other Mole-Dagbani languages in the area. The total population is a large one, the 1960 Census figure being nearly 200,000, about two-thirds Frafra and one-third Nankani.

2. NABIT. Speakers of Nabit, called Nabnam or Namnam, are found along the Western border of the Kusal area, bounded by the Frafra and the Talensi. The language is closest to Kusal, Mampruli and Dagbani, and was spoken by 16,500 speakers in 1960. Many of the Namnam appear to live in the two major centres of Nangodi (3564) and Sekoti (3337).

3. TALNI. Speakers of Talni are known as Talensi, and occupy an area to the East of the Tamale-Bolgatanga road, North of the White Volta and South of the Frafra area. The language is closely related to Kusal and Mampruli and was spoken by 32,780 people in 1960. These seem to be concentrated in major centres such as Winkogo (c.6000), Balungu (c.4500), Tongo (c.3000) and Shiega (c.2000).

