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EXPLORING URBAN MOTHER TONGUE LITERACY

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0. INTRODUCTION

At the outset, I should like to clarify the limits of this paper.[1] First, it focuses on adult literacy in the mother tongue among urban migrants, that is, among people of rural origin who find themselves in an urban environment, away from the main linguistic zone of their mother tongue. This 'displacement factor' is, as we shall see, an important element in their situation. Further, the basis for this exploration is limited to experiences gained and observations made during three one-month periods scattered over a two-year span. This paper deals not so much with the how of urban literacy in the mother tongue, as the why. Yet as we identify some of the sociolinguistic factors underlying motivation towards mother tongue literacy among urban dwellers, we shall be laying a firm basis on which to build an effective strategy and methods, whose application may well extend beyond the urban scene to the rural. Much of our discussion will have particular relevance to the West African situation.

The content of the paper falls into four main sections:

1) Setting
2) A brief outline of the Mundani literacy experience, 1981-85
3) The urban migrant, his community of origin and his mother tongue.
4) The potential rôle of the urban migrant in the overall literacy programme.

1. SETTING

Literacy, in its many facets, has stimulated much research, experimentation and publication during the past couple of decades. The aspect of urban literacy, however, has attracted little attention, judging from the paucity of materials available on the subject. And, indeed, it is not without some surprise that I find myself presenting a paper on this topic, for reasons which probably reflect the general dearth of interest.

First, as member of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Société Internationale de Linguistique), I considered the focus of my linguistic research, and its application in literacy, to lie in the rural context. The main weight of SIL's linguistic research is directed towards the world's unwritten languages, and is consequently rural-oriented. It is mainly in the world's rural areas that unwritten languages enjoy relative freedom from external linguistic interference and tend to fulfil their maximum function.

Second, in 1978 my colleague and I began research in the Mundani language, spoken in the Fontem Sub-Division of the South-

West Province of Cameroon. Lying on the western flank of the Bamboutos Mountains, the Mundani area is difficult of access, the terrain is rugged, and as a result, its 23,000 or so inhabitants have experienced a minimum of the effects of the country's national rural development drive. Indeed, the very nature of their environment has had a marked effect on the outlook of the people - they themselves tend not to be amenable to change. It is only in recent years that a church-sponsored medical facility has been established in the area, while on the communications, educational, and agricultural fronts the field is wide open for development. In short, one could scarcely envisage a more 'rural' and less 'urban' setting, one which tended to compound the rural-urban dichotomy in my thinking.

A further factor reinforcing my rural orientation was the view that the promotion of national languages (mother tongues) must not be an end in itself, but rather one element in an overall strategy geared to development. In Cameroon, rural development is a national priority. And many are seeing the important role that national languages must play in authentic development of any kind, be it cultural, social or economic. Ngijol (1978:3) has stated (translation mine). 'Development in our country can take place only through our (national) languages, the only effective channel for setting free the national genius and allowing it to blossom.'

This being my own conviction, the Mundani situation presented tremendous scope and challenge. As a first step, literacy in the mother tongue must surely make a significant impact for development in this predominantly illiterate community, where only a handful of people possessed a reasonable degree of fluency in English. In all of this, the rural sector of the population monopolised my thinking, to the exclusion of the urban. In any case, the latter were already to some degree 'developed' or, at the very least, were enjoying some of the effects of development by the very virtue of their urban location. What was more, could we seriously expect them, in their urban context with its pressures towards greater expertise in English or French, to take any interest in learning to read and write their mother tongue which was where our initial literacy efforts would lie?

In these circumstances, and with this mind-set, therefore, it is evident that any involvement in urban literacy on our part literally overtook us.

2. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE MUNDANI LITERACY EXPERIENCE 1981-85

My aim in presenting this outline is that the specific facts relating to the Mundani experience will provide a useful backcloth for the more general considerations that follow. It will be helpful also, when highlighting the response of the literate, urban sector of the population to mother tongue literacy, to have some indication of the reaction of the rural residents to the prospect of literacy in their own language.

With the help of several Mundani co-workers, a Mundani alphabet was duly established, and the first items of Mundani literature

were produced, including a calendar, a variety of folk-tales, and a small songbook. A Reading and Writing Manual was also in the course of preparation, to provide systematic instruction in the Mundani alphabet for those already literate in English. Such was the situation at the close of 1981.

Despite the exposure of the local rural population to our presence and activities, there was little overt reaction. We sensed a basic bewilderment on their part as to the utility of being able to read and write their language.

Meanwhile, during this initial phase of our work, we became aware of a 'fringe' Mundani population - those who had migrated to such urban centres as Bamenda, Nkongsamba, Buea, Douala and Yaoundé. Members of these various urban groups would make rare appearances in the home area on fleeting visits. They would, however, show curiosity and express interest in the written language - a small, but positive, reaction which was significantly, if not altogether surprisingly, lacking on the part of the home residents.

It was only after several requests from the leader of the urban Mundani group in Buea (Fako Division) to give them some instruction in the Mundani alphabet, that we began to consider seriously giving some of our time to this. In view of the seemingly high level of motivation of this group and the contrasting continuing low level of response among their rural counterparts, we felt that nothing could be lost in responding to their request.

Accordingly, the leader of the group was informed several months in advance that we would offer a 2-week period of instruction in September-October 1982. It would be his responsibility to do all the necessary organisation for the classes.

On my arrival there, one week of classes was given in each of two centres, in accordance with the leader's prior arrangement. These consisted of daily sessions from 4 - 6 pm., these hours being most suited to the daily work-patterns of those attending. The majority of the class participants were young or middle-aged men, most of them employed on the Cameroon Development Corporation's plantations, a few as clerical workers, the remainder as labourers. A few prison warders and trainees were also present. All students were already literate, to varying degrees, in English. The average class attendance was fifteen. The 'classroom' in one centre was that of a Mundani primary-school teacher, while in the other centre, a photographer's studio, suitably adapted, served this purpose. The degree of interest was very high, but the time at our disposal afforded only a brief introduction to the Mundani alphabet.

In response to a strong plea to return and follow up the initial instruction, a 4-week period in June '83 was offered. This was the earliest date that our overall programme would permit.

Meanwhile, news of the successful classes in Fako Division spread to other urban centres, and the substantial Mundani

community in Douala put in their application for classes. Here again it was the leader of the group who undertook the organisation of the classes and strongly encouraged members to attend. The first classes were given during a one-week period in June '83, with daily sessions from 7 - 9 pm. in order to best accommodate work patterns here. This was followed by a second two-week period in September 1983.

The Douala students were of varying occupations - policemen, teachers, clerical workers, traders, construction workers. Here, as in Fako, young or middle-aged men were in the majority. Class attendance averaged about twelve. A room in the home of one of the group leaders served as classroom. Unfortunately the level of noise interference here tended to be high.

On completion of the series of classes in each of the above three centres, each had had a total of only 30 hours' instruction at the maximum, and this at very widely scattered intervals. However, because of the high degree of motivation of a core of students in each centre, who were in possession of the instruction manual throughout, interest was sustained and progress was better than might have been expected.

Several students from each centre showed a sufficiently good grasp of the alphabet and of the various spelling rules, to merit an attestation to that effect. It was also gratifying to both students and instructor that several of those completing the classes were able to contribute short items in the language which have since been compiled, and constitute the first two completely native-authored productions in Mundani.

This overall picture of early mother tongue literacy developments in Mundani, shows that the response on the urban front up to that point far outweighed that of the rural population. Such results could not but challenge us in our highly rural oriented approach to the literacy programme. Was this high level of motivation among the urban dwellers just a fluke occurrence, or was it a feature substantial enough to bear developing and exploiting? Could it even help provide a solution to the apparent impasse on the rural front? These questions prompted me to take an enquiring look at the whole situation, not from an exclusively rural perspective, as previously, but from a comprehensive rural-urban viewpoint.

3. THE URBAN MIGRANT, HIS COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN, AND HIS MOTHER TONGUE

Having outlined the early stages of the Mundani literacy experience and noted the very positive reaction of the urban-dweller, we turn now to a more general appraisal of the phenomenon of urban migration. This will involve an excursion into the realm of sociology. Many of the insights I have culled from P.C. Lloyd's Africa in Social Change and they have been substantiated by my own observations of the Mundani urban migrant communities.

a) The scale of urban migration

The phenomenon of rural exodus or urban migration is neither localised nor sporadic, it is rather worldwide in scope, and, according to statistics, constitutes an apparently irreversible trend. At the 1976 Habitat Conference of the United Nations, the following statements were made, 'At the beginning of this century our world was predominantly rural. Perhaps 15% of the world's population lived in cities. By the end of this century the tables will have turned completely: only 15% of the world's population will be classed as rural.' It was also noted that 'the worldwide urban growth rate is 7.2% per year.' Africa is certainly no stranger to this urbanisation process, despite the currently high rural proportion of its population - some sources estimate it to be 90%. The 'sprouting' of its towns and cities provides ample evidence of urban invasion. While the growth of urban centres is partly attributable to a high birthrate, a major factor is migration into cities and towns from the countryside.

Cameroon is no exception. It was estimated that in 1975 74% of the population was rural while by 1995 this figure will have fallen to 62%. It is predicted that the increase in the urban population will comprise mainly youth, many of them to be disillusioned in their pursuit of employment.

This marked urban drift among the youth has not been going unnoticed or unchallenged, it rather continues to defy the considerable efforts being made to stem it, including, in Cameroon, the attempts to ruralise education. It remains the case, however, that instruction delivered in English or French is not readily applicable by the young Cameroonian who remains in the village. The school-leaver who wishes to profit from what he has learned at school is obliged to participate in sectors of modern activity, that is, in the town or city, where the European mentality he has acquired at school is more fitting.

The Mundani area bears eloquent witness to this. On average, up to 90% of primary school leavers make their way each year to the towns, though in the case of the Mundani, the situation is aggravated by the extreme dearth of openings for youth in the rural area, whether in further education or employment.

So we conclude that, from the point of view of scale alone, the urban drift is gathering momentum to the increasing detriment of rural development. Also, in its strong attraction for the youth, it is draining the very lifeblood of rural communities.

b)Motives and life-style of the migrant

Once the migrant, young or middle-aged, has set foot in the town, what then? Is he thereby immediately lost to the rural cause? Does a process of instant 'de-ruralisation' take place, in which his rural mentality is totally replaced by an urban one?

In order to make any evaluations in these areas, it is necessary to consider the migrant's motives and the pattern of his activities as he arrives in the town, searches for employment and settles down.

The motives of migrants vary, and with them the degree of influence of urban life. Students may have been obliged to go to the town or city to continue their education. School-leavers, unwilling to farm in the manner of their parents, or deprived of the opportunity to do so, go to the towns to seek employment on a long-term basis. Young men go, in many cases, to earn enough to pay the brideprice for their first wives, perhaps a more short-term proposition.

With the exception of the educated youths, there are perhaps few men who arrive in town with the intention of staying permanently. But those who make good, with success in trade or through the acquisition of a skill which guarantees permanent employment and a better wage, will tend to remain in the town. The possibilities of gaining a similar income in the village grow less, while their urban affluence, demonstrated on visits home, enhances their prestige in the village. P.C. Lloyd (1969: 119) notes: 'Few surveys have been conducted to measure the stability of urban residence and the patterns of migration. It seems probable nonetheless that there is, in West Africa, a quite rapidly increasing tendency for men to stay longer in the towns, and to have their wives and children with them.'

Whatever his motives, what is the pattern of the migrants' initial experiences on reaching the town?

The migrant, on arriving in the town, will most probably lodge with his nearest kin, or other people from his home community, and expect them to maintain him until he finds work. His behaviour towards these people will follow that of the village.

At the earliest opportunity, the newcomer is introduced to the appropriate ethnic association and enrolled. These associations are formed on the basis of single villages, or where the number of migrants is too small, of village groups. All members of the village or villages concerned who live in the town are expected to join the associations, and most of the poorer members do, because the benefits of membership are so much greater than they could obtain from other such sources.

Meetings of the ethnic associations tend to be held regularly, perhaps on a defined Sunday in each month. Attendance figures are usually good, traditional methods of fining late or absent members being frequently employed. The meetings are held either in the houses of the presidents or in those of the other members in rotation. The meetings are always conducted in the mother tongue, thus enabling all members to participate fully, whatever their degree of education.

Procedure tends to follow the indigenous pattern. Many of the topics which come up for discussion, on the other hand, pertain to urban life and its problems. With the more formal business of the meeting completed, the members relax in singing the songs of their village and in dancing. The activities of the ethnic associations are financed both by regular contribution and by levies for specific purposes.

What are the main functions which these ethnic associations perform for their members? Foremost is social security: the members of an association are expected to find employment for one another, to maintain the unemployed and sick, and to arrange and pay for funerals of the deceased and the repatriation of their dependents. Recreation, too, is an important function, as is the socialisation of members to the norms of urban life. Immigrants are helped to find acceptable compromises between the values of the home community and those demanded by urban life.

Such functions, and particularly the recreation aspect, are of greatest importance to the unskilled and semi-skilled urban workers. Such men establish in their everyday life a large number of relationships - with employers and co-workers, with traders in the market, with neighbours, but these tend to be highly superficial and rarely develop beyond the initial specific contact. Their personal friends are almost exclusively drawn from members of their own ethnic group, and may in fact be selected from among those most closely related to them. They may belong to no other association in the town, their lack of education barring them.

A further and most important aspect of the activities of these associations lies in their relationship with their home areas. This is illustrated by the names adopted by many of them, for example, the X or Y (Home Village) Development Association. Much of the time of each meeting of the association is spent in discussing the news and affairs of the home villages. The town-dwellers, being better educated than those at home, feel obliged to do what they can to gain improved social services for their villages.

The values inherent in the associations are those of their respective rural areas. Indeed, many of them seem to be but modifications of the traditional associations.

Why do these ethnic associations thrive in the urban setting, attracting the allegiance of migrants as they do? Might we not rather expect that on leaving his village society, the African becomes 'de-ruralised', that in learning the new norms and values of town life he becomes 'urbanised'? In much of the description of African urban life, these terms have been freely used, tending to obscure the degree to which relationships in the town may still be patterned according to traditional norms. We need to probe beyond appearances to uncover some of the latent, yet powerful, influences that are at work for the preservation of tradition in the urban context.

The town is indeed the locus of most innovation. Here the individual may escape the restraints of his family and kin, of traditional elders and ethnic values. How many men choose to do so is another matter, for the African townsman tends to remain in a very close relationship with his kind and community of origin.

This is because the family, the descent group, and the age group are associations typical of traditional African societies. And a urban migrant's links with his home area tend to be

strongest when he can assume, on his return, a status determined by his descent and age, and thus unaffected by his absence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the development of urban ethnic associations is most marked among peoples with such an ethnic social structure.

A second factor in the persistence of traditional norms in the urban context is paradoxically that modern towns and cities are ethnically heterogeneous. As men of different groups increasingly live side by side, one might expect them to develop greater tolerance of each other's customs, to develop a stronger sense of national allegiance. But these groups are also competing for employment. Differences in educational level or in achievement drive lead to the association of meaner tasks with certain groups. Stereotypes of those from other ethnic groups take on more force as one enters into rivalry with them. Ethnic hostilities grow, and 'tribalism' becomes more pronounced.

A further factor in the establishment of ethnic associations may be the inferiority which people traditionally having dispersed settlements and smallscale political organisation feel when mixing with other immigrants from indigenous towns and substantial chiefdoms: the former people perhaps feel a stronger need for solidarity as a group, and to eradicate the 'backwardness' of their home area.

Inter-ethnic inequalities and tensions apart, ethnic loyalties also provide for West African peoples a sense of identity, a sense of the values of their own cultures, which balance the feelings of inferiority that derive from the continual borrowing of Western technology and the acceptance of Western styles of living, feelings which are heightened in the urban context.

Strong ethnic 'awareness' is thus, to a large extent, an urban phenomenon, and one which develops with increasing modernisation of the economy. Ethnic relationships tend to intensify rather than decay in an urban climate. Also paradoxically, it seems to be the society with the less highly developed social or political structure which accepts change more readily.

We may conclude, then, that the economic, social and cultural pressures exerted by the migrant's new urban environment tend to encourage him to adhere to his traditional roots and values rather than to jettison them. Such adherence helps safeguard his economic security, his social wellbeing, and his cultural identity.

While this conclusion particularly applies to the illiterate and semi-literate, to the unskilled or semi-skilled worker, it also holds true for the literate, more educated townDweller, who tends to maintain fairly close links with his village of origin. In short, urbanisation is a much more gradual and less dramatic process than we might imagine.

c) The urban migrant and his mother tongue

We will now look more specifically at the rôle of the urban migrant's mother tongue in this overall situation.

First, for the migrant in the multi-cultural urban context, his mother tongue is the most significant and evident mark of his cultural identity, it at once links him with his own ethnic group and separates him from all the others. It is in his own language that his traditional values find their clearest expression, indeed his language will have played its part in shaping those values. His language and his traditions may have become fused to the degree that he may use the same word to refer to both. In this regard, it is interesting to note that all the older members of the first Mundani writers emerging from the reading classes chose Mundani proverbs, traditions, or folktales as the topic of their contributions. Instinctively they felt their language to be first and foremost the vehicle for transmitting their culture and values.

This same awareness that language transmits culture also underlies the concern experienced by many urban migrant parents on seeing their children, born and bred in the town, all too rapidly lose the language of their origins. The implication is that, once the language is lost, so also are the values, the sense of identity, thus severing the link with the home community. The urban Mundani parent frequently expressed this concern. Several, however, felt that, now that the language was written, it could more readily be taught to their children. In this way they could be rescued form the cultural alienation which threatened them.

The twin capacities of bestowing cultural identity and transmitting cultural values, particularly to the rising generation, are properties which the urban migrant can appreciate in his mother tongue even in the oral mode. Deprived of their influence, he loses his sense of identity and cultural balance, without which he cannot function efficiently in other areas.

In this regard, Tadadjeu (1983,3), addressing the question of linguistic integration in the African context, refers to two equally important dimensions in this process, the vertical and the horizontal. He states (trans. mine): 'Linguistic integration in Africa should satisfy the double requirement of Africans both to be culturally themselves (vertical dimension) and to communicate among themselves whatever their country of origin (horizontal dimension).' He adds: 'It must be emphasised that the two dimensions of this African linguistic integration are equally important, and that the one cannot be sacrificed to the other.' In the urban context, where conflict between the two dimensions most readily arises, it is inevitably the vertical that is sacrificed.

While language in its oral mode permits development of the vertical dimension to a certain degree, it is when the language is practised additionally in written form that its socio-cultural development potential is greatly enhanced. Research and experience substantiate this. Included among various principles listed by the experts for effective linguistic integration in Africa is 'the passage of her languages from the oral state to the written, a process whereby the level of intercomprehension is increased among the various dialects of a language on the one hand, and between a particular language and its neighbours on the other.' (Tadadjeu: 3)

My albeit brief experience of mother tongue literacy among those Mundani literate in English would appear to corroborate the above assertions regarding the development of national languages. The urban Mundani literates, in their eager acceptance of written Mundani, amply support the case for the vertical dimension in linguistic integration, and that, moreover, in the written mode. They demonstrate that literacy in a lingua franca or official language not their own is not socially and culturally sufficient. The horizontal dimension, that of cross-cultural communication, has been provided for to a certain degree, but a socio-cultural vacuum still exists. Neither English nor French, as lingua francas, can provide a satisfactory basis for the preservation and cultivation of the cultural personality. This is properly the domain of the mother tongue, and more particularly, of the mother tongue in its written mode.

These observations on the rôle of the vertical dimension (i.e. mother tongue literacy) for those Mundani already literate in English prompt us, at this point, to take a brief second look at the reaction of the illiterate rural Mundani to mother tongue literacy.

I referred earlier to a sense of bewilderment on their part. Some readily verbalised this: 'Read and write Mundani?! Why, it's English we need!' In other words: 'We are a deprived community, cut off as we are from the mainstream of national development. Give us access to improved standards of living, to improved health and agriculture, to education and employment, to a better understanding of our rôle...'. They had rightly diagnosed their problem and prescribed its solution. They did need English, the horizontal dimension. It only remained to demonstrate to them that literacy in Mundani would not only be an effective first step towards that goal, but also bring enrichment socially and culturally.

Both dimensions of linguistic integration, then, are equally important, and a proper balance must be maintained in the promotion of both.

To return now to the domain of the mother tongue in its written mode: by way of illustration, the following are brief indications of some specific reactions of the urban Mundani to mother tongue literacy.

First, there was obvious emotional and cultural pride in the realisation that Mundani, now with its own alphabet, could be considered on a par with English or French.

Then, on the intellectual level, the students were introduced to the particular challenges presented by the language in its written mode, as they struggled to apply the various orthographic rules, etc. They began to be impressed by the consistency of their languages: no longer a mere 'dialect', it began to acquire the status of a language proper. These were discoveries which the language in oral mode alone could not have stimulated.

It was also interesting to note that the urban Mundani quickly recognised the need to select one dialect of the language to serve as the reference dialect, and they readily accepted the choice that had been made. This contrasted with an apparent tendency to 'dialectal conservatism' among the rural population. Several students, through the written mode, also began to identify, for the first time, consistent phonological variations between dialects.

New areas of linguistic investigation and enquiry also opened up with the production of the first items of Mundani-authored literature, as consensus was sought as to an acceptable literary style.

In all of these aspects, the language in its new, written dimension, afforded stimulus to deeper linguistic, and hence cultural and self-awareness.

4. THE POTENTIAL RÔLE OF THE URBAN MIGRANT IN THE OVERALL LITERACY PROGRAMME

We have investigated in some depth the continuing relationship between the urban migrant and his home community and have observed its important influence on his behaviour in his new environment. We have also considered the rôle played by his mother tongue, perhaps more than any other single factor, it provides the vital, stable core for the migrant's persisting allegiance to his traditional values.

These major factors provide the basis for a high degree of readiness for mother tongue literacy on the part of the urban migrant. On that account alone, a significant urban sector of any predominantly rural people would merit, at the least, a proportionate share of the overall literacy effort.

With regard to the overall Mundani programme, however, were we to consider the urban literacy venture as a secondary digression from the major rural literacy thrust? Or did it call for a more significant place in the overall strategy? Two basic factors attracted us toward the latter route.

First, the fact that the urban interest existed, and that it was not a flash-in-the-pan occurrence but was rooted in a persisting traditional orientation, encouraged its exploitation to the profit of the less motivated rural population.

Second, our sociolinguistic findings indicated that the urban literates constituted an effective catalyst group for the wider Mundani population. As a group, they possessed certain characteristics which placed them in a uniquely strategic position.

As regards their mentality, the influences of their urban environment had developed in them an openness to change and an aggressiveness not stimulated by the rural setting. Yet they had also largely retained their traditional orientation. From the combination of these two traits emerged a practical concern for the development of their home area. They viewed such development as both possible and desirable, and were prepared to take the initiative in achieving it.

For their part, the home dwellers welcomed their initiative and support, their relationship being one of respect, trust, and dependence towards their educated, wage-earning urban countrymen. On this basis, we reasonably assumed that any definite lead given by the urban group in the direction of mother tongue literacy would find positive response in the home area. And indeed, since the completion of the first urban classes and the appearance of native-authored literature, there had been a noticeable increase in interest on the urban front. Letters written in Mundani were also now beginning to filter through from urban dwellers, requiring readers back home.

Further, despite their being a minority group with respect to the whole Mundani population and their being located in distant, scattered urban pockets, the urban literates retained vital, influential links, through their status and their kinship and community ties, with all sectors of the population, whether urban illiterates, rural literates or illiterates, the rural older generation, or the emerging urban generation. In matters relating to development, it was they who were the most powerful agents of change.

If, for example, we had considered the rural literates as an alternative catalyst group, what would we have found? We have already noted that their initial response to mother tongue literacy was poor. Why should this be so? The fact is that the literate living in his home area is not always in a better position to influence his community.

First, in the case of the Mundani for example, the rural literates are few and scattered, comprising mainly primary school teachers. They cannot constitute a 'critical mass' as far as the promotion of mother tongue literacy is concerned.

Second, their education has alienated them from traditional society and made them misfits to a certain degree in their home setting, an alienation that urban dwellers do not experience in their urban environment. Thus they are less acceptable to the rural population as agents of change than their urban counterparts.

In the light of these considerations, we concluded that, while maintaining our sights firmly on rural literacy and development, we could choose a no more effective route to our goal than the initial development and encouragement of urban mother tongue literacy.

Having opted for this route, how then were we to proceed? In broad outline, we envisaged taking the following measures.

An important first step would be the selection and training of literacy teachers and organisers in those centres already initiated in the written language. They would be responsible for the ongoing literacy programmes in their respective urban centres, and possibly farther afield.

Second, it would be necessary to give instruction in the Mundani orthography in those urban centres not yet visited. This could prove an important factor in the even spread of literacy back in the home area, as there is a tendency for the population of certain rural localities to migrate to particular urban centres. To neglect a significant urban centre at this point could result in a corresponding 'illiteracy pocket' back in the home area.

Third, we envisaged that these urban groups could provide the nucleus for a Mundani Language Study Committee, responsible for the standardisation and overall development of the language. This could be achieved perhaps through a number of small subcommittees functioning at urban centre level and sending a representative to the area committee, which would also include members from the various rural localities.

Fourth, we would strongly encourage the urban groups to continue in Mundani literature production. Having a substantial body of literature to offer in the language would provide important additional incentive towards literacy for the rural sector. Separated as the urban groups were from the actual source of their culture and tradition they appeared to be able to view these more objectively than the rural dwellers, and thus be better able to define and describe them. Areas of interest already touched on by them were proverbs, folktales, histories of the various Mundani clans, traditional music and medicine. Such topics are of interest also to the rural dwellers and would help constitute for them a body of literature which would provide added incentive towards literacy. To this end, courses giving guidelines and practical help in literature production could be provided.

Fifth, as the various urban groups would advance in mother tongue literacy and become more aware of their motivating influence on the wider home community or on the locality with which they had closest links, they might be encouraged, if the need arose, to contribute financially to the promotion of literacy there. During the past two years ('85-'87), that is, since the period outlined in section (2) of this paper, we have seen gradual progress in three of the above areas: reading classes have been given in urban centres not previously visited, several Language Study Subcommittees have been formed, several more native authored publications have been produced. The most recent of these developments has been the emergence of the Language Study Subcommittees: these we now consider a potential key to significant progress in the other areas, providing the structure needed for decision-making and fund-raising.

As these various measures now begin to produce results in the urban context, we expect them to be reflected in a corresponding increase in motivation and participation on the rural front. Indeed, judging from the measure of response generated already in 1985 among the rural inhabitants by the initial literacy activities among the urban migrants, the timelag between developments on the two fronts should not be great. We therefore anticipate a good measure of interaction between the two communities, thus avoiding the emergence of two distinct programmes.

To implement such an overall literacy programme with its initial emphasis on urban mother tongue literacy requires considerable fragmenting of time and effort with regard to the various aspects of the programme. The need to ensure interesting, relevant subject-matter in reading materials, for example, may eventually require the preparation of separate materials for urban and rural readers. The training and supervision of personnel in the various scattered urban centres, together with the effective co-ordination of literacy developments in all centres, both urban and rural, demand substantial funds, organisation, and effort. A key factor in the overall success of the strategy remains the effective training of capable personnel at all levels - urban centre or rural locality, regional and area levels.

However, this strategy, in taking into account the significant sociolinguistic facts relating to the Mundani people as a whole, permits the promotion of mother tongue literacy to follow the culturally appropriate development pattern. In so doing, its chances of success are greatly increased.

Since mother tongue literacy should gradually take effect in stimulating much needed socio-cultural development among the rural Mundani, we expect to see them begin to participate in the economic development of their home area, not so much in a spirit of dependence, as previously, but more as equal, enterprising partners with their urban-based countrymen.

In summary, this exploratory look at mother tongue literacy among urban migrants strongly indicates that, in the currently prevailing sociolinguistic conditions in West Africa in general, the promotion of urban mother tongue literacy has great potential as a prime factor in the successful development of African national languages among her rural populations.

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