

## A NOTE ON DOGON IN ACCRA

**M.E. Kropp Dakubu**

Language Centre, University of Ghana.

This paper presents some data on the sociolinguistic situation of Dogon in Accra, together with the nouns from the West African Language Data Sheets wordlist elicited from speakers of the Jamsay and Pinyay dialects resident in Accra.

On offre ici des données sur le plan sociolinguistique en ce qui concerne la langue dogon à Accra, avec deux courts vocabulaires des dialects Jamsay et Pinyay (noms tirés de la Liste des Mots, West African Language Data Sheets).

The wordlist that appears as the Appendix to this paper was collected in Accra at the interview<sup>1</sup> with two leaders of the local Dogon community on October 12, 1982. This interview was carried out in connection with a sociolinguistic survey of northern (Gur) communities in Accra that has yet to be fully published (Dakabu 1986). The sociolinguistic data included here are part of it. I had hoped to amplify the linguistic material into something more substantial, but that has not happened, and since judging by the article by Bendor-Samuel et al. (1989), the published data on Dogon is still very limited in dialect coverage, the little collected is offered in the hope that it may be of some use. The sociolinguistic data perhaps shed some light on aspects of the social integration of urban migrants in West Africa.

The Dogon speaking community in Accra is popularly known by the Fulani name Kaado. The persons interviewed were Ahmadu Anakila, about 60 years old, a speaker of the Jamsay dialect and (then) acting chief of the Accra community, and Baba Karembe, probably slightly older, a speaker of Piñay. The latter dialect name is not mentioned in Sebeok (ed., 1971), Calame-Griaule (1980) or Bendor-Samuel et al. (1989). The substantive chief at the time was a very old man, slightly senile, but still in office. The interview was held in the reception room at the entrance to the chief's house, on the south side of the mosque in the section of Accra known as Nima<sup>2</sup> called Masallin Kaado. This mosque was built by the Dogon community, and the leaders interviewed were devout Muslims, Baba Karembe in particular having had a fairly prolonged Koranic education. Among the first Dogon to arrive in Accra, he was a Muslim before he left home, but the deputy chief indicated that many including himself had converted after they arrived in Accra.

These two men both said they had originally come to Accra directly from their homes in what is now Mali, making the journey on foot. As is typical of Ghanaian urban migrants, they had not sojourned elsewhere for any significant length of time. Anakila, the Jamsay speaker, said he came in 1943, walking from his home town Jankabungu with seven others through Madugu, Lumbisagu, Tim, to Wagia in present-day Burkino Faso, and hence to Ouagadougou and then Pogu and into Ghana at Paga. The entire trip as far as Kumasi took 28 days. Baba Karembe, the Piñay speaker, was not sure of the date but had come a few years earlier, between 1935 and 1940. He had walked with three others from Tili in Mali through Binkom, Jambulɔ, Teigu, Gitbundo, Kainu, Bangase, Kɔnɔ, Kiu, Baagu, Yaafo, Waiga, Ouagadougou, the trip taking three days. They then walked through Pogu, Paga, Navrongo, to Bolgatanga, but from Bolga

<sup>1</sup> I was assisted at the interview by Mr. Nachinaba Bugri, Research Assistant at the Institute of African Studies, Legon, and Hamma Abudulaye, watchman at the Institute of African Studies, who introduced me. The interview was conducted mainly in Hausa.

<sup>2</sup> This name according to the Fulani chief of Nima is from a Fulani word, **ne'ema** 'pleasant land'.

he and his companions took a lorry to Kumasi. He had made four trips back, returning from the last in 1973. Both men agreed they had left home for adventure, independence and out of curiosity about the world, rather than because of poverty.

On a separate occasion, a survey questionnaire was administered to 51 adult members of this household and that of the community Imam, which also adjoins the mosque.<sup>3</sup> This group included 29 men, and 22 women of whom 5 were non-Dogon, four Togolese in origin (Kabre, Chamba, Kotokoli) and one Nigerian Hausa. The group was extremely polyglot. The average number of languages spoken (at least a little) by individuals was 6, and well over half the group (30) spoke 6 or 7. The group as a whole spoke a total of 20 languages, although only 6 were spoken by significant proportions. The figures are given in Table 1.

Most significant is the position of Hausa, as the only language shared by everyone. Only half the group (52%) claimed to speak Dogon well, a figure which included very few of the Accra-born. More people thought they spoke Ga better than Dogon (78%).

Hausa was the language most frequently reported in every intimate or personal situation of use except conversation with parents (Table 2). Ga also had a significant presence in the domestic circle. Although Dogon and Hausa were reported equally as the medium of interaction with siblings, less than half the speakers used Dogon with the younger generation, while considerably more than half used Hausa.

In external situations, Hausa is by far the most commonly reported language for use with friends and in public situations such as lorry parks and hospitals, with Dogon not surprisingly lagging behind all the others in the public sphere. At workplace and school Hausa and the Ghanaian languages are more or less equal, and Dogon does not figure at all.

Hausa thus appears as the principal (though not the sole) instrument of linguistic integration of the community into the Accra/Nima social environment. Its acquisition and use is obviously an Accra phenomenon, for it is a general lingua franca in Nima, but not in the Dogon homeland, and nearly all members of the community came to Accra directly - they did not acquire it through sojourns in other places where Hausa is spoken. This is also the pattern among migrant communities in Accra originating from northern Ghana.

Otherwise the Dogon community displays a very different pattern from Ghanaian groups, because as the data of Table 2 might suggest, it also seems to be losing its language in favour of Hausa, and this is not the typical pattern among Ghanaian migrant groups that use Hausa for communication with other migrants. Eight of the Dogon women and thirteen of the men (about 46% of the ethnic Dogon, ie. excluding the 5 non-Dogon women) had been born in Ghana, and not one of them had learned Dogon as a first language. It is not surprising that none of these people regarded Dogon as the language they now spoke best, but the same was true of the Dogon born in Mali: with only three exceptions, everyone considered Hausa to be the language he or she spoke best. The exceptions were one man born in Mali who thought he still spoke Dogon best, one man born in Ghana who thought he spoke Ga best, and a woman also born in Ghana who thought she spoke English best. The Hausa-centered majority however included several who considered themselves balanced bilinguals: seven Hausa-Ga, one Hausa-Dogon, one Hausa-English and one Hausa-Ga-Kotokoli.

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<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire was administered by Nachinaba Bugri, in Hausa.

Since those born in Mali had all learned Dogon first, there has evidently been a general shift from Dogon to Hausa in individuals' primary competence, and a nearly complete shift between generations. One reason may be infrequent reinforcement of the mother tongue by new in-migration of speakers. Everyone born in Mali was over 30 years old, and the mean age was at least forty. These people had spent an average of more than thirty years in Accra, which meant that most had arrived there as very young adults or children, before the political independence of either Ghana or Mali, and not everyone has visited 'home'.

There has also been a rather high rate of marriage to non-Dogon women. This was not completely unknown before arrival in Ghana, since two of the group born in Mali reported their mothers' language as Songhai, but it does not appear to have been the common pattern. Among the 21 Dogon born in Ghana, on the other hand, only 8 reported that their mothers' language was Dogon. The mothers mainly spoke Gur languages from Togo, especially Kotokoli, as did the 5 non-Dogon women in the group, all of whom were married to Dogon.

Another factor contributing to the shift may be that, although the Dogon apparently act in relation to others as a single community, the Dogon language is not necessarily a unifying factor. Hama Abudulaye, who introduced me,<sup>4</sup> was sure that the Dogon all understood each other, and my Dogon informants claimed the same, but although the wordlists obtained are clearly closely related, they are sometimes strikingly dissimilar, from each other and/or from Tòrò Sò: (as in Calame-Griaule 1980). When Baba Karembeey conversed with Ahmadu Anakila he promptly shifted to Jamsay. The degree of mutual intelligibility thus seems to be rather low.

The picture suggests that Hausa had also become an instrument of social integration within the Dogon community itself. There are probably additional factors in the shift; the local association between Hausa and Islam, for one, and the role of Islam in the urban integration of this particular community. The sociolinguistic pattern the Accra Dogon present suggests further that the combination of physical distance and especially the practical consequences of political boundaries means that the linguistic integration of urban immigrants from another state is likely to follow a different course from that of migrants from even relatively distant and culturally dissimilar parts of the same state.

Table 1: Multilingualism in the Dogon Community in Accra

<u>Languages<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>Degree of Knowledge Claimed</u>					
	Any at all			Good		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Hausa	29	22	51 = 100%	28	22	50 = 98%
Dogon <sup>b</sup>	27	21	48 = 94%	17	9	26 = 52%
Ga	24	19	43 = 84%	24	16	40 = 78%
Akan	25	16	41 = 80%	16	7	23 = 45%
English	23	9	32 = 63%	6	5	11 = 22%
Kotokoli <sup>c</sup>	7	8	15 = 39%	6	7	13 = 26%
Ewe	5	4	9 = 18%	0	2	2 = 4%

<sup>4</sup> Hama Abudulaye himself is a Fulani, born at Nianfounké in Mali. In his opinion, the largest proportion of Fulani in Ghana are from that country, followed by Burkino Faso. He also considered that in Accra the Fulani are outnumbered by both Kaado and Wangara (Bambara).

## Notes:

- a. Other languages spoken in the group by 10% or less of the total were, in descending order, Bassari/Chamba, Moore, Dagbani, French, Zabrama, Gurma, Dangme, Frafra, Yoruba, Kabre, Arabic, Igbo, Loso.
- b. The number of speakers of each dialect is not known. These figures include at least 9 speakers of Jamsay, 5 male and 4 female, and 7 speakers of Piñay, 5 male and 2 female.
- c. Kotokoli speakers include 3 males and 2 females who had Kotokoli mothers.

Table 2: Patterns of Use of the Major Languages

% = of total sample (51)

<u>Context</u>	<u>Language</u>				
	Hausa	Dogon	Ga	Akan	English
<b>Kin group:</b>					
parents	57%	82%	22%	2%	0
spouse	69%	63%	26%	4%	0
children	61%	49%	28%	2%	2%
siblings	78%	78%	33%	16%	16%
other	86%	61%	14%	6%	4%
Friends	100%	59%	78%	57%	59%
Public services	94%	20%	75%	77%	61%
Workplace	43%	0	43%	47%	43%
School	12%	0	14%	14%	18%

## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX: WORDLIST

A portion of the list used in West African Languages Data Sheets was elicited, to allow comparison with the list given by Calame-Griaule (1980). Since the two versions were elicited together, and the Pinay speaker at least was bi-dialectal, we can be reasonably confident that the items are good semantic equivalents.

The transcription is impressionistic and broadly phonetic. There seems to be a distinction between long (v:) and double or extra-long vowels. (It is possible that the vowels marked with : actually carry word accent, not length.) Where word accent was specifically noted it is marked by underlining the syllable. Tones are marked (phonetically) as high (´), high mid (ˊ), low mid (ˋ). level low (unmarked), low falling (ˆ). The item *dú* evidently means 'many'. The items given for 29 'earth' may be the result of misunderstanding. The speakers of both dialects called themselves *dɔ̀ɔ̀m: mí d̀̀ɔ̀ nóm* 'I am a Dogon', *émè d̀̀ɔ̀m* 'we are Dogon'.

	Jamsay <u>jamsay tegu</u>	Piñay píñarè núgè
1. woman	ñɛn pl. ñɛ́m	γᵛ:
2. man	ań pl. anúm	wáɫá
3. head	kɔ pl. kɔ́ú, kɔ́mɔ́n	kó:
4. ear	sugunu	sugulé
5. eye	g'iré	giré
6. nose	kinà nostril kinam bééré nose	kindiá
7. mouth	ká:; kà: kú: upper lip kà: dód'íó lower lip	dòngò
8. tooth	ɪná; iná d'íó many teeth	ini
9. tongue	nèné pl. nène d'jó:	nè:nd'è
10. foot	kó:wá	s'ìè; s'ìes'ìè toe
11. knee	nineg'é	kund'ɥ ugà
12. hand	num'ɥ pl. nùm'ɥ saí	nʋè:
13. stomach	bɛɛ'ɛ	piɣ'í
14. bone	(jeɟi) kiná pl. kina d'íó!	gǎǎɥ'è
15. blood	nè	g'ìè:g'ìè
16. skin	gèd'í	g'w'ɥd'ɥ'w'ɥ
17. name	bó:n'ɥ à bó:ni a j'ɛgá bòma	ini What's your name?
18. dog	ɪd'í pl. ɪd'í d'íó:	ɪnd'íá
19. fish	í:d'í pl. í:d'í d'íó:	kɔg'wɫè
20. snake	lù:ló pl. lù:lò d'íó	nó:mód'ìè
21. goat	bɛ:ɟú	úná
22. horse	sòm	sònd'íóni
23. fowl	èñé	s'íid'íá
24. egg	èñè t'áɟú	s'íid'íá pólè
25. tree	tiń	téɟg'é pl. tínúg'g'ó

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\*\* [d<sup>ɥ</sup>] in this word is very similar to Akan alveo-palata:  
/dw/.

26. rope	sùḡ, sùḡú	s'íḡḡè pl. s'íḡḡéḡè
27. stone	tùm <sup>w</sup> ó	kinì pl. kíḡḡè
28. path	ò:d'ìèkà	ódí pl. ód'ìḡè
29. earth	ìd'ì bái (?)	sóè (?)
30. water	ní:	mi:
31. fire	nú <sup>í</sup>	ḡèní
32. sun	níníí	d'ì <sup>è</sup> :
33. moon	éε	ḡε:
34. night	dà:ḡá	dò:
one	tí:ḡú	tí:tà
two	lè:í	né:ḡá
three	tà:n'	tán'dì
four	nàí	kē:d'ì <sup>ḡ</sup>
five	nùmlí	n'ú:m'è
six	kúloí'	kúlé
seven	súḡì	s'òḡè
eight	ḡá:ḡá	s'ìé:dè
nine	l'ááḡúá	tòwà'
ten	pε:ḡú <sup>^</sup>	p'è:l'è