

LAGSUS-Ivory Coast
Research beyond the lines of trust
Field research in the Tura area, February 1-15, 2005
Preliminary report

Participants:

TB = Thomas Bearth, Prof. em. of General and African Linguistics, Univ. of Zurich, senior researcher LAGSUS

FD = Fan Diomandé, ing. agr., Uganda, Univ. of Kassel, junior researcher LAGSUS

FM = Diomandé Fan Monssia, computer technician, LAGSUS Ivory Coast

SG = Geneviève Singo, student in African litt. and oral tradition, Univ. of Abidjan

Dec./January: Planning,

Early January: Information of host country entities about travel plans and research objectives

26 Jan.: Arrival TB in Abidjan

28 Jan.: Arrival FD in Abidjan

29-31 Jan.: Logistic preparation: Minimal equipment for trekking in the Tura mountains, medical kit, car rent and check-out with the Centre Suisse de Recherche Scientifique (CSRS), recording equipment

Information of Swiss Embassy (through CSRS)

1 Feb.: 600 km journey from Abidjan to Man via Gagnoa-Issia. Departure from the CSRS, km 17 from Abidjan-Center, at 10 a.m.

The decision in favor of Peugeot Partner rather than Landrover turned out to be the right choice. Due to the diplomatic license plates and the Swiss cross emblem (which tends to be confused with the red cross), we had virtually no problem at all in crossing the lines. On the government side we were winked through the numerous checkpoints. In the security zone – the so-called “zone de confiance” north of Douékoué - the U.N. check point manned by Bangladeshi soldiers quizzed us about the aim of our journey and were obviously happy to interact in a language some of them were able to speak (English). At the famous rebel-check points in Logoualé, 25 km south of Man, we were stopped by very young lads and paid them some money. The “béret rouge” (red-capped security units of the army) at the Zele crossroads, just before Man, insisted on searching our baggage.

We arrived at “Béthanie”, the catholic guest center on one of the 18 hills of Man, just before dusk, as Fan had hoped. The local LAGSUS team was there to greet us.

2 Feb.

The detailed “ordre de mission” – letter of trust – by the director of the csrs proved to be indispensable when we went to see the “Decab”, the “Directeur de cabinet” of the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces Nouvelles (FN) in the Western area. He told us that the Tura had always been antagonistic against outsiders, and that this had also been evident in their dealing with the rebels (the term he himself used). He alluded to the problems in the Gbonne area which, according to him was due to their strong FPI (President Gbagbo’s party) leanings. After having gently warned us against raising sensitive political issues during our visits in the villages, he issued a permit stating the period of our stay and the villages we were allowed to visit, and requesting the “elements” (term used for the paramilitary personal in subordinate functions of the FN). He also seconded a journalist accredited with them so that, as he said, what we were doing was in the open and our visit would be legitimized in the

eyes of the villagers. We gratefully acquiesced. The journalist turned out to be a Tura speaker himself.

3-4 Feb. Visit of Fan and his brother to Benomba, making contact and arranging for our visit later. Testing and application of a questionnaire about literacy to participants in the Tura literacy program Alphatoura in the Man area.

5-8 Feb. Visit to Kpata, the first Tura village on the Western slope of the Tura mountains. On our way, we present our credentials to the local rebel administration in Biankouma, the district center on which this part of the Tura region depends. The direct road which links Biankouma to Kpata being reported to be impassable, the road branching off from the main road in Dingouen provided us with another opportunity to test the limits of the vehicle. Essentially
During this period, interview type gatherings took place in Kpata on Feb. 5 (D-111, Maketa) and in Gaote II (see 6 February). More informal encounters took place in Kpata (Feb. 5-7), neighbouring Nébou-Sama, as well as in Gaote II and Gaote I (new and old Gaote). Due to the state of the road and the limitations of the vehicle, we walked from Digoualé to Gaote (1 ½ hours uphill, and 1 ¼ hour downhill).

9-10 Feb: Gouané. Meeting with village notables and leaders.
See minutes in T-9.2.1c, video and transcript (D-109)

11-12 Feb. Benomba: videos of PBI (palm broom industry) and Kono.
Write-ups and preliminary analysis of Kono procedures.

13 Feb.: Return to Abidjan.

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Follow-up, 20 Feb:

On my request, J. Baya, himself a former extension officer of the Mt. Sangbe Park authorities, went to see Mr. Ouattara Siaka, former Co-ordinator (Chargé d'appui aux opérations = CAO) of the Mt. Sangbe project who is now in Abidjan.

JB summarized the results of our inquiry in terms of the distinction between material and communicative sustainability. CAO suggested that our hypothesis should be verified by a follow-up study on the impact of the war on the Mt. Sangbe project.

In case of the resumption of the project, the dual approach (park and local development) must be resumed.

Comment JB: As to the question of transfer of the supervision of the park to the villagers, this was one of the original objectives of the park project. It was to be implemented through the gradual process of training of local agents by the external agents appointed in the initial phase. As a matter of fact, this process of transfer of competence was somewhat thwarted by self-promotion on the part of some people in the park authority as was noticed by some discussants during the conversation in Gouané.

The possibility of doctoral research on the connection between literacy and development in the multilingual context of the park project (Dan, Toura, Maou, French) would be of great interest, in the opinion of the CAO.

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