

7.3.1. THE CHURCHES AND LANGUAGE POLICY¹

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7.3.1.1. INTRODUCTION

In Papua New Guinea there are many different churches² and among them there have been a number of different approaches to language questions. Some have always been active in using vernaculars; others have mostly used one or more of the three main *lingue franche* - English, Pidgin, and Hiri Motu; others have used particular vernaculars as *lingue franche* for at least some areas of their work.³ There are a number of reasons as to why the approaches differ, in particular the size of the church and the extent of its work and the number of languages which are in the church's area and how closely they are related. Within a church there have sometimes been differing approaches and some churches have changed their policy over the years. The churches' main concern has been to communicate their message to the people, initially with a view to converting them to Christianity and then to build up their Christian faith. In this regard, decisions have had to be made regarding which languages the church workers would learn and use for evangelism and which languages the people would be made literate in so that they could read the Christian literature produced by each church and so that some of them could enter that church's training institutions.

Prior to World War II the main missions working in Papua New Guinea were the London Missionary Society, the Methodists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Seventh Day Adventists. The London Missionary Society began work in 1872 and extended along the south coast of Papua. Most of the missionaries were Polynesians who were both pastors and teachers. They taught vernacular literacy skills in village schools. Faced with the problem of how to work among a large number of languages, the general mission policy was to use all vernaculars in preaching and evangelistic work as far as possible and to use the language spoken

around the main mission stations, such as Kiwai, Namau (Koriki, today called Purari), Orokolo, Toaripi, Motu, Hula (Keapara), and Mailu (Magi), for educational purposes. To varying degrees these languages became *lingue franche* for the mission in their areas. On completion of the course in the village schools, some students went to the boarding-schools at the main mission stations for a few years, where they received more instruction in the vernacular as well as in English. Scripture was translated into these main languages, with New Testaments published before the war in Motu, Toaripi, Namau, and Mailu.⁴ School-books were also published. Some missionaries made linguistic studies, such as Lawes in Motu, Saville in Mailu, and Short in Hula.⁵ Motu became the main *lingua franca* for the mission and it was the language in which Papuan pastor-teachers were trained, though the role of English gradually increased. Motu was in fact used at the main mission stations of Delena and Saroa instead of the Roro and Sinaugoro languages.

7.3.1.2. PRE-WORLD WAR II PERIOD

7.3.1.2.1. METHODIST MISSION

The Methodist Mission began work in the New Guinea Islands area in 1875 in the Duke of York Islands and on the Gazelle Peninsula. They too used pastor-teachers, mostly Fijian, to run village schools which provided basic literacy skills. Both the Duke of York and Kuanua languages were used, and hymn books, catechisms, and Bible translations were published in both. However, Kuanua was chosen as the mission *lingua franca* and it was used in evangelism and education as the work spread into some parts of New Britain outside the Tolai area and into New Ireland. However, it was not enthusiastically received in all areas and some work was done in at least two languages on New Ireland, Omo (Tigak) and Patpatar, including some Bible translation.

Methodist work was started in the islands of what is now the Milne Bay Province in 1891. Dobu was the first place settled and the Dobuan language was the first one which the missionaries learnt. As a simple form of it was already known to speakers of other languages in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands through trade it was chosen for use as a *lingua franca* by the mission. However, the mission recognised that Dobuan was not well known in all parts of the D'Entrecasteaux Islands and that it was much less known outside that area, indeed unknown over a wide area. So, while much literature was produced in Dobuan, some was also produced in Tubetube, Bwaldoga, Kiriwina, Tavara (Keherara), and Panaeati (Misima).

7.3.1.2.2. ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION

In this period up to World War II the main Roman Catholic work was in an area involving the western part of the Central Province and the eastern part of the Gulf Province, the New Guinea Islands, and the Sepik and western part of the Madang Province. The work on the south coast was begun by the Sacred Heart Mission in 1885 in what is now the Kairuku District and spread into the Gailala area and the Gulf Province. Not a large number of languages were involved and the work of the mission was carried out in almost all of them. So, for example, school and religious publications appeared in the Roro, Mekeo, Nara (Pokau), and Kuni languages of the Kairuku District. Grammars and dictionaries were prepared in them also, but unfortunately very little has been published. In the New Guinea Islands, the Sacred Heart Mission began work on the Gazelle Peninsula among the Tolai people and while it used the Kuanua language (for which it used the name Gunantuna) among them, it did not use it as a lingua franca as the Methodists did. A number of vernaculars were used in New Britain and New Ireland and in the Bougainville area where the Marist Mission Society operated, and a variety of religious literature was translated into them. Some linguistic studies were done also.⁶ The large number of languages in the Admiralty Islands for the small population meant that the church used mostly Pidgin there. In the Sepik and Madang areas, the Catholic Mission of the Divine Word was also faced with a large number of languages. For a time an attempt was made to use Boiken as a lingua franca for part of the area but this was not successful. So for most of the period vernaculars were used in church wherever possible and in some schools. The constitution of the Society of the Divine Word states quite strongly that the missionaries should learn the languages of the people among whom they are working (Z'graggen, personal communication). Some linguistic studies were undertaken, but unfortunately much of the material collected from the Madang Province was destroyed during World War II (Z'graggen 1971:3f). Pidgin increasingly became a candidate for use as the main lingua franca and in 1930 an official decision was made to adopt it. The use of English in schools increased as the Administration began to encourage it and to offer some financial support.

7.3.1.2.3. LUTHERAN MISSION

Lutheran mission work began near Finschhafen in 1886 and spread through the Morobe Province and the eastern part of the Madang Province. The Austronesian language Yabem was the language in which the mission first worked and it became the lingua franca in all areas around Huon

Gulf where people spoke Austronesian languages. It became the language of evangelisation and of education. Linguistic studies were made and much religious literature was published as well as school textbooks. However, most languages in the Morobe Province are non-Austronesian, and for work among speakers of these languages the mission chose Kâte, which was the first non-Austronesian language they learnt. As Yabem, Kâte was used in evangelism and education, with various school and church publications and detailed linguistic studies. However, some work was done in vernaculars, including Adzera, Ono, Sio and Zia. In the Madang Province a few vernaculars were used in the earlier days, including Bel (Gedaged), Amele, Nobonob, Bogadjim, and Bongu. The first two of these, Bel, an Austronesian language, and Amele, a non-Austronesian language, were chosen in the 1920s as *lingue franche* just as Yabem and Kâte had been for the Morobe Province. However, the use of Amele as a *lingua franca* was discontinued in 1935 to avoid duplication of effort in places like training institutions and to help unify the church. Lutheran mission policy has been to use vernaculars in the preaching of the Christian message and evangelists were expected to learn the language of the people they worked among. However, the mission did not have the staff or resources to provide Bible translations and school-books in every language. For this reason and the need to have a common language that could be used in training institutions, the *lingue franche* were developed. Freyberg (personal communication) has suggested that Kâte might have been successfully introduced into the Madang area if Bel and Amele had not been chosen as *lingue franche*. However, the work in the Madang and Morobe Provinces was operated by two different Lutheran Mission organisations, the Rhenish Mission Society and the Neuendettelsau Mission Society respectively, and they made separate, different decisions.

7.3.1.2.4. ANGLICAN MISSION

The Anglican Mission commenced in 1891 in the Wedau area of the Milne Bay Province. Faced with the common problem of the number of languages in the area, they chose Wedau as a *lingua franca*. It was used in evangelism, for theological training, and in the schools where it was the language of instruction for the first few years, above which English was used. While Wedau was reasonably understood in the surrounding coastal area, it was not a satisfactory medium for communicating with the speakers of Austronesian languages further afield nor with the speakers of non-Austronesian languages. So some work was done in other vernaculars, including Mukawa in which the whole Bible was published in

1925 (the first Bible in a language of Papua New Guinea), Ubir, and Maisin. Further north in the Northern Province the vernaculars Binandere, Ewa Ge, and Orokaiva were used.

7.3.1.2.5. SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST MISSION

Seventh Day Adventist work began in the Central Province in 1908 and in the New Guinea Islands in the 1930s. Evangelistic work was carried out in the various vernaculars as far as possible. However, the mission had stations over a wide area and the number of missionaries was not large so that considerable use was made of Pidgin and Hiri Motu. Pidgin was used in the training school at Kambubu on New Britain and Hiri Motu in the training school at Mirigeda near Port Moresby.

7.3.1.2.6. SUMMARY OF MISSIONS

To summarise, in the period up to World War II the missions generally made as much use of vernaculars as they were able to. The greatest use was made in the field of evangelism once Papua New Guinean pastors, evangelists, and catechists were trained who could work in their own language areas. However, for education, theological training, and literature it was usually necessary to choose particular languages. In most cases, a vernacular was chosen for use as a lingua franca, though some use was made of Pidgin and English, and to a lesser extent Hiri Motu.

7.3.1.2.7. LITERACY

There were, in fact, extremely active literacy programmes in many areas. However, most majored on the mechanics of reading and paid little attention to comprehension. Practically nothing was done with regard to the production of literature for new literates to read other than Bible passages, catechisms and hymn books. Also there was often too big a jump in reading difficulty between school primers and the Christian literature, a problem which has continued in many languages even up to the present. There was little co-ordination in literacy work. Each area was left on its own to develop its own course with little assistance from outside. As missionaries moved - either transferred to another posting or leaving the country - programmes suffered. In many cases the success or failure of a programme depended very largely on the efforts of one person. It should be noted that while most of the programmes were for children in schools, there were also literacy programmes for adults.

The churches felt quite strongly that people in school should become literate in their own language first, though they did not object to teaching a second language. In at least the earlier part of this period there did not seem to be much need to teach many people English. The usual pattern was for students to spend the first couple of years becoming literate in the vernacular or church lingua franca before going on to study English. Indeed the churches had a very broad-based education programme that took up to 100% of school-age children and older into the vernacular programmes, but a greatly reduced percentage into their English programme.⁷ Quite considerable effort was put into producing primers and readers. These were funded entirely by the churches at the beginning though later a few primers were printed at government cost. Usually it was also mission policy to include some instruction in the methods of teaching vernacular literacy in catechist and pastor training courses. Mostly the catechists and pastors were the school-teachers too.

7.3.1.3. POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD

7.3.1.3.1. GENERAL REMARKS

The period after the war saw a number of changes in the churches' situation. Some had suffered considerable loss of staff and materials. There was now one Australian Administration for both Papua and New Guinea. In the 1950s, language policy in the established churches continued much as before the war. However, there was increasing use of the three main lingue franche, English, Pidgin, and Hiri Motu. English began to be used more in theological training as the students entered colleges and seminaries with a higher level of education. Pidgin was used even more widely than before by the Roman Catholics in the Sepik and Madang areas; by the Lutherans who formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea (ELCONG) (now ELCPNG) in 1956, which made the need of a common language more apparent; by the Methodists who were using it extensively in New Ireland rather than Kuanua; and by the Seventh Day Adventists who also made more use of Hiri Motu as their work spread. The London Missionary Society also used Hiri Motu more in areas such as the inland of the Rigo District. One reason for this increase in the use of Pidgin and Hiri Motu was that many of the new overseas staff who arrived after the war were often transferred and as a growing number of Papua New Guineans could understand Pidgin or Hiri Motu, these newcomers felt that learning a vernacular was not worth the effort. Nevertheless work continued in a number of vernaculars and was begun in more. For example, Christian literature was produced by the Roman Catholics in the

three languages of the Goilala District, Fuyuge, Tauade, and Kunimaipa (Steinkraus and Pence 1964); the London Missionary Society produced primers in Roro, Gabadi, and Dimuga; and the Methodists on Buka and Bougainville continued to produce material in Petats and Siwai and began work in Teop (Allen and Hurd 1965).

A big event was the growth of work in the Highlands. This had begun before the war but grew rapidly after it. This involved the Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans and Seventh Day Adventists, as well as a number of new churches. All these five churches used mainly Pidgin in their Highlands work. The Lutherans used Kâte as a lingua franca for a time, but with the closure of the Kâte schools early in the 1960s due to the Administration policy to educate in English, its use was largely given up. However, a number of vernaculars in the Highlands have, for Papua New Guinea, large numbers of speakers and this made it more feasible to use them. So, for example, the Lutherans produced Christian literature in Kuman and Melpa, in both of which the New Testament was translated, and used Melpa in their theological training centre at Ogelbeng in the Western Highlands along with Pidgin and Kâte, Roman Catholics worked in such languages as Enga and Mendi, and the Methodists in Mendi.

7.3.1.3.2. NEW CHURCHES IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

Reference was made above to the arrival of a number of new churches in the post-war period. Their policies also varied somewhat. While almost all, if not all, wanted to use the vernaculars in order to communicate the Gospel as effectively as possible, they were generally faced with the same problems as the older churches, i.e. many languages, small number of expatriate staff, limited finance, and the need for some common language for use in training institutions and major church meetings.

The Unevangelised Fields Mission (now known as the Asia Pacific Christian Mission) actually began work just before the war in the Balimo area of the Western Province where it made some use of Gogodala as a lingua franca. As the work spread into much of the inland area of that Province and into the Southern Highlands, use was made of Hiri Motu and of quite a few vernaculars, such as Suki, Aekyom, Yongkom, Zimakani, Foe, Pole, Samberigi, and Huli. Vernacular literacy programmes were run and a good deal of Bible translation done. Training institutions for pastors were run in each of the vernaculars listed above and further training provided at one centre in Hiri Motu.

Among these new and smaller missions the New Tribes Mission, like the Unevangelised Fields Mission, also made considerable use of vernaculars including Hamtai in the Morobe Province, Yagaria in the Eastern Highlands, and Sinasina in the Chimbu Province. Vernacular literacy programmes were run and Christian literature translated.

Some other churches, for example the Christian Missions in Many Lands, Churches of Christ, and South Seas Evangelical Church, which work in areas where many vernaculars are spoken, have used mostly Pidgin, though individual missionaries who were interested in doing so and who were stationed in one place long enough, have used vernaculars. However, these are individual efforts and generally stop if the missionary concerned leaves.

A few churches have worked in areas where there have been only a few languages and so they have been able to use a vernacular in most of their work. The New Guinea Lutheran Mission - Missouri Synod has worked mainly among the large Enga group. They were able to use Enga in evangelism and education, including an adult literacy programme and two training colleges, one for teachers and the other for church workers. Regular language courses were held for expatriate missionaries. A good deal of literature was published. The Baptists working nearby in Kyaka Enga and Sau Enga made a similar use of those languages.⁸

Among those churches which had the resources and manpower, vernacular literacy and literature programmes continued or new ones were initiated. In the 1950s it is estimated that over 50,000 people a year were receiving instruction to become literate in their own language. It was in fact the heyday of the churches' vernacular literacy programmes. Teachers were better prepared. For example, early in the 1960s the Papua Ekalesia (formed from the London Missionary Society) introduced the method of teaching vernacular literacy in its Ruatoka Teachers' College. A similar type of course was also introduced at the Awaba Teachers' College for the Evangelical Alliance, a grouping of many evangelical missions.

7.3.1.3.3. ENGLISH

However, some big changes came when during the 1960s the Australian Administration gave tremendous emphasis to the teaching of English as a national and unifying language. This was part of a plan for universal primary education, which was not achieved. The churches were for the most part forced to forego their vernacular literacy programmes in schools, as the new syllabus for primary schools required that English be taught from the beginning. This was a severe blow to the churches

who were sure that their policy was a good one for the people and for the country. Nevertheless, some churches continued to teach vernacular literacy as a subject in primary schools. Most did not stress it, but some still regarded it very highly, particularly the Lutheran church. The Lutheran school system was severely affected by the Administration decision, as many of their teachers were not able to teach English. They were forced to close a lot of their schools, including nearly all the Yabem ones. However, they continued to operate some of the Kâte schools and they developed their Pidgin literacy course and Pidgin-stream school programme in a very organised way. The village schools provided a four-year course with provision for some students to go on further at some schools. In 1973, over 16,000 children were enrolled, over half being in the Morobe Province. A teachers' college for the Pidgin programme was set up at Rintebe near Goroka and another was set up for the Kâte programme at Heldsbach near Finschhafen. Among others, the Catholic Archdiocese of Madang started a second stream of education, in Pidgin, and the Baptists continued their schools in Kyaka Enga, which provided two years of vernacular education, after which the students went into either English or Pidgin schools.

7.3.1.3.4. ADULT LITERACY

Also in quite a number of places, especially in the Highlands, adult literacy programmes flourished. Some missions, such as the Baptist Mission in the Western Highlands and the Unevangelised Fields Mission in the Southern Highlands appointed missionaries to work full-time on adult vernacular literacy programmes. Teacher education programmes lasting from three months to a year were conducted to train literacy instructors, people who could read and write themselves and were interested in helping others to learn as well. A number of smaller churches in the Sepik Provinces joined together to produce a suitable Pidgin literacy course. After a lot of experimental work and after the material had been tested and revised, the *Kisim Save* series of primers was produced.⁹

Finance was a major problem as the instructors, apart from those who were pastors and catechists, were an addition to the churches' wage bill, and they had to be paid or they could not do the job. There was some slight assistance given in some districts from the Administration-sponsored adult education programme, but this was very little overall. In addition, apart from the Administration's policy favouring English, there was a growing feeling among the people that, as English was the prestige school language that led to good jobs, vernacular literacy was

definitely only second-best. So people were not so interested in attending such classes, and even less interested in having to pay any fees that might be associated with them.

7.3.1.3.5. BIBLE TRANSLATION ACTIVITIES

The effect of the Administration's policy regarding English went beyond the schools. Most young people were not being taught to read or write their own languages. This, coupled with the usual problems in using vernaculars, led churches to make greater use of the three main lingue franche, especially Pidgin. A translation of the New Testament into Pidgin was published in 1969 (The Bible Society in Australia 1969), a project which involved a number of churches and which the Lutheran church in particular encouraged, after which a translation of the Old Testament began, involving an even greater number of churches. A translation of the New Testament into Hiri Motu was also begun. In the field of both Christian and general literature in Pidgin and English, Kristen Pres at Madang has made a considerable contribution, and in the last few years the Christian Publishers' and Booksellers' Association has been operating which facilitates co-ordination in the publishing field.

There has been a good deal of Bible translation done in some of the missionary lingue franche also. This has included the completion of the Bible in Motu, and the near completion of it in Kuanua, Kâte, and Toaripi. Much of the Old Testament has been translated into Yabem and Wedau, as well as revisions of the New Testament, while the New Testament has been completed in Gogodala. However, there has been some decrease in the area of influence of these languages. For example, Motu lost some ground to Hiri Motu, and both Kâte and Kuanua lost ground to Pidgin, while most have lost some ground to English.

Work in vernaculars has continued. For example, translations of the New Testament have been completed or are making good progress in quite a few languages, including Siwai on Bougainville, Adzera and Hamtai in the Morobe Province, Enga, Kyaka Enga, Duna, Sinasina, Huli, Foe, and Angal Heneng in the Highlands, and a new translation into Mailu in the Central Province. As a result of decisions made at the Second Vatican Council, there has been increased Roman Catholic activity in vernaculars, especially in the translation of the liturgy and of passages from the Bible for reading in services.

English became the language of the main theological seminaries. The Christian Leaders' Training College at Banz, which provides training particularly for churches in the Evangelical Alliance, has run special English programmes for those of its students who needed them. In lower

level institutions Pidgin and Hiri Motu have been used, sometimes along with missionary *lingue franche*. Thus the Lutheran seminary at Logaweng near Finschhafen used Pidgin, Kâte, and Yabem, and their seminary at Ogelbeng in the Western Highlands used Pidgin, Melpa, and Kâte. And in some smaller, more local, institutions such as those run by the Unevangelised Fields Mission, the vernacular has continued to be used.

7.3.1.3.6. *THE SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS*

Mention must be made of the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics which began work in Papua New Guinea in 1956. Though not a mission organisation itself, its activities in the fields of literacy and Bible translation have naturally benefited the churches. At the time of the writing of this chapter in 1974, they had teams in about 90 languages (now it is over 100), and in addition they provide valuable technical assistance to literacy and translation programmes run by churches. There is little doubt that the activity of the Summer Institute of Linguistics has been a great encouragement to some churches who were having second thoughts about running vernacular literacy and translation programmes.

7.3.1.4. POST-1970 PERIOD

By the beginning of the 1970s, there was a marked change in the church and in the country as a whole. Localisation was the keynote and in the churches the number of Papua New Guinean leaders increased rapidly, so that their councils and executives began to be dominantly Papua New Guinean. The question of language naturally arose. There was a real emphasis given to Papua New Guinean culture. Church leaders more than ever held the view that Papua New Guineans had to be Christians and live according to the Word of God within their own culture and not as brown-skinned Europeans. And it was argued that to train people to fit into their own culture could best be done within the framework of their own languages. Another important factor in the discussion of language was that only half the school-age population were in schools. Church leaders began to feel that something should definitely be done for the half who missed out. And even of those who completed primary school only one-third were able to go to high school. The churches began to be quite concerned about their responsibilities to these young people also and wondered how to help them. The inadequacies of the English-based programme began to be apparent, as it did not prepare the students for life in their own village community. Another problem was the gap between the Western-educated young people and the older people.

These factors have led to a new emphasis on vernacular literacy and literature, and in Pidgin and Hiri Motu too. This is felt by nearly all, if not all, churches. So, for example, the Anglican church in the Northern Province began a vernacular literacy programme and found an encouraging response, so much so that it has set aside some more funds and plans to produce some teaching aids and textbooks. The Churches of Christ in the Madang Province plans to run adult literacy courses based on a Pidgin course prepared by the Lutheran church. In the Sepik, the South Seas Evangelical Church and the Assembly of God have begun literacy programmes for adults and those who did not attend primary school respectively.¹⁰ The Lutherans are making a major revision of the curriculum for the upper years of their Pidgin and Kâte programme to better meet the demands of the present situation and in 1974 they opened a college in the Western Highlands for training teachers for the upper years.

Thus, at the time of writing, the churches are very interested in the field of vernacular literacy and literature, as well as in Pidgin and Hiri Motu, and many are starting or planning new programmes. However, just how far these go and in what direction will depend largely on the speakers of each language, whether they want these programmes or not, and whether they want their own language or a lingua franca.

7.3.1. THE CHURCHES AND LANGUAGE POLICY

N O T E S

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2. Generally speaking the term 'mission' is used in Papua New Guinea for the overseas organisations which brought Christianity to the country, while 'church' is used when a mission sets up an organisation which is autonomous in Papua New Guinea and run by Papua New Guineans. However, the division is somewhat blurred and in this chapter both terms are used without maintaining a strict distinction.
3. For more information on the policy of the churches regarding Pidgin, see chapters 7.4.2.2., 7.4.2.3. and 7.4.2.4. For discussion of missionary lingue franche see the 13 chapters subsumed under 7.4.5. and for vernacular education see the four chapters of part 7.5.
4. See Dance 1963, British and Foreign Bible Society 1967, and United Bible Societies 1972 for listings of many of the scripture translations done by the churches in Papua New Guinea.
5. See the chapters of part (II) 4.2., and chapters 7.9.8. and 7.9.9. for detailed information regarding linguistic research done by missionaries in Papua New Guinea.

6. See Capell 1962, Allen and Hurd 1963 and 1965, Lithgow and Claassen 1968.
7. Up to World War II practically all education of Papua New Guineans was done by the missions.
8. However, in the Telefolmin area of the West Sepik Province the Baptists did not make much progress with the vernaculars and changed over to Pidgin.
9. These primers were prepared by Walter and Ruth Sim of Christian Missions in Many Lands in conjunction with the editorial committee of the Pidgin Adult Education Course, a project of Literacy Literature New Guinea.
10. These are just some of the programmes and plans which churches have, as indicated in the replies by Mission Education Officers to a questionnaire sent out by Neuendorf.

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