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THE HISTORY OF NIGERIAN LINGUISTICS
A Preliminary Survey

Bertram A. Okolo

Abstract: The scientific study of a language may be divided, on the simplest analysis, into two parts: first, the collection of words to form a vocabulary or a dictionary; second, the investigation of the ways in which words are shaped, transformed, and grouped to indicate particular thoughts, to form a grammar of the language. Early work on a language generally terminated in the production of a dictionary and a grammar. But the earliest students of Nigerian languages faced a preliminary problem before they could begin any study--they had to discover what languages existed, and how extensive geographically, and important socially, each language was. This paper is an attempt to provide a preliminary survey of the early development of Nigerian linguistics.

Introduction

This paper concerns the general development of linguistic studies in Nigeria from the earliest times, but cannot claim to be completely comprehensive. More than a hundred languages are known to be spoken in Nigeria, and to attempt to cover early developments in the study of all these languages would be beyond the scope of this paper. I shall, therefore, focus my attention on the languages which have received most scholarly attention. Moreover, this paper cannot claim to cover all that has been published on Nigerian languages in strict chronological order, but an attempt will be made to observe chronology as much as possible. The difficulty is that most early materials on Nigerian languages are to be found in private libraries and church archives rather than in important libraries (Hair 1967:x)

The development of Nigerian linguistics is so intricately tied up with missionary activities that it is scarcely possible to separate the one from the other, especially if incoherence and distortion are to be avoided. For the purposes of better understanding and appreciation, I shall treat the languages chosen for consideration under three heads, namely, Yoruba, Hausa, and the languages of the lower Niger-Benue (Igbo (Ibo), Ijaw, Igbira, Igalla, Idoma, Tiv, Jukun, Nupe, and a brief mention of Edo). I am forced to make this division for purposes of clearer exposition. The languages that I refer to as the languages of the lower Niger-Benue are lumped together because they have such closely connected historical developments that they cannot be separated without serious damage to coherence and to the appreciation of simultaneous historical developments.

It should be borne in mind that the languages treated here are not the only important languages in Nigeria but simply those on which I could readily find printed materials, and to which early European scholars turned their attention. These languages are shown on the attached map.

I shall try as far as possible to give equal treatment to these languages, and to clarify historical developments. In so doing, I shall sometimes be forced to refer more than once to certain publications, but they will be viewed in a different context.

Scientific study of the languages of Nigeria--which number well over one hundred, as mentioned above--did not begin until the nineteenth century. Though these languages had been spoken for centuries in or near the territory where they are spoken today, the vast majority had not been written down, and none had been analysed in writing before 1800. Today many Nigerians prepare written materials in their own languages enabling foreigners to learn and write Nigerian languages. But the early study of Nigerian languages was carried out by missionaries from Europe, who studied the languages primarily in order to translate religious materials into them, particularly the Christian scriptures. The history of the early study of Nigerian languages is thus closely connected with the history of Christian missions in Nigeria. As will be seen later, from the 1840s, important work on the Efik (Ibibio) language was carried out by the Scottish Presbyterian mission in Calabar. Later in the century, useful materials in Yoruba and Igbo were prepared by the Methodist and Roman Catholic missions. But the earliest, most thorough, extensive, and effective linguistic research was that covering about a dozen or so languages undertaken by the agents of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), a society supported and founded by Evangelical members of the established Church of England.

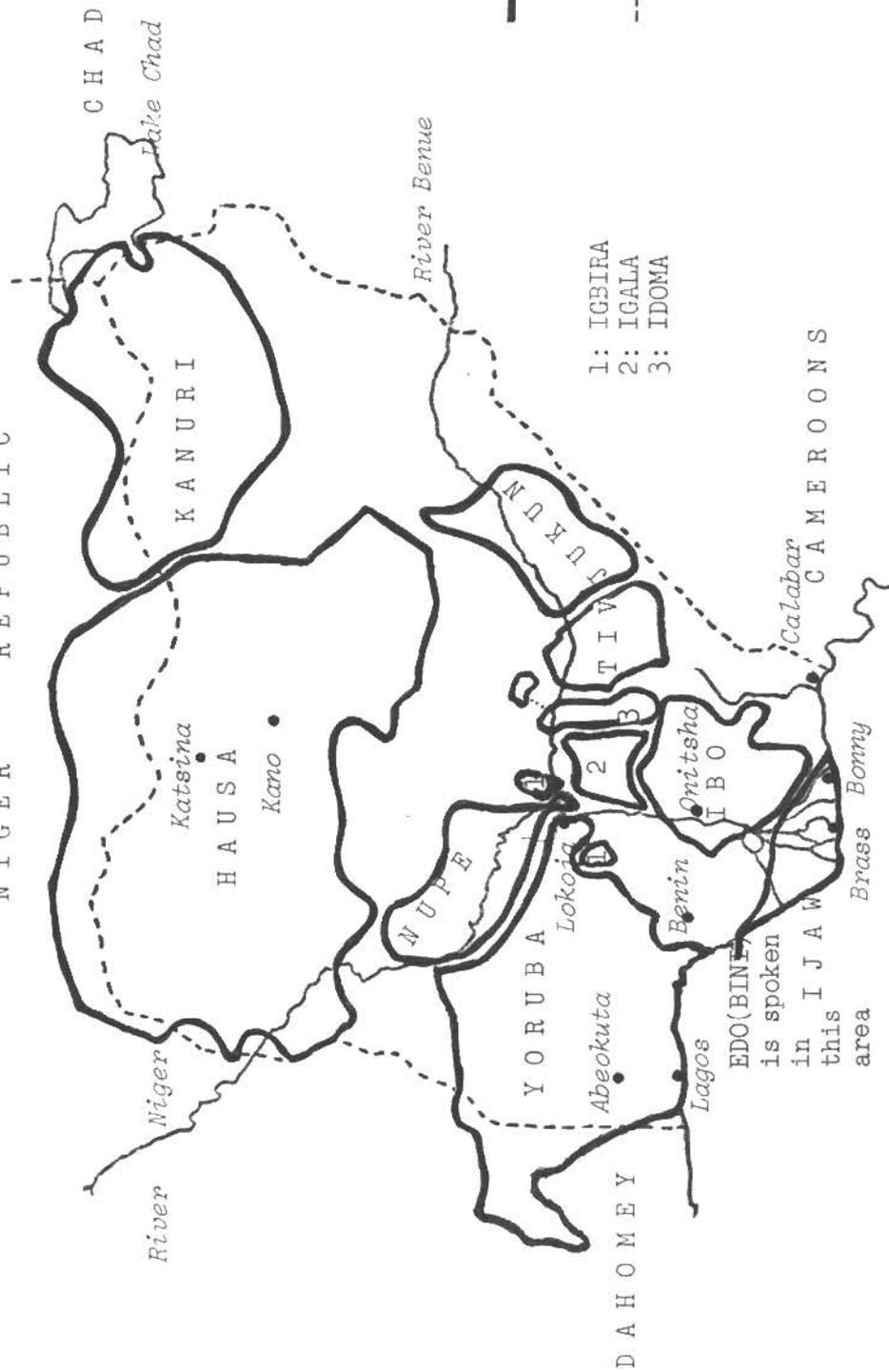
This paper, therefore, concentrates upon the early study of about a dozen Nigerian languages, all of which were chiefly studied by agents of the CMS. One reason for this is that the records of this society are more easily available than those of other societies and missions.

The earliest information about Nigerian languages to reach Europe was gathered around 1500: a handful of words in several languages of southern Nigeria were collected by Portuguese visitors to the coast, while a little information about some of the peoples of northern Nigeria appeared in Leo Africanus's description of the northern parts of West Africa in 1556.

But no systematic interest in Nigerian languages was shown by Europeans during the early centuries of European contact, just as none was shown by the Arabs during a millennium of contact, and the scraps of information that became available were not put together until around 1800.

The first study of all known African languages appeared in the Mithridates of Adelung Vater in 1812. It contains brief vocabularies of six Nigerian languages: Hausa, Kanuri, Fula, Igbo, Ijaw, and Ibibio, but

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so little was known about these languages that most of them were referred to by misleading or incorrect names. It was the task of the missionaries to identify these and other Nigerian languages, and to study them in detail.

One more point worthy of general mention is that the Church Missionary Society operated in the west, east, and north of Nigeria, and studied the languages spoken in these areas. Up to the 1850s, however, the West African base of the Society was not in Nigeria but in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The first CMS missionaries to Nigeria came there from Freetown, and the earliest works on several Nigerian languages were written in Freetown. As is well known, in the early nineteenth century, the population of Freetown consisted largely of liberated slaves, and a large proportion of these slaves had come from the territory that is now Nigeria. Thus, in early nineteenth-century Freetown, many inhabitants spoke a Nigerian language as their mother tongue, and missionaries who decided to study a particular language had no difficulties in finding informants in Freetown.

Early Developments of Yoruba Language

Yoruba, spoken in the western parts of Nigeria (comprising the present Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Lagos and Kwara States), had received more scholarly attention than most of the other languages of Nigeria, although it cannot claim to be the first Nigerian language to be used in print.¹ Today, it possesses one of the most prolific vernacular literatures in Nigeria. Yet a century and a half ago, the Yoruba language was not only unwritten, but was not even known to scholars.

The earliest collection of Yoruba words in print dates from 1819. This was collected in Ashanti by an English diplomatic agent named Bowdich in 1817, and printed in his account of this diplomatic mission. It consists of the Yoruba numerals. The name of the language is quoted as 'Yariba' (Bowdich 1819:209,505). Bowdich wrote as follows: 'a large kingdom called Yariba by the Moors,² but Yarba more generally by the natives ...Yariba must certainly be the Yarba of Imhammed', i.e. the place-name mentioned by an Arabic-speaking North African trader who supplied information about Hausaland and neighbouring territories to an agent of the African Association in 1789. If this identification is correct, then the earliest appearance in print of the term was in 1790 when the agent's report was printed (Proceedings 1790:224).

One probable reason for the late appearance of the Yoruba language in print is that Yorubaland was not regularly or extensively visited by Europeans until the nineteenth century. The Portuguese, who dominated the Afro-European contacts in West Africa during the period 1450-1630, concentrated their efforts on neighboring territories such as the Gold Coast (Ghana), and had little to do even with coastal Yorubaland. Though the town of Ijebu was occasionally visited, trade was slight there, and the Portuguese relied on second-hand information about the people living inland.

When, about 1800, Yoruba became one of the major centres for the export of slaves from West Africa, white traders--Portuguese, Spanish, and British--began direct and extensive activities in the area. Because there was no Yoruba vocabulary in print, the language was not mentioned in the earliest book to discuss African languages in detail, published by J. C. Adelung and J. S. Vater, which appeared in 1812. Even the first general collection of West African vocabularies, which was collected from the slaves in the West Indies in the 1760s, while it contained vocabularies of Igbo and Ibibio, had no Yoruba in it. It is possible that a vocabulary of Yoruba predating Bowdich's collection may yet be discovered among unpublished manuscripts in the Caribbean or Brazilian archives.

From the 1790s Yoruba slaves began to be exported in large numbers, and when the liberated slaves were resettled in Freetown, the African language most widely spoken there was Yoruba, or Aku, as it was called in Freetown.³ It was at Freetown that Yoruba studies began, but members of the Aku community were used as informants.

After Bowdich's list of numerals of 1819, which introduced linguists to the language, the next vocabularies of Yoruba to appear in print were collected by Mrs. Hannah Kilham (published 1828), by Hugh Clapperton in 1829, and by John Raban between 1830 and 1832 (Hair 1967:6). Of these three, only Clapperton collected his materials in Yorubaland, though his material was not as analytical as those of Mrs. Kilham and Raban, both of whom worked in Freetown. A Quaker educationalist and one of the first Europeans to recommend the education of Africans in their vernaculars, Mrs. Kilham published in 1828 a collection of vocabularies of thirty African languages, which she had assembled while living in Sierra Leone. In the introduction to this volume, Mrs. Kilham noted that 'as regards to the vocabulary of Aku, the writer had the kind assistance of two of the missionaries who furnished most of the words and sentences ... having taken them down chiefly from the dictation of one of the men educated in the mission schools' (Hair 1960:165-8). One of the two missionaries interested in Yoruba was almost certainly Rev. John Raban (her friend), and the author of the first book on Yoruba; and the young Yoruba-speaking informant may well have been Samuel (Ajayi) Crowther, who was to become the founding father of Yoruba written literature.

To her 1828 collection of vocabularies, Mrs. Kilham added brief grammatical examples in Yoruba. In 1831 she started a school for girls and tried to carry out the experiment of conducting instruction partly in African languages. First, vernacular lessons were given in Yoruba. Kilham must have stimulated Raban's interest in Yoruba. In 1830, 1831, and 1832, he published three books on Yoruba, and in them he used a different orthography from Kilham. These books were the first to appear in Yoruba. They are basically vocabularies supplemented with a few grammatical remarks. He entitled one section of one book 'Gleanings for grammar'. Professor Ajayi (Ajayi 1961:49) has suggested 'that the work is more to be commended as a pioneering attempt at evolving a system of orthography for Yoruba'.

In 1840, the British government decided to send an expedition to the Niger, and it was decided that missionaries in Freetown be included in the expedition. Jacob Friedrich Schön, a German missionary in Sierra Leone, was asked to learn two Nigerian languages--Igbo and Hausa--and another German, J. U. Graf, learnt Yoruba, although he never went far in the study. Henry Townsend started learning Yoruba in Freetown before he left for Yorubaland in 1842. To a publication of 1843 (R. Clarke 1843:154-61) Townsend contributed material on Yoruba: a brief vocabulary, a list of proper names with their meanings, three proverbs, two texts of about six sentences each, and a song. This was the first Yoruba music in print.⁴

In 1844, C. A. Gollmer translated the Lord's Prayer, the Decalogue, and the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel into Yoruba. By the 1840s, among the growing class of educated Africans in Freetown there was a small group of Yoruba speakers eager to study the language and produce literature in it. Two of these people were Thomas King and Samuel Ajayi Crowther. In 1840, Crowther was selected to accompany Schön on the Niger expedition. He prepared a grammar and vocabulary of Yoruba which was published in 1843. Meanwhile, Crowther had become a priest. In 1844, the CMS Yoruba mission was inaugurated, under the leadership of Crowther, and Yoruba studies moved from Freetown to Yorubaland.

A little earlier, a Yoruba slave in Brazil had been taken by his master to Paris, where he attracted the attention of a Frenchman named d'Avezac. In 1839, this Yoruba supplied information about the customs and languages of Yorubaland, which enabled d'Avezac to prepare a lengthy article. He obtained a vocabulary of eight hundred words and from this was able to produce forty-five pages of remarks on the grammar of the language. The resulting book was not published until 1845, after Crowther's grammar had appeared.

In 1847 Crowther began work on the translation of the Gospels into Yoruba, and between 1850 and 1856, published annually at least one book of the Old or New Testament in the language. His very first book written wholly in Yoruba was a school primer, printed in 1849 (and reprinted in 1852 and 1853), and in 1850 he published a translation of part of the Anglican Prayer Book. He was helped by a number of Yoruba-speaking Sierra Leonians who joined his mission after 1850, especially Thomas King, who also published scriptural translations on his own between 1857 and 1862. Although after 1854 Crowther's main attention was directed to languages other than Yoruba, he published an enlarged vocabulary of Yoruba in 1870.

Gollmer translated a large number of religious tracts into Yoruba, which were published between 1850 and 1870, and in the 1860s, he revised or supervised the revision of the parts of the Bible already translated.

Another important work during this period was J. T. Bowen's Grammar and dictionary of the Yoruba language, which appeared in 1858. So far, this was the most comprehensive treatment of the grammar of the language.

In 1879, J. B. Wood published his Notes on the construction of the Yoruba language. This comprised mainly the structure of simple sentences in the language and was written primarily for the benefit of beginners and Europeans.

By 1890, a steady flow of printed religious and educational literature supplemented by home-produced material, pamphlets and booklets written by Yorubas, circulated throughout Yorubaland. The number of books and booklets printed in Yoruba since Crowther's primer of 1849 is between eight hundred and one thousand (Hair 1967:15). This represents one of the largest printed vernacular literatures in any African language in the period.

The achievement of these earlier scholars on the language was very considerable. Raban's orthography was reasonably systematic, and Crowther adopted it in part. Crowther used diacritics and tone-marks to distinguish vowels and tones. Gollmer criticized Crowther's use of consonant combinations (e.g. kp, bh, ng, hr) to indicate sounds which do not occur in European languages, and suggested using diacritics (e.g. p̣, ḅ, ñ, f̣) instead, but accepted Crowther's suggestion that tone be marked by means of diacritics.

Townsend was appalled by the large number of the diacritics proposed, and also argued on a number of minor points, e.g. whether it was necessary to write kp since there was no p in the language. The argument on orthography was resolved when in 1848 Professor Samuel Lee of Cambridge, a Semiticist, and J. F. Schön, a Hausa scholar then, produced a set of rules for writing African languages, and in 1854, C. R. Lepsius, the German philologist, published a standard alphabet for all the languages of the world. Yoruba orthography was changed accordingly. In the new style, Townsend gained his plain p, Gollmer gained many of his suggested diacritics, and Crowther gained a few tone-marking diacritics. The orthography, with only slight modifications, has continued to be used to the present day, and has 'enabled the Yoruba to write down their thoughts in their own language, and to read in the same a variety of instructing and stimulating works for over a century' (Ajayi 1961:54-5). This seems to mark the first era in Yoruba studies.

Between 1914 and 1925, a lot of material was published in Yoruba. The CMS published Language studies in Yoruba in 1914. This work was an attempt to assemble all the main features already discovered in the language. Gaye and Beecroft published two books, one in 1914, Yoruba grammar, and another in 1922, Yoruba composition. The latter work consisted of translated samples from English. R. E. Dennet wrote an article entitled 'How the Yoruba Count' in 1917 and published it in the Journal of the African Society. This concerned the numerals only. The Yoruba phrase book with phonetic spelling by H. L. Ward Price appeared in 1925. It contains definitions of some important grammatical elements in the language, and a phonetic transcription of the language was attempted. In 1952, Ida Ward published her Introduction to the Yoruba language. This was a major contribution to the phonetics of the language, incorporating all previous work.

She, of course, devoted some sections to syntax and grammar. It seems that this is the only work done by a linguist on the language. I. O. Delano, a native speaker, published A short Yoruba grammar and dictionary in 1958 for use in primary schools, and R. C. Abrahams published in the same year a Dictionary of modern Yoruba, which for many years remained the standard reference work on the language. It is comprehensive, and in most cases utilizes previous vocabularies.

It should be noted that these were not the only published materials in the language which appeared between 1925 and 1958. Many grammar books, mainly readers, and reading books were published by native speakers for use in primary and secondary schools. But it was not until 1966 that the most thorough and standard work on the language, published by a Yoruba linguist, which originated from his Ph.D. dissertation, came out. The book, A grammar of Yoruba, was written by Ayo Bamgbose, and in his preface to the work, John Spencer observed that:

...from the pioneer work of Samuel Crowther in the 1840s and 1850s up to the present day, no extensive descriptive grammar of Yoruba has appeared in print ... this particular deficiency the present monograph now remedies ... and it is entirely appropriate that it should be the work of a Yoruba linguist (Bamgbose 1966:3).

In his introductory chapter, Bamgbose points out that the previous Yoruba grammars were strictly limited in their aims, being usually either prescriptive sketches for the learner or adjuncts to dictionaries. In addition, he said:

...the previous grammars have been skewed by the use of inappropriate categories drawn from Latin grammar through English, or confused by the application of notional criteria in assigning these categories ... in Ida Ward's well-known Introduction to the Yoruba language, English translation equivalence has played its part in contributing further distortion (Bamgbose 1966:5).

In spite of their pitfalls, the earlier works on Yoruba should not be discredited. At least, interest was stimulated in the language, and this gave rise to the collection of linguistic material.

The Development of Hausa and Kanuri Languages

The Hausa States and the kingdom of Bornu were the major political units in the districts west of Lake Chad and northeast of the Middle Niger. Around 1500, the district was visited by a North African youth, who described it in an account of Africa he wrote in later life. This account was published in several European languages under the author's adopted name, Leo Africanus, and it gave Europeans their earliest knowledge of the

Central Sudan (Hallet 1965:53-9). His account does not include the term 'Hausa', but he did use the name 'Bornu'. For almost three centuries this was the only account Europeans had of the Central Sudan, because during this period Europeans were in regular contact with the Guinea coast but were either unable to travel inland or did not learn much about the interior states.

To the north, the Central Sudan was in regular contact with the Muslim shores of the Mediterranean, because merchants from Bornu visited Tripoli, and Sudanese pilgrims passed through Cairo. Later, colonies of Hausa traders began to settle in the major towns between Morocco and Asia Minor. Christian Europe had only limited contact with Muslim North Africa, because the North Africans were reluctant to supply information to Europeans about the Sudan. As a result, in 1800, no Christian European had yet visited any part of the Central Sudan.

Haruna Birniwa in his article "The Development of Hausa Written Literature" (1979), states that written literature in Hausa can be said to have started in the fourteenth century, when Islam came to Hausaland, and Arabic scripts were introduced. He states that 'this was during the reign of Yaji, the Emir of Kano (1349-85), and during this time, a group of some clerics, numbering forty, and called "Wangarawa" from the Mandigo tribe in Senegal arrived in Kano and started teaching' (Birniwa 1979:2).

Birniwa further states that it was Sheikh Usman dan Fodio (1774-1817) who gave a boost to Hausa literature. The Sheikh, who was a religious reformer, used writings to admonish the people and propagate the Muslim religion. He wrote more than four hundred and eighty poems (which contained the dos and don'ts of the Muslim religion) in Arabic, Fulfulde and Hausa. Arabic and Fulfulde versions were translated into Hausa by Nana Asman and Isan Kware, his daughter and son respectively. All literature at this time was in verse because the people liked songs, and verses provided the preachers with the surest way of communicating their ideals to the people.

Hair (1967) states that the earliest vocabularies of Bornu (Bornu) and Afmi (Hausa), and a score of nouns in the latter, appeared in the linguistic encyclopedia, Mithridates in 1812, and these are the earliest vocabularies of these languages known to exist.

It is not clear when Hausa originally came to the notice of Europeans. In prefatory remarks to his Grammar of the Hausa language in 1862, Taylor says 'Schön seems to have been the first to notice and make a close study of the language. ...my attention was first called to it (i.e. the Hausa language) in the year 1840 when I was requested by the CMS to accompany the Niger Expedition...' (J. C. Taylor 1862:i-xiv). But in spite of this disagreement, I will regard the year 1790 as the time when Hausa language first came to the notice of European scholars.

Between 1773 and the 1850s, over a score of travellers and savants

published original material on the area. Most of them provided information about the Hausa and the Kanuri languages, but none provided more than very limited details. The briefest way to record this period of extensive but superficial inquiry into the languages will be simply to list the persons involved, together with a summary of their activity, in chronological order by the date of collection of the information.

In 1789, Simon Lukas, on behalf of the African Association, travelled to Tripoli and collected the numerals of Bornu and Cashna (i.e. Katsina Hausa), and this was published in London in 1790 (Proceedings 1790:166; Hallet 1965:204-9). El Haj Salam Shabeni, a Moroccan merchant, supplied the Secretary of the African Association with an account of a town called Houssa which was published in London in 1792 (Hallet 1965:217-19). Friedrich Hornemann travelled across the desert into the Central Sudan, learnt some Kanuri, passed through Bornu and parts of Hausaland, but died in Nupe country, where all his papers were destroyed (Hallet 1965:250-63). In 1816-7, J. L. Burckhardt, on behalf of the African Association, collected Bornu vocabularies from Bornu-speaking pilgrims, which were published in London in 1819 (Hallet 1965:366-77).

Most of these attempts to obtain information about the Hausa and Kanuri languages were either made by British subjects or were backed by British interests. The sum of linguistic knowledge obtained after all these attempts was disappointingly meagre. Most of the vocabularies were very short and inaccurate. 'In all, allowing for duplication of terms, they added up to about 1000 words in each language, with only a very small proportion in phrases from which grammar could be deduced. No texts were collected' (Hair 1967:36).

In 1812, the German scholar, J. S. Vater, in the third volume of the linguistic encyclopedia Mithridates, examined two sets of Hausa and Kanuri vocabularies, and correctly showed that the language which was called Afmi was the same as the one called Cashna by Lukas. J. C. Prichard, an English ethnographer, listed the materials available on African languages in 1826, but no attempt was made at that time to analyse them. In 1841, Edwin Norris prepared and printed vocabularies of Hausa and Kanuri from earlier sources in a handbook entitled Outline of a vocabulary of a few of the principal languages of Western and Central Africa compiled for the use of the Niger Expedition (London).

Before the 1840s, the only published material on Hausa and Kanuri which was more than mere vocabulary appeared in 1826 in a booklet written by H. J. Klaproth, a German scholar and author of Asia Polyglotta. He analysed the vocabulary that appeared in the reports of Denham's expedition of 1822-25. He produced fourteen pages of analysis to form the first scholarly study of Kanuri.

The Niger expedition of (1841-2) marked the end of the groping discovery of Hausa and Kanuri. J. G. Schön, a serious student of Hausa on

the expedition, published his first book on Hausa in 1843, containing a vocabulary and a brief grammar, and his last book on the language in 1888. He began work on Hausa as a missionary of the CMS in Sierra Leone, and translated the three Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles into Hausa. Material for a grammar and a dictionary that he collected was never published. His successor, S. W. Koelle, who devoted three years to the study of the Kanuri language, published two brilliant works on this language in 1854, one on grammar, personal names and phrases, and the other on sentence structure, sounds and proverbs. Heinrich Barth, who learned to speak Hausa and Kanuri on another expedition, published linguistic material containing partial studies of both languages. By the 1870s, thanks to the labours of these three men, Hausa and Kanuri were unusually well described by the standards of the day in African linguistics.

In 1874, Crowther asked Schön to publish his Hausa dictionary and offered one hundred pounds towards the cost. The Fowell Buxton family gave a further contribution, and after Schön had revised his orthography slightly, the work was published in 1876. It incorporated vocabularies from Baikie and Barth, and was the standard work for about twenty years. It was probably used more widely than any of Schön's other writings. In 1877, Crowther sent one of his assistants, Rev. T. C. John, who spoke Hausa, to England to study Hausa with Schön. John assisted in the preparation of a rather elaborate primer or reading book entitled Travellers' vade mecum, and obviously intended for Europeans who wanted to learn the language. Schön published the Gospel of St. Mark translated into Hausa in 1878, a translation of the New Testament in 1880, a translation of the book of Isaiah in 1881, and also saw through the press Baikie's translation of the Psalms. All these were in Roman script, but in 1877, Schön's translation of part of the Gospel of John was transliterated by Henry Johnson in Arabic script. Schön's most lasting work appeared in 1886--Magna Hausa or Hausa literature, a collection of Hausa texts with an English translation.

Schön published about 3000 pages in or on Hausa during a period of nearly fifty years. In 1877, he was awarded a Volney medal for his grammar and Dictionary, and in 1882, he was invited to read a paper on Hausa to the Royal Asiatic Society. Through the help of Robert Cust, he was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Oxford University in 1884.

In 1883, Robert Cust, Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, and a committee member of the CMS, published a two-volume bibliographical work on the languages of Africa.

In 1844, F. W. Newman, a British pioneer of Berber studies, wrote a note on Schön's Hausa vocabulary in which he made the earliest attempt to define the relationship between Hausa and Hamito-Semitic. The very suggestion that a Negro language was in any way related to Semitic caused surprise at the time. Schön had tried to demonstrate in his 1862 grammar, though less convincingly, that Hausa was a Semitic language. This stimulated interest in comparative studies, and Koelle, in his contributions

to the comparative linguistics through his Polyglotta, said as regards Kanuri that he was convinced in his study that not only had it 'no important affinities with other Negro languages' but that 'it was connected with Indo-European and Semitic languages by a considerable number of roots'. (Keolle 1854:iv). Keolle taught Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek at the Fourah Bay Institution in Sierra Leone, and in his grammar, he included a few pages of roots in these languages.

Evaluation of work in Hausa up until this time has been made more difficult by the comparatively recent introduction of tone in the analysis, and some of these early exponents of tonal analysis found the new technique so revolutionary that they were inclined to ignore all the language study that had gone before.

In the late 1880s, there arrived in the Niger a band of young English missionaries whose fervid enthusiasm made them excessively critical of everything that had been done before. They proposed a mission to Hausaland, but the leaders died before the mission got under way. In memory of the attempt, a Hausa Association was formed in England with a studentship at Cambridge University, and the first student of the Association, C. H. Robinson, brother of one of the dead men, began to study and produce works in Hausa. In this milieu, there was much severe criticism of Schön's work: of his translation, Robinson wrote: 'it will require a large amount of correction before it can be of use' (Robinson 1896:xviii). A new translation of the Bible was begun. The major criticism made of Schön's translation was that it was too European in idiom, and considering the circumstances in which it was produced, there was doubtless, at least, a measure of justice in the criticism.

Schön's critics made much of the fact that he was unaware that Hausa had been written in the homeland in the Arabic script, and they argued that Arabic rather than Roman script was the more suitable for translations. Schön had provided transcriptions in Arabic script in two of his works, but his very limited knowledge of Arabic forced him to work in Roman script. This was, perhaps, fortunate, for only very little literature in Hausa had ever been produced in Arabic script because the language can be better represented in Roman than in Arabic script.

In 1896 and 1897, Robinson produced a dictionary and a grammar of Hausa, each of which went into several editions during the next thirty years. They superseded, as they were intended to, Schön's grammar and dictionary. Robinson spent only short periods studying Hausa at first hand (in Hausaland and Tripoli), so he based his work on Schön's, with revisions, which in some cases were no improvement. Both grammar and dictionary showed a tendency to popularize Hausa studies by presenting a simplified form of the language. While this made them useful to learners who wished to acquire only a smattering of the language, it may be doubted whether in soundness of linguistic theory they represented any advance on Schön's work.

During his half century of Hausa studies, Schön had had the field almost to himself, but between the late 1880s and 1914, about a score of authors published books on Hausa. The most important dated work of this period was that of F. W. H. Migeod. He published two volumes of The languages of West Africa in London between 1911 and 1913. These volumes were republished in 1971. In 1898, Migeod joined the West African Frontier Force at Lokoja, Nigeria, as assistant transport officer. His interests in West African languages began then.

He collected word-lists of the languages spoken by the men who worked at the station. In 1908, he published The Mende language, and in the preface, included a brief comparison of the grammatical rules of Mende and Hausa, for the use of Europeans and natives. This work cost him twenty-five pounds. In 1911 he wrote The grammar of Hausa language, which was published in 1914. Of this work, reviewers severely criticized his inadequate knowledge of phonetics, for he had failed to note the glottalic sounds b, ɗ, ƙ, and had even gone so far as to include gb, a sound not found in Hausa spoken in Northern Nigeria. He was discouraged by this criticism and from 1914 wrote very little on African languages apart from the inclusion of short word-lists collected during his travels.

Of his first volume of Languages of West Africa published in 1911 at a cost of seventy-five pounds, only 105 copies were sold. Among the languages covered were: Hausa (which he classified as inflectional), Yoruba, Igalla, Nupe, Gbari, Igbira, Kakanda, Igbo, Efik (which were all classified as agglutinative). He drew up a statement of grammatical rules in these languages, discussed the parts of speech--noun, adjective, pronoun, verb tense, preposition and gender--in each of these languages. Prominence was given to Hausa because according to him 'in the British possession of West Africa, it is the one language that in importance sets all others in the background'(1911:149). He devotes a lengthy chapter to the discussion of the grammatical features of Hausa, its connections with Arabic, phonetics, its passive and active voices, tenses, and he gives many examples of each. He summarized the chapter by transliterating into English a letter written in Hausa in 1902 by the Chief of Kwotto, Muhammadu dan Umaru, to Webster.

In this study, a scientific study of Hausa was exemplified. Although Migeod was not a linguist, and in spite of the inaccuracies of his descriptions and statements, the work could be regarded as the beginning of modern scientific Hausa studies.

G. Merrick published Hausa Proverbs in 1905 and in 1929 F. W. Taylor published an article entitled "The orthography of African languages with special reference to Hausa and Fulani" in the Journal of the African Society of April 1929. In this work, he criticized the spelling of the language, and to follow up this criticism, he published A practical Hausa grammar in 1959. In the introduction, he discusses letters and sounds, length and stress, and justifies his assignment of phonetic symbols to the language.

He devotes another section of the book to a discussion of parts of speech (F. W. Taylor 1929).

R. C. Abraham published a series of books in Hausa and other languages between 1940 and 1959. Among the books published in 1940 were The principles of Tiv (see next section on lower Niger-Benue languages), and Introduction to spoken Hausa. In the latter, he discusses the phonetic features of Hausa and severely criticizes Taylor's 1929 article on orthography. In 1941 he published A modern grammar of spoken Hausa. Hausa literature and the sound system was published in London in 1959. 'The aim of the book', according to Abraham, 'is to teach vocabulary and reading.' (Abraham 1959:i) He discusses the consonants and vowels in detail, attempting to specify the articulatory qualities that would ensure a perfect pronunciation. In another of his books also published in 1959, The language of the Hausa people, he discusses sounds and tones.

Johannes Lukas in 1937 published a comprehensive work, A study of the Kanuri language, grammar and vocabulary. This was first published by Oxford University Press in 1937 and reprinted in 1967 by Dawsons Pall Mall, London. He treats the parts of speech, and discusses tone at length. In the introduction, he has this to say about tone: '...the tone system of Kanuri has hitherto been overlooked. By this analysis, I hope to make it clear that Kanuri, like so many other African languages, is a tone language' (Lukas 1937:iv).

With the introduction of Latin scripts and the appearance of Migeod's analysis of Hausa, some modifications were made in Hausa orthography. The pioneer was the Assistant Resident of Northern Nigeria, Sir Hanns Vischer, popularly known as 'dan Hausa'. Such phonetic symbols as k, d, b, were used for the language.

The first school was opened in Kano in 1909 for the training of people to read and write Hausa correctly. Later English and other subjects were taught. By 1930 there were only three schools throughout Hausaland (Birniwa 1979:5). The problem which faced the schools was that of adequate texts for beginners in the language. In 1930, the Northern Regional Government set up a translation bureau under the chairmanship of Dr. R. M. East, then Director of Education, to translate books from other languages into Hausa, compile reading materials in Hausa, encourage indigenous writers and translate government bulletins into Hausa.

The response was encouraging. Several books were translated into the language, and to encourage indigenous writers, writing contests were set up. This stimulated indigenous writers. Alhaji Abubakar Iman won the first prize for his book Ruwan Bagaja (Water of Cure); the second prize went to Muhammad Bello for his book Gondoki; and the third prize was won by the late Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Tafewa Balewa for his book Shaihu Umar. Abubakar Iman followed up his recognition by producing a set of primary school readers call Magana Jari Ci (Speech is treasure).

In January 1939, the Hausa newspaper Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo was founded. The aim was to educate the people on the language and to propagate government policies. The newspaper still exists, published three times a week in Kaduna. It was first published fortnightly and circulated in 225 towns in Northern Nigeria. It is now run by the Gaskiya Corporation in Zaria.

All three pioneers in the study of the Central Sudan languages, Barth, Koelle, and Schön would have approved of the recent intensification of interest in the languages of Nigeria, both from the practical and the academic side. In his Kanuri grammar, Koelle (1854:10) wrote:

... Africa is still an unknown country in many respects. Its numerous languages are a wide field, the cultivation of which will be sure to reward the professional philologist with many interesting discoveries. Hitherto, the Christian missionaries have done by far the greater part of the work: may we not expect that the linguist will join them in this enterprise ...

Languages of the Lower Niger-Benue

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, all the languages of Nigeria from the Delta five hundred miles upstream to the Bussa Falls, and along the banks of the Niger and Benue, and from the confluence upstream for three hundred miles will be treated together under the heading 'Languages of the Lower Niger-Benue'. As far as possible, individual treatments will be given for these languages. However, the historical developments of these languages are so interconnected that they cannot be rigidly separated without serious damage to coherence. As this paper is a general survey, I leave it to linguists and historians interested in individual languages to provide a strictly individual treatment of these languages.

Of the many languages spoken today on the banks of the Niger-Benue rivers, eight, all of which received some attention before 1890, will be considered in this section. They are as follows:

- a) Igbo, spoken for about one hundred miles upstream above the Delta and on either bank of the lower Niger;
- b) Ijaw, spoken in the Delta;
- c) Igbira, spoken between the Niger and the Benue immediately north of the confluence, but for only a short distance on the banks, with another section west of the confluence in the near interior;
- d) Igalla, spoken on the east bank of the Niger for about one hundred miles, above the Igbo-speaking area and below the Benue confluence;

- e) Idoma, Tiv, Jukun, spoken in that order, ascending the Benue from the confluence, with the last extending to about three hundred miles up from the confluence;
- f) Nupe, spoken on both banks of the Niger above the confluence for about two hundred miles; and
- g) Edo (Bini), spoken on the western bank of the Niger towards the Yoruba-speaking area.

Of these languages, only the two most northerly were mentioned in Arabic sources on the Sudanic region before 1800; and only the two most southerly were mentioned in European sources on the Guinea coast before 1800. Knowledge on the part of the outside world of the mere existence of the remainder, and the linguistic study of all of them, had to await the discovery of the course of the Niger completed in the 1830s, and the opening up of the river to European influence, inaugurated by a series of expeditions upstream between 1832 and 1857. Immediately after, major work was begun on the lower Niger-Benue languages. The early students of these languages and the founders of written literatures in them were in the main missionaries; and the majority were African members of the CMS Niger Mission.

Ijaw has been less studied than some other Nigerian languages (e.g. Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba). There are several reasons for this: the variety of dialects, the use of pidgin English in the early trade with Europeans, and the relatively small number of missionaries who lived in the area, are among the reasons for the early neglect.

The first European record of a possible Ijaw word appeared in 1500 in Duarte Pacheco Pereira's Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis edited by Kimble in 1937 (Williamson 1965:v). A Portuguese account of the coast written around 1500 noted that the 'Jos' i.e. Ijaw, lived on the rivers of the Delta region: it briefly described their economic activities, and included one word in the vernaculars which might be an earlier form of a modern Ijaw term. This account remained in manuscript until the nineteenth century. Nothing else appeared in print on this language during the period of Portuguese ascendancy in the trade there, though it is conceivable that vocabularies were collected and may yet be discovered in largely unexamined archives of Portugal and the Catholic Missionary orders.

The earliest material in print was apparently collected by a Dutch sailor in the mid-seventeenth century while the Dutch were opening up trade at New Calabar and Bonny. The material was rather meagre, being only the first five numerals. It was published as part of an account of Dutch trade at these ports in 1668, and republished in O. Dapper's Nakeurige Geschiedinge der Africaenesche Gewesten in 1676. The numerals also were given in E. Norris's Outline of a vocabulary of a few of the principal languages of West and Central Africa, published in London in 1841.

During the next hundred years, various writers described the Ijaw traders and chiefs at New Calabar (without, however, using the term Ijaw), and an English work of 1732 referred to the interior, but no more linguistic material appeared in print. Thus, the first two hundred and seventy years of European contact with the Niger-Delta region proved almost entirely profitless as far as the study of Nigerian languages was concerned. Meanwhile, however, representatives of these various peoples and languages were being transported across the Atlantic as slaves. 'In the Americas, slaves from the Delta region were usually known as Caravali, Carabali, Kalbary or Calabars, after the two Calabars, New and Old, the ports from which so many of the slave ships sailed' (Hair 1967:71).

In 1627, a Spanish priest who had worked among slaves at Cartagena listed in print the names given by 'Caravalties' when questioned about their provenance. Of nineteen names, ten are the same as those of modern Ijaw settlements in the Delta, while among the other names is the name Igbo. We can be certain from this evidence that Ijaw slaves were to be found in America though the name Ijaw seems never to have been used in the records of the slave trade. We cannot be so sure that Igbo had the modern ethnolinguistic meaning, but since it is likely that there were Igbo-speaking slaves in the Americas from at least the early seventeenth century, this could well be the earliest reference to the Igbo people. Much later, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the name Igbo began to appear regularly in slave-trade records, while the term Calabar was much less used: this may indicate that Igboland was providing a larger proportion of the slaves shipped from the Calabars and the neighbouring ports. Several accounts describe Igbo slaves in the Americas, and one of these also provided the earliest substantial linguistic information on lower Niger-Benue languages.

In 1776-7, G. C. A. Oldendorp, a German Pastor of the Moravian Brethren, visited the West Indies to collect material for a history of the Caribbean mission of the Brethren. He became interested in the slave population he encountered, and wrote at length about their African origins and languages: the account was edited and published in Germany in 1777. Among Oldendorp's twenty-eight brief vocabularies of African languages were two of Igbo under the names Ibo and Kalabari. Despite the peculiar orthography, the words (numerals and thirteen nouns) can be seen to be close to modern Igbo, the Kalabari forms being probably from a southern dialect. Oldendorp also provided a sentence translated into each of the African languages. There were two Igbo sentences.⁵

It is true that the kingdoms of 'Noofy' (i.e. Nupe) and 'Korofa' (i.e. Kwararafa, on the Benue, usually meaning the Jukun State) were marked on the maps of Africa from about 1720 (Hallet 1965:102-3) but the exact position of these interior districts was not known because of contradictory reports about the course of the Niger. A few slaves from the interior reached the Delta ports, and thence found their way to the Americas, but it was not till the Fulani razzias after 1800 that large numbers of interior

slaves were exported. In the nineteenth century, Nupe slaves were sufficiently common in Brazil and Cuba to be known by the Yoruba term for a Nupe man, tapa.

Systematic exploration of the lower Niger-Benue area began when Friedrich Hornemann crossed the Sahara in 1800: he made his way to Nupe country, but died there and all his papers were lost. Five years later, Mungo Park died just as his expedition was about to enter the Nupe country. In 1826, Clapperton and Lander passed through the western part of Nupeland on their way from Badagry to Sokoto, and in 1830, the Lander Brothers became the first Europeans to pass down the lower Niger, from Nupeland to the Delta. None of these expeditions provided any material on these languages. It was in 1832-4, during the expedition under the direction of MacGregor Laird that a small quantity of linguistic material was provided. In 1841, on an official Niger Expedition, two missionary-linguists from Freetown successfully studied the distribution of languages along the Niger.

After Oldendorp's vocabularies of 1777, half a century elapsed before further vocabularies of lower Niger-Benue languages were published. The first to appear were those collected in Freetown in the 1820s from the liberated slaves by the CMS missionaries and Mrs. Hannah Kilham, the Quaker educationalist. Her publication of a collection of vocabularies in 1828 included vocabularies of Igbo and Tapua (i.e. Nupe), Sobo (i.e. Urhobo), and Ibibio (Karaba), but none of Ijaw. These lists consisted mainly of numerals and about fifty nouns for each language. Though meagre and only moderately accurate, these vocabularies were the first to appear in print on Nupe and Urhobo. The account of Laird's expedition published in 1837 included a vocabulary of thirty words of Nupe, and a vocabulary of six words of Kakanda (probably a dialect of Nupe). In 1840, Edwin Norris prepared a handbook of vocabularies, mainly the two earlier vocabularies noted above, with an addition of about one hundred words taken from lists collected by various person, who were most probably members of Laird's expedition. Numerals in Ijaw were also published--these were the first words in print in Ijaw since the five numerals of 1668. From accounts of Delta ports published in 1830, sixty words and phrases of 'Eboe' (i.e. Igbo) appeared, which were overlooked by Norris. In a German periodical published in 1842,⁶ a vocabulary of six hundred words of Ijaw appeared, including many medical terms. This was collected by an unnamed German doctor aboard a British vessel (Hair 1967:74).

While Norris was preparing his guide for the use of the Niger Expedition, the CMS was training two missionaries for the expedition, namely J. F. Schön and Samuel Crowther. In 1840, Schön reported to the authorities that he had collected a vocabulary of 1600 words of Igbo and had translated a few prayers. Schön and Crowther took with them on the expedition twelve interpreters who spoke languages spoken on the banks of the Niger. When the expedition was sailing up the Niger through the Igbo country, Schön attempted to communicate in Igbo. To his greatest disappointment, he found that 'the dialect of the Igbo language on which I had bestowed so much

labour in Sierra Leone, differs widely from that spoken and understood in this part of the country. It never escaped my observation that a great diversity of dialects existed; but I must blame myself much for not making stricter enquiries about that which would be most useful for the present occasion' (Crowther & Schön 1883:47).

However, Schön persisted in his efforts to put his Igbo to use, and prepared and read an address in the language to the chief of Abo. The chief, no doubt, baffled by the pronunciation and intonation, soon grew bored and interrupted the reading. As a result of this disappointment, nearly twenty years elapsed before Schön resumed his Igbo studies. His unhappy experience with Igbo dialects in 1841 was significant; it can now be seen as an indication of the problems that lay ahead in the development of Igbo literature, problems which have persisted to the present day.

In England, after the expedition, Schön gave the first comprehensive report on the languages of the lower Niger-Benue, naming six of them-- Brass, Igbo, Igalla, Nupe, Hausa and Fulani--and briefly describing their extent and range of use. Schön never returned to the Niger but stayed in Sierra Leone and worked on Hausa.

In 1854, Crowther ascended the Niger again. At this time, a small party of Sierraleonians of Igbo extraction set out from Freetown, under the direction of the Principal of the Fourah Bay Institute, with the intention of visiting Igboland to prepare the ground for the general return of the Igbos from Freetown. The party did not get farther than Bonny because of the hostility of the Delta peoples (Dike 1956:117, Ajayi 1965:41-42).

In 1848, John Clarke, a Baptist missionary, collected and published a set of vocabularies of African languages. Though brief and unsystematically arranged, they include the following languages: Ijaw (numerals and ten words), Igbo (numerals and two hundred and fifty words), Nupe (numerals and fifty words), Igbira (numerals and fifty words), Tiv (numerals and ten words). This was the first appearance in print of Igalla, Igbira, and Tiv.⁷

In 1854, Koelle's Polyglotta Africana appeared. It was the work of a genius, for a hundred years later it had still not been superseded as a standard reference work for comparative West African studies. Its contribution to the knowledge of the lower Niger-Benue languages was as follows: vocabularies of about three hundred words in each of two dialects of Ijaw, five dialects of Igbo, five dialects of Nupe, three dialects of Igbira, and vocabularies of Igalla, Tiv, Jukun and Eregba.⁸ The vocabularies were accurate, and for most of the languages, longer than any previously in print. Koelle established precise locations for almost all the languages, and his arrangement of the vocabularies gave a reasonable indication of the linguistic relationships involved. His work presented a linguistic ground-plan of the lower Niger-Benue area which was not surpassed for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

At the end of the 1854 expedition, Crowther wrote to the CMS authorities recommending that a mission be stationed on the Niger, with a station at Onitsha in Igboland. The recommendation was accepted because it satisfied the wishes of Freetown Igbos. Crowther sent for Simon Jonas, and the two of them settled in Lagos to study Igbo. From Schön, they borrowed vocabularies compiled in the 1840-41 expedition. In 1857, a mission station was opened in Onitsha, and Crowther printed a short primer in Igbo. Little more than a spelling book, the primer in its seventeen pages gave words and sentences in Igbo, and concluded with a few prayers and verses of the Scripture in translation. This was the beginning of a new period in the study of the lower Niger-Benue languages. Rev. J. C. Taylor was left in Onitsha to run the mission station. In 1858, Crowther set up a mission station at Rabba in Nupeland.

With the help of Taylor, Schön resumed his Igbo studies, which he had begun seventeen years before. Taylor, guided by Schön on theoretical points, began to publish in Igbo. His journal, published in 1859, included a small collection of Igbo proverbs, and in the same year, he published a catechism in Igbo. In 1860, he followed this with the publication of an Igbo sermon preached in Sierra Leone. He revised Crowther's primer, and translated the Gospels and extracts from the Prayer Book. Meanwhile, Schön was working on Igbo grammar and in 1861, he produced his study of this. Schön's grammar was the only work on the subject until 1890, and so far was the only academic study of Igbo.

Onitsha flourished, but the northern stations were less successful. Crowther published a primer and a translation of one Gospel in Nupe in 1860. In 1864, he produced a grammar and vocabulary of the language, the earliest books in and on Nupe.

The success of Crowther's activities led to his appointment in 1864 as bishop, with his headquarters in Lagos. In 1866, Taylor completed the translation of the New Testament into Igbo, which he started in 1860. The Acts of the Apostles and most of the Epistles were printed between 1864 and 1866. Liturgical materials, namely a few hymns, were printed in 1871, and the Prayer Book in 1872. At the end of 1871, Taylor was transferred to Sierra Leone, and this ended his study of Igbo. He was the pioneer of Igbo literature.

In 1860, Crowther left Nupeland and moved to the Delta. In 1861, a mission station was opened in Bonny, and in 1867 at Brass. Taylor prepared a primer in Ijaw. It appeared in 1862 and, though hastily written, was the first book in Ijaw.

In 1870, F. W. Smart, who was with the Niger Mission, published a revised primer and some hymns in Igbo, and W. E. L. Carew published a primer and translations of two small religious works in Igbo. A. G. Goomber, a Sierra Leone clergyman, who supervised the Nupe mission, published two books--a primer of Nupe, and a primer of and some Bible translations in

Igbira. Thus by 1870, five lower Niger-Benue languages--Igbo, Nupe, Ijaw, Igalla and Igbira--had achieved their earliest printed literature.

Crowther was aging, and in 1878, two archdeacons were appointed to help him: Dandeson Crowther and Henry Johnson, for the Delta and the Upper stations respectively. Johnson took up Nupe studies, while Crowther concentrated on Igbo, in which nothing had been published for some years. In 1882, Crowther published an Igbo dictionary, and in 1883 an English-Igbo supplement was written by Schön.

Johnson published a reading book in Nupe in 1882 and in 1883 a catechism. In 1886-7, he translated and published all four Gospels in Nupe. He translated more of the New Testament and was preparing to print this at the mission press set up at Lokoja when the CMS decided to abandon the station. Under his supervision, a reading book was published in Igbira in 1883, and a translation of the whole of the Bible and Prayer Book in 1891. The vigour of linguistic activity at Lokoja in the 1880s in itself raises doubts as to the wisdom of the CMS in closing the mission station.

From Lokoja, Johnson was transferred to Onitsha to work on Igbo. In 1891 he translated two Gospels which were published in 1893. But the same year he left both the Niger and the CMS in protest against the changes in the Niger Mission. In his enthusiasm for linguistic work, he would have made a worthy successor to Crowther in the direction of the Niger Mission. But disappointed and frustrated, he did no more work on the languages after leaving the Niger.

In the Delta, Dandeson Crowther was equally active. A printing press arrived in the Delta in 1884, and all the works on the area were printed locally. Thomas Johnson, a catechist at the Delta station, prepared two Ijaw catechisms and a translation of the Book of the Common Prayer. These were printed between 1885 and 1886. J. D. Garrick, a Sierraleonian, who served as a catechist at Nembe, published an Ijaw translation of a Gospel in 1886.

A translation committee at Bonny prepared translations of two catechisms, the Prayer Book, a Gospel and several Epistles into the local dialects of Igbo. All these were printed between 1886 and 1893. Assisted by J. O. Mba, an Igbo catechist, Johnson prepared an Igbo hymn book, parts of the Prayer Book and a reader in 1899.

Between 1857 and 1893, over fifty books and booklets were published in the lower Niger-Benue languages, and all were due to the activities of the Niger Mission under Crowther. Crowther died in 1891.

The unique feature of the study of these languages between the early 1850s and early 1890s was the deep involvement of Nigerian slaves liberated in Sierra Leone. The quantity of linguistic material of this region was rather smaller than that of the Yoruba or Hausa languages, but the output

is respectable considering the fact that all missionary agents were involved in linguistic work. In the quality of output of this period, only three books were formal contributions to academic linguistics. The Ibo dictionary of 1882 was a disappointing work because it was done carelessly. Schön's Igbo grammar (Oku Ibo) of 1861 was not known, but it was sophisticated enough to discuss tonality; it also dealt with the language in fair detail to the extent that it provided the only introduction to Igbo grammar available during this period. Crowther's Nupe grammar was a tentative effort according to the author, and even today Nupe is not a well-studied language. But in the introduction, Crowther argued for the necessity for tone-marking because 'nothing makes speaking these languages so difficult to foreigners', and he continued: 'I do not mean that every word in the translation is necessary to be marked, but in many cases distinctive marks are indispensable' (Crowther 1864:iii-vi).

In his Ibo grammar of 1857, Crowther marked two tones, but incorrectly in most cases. But then the discovery of tonality in West African languages became known when Lepsius referred to the matter in the second edition of his Standard alphabet (1863). He noted tone marking of Yoruba by Crowther and Bowen, and of Igbo by Crowther and concluded: 'we find here in a smaller extent the same principle of intonation as in Chinese' (Lepsius 1863:275,277).

In his Ijaw or Idso primer of 1862, Taylor distinguishes only seven of nine vowels, and sometimes mistranslates the English; 'it is apparently based on the Nembe dialect' (Williamson 1965:5).

The first useful information on Nembe was given by Adegisi Tepowa in "Notes on the Nembe (Brass) Language" in Journal of the African Society in 1904. N. W. Thomas gives vocabularies of Degema (i.e. Kalabari), Nembe and Bonny in his article entitled "Specimens of Languages from Southern Nigeria", published in 1911. In Nembe there is a Book of Common Prayer (1923), and the complete Bible (1956). In Ijaw there were a few primers for schools, and Dina D. S. Kalio published a collection of Okrika proverbs (1960). In 1961, M. N. Agbegha produced Ijaw-English vocabulary. and T. O. Onduku published in 1960 How to write an Ijaw language.

In recent years several linguistic studies of Ijaw have appeared. In 1959 Hans Wolff published vocabularies of Kalabari, Nembe, Kolokuma and Western Ijaw in his article entitled "Niger-Delta Languages 1: Classification" in Anthropological linguistics. An excellent tonal analysis of Nembe is contained in E. C. Roland's article "Tone and Intonation Systems in Brass-Nembe Ijaw", published in African language studies in 1960. A good descriptive and transformational grammar of the Kolokuma dialect of Ijaw was published in 1963 by Kay Williamson, and in 1959 she also published an article on the tone of the language, "The Units of an African Tone Language" in Phonetica, volume 3, 1959. With the exception of Williamson's grammar, no other general description of any Ijaw dialect has yet been published.

Between 1890 and 1930 nothing of significance was written on Igbo. The only scholarly but grossly inadequate work published before 1930 was Northcote W. Thomas's book Anthropological report on the Igbo speaking peoples (New York 1914). The proverbs, tones and stories covered in the book are merely duplicate records deposited in the Museum of Ethnology, Cambridge, Forest Hill, according to him. His treatment of Igbo consonants is very misleading because he mentions sounds not found in the language-- glottal stop, uvular stop, soft fricatives, and some sounds he refers to as 'cerebral sounds'. He assigns thirteen vowels to the language instead of eight, and has four diphthongs which do not exist in the language. He conducted tests on tone, but then said 'these tests were only roughly applied, and in the light of further results, I feel some doubt as to how far they were accurate' (Thomas 1914:99). This publication was supposed to be a work of labour, but it represents one of the most idle performances offered to the public on the Igbo language.

In 1932, R. F. G. Adams published A modern Ibo grammar, and in 1936 Ida Ward her An introduction to the Ibo language. Both are pedagogical grammars aimed at the instruction of English-speaking foreigners. Although both describe the simplest syntactic patterns in the language, presentation is lucid in both grammars. Ward's book is especially useful for its phonetic indications of tone.

In October 1961, the government of Eastern Nigeria announced an official decision about script and spelling for Igbo. This can be studied in the booklet issued by the Ministry of Education The official Igbo orthography, as recommended by the Onwu Committee in 1961: notes on scripts and spelling for teachers. In the official orthography, Roman letters with diacritics are used for the vowels, and the use of the hyphen with auxiliary verbs was advocated.

Green and Igwe's A descriptive grammar of Igbo of 1963 is an improvement on Ward's grammar. Material from Ward's work is copiously used, and in the discussion of consonants and syllabary, they relied heavily on J. Carnochan's phonological system. L. B. Swift, A. Ahaghotu and E. Ugorji published Igbo basic course in 1962 under the auspices of the Foreign Service Institute, Washington D. C. This grammar also is pedagogical, but its goal is oral-aural proficiency. Grammatical statements are kept to a minimum. Igwe and Green's grammar consists of tabulation and classification of lexical categories and grammatical constructions. It is the most copious, detailed description of Igbo that has been available before 1970. Achinuvu published a series of grammar books for the primary schools within the period. In 1963 he published Primary Igbo course books 1 & 3. S. C. Obi published in the same year Primary Igbo course, book 2. It is only from 1970 that standard works on the language started to appear.

In spite of the part played in the history of Nigeria by Bini people, it was only in 1910 that a printed work in the language appeared. This was Edo speaking peoples published by N. W. Thomas. The book is more of a

historical book than a grammar book, although it devoted several pages on orthography, numerals, vocabulary and simple sentence constructions. The late appearance of Edo (Bini) language in European linguistic studies could possibly be attributed to malice nursed against the Binis by the British for their successfully resisting the intrusion of the Europeans. This may have warded off any interest in the study of the language.

A more scholarly work in Fula appeared in 1970 when D. W. Arnott published his The nominal and verb systems of Fula. This work is based on a detailed investigation of native speakers' speech followed by a field work. It deals with 'the complicated morphology of the nominal and verbal systems... the most conspicuous feature of Fula' (Arnott 1970:5). He distinguishes twenty-five minimal class systems marked by distinct morphological elements. The verbal classes comprise fifteen different 'tenses' marked by different verbal suffixes and morphological features.

Conclusion

From this general survey, it is clear that the early linguistic work on Nigerian languages was pioneered by the Niger Mission and its agencies. The immediate practical value of the publications was limited. In general, they were used only by the mission personnel and in mission schools, and their usefulness was no doubt reduced by their academic shortcomings. It is fairly clear that enthusiasm for the use of any particular linguistic publication was apt to be short-lived. Possibly, the books were difficult to use because of their errors. Apart from contributions to linguistic work made by Africans, the cultural achievement of the linguistic efforts of the Niger Mission lay in its bringing into the literate community of the modern world most of the languages of Nigeria. Many of them were put into writing and given their earliest printed literature, thus raising them in the estimation, not only of their speakers, but of those in the outside world who had doubted whether the languages of this part of Africa were capable of being transferred to paper.

NOTES

- 1 Hausa appeared in print in 1700, Igbo in 1777 and Fula in 1732.
- 2 Bowdich's 'Moors' were Hausas, who today call the Yoruba Yarabawa/Yarbawa.
- 3 'Aku' or 'Oku' is a mode of salutation among the Yoruba-speaking

tribes, but they 'were called Akus because of the way they greeted, which shows that up till then (1820) the majority were Oyo since it is the Oyo Yoruba who greet in this way' (Ajayi 1965:21).

4 How original this material is, it is difficult to say. Townsend may well have borrowed some of it from manuscripts circulating in Freetown. The song presumably also came from Townsend, though Clarke omitted to say so.

5 Also a first attempt to find an equivalent sentence in modern Igbo can be found in P. E. Hair's paper entitled "Languages of Western Africa, c.a. 1700: A Note and a Query", in Bulletin of the African Church History Society, volume 1, 1963, pages 17-20.

6 Reprinted as H. Köler Einige Notizen über Bonny---seine Sprache und seine Bewohner (Gottingen 1848). The 1843 articles were overlooked in England. See, for example, R. G. Latham's "Remarks Upon a Vocabulary of the Bonny Language" (Proceedings of the Philological Society, vol.4, 1848-50:73).

7 The vocabulary is number 149 in Clarke (1848).

8 a) Ijaw--Ukoloma, Udşq b) Igbo--Isoama, İşiele, Abadşa, Aro, Mbqfia e) Nupe--Nupe, Kupa, Eşitako, Basa, Ebe d) Igalla--Igala e) Igbira--Opanda, Egbira, Hima f)Tiv--Tiwi g) Jukun--Dşuku h)Eregba.

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