

KAY WILLIAMSON EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION (KWEF)

Report to Trustees, October 2008

Roger Blench

1. Since our previous meeting the situation in Rivers State has, if anything, deteriorated, with attacks on oil pipelines and threats to expatriates still worse. Effectively nothing can be done except the editing of existing materials. I was recently in touch with Kay's old colleague, E.J. Alagoa who advised me that PH remains entirely unsafe.
2. Dr. Carole Pegg has now completed her work in typing missing materials from Kay's manuscripts and new versions of the Igbo, Kana and Nembe dictionaries are now posted on the website.
3. I spent much of the early part of the year in Nigeria and have been formatting documents produced together with collaborators, posting them on the website and presenting the findings at conferences.

Work in Northern Nigeria

Applications for funds have been somewhat frustrating; Nigerian students have applied for funds but without any supporting documentation or any evidence that they would do the work required. However, more successful has been support to publications for existing materials. The problem with these has turned out to be that they need a great deal of editing. So I haven't been able to bring them to press as quickly as I would like. But we now have one dictionary in print and another expected shortly.

Typing of Kay's manuscript material

This is now proceeding ahead more smoothly and some important manuscripts have been completed. These are;

- Reshe wordlist
- Nembe dictionary
- Igbo dictionary
- Ekpeye student thesis
- Idoma wordlist
- Kana dictionary

All of these are posted on the KWEF website

Jos Linguistic Circle (JLC)

This has been one of our most successful initiatives. Since its inception in 2006, KWEF has supported meetings with hire of rooms and refreshments, and has been able to bring together a growing number of enthusiasts for Nigerian languages. [A list of talks given under JLC's initiative is appended to this report]. I am now preparing to write to contributors in order to put together a first volume of collected papers on Nigerian languages. However, one of the good, but slightly bizarre consequences, is that students from Jos university are attending the meetings, as they apparently feel that all they get at the university is theoretical work on general linguistics, and many of them would like to work on their own language. Furthermore, the University has now invited JLC to try and establish some sort of joint meetings and perhaps even teaching. This is about as good an outcome as I could possibly expect and will contribute to young people promoting their own language. I am watching this, and if I think a small application of funds would assist this process I will try and put them in.

Support to workshops

There are now a large number of committees working on languages in various regions of Nigeria. However, they often do not have the resources to meet one another and exchange experiences and solve problems of orthography and analysis. Kay gave support to numerous workshops in her lifetime, and it seemed appropriate to continue this tradition. Following this thread, I organised a workshop on the West Kainji languages between the 10-12th March, 2008, in Kontagora. This was extremely successful, and was attended by some 35 people.

Photographs of the meeting, presentations and papers are all to be found at;

<http://www.rogerblench.info/KWEF/KWEF/Conferences/KWEF%20conferences%20opening%20page.htm>

The final workshop report is appended to this report.

A similar meeting on the Adamawa languages is now scheduled to be held February 9-13th, 2009 in Tula (Gombe State). A preliminary announcement can be seen at;

<http://www.rogerblench.info/KWEF/KWEF/Conferences/Tula%202009/Workshop%20on%20Adamawa%20languages.htm>

Single language intensive workshops

In some cases, where a single language is floundering for lack of technical help, it seemed appropriate to bring speakers to Jos and work intensively with them for a few days. This was arranged in March in co-operation with Mark Gaddis, Language Programme Co-ordinator with Wycliffe. Two workshops were undertaken for the Idū and Nyankpa languages and the results can be seen at;

<http://www.rogerblench.info/KWEF/KWEF/Conferences/KWEF%20conferences%20opening%20page.htm>

This appears to be a very successful format and two more are planned early next year.

Publications

I see that trying to bring to press unpublished manuscripts is an important goal for KWEF. I append a list of mss. that I have been working on. This is a long-term objective as many will take considerable work to bring to press. So part of my work for the future will be to encouraging ms. production, editing and formatting. I have found that going to conferences is an important part of meeting supervisors of interesting Ph.D.s which we eventually will hope to publish and distribute in Nigeria.

I am also supporting a series of local publications in Nigeria (or in Cameroun if the language is also spoken in Nigeria). This would be relatively 'quick and dirty' and would bring out books that are not suitable for international publication. I worked quite intensively on the first volume of such a series while in Nigeria and the cover is appended.

Books to improve Nigerian library resources

As you know, I have been perplexed about the fate of Kay's books and how to make more resources available to Nigerian students for their work. A positive development has been the creation of a library in Jos for linguistics, under the auspices of TCNN. The books are properly kept, secure and are being used by students to improve our understanding of Nigerian languages. I have agreed in principle to support the expansion of the library by buying hard-to-obtain books at conferences or from dealers and getting them carried to Nigeria. The first shipment went out this summer.

A colleague of mine, Stefan Elders, unfortunately died while in the field in 2007, and his parents made available his books to scholars, either free or at very low prices, in Leiden. I saw this as a chance to acquire books for TCNN in Jos and SIL in Yaoundé libraries and made up a series of large packages. I went over to Leiden by car this week and picked up the boxes and I am carrying them to SIL, Horseleys Green, for onwards transmission.

Conferences attended where work done under KWEF has been presented

Conferences make it possible to both present work done with KWEF funding and to distribute the flyer, and purchase books to improve Nigerian library resources (see below).

10th Nilo-Saharan Meeting, Paris, August 2007
37th Colloquium on African Languages and Linguistics, Leiden, August 2007
BICCL, Chadic Conference, Bayreuth 2007
Kontagora Conference on West Kainji languages, March 2008
5th Cushitic/Omoti Conference, Paris, April 16-18th, 2008
OMLL Workshop, New Directions in Historical Linguistics, Lyon, May 12-14th, 2008
CALL Meeting, Leiden, 25-27th August, 2008.
SAFA Conference, Frankfurt, September 6-10th, 2008.

Contact with British-based Nigerian cultural development Associations

A positive aspect of the website has been that British-based Nigerian cultural development Associations are increasingly finding our work and contacting me. During the last month the BECO (Berom Educational and Cultural Organisation) and the British Ogoni group have been in touch with me following the material posted and have been in discussions about their input on further dissemination work.

Other issues

Website. The website is not ideal as I have had great difficulty in finding the right programmer to do everything I want. However it is functional and explains the goals of KWEF, enables to potential applicants to download a form and provides links to all the work being carried out under KWEF. I have also created a page showing the proposed format of the publications.

<http://www.rogerblench.info/KWEF/KW%20opening%20page.htm>

I have had some delightful emails, responding to this work. The style is a bit over the top, but we must be doing something right.

Flyer. A flyer has been printed and I am distributing it at meetings I attend.

My own work. Our agreement has been for me to work on KWEF affairs for a year and see how things pan out. Although I was originally working mainly on Kay's materials, the need for further fieldwork has slowed down this side of things. However, the volume of correspondence concerning potential manuscripts, reading the said manuscripts and fieldwork in Nigeria contacting literacy groups has been considerably more than anticipated. I would therefore propose to continue on the present basis indefinitely, in order to be proactive in furthering the goals of the trust.

General conclusions

Focused visits to Nigeria and working with existing literacy groups has enabled me to collect a great deal of data in a short time. This is published on the KWEF website while awaiting completion for publication. With the agreement of the trustees, I will try and make visits to Nigeria twice a year, to continue work with my collaborators. I am presently attempting to get a permanent residence stamp to enable me to go in and out freely.

Accounts. Presented separately.

Publications in progress

International series

1. Kuteb grammar [now with the publisher]
2. Mofu Dictionary [now with the publisher]
3. Tarok Dictionary
4. Gbari grammar
5. Mada dictionary
6. The Rigwe language
7. Atlas of mammals of the Niger Delta
8. Berom dictionary

Further in the future

1. Kuteb dictionary
2. Tyap grammar
3. Kirya dictionary
4. Oko grammar

Nigerian series

1. The Tarok language (being printed)
2. Babanki dictionary [printed]

Some supportive emails!

Dear Roger,

Greetings!

Thanks for the Plateau book. I will try to get stories as you said. I have discovered that writing stories and the grammar analysis are making me discover some features that lead to improving the orthography. I don't know much about morphology. I think it is an aspect that needs to be exhaustively analysed for decisions on the writing system be completed.

Believe me it is after much discussion and encouragement from Selbut and Andy that I got convinced to change my academic pursuit from biblical studies to linguistics. The confirmation that what I am doing is God's will is needed to sustain me, and I earlier thought I need just my ICAL knowledge and in depth biblical knowledge to help in Bible translation not only into Rigwe but also other Nigerian languages. But with my new conviction and zeal for linguistic studies, I believe I will use it to help in promoting Bible translation. And there are so many things that I need linguistic skills to discover even in my language. However, I don't know where and when to plan for further studies on this subject. Thanks for your initiative and vision for the minority Nigerian languages.

Daniel Gya,
NBTT, Jos.

I want to first of all thank God Almighty for given you the thought to help us (Ron people) by showing us so many things that we don't know that they existed before due to lack of keeping record. As I went to this site this morning, in fact I saw lots of things about us. I have thus, downloaded some of the materials go to and show my people so that they too should be able to know that there is some thing good that is happening somewhere. (You are indeed a messenger that God will use you to still bring back the glory of Ron man on earth), the materials are so rich. Personally I don't know that we have proverbs, but from your site I was able to know it. O God is great. I will try my best to get our project advisor on this development so that he will be able to spread the news.

Sir, I want to still appeal that if there are other information about how the Ron man came to settle in Bokokos land, the coming of the missionaries, and his relationship with other neighbours, how marriage was done in those days, let them be inserted on the site because it will really help our people who are writing project, and also that help researchers to write some article about a Ron Man.

My name is Mr. Gyang J. Jonathan, a staff of University of Jos, working in Library Computer laboratory (cyber cafe).

Thanks.

Dear Sir,

In browsing the internet for the above book I was delighted to come across your publication on the Tahoss dialect of the Berom language. I lead the UK branch of the Berom Educational and Cultural Organisation (BECO). It would be a pleasure to talk with you as you possess expertise that would be of interest to members of BECO(UK). I would be grateful for a reply to this email or, should you wish to call, my telephone number is 07719114715.

With best wishes, Ishaku Pam