

# **ENDANGERMENT AND SURVIVAL PROSPECTS OF THE ɛBOZE LANGUAGE (NORTHERN JOS PLATEAU OF CENTRAL NIGERIA)**

J.G. Nengel  
Department of History  
University of Jos  
Plateau State  
Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Generally, spoken languages of societies are as dynamic as living organisms. In a sense, like animals and plants which are subject to life and death, so are the languages of the world. Palaeontological studies have shown that there were many species of plants and animals that once existed and roamed the surface of the earth but which have today become extinct. Similarly, works on languages of the world indicate the same trend with regard to their existence and extinction. This process of the evolution and loss of living organisms as well as languages has not stopped because while some new ones may be evolving many of the old living ones are driven to extinction. Unlike animal and plant extinction, however, language loss in no way implies the extinction of the speakers. The identity of the speakers may be lost but the people become assimilated by others and continue to exist with the same or a different name.

In essence, the struggle for survival is common both to living organisms and languages. Within the framework of Charles Darwin's theory which postulates that in the on-going struggle for survival, it is often the case that, while some organisms or languages manage to make it, others in the struggle lose out and become assimilated by the more numerical and powerful ones. Though it needs hardly any review, linguists are well aware of such ancient languages like Hebrew, Greek and Latin, which flourished in the past but today these ancient languages are no longer comprehensible to modern speakers of their daughter languages. There are many cases of languages disappearing some of which are being incorporated into other languages throughout known or recorded history. Although implicitly acknowledged by linguists this historical perspective is rarely pursued when discussing endangered languages. This paper examines, among others, the extinction of the language of ancient Aturu settlement and the assimilation of its inhabitants by the Amap, Anaguta, Bace, Berom, Boze and Zelle societies. The paper however concentrates on the Boze language of the Northern Jos Plateau as a case study. It analyses how the society is today being assailed by pervasive and powerful extraneous influences and examines the prospects of survival of the Boze language.

The survival of the Boze language can best be studied within a framework of theoretical literature which attempts to find links between sociohistoric types of language contact and types of linguistic changes. Most typologies of these two postulations distinguish roughly between linguistic changes resulting from language maintenance, i.e. speakers maintain their language but borrow words or grammatical structures from others; and those resulting from language shift, i.e. speakers give up their language in favour of another language, but retain some lexical or grammatical features from their old language (Tomason and Kaufman 1988). It seems that present-day Boze developed partly through language shift from speakers of the ancient Turu language. The case of Boze language calls for a multidisciplinary team work by linguists and historians to urgently undertake further research.

## **Problems of Identifying Endangered Languages**

While linguists by means of glottochronology are able to measure the approximate ages of spoken languages, it is not always easy to determine precisely the span of a language from its birth to its extinction. This makes it difficult for linguists to determine and identify endangered languages. As experts on small languages have correctly argued,

Trying to identify endangered languages is not as easy as it may seem. A language being spoken by few people does not necessarily make it an endangered one. There are no clear-cut criteria for determining language endangerment. There is however a growing body of literature and academic expertise in this area.

Blench (1998), has suggested the following as the main causes of language endangerment especially for the minority groups in Central Nigeria:

- a) assimilation to larger more powerful groups nearby
- b) assimilation to smaller but culturally dominant groups
- c) assimilation to English, the national language
- d) demographic crises caused by labour migration/urbanism

### **Ancient Aturu Settlement**

Aturu settlement is one of the oldest sites on the Northern Jos Plateau where some sections of the Amap, Anaguta, Bace, Berom, Boze and Zelle trace their ancestry. From the available literature it is clear that the occupation of the Plateau by its present societies spanned over many thousands of years. The extant sources indicate that the early inhabitants consisted of three main groups; the earliest to emerge were the autochthonous groups. The other two were long distance migrants and composite groups. While the autochthonous groups claim that they have been living in the area from time out of memory, the migrant groups trace their origin from outside the locality, and the composites consisted of elements of both groups.

Invariably, the claims of all three groups of early inhabitants have some underlining facts that present an interesting line of discussion which are supported by archaeological, linguistic and other historical evidence. Acheulian culture is known to have flourished on the Plateau since prehistoric times - from over 40,000 years ago. This is suggested by archaeological excavations at Mai Idon Toro, a tin mining site south of Jos (Daniels 18,21). Other archaeological evidence of Late Stone Age sites have also been found at Rop Rock shelter close to Barkin Ladi (Daniels 26,28; Fagg 1972), Dutsen Kongba near Rukuba barracks (York 1978, 160), Pingel north of Toro town in Bauchi State (Soper 1965), and the famous Nok culture which flourished between BC 200 and 1000 AD. Artistic works depicted on some artefacts of the Nok culture have striking resemblances with the attire of some of the societies on the Plateau (Fagg 1959a; Jemkur 1992). It is within this prehistoric time framework that the autochthonous claims of Aturu settlement are analyzed immediately below.

Aturu settlement was founded by a giant called Turu, who is said to have been created by God. The settlement was however destroyed in the late fifteenth century during a battle known as Gonchake (Nengel 1999,47). This resulted in the dispersal of the settlement from which many of its inhabitants went and established nuclei villages at Du in Beroland, Kishi in Bace, while others now exist as clans, such as the Anambi in Anaguta, Ananliki in Amap, and the Akwẹ̀rẹ̀ clans in Boze and Zelle (ibid).

The main problems associated with these archaeological investigations are that the artefacts are not only fragmentary but it is also very difficult to establish any direct link between the inhabitants of those pre-historic era and those of the present day societies on the Plateau. Yet despite the limitations that oral traditions do not go back into the pre-historic era, the accounts of autochthonous groups which have lost memories of how and when their ancestors emerged in the area are strong indications that they may belong to the offspring of those pre-historic times. It is within the context of those pre-historic periods that traditions of the autochthonous groups can best be interpreted.

Though the traditions lack details, the descendants of Turu have kept memories of their putative ancestor and named the settlement after him as Apeturu, the short form of which is Aturu (Nengel 1999,46). From this account it can be inferred that among the earliest inhabitants on the Plateau were the autochthonous survivors of ancient Aturu settlement. Subsequently, following the migration of the Amap, Anaguta, Bace, Berom, Boze and Zelle into the area it is recounted that they built settlements at different localities where already the descendants of Aturu were in existence. As the autochthonous groups were comparatively smaller than the incomers, in the course of many generations of intermarriages the migrants gradually assimilated the remnants of ancient Aturu. While the populations of the migrant groups may never be determined precisely, from all indications their numbers were quite substantial as over many generations they were able to absorb the autochthonous groups so completely that even the language spoken at ancient Aturu suffered irredeemable loss, and today it is no longer remembered in the oral accounts.

## The Languages of Northern Jos

There are ten different ethnic groups that speak related languages of Benue Congo phylum in the Northern Plateau. These consist of the Agusu (Gusu), Amap (Amo), Anaboze (Buji), Anarubunu (Ribina), Anoloro (Loro), Anomoro (Lemoro), Anapanawa (Bujel), Ashanga (Sanga), Atunzu (Duguza) and Azelle (Jere). With the single exception of the Amap who speak a distinctive language, all the other languages are intelligible to each other. The commonest response to greetings among them is *shammoh* which simply means peace or well (Nengel 2000,99). All of them including the Bace claim that their ancestors came from Gba on the Bauchi lowlands (Gunn 1953 passim). Detailed accounts of the migration of these societies to their present day locations on the Plateau has been studied and need hardly detain us here, see Nengel (1999:45-69; Kudu 2002).

Linguistically, excluding the Bace, they all belong to the East Kainji language group. But this paper concentrates mainly on the Buji (Boze). From the recent concluded international symposium on the Plateau languages it is obvious that the region has been both a convergent and a divergent centre for many of the Central Nigerian languages.<sup>1</sup> Extant sources indicate that some ancestors of societies on the adjoining lowlands once roamed the Plateau before descending to the plains while many on the highlands point to locations on the lowlands as their places of origins (Ames 1932 passim; Gunn 1953 passim).

Besides the ten societies outlined above there are the Tariya whose speech is much more closely akin to the Berom than the Northern sublanguages. But also there are other East Kainji languages that are not part of the Shammoh speakers such as the Anaguta, Chokobo, Kere, Kurama, Sheni and Ziriya. Of the Anaguta, Isichei - using the classification of Hoffman and Shimizu - said they belong to one of the sub-sections of the Plateau subdivision of Benue Congo (Isichei 1991a,528). Recent fieldwork investigations by Blench confirm Shimizu's earlier studies that the Kere and Ziriya languages were on the verge of extinction. In the course of the investigation there was not a single person among the elderly people in either of the groups that could speak the language. In Sheni there were only six adults at Gurjiya village who were fluent in the language while the rest that managed to speak it used Hausa loan words extensively. Extraordinary measures are necessary to reverse the slide otherwise sooner rather than later the Sheni language is inevitably heading toward extinction. Their children hardly speak the language though a very few are barely able to respond in Hausa when spoken to in their mother tongue. With respect to the Anaguta, Isichei observed that when they came into contact with Hausa, "though hardly any have become Muslims,...some Eguta vocabulary is being lost." (ibid.a.554)

## The Boze

The information for the rest of this section of the paper is based largely on the recent fieldwork of Blench (2004) on the Boze language. According to him, "The Boze (Buji) language forms part of the 'Jere cluster' and is in turn part of the Northern Jos group of the East Kainji languages spoken north of Jos town in Central Nigeria. Very little has been published on this group, Ames (1932:57,99) Gunn (1953:20 infra) with a mimeo by Shimizu (1978) and some short wordlists (Shimizu 1982)."

Some ten kilometers north of the city of Jos is the home of the Boze; they live east and west of the Jos-Zaria road which runs through their territory. Though they are known by outsiders as Buji they address themselves as Anaboze and the singular name for one person is Unaboze. When and how they came to be called Buji is not very clear but like most of their neighbours this name was given to them many centuries ago at their initial contact with the Hausa people. The name of the language is *eboze* while their land is *Qboze*. Blench (2004) states that "The Boze are divided into two main dialects, eGorong and eKokor as well as a third rather divergent speech form, *eFiru*." The Boze proper are the Anekokor, that is, the speakers of eKokor dialect while the other main group, Anagorong, that is, the speakers of eGorong are a mixture of Akwẹre clan, Jan Tudu village and immigrants from Anarubunu (Ribina) and Atunzu (Duguza). The Anekokor live in nineteen villages:

---

<sup>1</sup> International Symposium on Endangered Languages in Contacts, Nigeria's Plateau Languages, Institute of Asian and African Languages, University of Hamburg, Germany, March 25-26, 2004

Original name	Modern name	Location
Zuku	N.N.P.C. Depot	East
Behol	Behol	East
Urakun	Urakun	East
Bari	Sarari	East
Bintiri	Bintiri	West
Gwandan	Gwandan	East
Ukwashi	Ukwashi	East
Tumu	Sarari	East
Beso	Beso	East
Rumfan Gwamna	Rumfan Gwamna	East-West
Saya	Saya	East-West
Zallaki	Zallaki	East
Amaruja	Maruja	East
Owoyoyo	Owoyoyo	West
Makun	Makun	East
Ugwara	Ugwara	East
Ridapo	Ridapo	East
Reshoko	Reshoko	East
Ulu Aturu	Ulu Aturu	West

Source: Field work, Jos-Zaria road being the main bearing point determining the locations of the villages.

A history of the Anagorong is complicated. There is a core population, the Ananyi ma Gorong or ‘people of the inner Gorong’ who are the original inhabitants of the area, “but whose language has now wholly been assimilated” (Blench 2004). The Ananyi ma Gorong constitute the Akwẹ̀ clan in Buji. Their assimilation took place following the migration of the Boze and the settlement of Jan Tudu village in the area which occurred most probably during the early sixteenth century (Nengel 1999:48-52).

Source: Fieldwork, the main road from the city of Jos further south, not shown on the map, determines the relative positions of each of the villages.

Blench (2004), laments the scarcity of sources, “The evidence is so slim that it is not possible to know the original language of the early inhabitants of Ananyi ma Gorong who lived at ancient Aturu settlement.” Tradition has it that the Anambi clan of Anaguta like the Akwẹ̀ clan of Boze, originated from ancient Aturu settlement. Though Isichei’s informants were not categorical about this close relation, her analysis is very suggestive,

Linguistic data reflects the antiquity of their settlement. Eguta belongs to the Northern Jos group, a subsection of the Plateau branch of Benue Congo. Its closest linguistic relatives are languages spoken by immediate northern neighbours- Buji, Jere, Ribina, and slightly further north, Chokobo and Limoro... The traditions of the northern Jos group speaks of migrations, but they are migrations of relatively small area (Isichei 1991,36).

On the relations between the Anambi clan with the Berom, Isichei concludes, “The Anambi kinship group once lived with the Berom of Du in Kabong...” (Isichei 1991a, 530). Several allusions are made from Isichei’s studies of Anaguta originating from either the Bujel or the Ribina (Anarabunu), the close neighbours of the Buji.

As has been pointed out above though, the size of the Boze migrants from Gba may never be known, as the autochthonous groups were assimilated by the migrants. Descendants of the original group in the area now exist only as two clans of the Boze, namely the Akwẹ̀ and Ashimari aBowozo. The ancient speech spoken by the inhabitants at Aturu settlement has been preserved by the Akwẹ̀ clan only in its duodecimal counting, Nengel (1999:69).

Ancient Turu Numerals		Current Boze Numerals
1	Sibo	Dinka
2	Gongong	Repo
3	Anincu	Taro
4	Camakon	Naze
5	Karkate	Shibi
6	Garne	Tase
7	Oho	Sunare
8	Caroko	Uru
9	Nyembete	Toroy
10	Tisharnəh	Bituru
11	Ayigoto	Bereng
12	Ehi	Rikuri

Though the sources are silent on the causes of migration of the Boze that resulted in the assimilation of the Akwɛrɛ and Ashimari aBowozo during the sixteenth century, in the course of the nineteenth century, population displacement caused by the Sokoto Jihad, led to further mass movement of people onto the Plateau from the lowland. In the second half of the nineteenth century many of the Anarubunu, Atunzu and Anapanawa (Bujel) migrated and joined the Akwɛrɛ at River Gorong. It was from this river (which today is called Gurum) that the original inhabitants (Akwɛrɛ) were called Ananyi ma Gorong, while the in-comers were called AnaGorong.

Like the earlier case of Boze, the later immigrants came in substantial numbers, but as there was still plenty of empty land they were allowed to settle without any problems. By the beginning of the twentieth century they started to scheme for the creation of a separate and autonomous unit of administration of their own. This coincided with the conquest of the area by the British. Since the immigrants welcomed the white men while the Akwɛrɛ remained truculent, the British accorded the Anarubunu immediate recognition by the appointment of Sambo as their chief. On his appointment, Sambo took on the title of Ogomo Gurum (Drummond-Hay 1937). As a punishment for the stubborn Akwɛrɛ, the British did not initially accord them the same recognition to appoint Ogomo for the Akwɛrɛ or Ananyi ma Gorong until much later on. This was after much pressure by the people that the office of Ogomo Aima Gurum was created for the Akwɛrɛ (ibid). Similarly, the office of Ogomo Jan Tudu was also created for the village of Boze branch that had earlier settled with the Akwɛrɛ.

To differentiate between the Anarubunu on the Plateau and those on the lowland, the Boze called the upland section, Anarubunu aKayaza while those of the lowland, Anarubunu aDizi. On the hill settlements the Anarubunu aKayaza lived together and intermarried with the Akwɛrɛ and the Boze. There were several villages or wards (*ugwuri*, sing. *tigwuri*, pl.) on the hill settlements such as Ugwuri naZowo (mountain top ward), Ugwuri Wari (priest ward), Ugwuri Rezuwa (stone ward), Ugwuri Ananyi ma Gorong (inner Gorong ward) which consisted of other sub-villages, etc. However, all of the hill settlements have now been abandoned and the people now live intermingled on the plains.

The Ananyi ma Gorong and Anagorong lived in fifteen settlements:

Original name	Modern name	Location	Meaning
Tipo	Kwana	East-West	rocky terrains
Rewo	Rafin Gwaza	West	stream of cocoyams
Bidiri	Kongo	West	place of wetlands
Malempe	Jejin Fili	West	place of bush fields
Bichiza	Mistale	East-West	place of wasteland
Sarsin	Asarsin	West	name after a stream
Tiwotebo	Tiwotebo	West	black or dark rocks
Ribamboze	Ribamboze	West	?
Gorong	Gurum	West	named after river
Amarugirgi	Farin Lamba	East-West	across rail line
Obene Akura	Obene Akura	West	plain old hill settlement
Ulindan	Ulindan	West	?
Afiru	Kofa	West	Anofiru settlement
Adonkorong		West	?
Abonjolo		West	?

Source: Field work, Jos-Zaria road being the main bearing point determining the locations of the villages.

Regarding the third group of the Boze, Blench (2004) explains that: “Also parts of the Anarubunu but speaking a very distinctive dialect are the Anofiru (Kofa). They live surrounded by the Amap, Bace, and Cara (Tariya) and their language is influenced by these other speech forms. They speak, as the other Boze say, ‘with a heavy tone’” In sum Blench stated: “So Boze, despite being a small ethnic group has three distinct dialects. *Eboze* itself is a threatened language. The anaBoze had early contact with the Fulbe and Hausa as is shown by the fact that many of their family names are Hausa or Fulfulde names.”

This early contact with the Hausa in particular has had a profound impact on the Boze. Blench (2004) concludes that even,

Their masquerades speak Hausa, which was originally a language known only to a few older men, but of course now very common. Virtually all Anaboze are bilingual in Hausa. Anaboze cultural history has been heavily influenced by the expansion of tin-mining in their area since colonial times, leading to dispossession and resettlement, all of which added to the prestige of external languages and loss of indigenous vernaculars. Today, for example, it is common to find children who have only a passive knowledge of the language; their parents may speak to them in *eboze*, but they respond in Hausa. The portent danger of loss of *eboze* is therefore very eminent.

The Boze are further divided into several exogamous clans:

### **Ekokong Village**

Ano Kusaru  
Ano Berte  
Ano Kamare  
Ano Kavete  
Ano Wangali  
Ano Dau  
Ano Guṅuru  
Ashimari Abowozo

### **Anagorong Village**

Akwere  
Ano Kitu  
Ano Bare  
Anogereṅ

**Ano Firu Village** (geographically within Boze territory but technically belonging to Kimap).

Ano Kitu  
Ano Gereṅ

Each of these clans constituted a marriage moiety among the three villages. Inter-marriage within the same clan was strictly forbidden. Yet inter-marriage between certain clans was considered taboo. For instance, no Akwere was permitted to marry Ano Kereṅ, because of *ripari* whereby they regarded each other as playmates. The settlement pattern of these clans was not based along the division of these three village units. The clans were scattered in all the three villages. Thus the Akwere, Ano Wangali, Ano Kitu, Ano Bare, Ano Gereṅ were found in all the three villages and so were all the other clans. However, though the Ano Firu village was geographically located within Boze territory, they were culturally linked with the Amap. As a border village the people could speak eBoze, Timap as well Bace languages quite fluently. The tone and manner in which the eFiru is spoken with a slightly heavy tone, distinguishes it as a dialect of eBoze. The three dialects of eBoze are shown in the table below.

eFiru	eGorong	eKokong
Ra (come)	Ra (come)	Ra (come)
Shanmo (well or peace)	Shammo (well or peace)	Shammoh (well or peace)
Kukan (general greeting)	Kukang (general greeting)	Kukwang (general greeting)
Shenko (move)	Shonko (move)	Shonko (move)
Sonlo (nuisance)	Sololo (nuisance)	Solollo (nuisance)
Chenno (fast or quickly)	Chonno (fast or quickly)	Chonno (fast or quickly)

Blench (2004) regrets that, “Numbers are hard to estimate in such a fluid situation, but local figures are some 40,000 in the Buji District out of which about 30,000 are of ethnic Boze with perhaps half of these fluent in the language. The majority of the Boze proper now live in the city of Jos and its main suburb, Mista Ali, as well as the growing settlement around the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) depot at Zuku and Behol. The proportion of speakers is declining fast. There has recently been some interest in reviving the Boze culture, but action will need to be rapid and intensive to halt the slide.”

### The Boze under Colonial Administration

Proximity to the growing urban city of Jos and early contacts with the Fulbe and Hausa exposed the Boze more to outside influences than many of their neighbours. By 1950, their ruler, Ogomo Maigari was the first chief in Pengana Chieftdom to ban women from wearing bunches of leaves in his district. He considered such outfit as backward in the wake up of large influx of labour migrants in the area who dressed in modern attire. Subsequently many other groups followed after the Boze.

Despite the lack of any schools in the area until 1952 when a Junior Primary School was built at Rumfan Gwamna, very few determined individuals like the late Rev. Goje, the late Ogomo Pengana, Mallam Akinga Kasuwa, and the late Mallam Amasa joined adult education literacy classes where they learnt to read and write in the Hausa language. The ability to read and write in Hausa easily identified one as a leader in the community. The prestige in literacy further accorded the Hausa language a higher status above the local language. The establishment of tin mining camps and the growth of labour migrants in the area over time encouraged some of the local women to get married to the relatively rich migrants. Children of such marriages were never taught the *eboze* language by their mothers. They grew up speaking Hausa language and those of their fathers. This was coupled with the introduction of Christianity and Islamic religions which gradually drew converts from the local community.

Most of the Boze are now Christians. Preaching in the churches and mosques is carried on in the Hausa language. All of these developments have profoundly affected the first language that their children speak from birth. Their elites have not helped matters as some of them got married to outside women, and their children are never taught the local language but speak English and Hausa at the expense of their mother tongues.

### Post Colonial Cultural Revival

Following the Second Black World Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977 in Lagos, the new wind of change which blew across Africa affected Nigeria and particularly the Boze people. From then onwards

there have been concerted attempts at cultural revival embarked upon by almost all the small as well as the large language groups. While the major languages such as Fulfulde, Hausa, Kanuri, Igbo and Yoruba have no problem in intensifying the power of their dominance, the survival of the minorities lie in their capacity to unite together as a group. One of the means of achieving this unity was through the revival of cultural festivals.

For many of the minorities on the Plateau, the period of the Second Republic (1979-1983) witnessed the return to many aspects of the culture that had been relegated and shunned as being outmoded. The rise and organization of National Development Associations by the different ethnic nationalities in Central Nigeria was a practical response to cultural revival. Ethnic National Development Associations have among others promoted the use of local languages in most of their communications. Meetings of the different ethnic nationalities are on most occasions now conducted in the local languages. Some well developed and very rich associations such as the Afizere, Bace, Berom, Mada, etc. have even encouraged and sponsored the study, writing, documentation and publication of their languages.

### **Problems and Survival Prospects of eBoze**

There are many problems confronting the Boze speakers. These problems have divided the people into four major categories

1. To begin with, there are those who can speak the language quite fluently. They constitute about half of the population.
2. These are followed by those who speak it but with lots of Hausa loan words.
3. Then there are the passive speakers who understand the language but can only respond in Hausa.
4. Finally, there are some who cannot understand the language at all but are ethnically Boze.

#### **1. The Fluent Speakers**

Among the first category are the aged people that are fluent in the language and can also speak Hausa very well. In spite of the pervasive influence of Hausa such people in the society have always insisted in speaking *eboze* with fellow members and in this way have managed to preserve the language. They are largely illiterate but are strong advocates of preserving *eboze*.

#### **2. The Elites**

Within the second category are those that have embraced Christianity or Islam. Many of them have gone to schools and are quite literate in the Hausa and English languages. During the colonial period, in their bid to acquire modern science and technology, they saw no need to retain their mother tongue. But in response to the call for cultural revival many have without prejudice to their faith in Christianity or Islam now joined the bandwagon to preserve their language and culture

In this way the Christians, Muslims and traditionalists have cooperated especially in the organisation and celebration of annual festivals performed in a variety of colourful cultural dances. Cultural festivals are among the many aspects of cultural revivals which have brought most of the minority subgroups into prominence at the national and international levels. For instance, the small Anaguta (Guta) subgroup like the large Ngas have appeared at national and international festivals and won many awards during such cultural jamborees.

The Boze and the Guta have virtually the same customs and common cultural dance festivals. But while the Guta have won several national awards the Boze have not - largely because of their previous attitude toward their language and culture. Though the majority of Guta like Boze now live in the city and suburb of Jos, while *eguta* has been a resilient language (Nengel 2004), *eboze* is in grave danger. The size of the Boze and Guta is basically the same, but while almost all the Guta are fluent in their speech including their children, most of the young among the Boze are not fluent in their mother tongue. By implication while there is little future hope for the survival of *eboze* if nothing is done now to preserve it, for the *eguta* there is much future hope for the survival of their language. As Isichei has concluded, they

...are anxious to preserve their culture, and Anaguta musicians and dancers often put on outstanding public display. They realize that 'culture' is an essential dimension of their identity, and are anxious,



in the complexities of Plateau State ethnic politics, to present a clear and favorable corporate image (Isichei 1991a,520).

### 3. The Passive Speakers

With respect to the third category of passive speakers – who though understand the language can only communicate in Hausa - most of them are children living both in the rural and in urban centres. They are of school age and constitute a substantial part of the population. As pupils in primary schools and students in secondary and higher institutions their preoccupations with education allow them little time to learn their language.

### 4. Non Boze Speakers

The last category of Boze are non speakers of the language who are mostly children of intermarriages. In most cases their mothers are not Boze and live largely in the urban centres where only English and Hausa are the main medium of communication in the home and community.

Given these enormous problems, the issue is what prospects are there for the future survival of the Boze language?

### Ray of Hope

Concerned individuals have attempted many times to write the language, but without the necessary skills such efforts have amounted to nothing. However, early this year, following a number of meetings with the community, Dr Roger M Blench inspired and gave advice on how to go about committing the language into writing. This kindled a lot of enthusiasm and currently there is active participation of all sections of the community in the effort to writing a dictionary of the Boze language. There is thus some ray of hope in the preservation and survival of the *eboze* language.

### References

- Ames, C.G. 1934, 1972, *Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria vol.iv: The Highland Chieftaincies (Plateau Province)*, Frank Cass London.
- Blench, R.M. 1998. The status of the languages of Central Nigeria. in: Brenzinger, M. ed. *Endangered languages in Africa*. 187-206. Köln: Köppe Verlag.
- Blench, R.M. 2004, Notes on the Boze Language. Electronic ms.
- Drummod-Hay, J.C. 1937, Report on Buji District Reorganisation, in NAK, JOSPROF, PLT/12, Buji District of Jos Division 1935-56.
- Daniels, S.G.H, 1975, The Early Stone Age, in ed. Shaw, T. *Nigerian Prehistory and Archaeology*, Ibadan University Press, pp.14-22.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1975, The Middle and Late Stone Age, *ibid*, pp.23-29.
- Fagg, Angela 1972, Pottery from Rock Rop Shelter Excavations of 1944 & 1964, *West African Journal of Archaeology*, 2.
- Fagg, B.E.B. 1959a, The Nok Culture in Prehistory, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, iv, pp.288-93
- Gunn, H.D. 1953, *Peoples of the Plateau Area of Northern Nigeria*, London International African Institute.
- Isichei, Elizabeth 1991, "Change in Anaguta Traditional Religion," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol.25, no.1, pp.34-57.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1991a, "On Being Invisible: An Historical Perspective of the Anaguta and their Neighbors," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol.24, no.3, pp.513-556.

- Jemkur, J.F. 1992, *Aspects of the Nok Culture*, Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd, Zaria.
- Kudu, A.A. 2002, *The Rukuba and their Neighbours: A History Intergroup Relations on the Jos Plateau 1800-1900*, Central Nigeria, University of Jos, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis.
- Nengel J.G. 1999, *Precolonial African Intergroup Relations in the Kauru and Pengana Polities of Central Nigerian Highlands 1800-1900*, European University Studies, series iii, vol./Bd.814, Peter Lang, Berlin.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2000, *The Besiege Mother Tongues of the Northern Brothers: A Note on the Shammoh Speakers of Jos Plateau, Nigeria*, *Afrika un Ubersee*, Band 83, pp.27-114.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2004, *The Unexpected Resilience of Small Languages: The Case of Guta and Cara Subgroups of Northern Jos Plateau*, a paper presented at International Symposium on 'Endangered Languages in Contact, Nigeria's Plateau Languages,' Hamburg, Germany, March 25-26.
- Shimizu, K. 1978, *Five Wordlist with Analyses from the Northern Jos Group of Plateau Languages*, *Afrika und Ubersee*, Band LVII, pp.253-271.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1982, *Ten More Wordlists with Analyses from the Northern Jos Group of Plateau Languages*, *Afrika und Ubersee*, Band LXV, pp.97-134.
- Soper, R 1956, *The Stone Age in Northern Nigeria*, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, no.3,ii, pp.175-94.
- Thomason, Sarah Grey and Terrence Kaufman. 1988, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- York, R.N. 1978, *Excavations at Dutsen Kongba, Plateau State, Nigeria*, *West African Journal of Archaeology*, 8, pp.139-163.