

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL REPORT  
ON THE IBO-SPEAKING PEOPLES  
OF NIGERIA. PART V; ADDENDA  
TO IBO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649076741

Anthropological report on the Ibo-speaking peoples of Nigeria. Part V; Addenda to Ibo-English Dictionary by Northcote W. Thomas

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ON THE  
IBO-SPEAKING PEOPLES OF NIGERIA.

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PART V.

ADDENDA TO  
IBO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

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LONDON :  
HARRISON AND SONS.

1914.  
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## PREFACE.

The present volume contains firstly the Addenda and Corrigenda of the Ibo Dictionary previously published, the proofs of which were read mainly in the colony, so that comparison with the original MS. was impossible.

In the second place it contains re-determinations of tones of certain words in the previous Dictionary, and in the third place a number of words used in the Asaba dialect. It must be understood that these latter by no means comprise the whole of the Asaba vocabulary; words included in the previous Dictionary are not reprinted here.

The tones were noted on the assumption, which has since turned out to be incorrect, that they are four in number, high, low, and upper and lower middle. Reference to Part VI will show that by the study of phonograph records many more tones have been discovered. As, however, words pronounced according to the number notation adopted in this Dictionary appear to be recognisable, even if they are not absolutely accurate, I have not hesitated to print my data here. In a certain number of cases, material collected at an early stage of my tour was left unrevised, and in such words are, as a rule, marked with accents only.

The whole of the material was collected personally, and I have made no attempt to incorporate material collected either by the Church Missionary Society or the Roman Catholic Mission at Asaba. A request addressed to the Church Missionary Society in 1910 for permission to study their material was refused. I mentioned the subject informally at the Roman Catholic Mission, but made no definite proposal. In view of the fact that comparatively little of my time is devoted to linguistic research, it would have been impossible

to revise with due care material collected by other people, and it is undesirable to include in any Dictionary data collected at different hands unless comparative uniformity is obtained by careful revision.

The main mass of the Dictionary refers to the Asaba language, but in certain cases words from the Hinterland and from the east of the Niger are included, as also certain words accidentally omitted from the Onitsha-Awka Dictionary. Such words are shown by a letter or other abbreviation in brackets. The short time available for the collection of material in the colony prevented me from examining in detail many points of interest. Thus *g lenis* is found in a certain number of words, and the table of consonants shows two or more variants of the same consonant are in use.

NORTHCOTE W. THOMAS.

## PHONETIC ELEMENTS.

### CONSONANTS.

- b,
- ɸ, with glottal stop.
- č, ch as in *church*.
- d,
- ɖ, cerebral d.
- f,
- ɸ, bilabial.
- g,
- ɣ, uvular (?).
- ɣ, "soft" (fricative) g as in N. German *tag*.
- h,
- ʃ, as in *judge*.
- k,
- ɣ, uvular (?).
- l,
- m,
- n,
- palatalised n is written ny
- ŋ, ng as in *singer*.
- p,
- ɸ, with glottal stop.
- r,
- rh, breathed r.
- s,
- ʃ, cerebral s.
- š, as sh.
- t,



- t, cerebral t.  
 t̥, has something of a th sound; it is formed by putting the tongue against the upper teeth.  
 v,  
 ʏ, bilabial v.  
 ʏ̥, unvoiced v.  
 w,  
 y,  
 z,  
 ž, as zh.

## VOWELS.

- ǎ, short a, as in French *ma*.  
 ɑ, long a.  
 e, close e, resembles French e in *été*.  
 ɛ, ɛ̃, as in *let, there*, very open.  
 i, ĩ, open i.  
 i, as in French *ici*.  
 ɔ, ɔ̃, very open o.  
 ɔ̄, less open, found after d, r, g, etc.  
 ɔ̄, slightly open.  
 o, French o, as in *eau*.  
 ɔ̄, close o, perhaps with overrounding.  
 ʉ, ʉ̃, very open u, sounding almost like o.  
 u, close u.

## DIPHTHONGS.

- ai,  
 au, especially in dialectical forms such as *dau* for *do*.  
 oa,  
 oi,  
 ' after a vowel signifies abrupt close.  
 ˘ below a vowel indicates a specially long, usually contracted, vowel.  
 ~ sign of nasalisation.  
 ˘ sign of palatalisation.

## CONSONANTS.

b appears to be in some cases more fully voiced than in others.

B sounds like a very fully voiced b: it is, however, probable that the glottal stop really exists, for such forms as *ibo* (more properly written *i<sup>h</sup>bo*) are pronounced *igbo* by neighbouring tribes; and the third person of 'bue, to kill, is in the *Ọka* dialect *ogbue*, the *g* being distinctly heard; but the main audible difference between *bue*, kill and *bue*, carry, is that the former is more fully voiced. Where the preceding *k* is pronounced, however, the *b* is only partially voiced, if at all.

In the words printed in the Dictionary, *kp*, a considerable proportion might well be written *kb*.

*c, j.* I omitted to determine whether *j* and *c* are front plosives or affricates. From the phonetic changes from which they are due, the latter is more probable.

*d, also t,* are occasionally cerebral. *t* (*ṭ*) appears to be interdental in a certain number of cases, in giving a sound nearer *th* than the ordinary English *t*. *d* lenis appears to be found sometimes.

*f, v.* It is exceedingly difficult in many cases to determine whether *f* is denti-labial or bilabial, but the distinction does not appear to be of any importance for the meaning of the word. It is often said that *v* is not found, in point of fact an unvoiced *v* is by no means uncommon.

*g* appears to be voiced in different degree. It is also found as a lenis, for example in *ago*, leopard. A systematic distinction between the lenis and fortis is not made in the Dictionary owing to lack of time for the revision of the material in the Colony.

In addition to the ordinary *g*, a uvular (?) *g* is found, shown as *g*. This I termed postvelar *g* in Part III of this report. It is only very slightly explosive. The same applies to *k*. It may be that this *g* and *k* are in reality fricative, for in whispered words the *k* sound seems to disappear altogether

and to be replaced by h. On the whole, however, I am disposed to think that they are stopped, not fricative.

h is only rarely found ; but in certain areas, such as Isele Asaba, it appears as an intrusive letter between two vowels.

l in a certain number of cases, appears to be formed much the same way as in English. In other cases the tongue does not touch the palate, but makes a semicircular movement to the left, and then returns to the central position. The sound thus produced is almost indistinguishable from n and r. The distinction between this l and the other one is not made in the Dictionary.

ñ. There is some uncertainty about words which are printed in the Dictionary under ñk. Such words as ñkpu might just as well be written mpñ, where m bears the same relation to the ordinary m as ñ does to n.

rh is written for a breathed r very frequent in the Asaba language. It is also found at Nimo on the other side of the Niger, and in the Edo languages (*see* Report on the Edo-Speaking Peoples).

š is interchangeable with r (rh).

b, m and other consonants are sometimes followed by a diphthong, of which one component is usually o, this is printed bw, mw, etc., where the word is not found with a simple m or b it should be looked for under bw, mw, etc.

In a certain number of words the division into syllables is unusual ; such are abamwq (ab-anwq) akwu (ak-wu), anagala (anag-ala), ŋgogo (qg-ogo), ŋkò (qk-o), ičoku (ičok-u), igwè (ig-we), obèle (ob-èle), ŋkò (qk-o) ; there is perhaps a simultaneous glottal stop. But this explanation will hardly meet the cases nwagèlèle (nwagèl-èle), onyinyo (onyin-yo), ùmè (um-e), èbèngèbe (èbèng-èbe), ala (al-a), alolo (al-olo) amabwa (am-abwa).

#### VOWELS.

The Asaba vowel sounds appear to be more complicated than those of Qka. This is possibly due to better opportunities for observation.