

History of the Nupe Christian Literature Committee (NCLC)

Background

Language is a means of communication and interaction among people. Thus, the Nupe speaking ethnic group together with the European missionaries in Nigeria saw the need to promote and develop the spoken and written Nupe language. Consequently, a committee was constituted, called the “Nupe Christian Literature Committee” in the year 1906 at Patigi in the present Kwara State of Nigeria. The Committee was reconstituted in 1939 and Mr. A. Banfield continue to chair it so as to sustain the activities during World War 11. The other members of the Committee include; Irak Sherk (UMS), F. Mercy Weather (SIM), D. E. Ball and G. H. Dintree of CMS.

To cater for the after-effects of the impending declaration of independence of Nigeria, a New Committee was inaugurated on the 23rd February, 1960, when all the Committee members met at Ilorin, the Capital of the present Kwara State of Nigeria. The Committee members include; Revd. W. J. Cairns, Revd. S. A. Mamman, Revd. W. H. Brennoman, Miss A. J. Yoo, Mr. P. A. Osborn, and Revd P. R. Lapage. The Anglican representative from Bassa District of Kogi State could not attend the meeting due to prior commitment. However, Revd R. E. Harrison of S. I. M was in attendance at the new inaugural meeting. The Committee had had several committed Chairmen. These include the following persons.

Chairmen of Nupe Christian Literature Committee to Date

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| 1. Alexander Banfield | 1906-1960 |
| 2. Revd. W. J. Cairns | 1960-1976 |
| 3. Mr. Samuel Kolo Kopa | 1977-1983 |
| 4. Ven. Philip Y. Gana | 1984-2016 |
| 5. Elder/Evang. Jonah N. Yisa | 2016- To Date |

Objectives

At the Ilorin augural meeting, which was chaired by Revd. W. J. Cairns, with Revd. S. A. Mamman as the secretary, issues concerning Nupe Land and Nupe Speaking people and language were accorded first priority. Therefore, the representatives from the different denominations, that is, the S. I. M, the UMS and the CMS agreed on the following resolutions.

- That the Committee meeting should have two representatives from each denomination operating in areas of Nupeland and one observer, making a total of three people.
- Recognizing the concern for development of written Nupe language the Committee to serve as a Vessel for the spread of the gospel of Christ through review and diversification of the existing Nupe Literatures.
- Ensure and facilitate the production and use of Nupe literature

Nupe literature Materials of 20th Century

The Nupe Literature Committee intensified the production of books, pamphlets, and magazines as basic for promoting the use of Nupe language. Some of the early literature books include:

- ✚ Yeko nya Biboya (The way to Salvation/Eternity);

- ✚ Zabolugwa nya Yizhe (Saviour of the World);
- ✚ Soko gaga a ni (God has Spoken);
- ✚ Enya Guni (Four Things);
- ✚ ke mi a zeze ci kpe ga mi de biboya na o? (How would I know that I am saved);
- ✚ Tsutsu nya Jesu Almasiu to Ekinna u (The Death and Resurrection of Christ); Isrealacizhi to kin nya a (The Land of Isreal);
- ✚ Bayetin nya Rayi (The Light of Life); and
- ✚ Yiyi lo eba rayi (Born Again).

Very important translations and write-up productions in Nupe language are the Nupe Bible (The King James and the Good News versions), Nupe Hymn Books, Our Daily Bread, Nupe Grammar, covering basic learning how to read and write in Nupe, and Nupe Dictionary.

The other Nupe Language literature translated materials include, “The Quiet Time”, The Christian and Money “Light of Life”, “The Heart of Men”, “When God laughs”, Rivers of Living Water” and Nanyitsu Magazine “Christian Home”.

While all these literature materials were produced in the 20th century there is need to resuscitate and adapt the materials for the 21st century Christianity in Nupe land, not only for the benefit of the in-coming generation but also for the propagation of God’s work and word among the Nupe people. This is the calling and the obligation on the part of all Nupe Christians and other Christians of the family of Christ to revive and sustain the good work that was started by the past Christian leaders.

The Nupe Christian Literature Committee in responding to the challenges of the 21st century is saddled with the responsibilities thus:

- Not to allow Nupe language to be overshadowed by other languages like English, Hausa, and Arabic, hence, ensuring the survival of written Nupe language.
- Produce different materials in Nupe language for use by all Nupe people irrespective of their denomination or location.
- Digitize all Nupe Christian Literature materials for electronic storage and access.
- Promote the spread of the gospel through Nupe language among Nupe people both in Nigeria and Diaspora.

Conclusion

Today, there is an apparent existential threat to the written Nupe language. With the work of missionaries and indigenous Christian Nupe Literature Committee in the past and at present, much can be done. The responsibility of sustaining the written Nupe language rests on the current generation. While the Committee solicits support to propagation of Nupe literature, suffice to say that “Givers never lack” particularly when it comes to working in the Vineyard of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Your support will help actualize the work of the Committee. As you support this work, God will bless you richly in Jesus name. Amen.

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By

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