FULFULDE - ENGLISH DICTIONARY

Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages, Bayero University, Kano
INTRODUCTION:

HOW IT BEGAN

This dictionary is no doubt the outcome of F. W. de St. Croix’s many thousands of hours work on a language he learned and studied while working for the Fulbe whom he served for twenty-two years and died serving their language (Fulfulde). This is because on retiring from colonial service, the author fully engaged on polishing a Fulfulde dictionary towards its publication. At first he contacted the Oxford University Press, London, to publish his treasure. He was however referred to school of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London, who in turn advised de St. Croix to further improve on the work by contacting linguists. The advice shattered the aging retired veterinary officer.

HIS WAY OUT

With this development, it became evident to St. Croix that his priceless work had not received the blessing he expected. He was thus left in confusion. Before then, he had been told by Dr. D.W. Arnott of SOAS, that there was a Pullo from Nigeria, (with the University of Ibadan) reading in SOAS. This person was Mallam Ibrahim Ahmad Mukoshy, whom St. Croix longed to see. When they finally met, in 1967, ‘St. Croix immediately introduced his predicament. There and then, Mukoshy examined St. Croix’s bulky manuscript. Mukoshy was highly impressed with the effort. Sincerely, Malam Ibrahim Mukoshy advised St. Croix to take his work back to Nigeria to any University and particularly to Abdullahi Bayero College of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABC/
ABU) (now Bayero University Kano). When St. Croix introduced his work to the then Provost of the College, Alhaji Hamidu Alkali, he was assured of the readiness of the College to work on the manuscripts towards its publication.

THE FULFULDE LANGUAGE BOARD

While it appeared promising that F.W. de St. Croix’s work was to be secured by ABC/ABU and the quest for the translation of Primary Science and Mathematics vocabulary to Fulfulde, there arose the need to form a Fulfulde forum. These encouraged Alhaji Hamidu Alkali to consult Dr. Aliyu Abubakar who readily accepted for the setting up of a language board. In 1972, the Fulfulde Language Board was formed under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages. The priority languages of the Centre then were accordingly Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Nupe and Tiv. The Fulfulde Language Board was first chaired by Dr. Aliyu Abubakar; the second and incumbent is Alhaji Hamidu Alkali.

THE ACQUISITION OF THE DICTIONARY

After some visits to St. Croix by two staff of the Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages, Miss Mary McIntosh and Mallam Hassan Moturba Pullo, bidding for the collection of his dictionary, it was finally received in 1978, during the tenure of Dr. Mahmud Tukur as the Principal of Abdullahi Bayero College. The Principal was not only instrumental towards collecting the dictionary, but a keen member of the Fulfulde Language Board.
WORK ON F. W. de St. CROIX DICTIONARY

The Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages set up a committee - Dictionary consultative committee - in conjunction with the Fulfulde Language Board immediately to work on the acquired dictionary. The terms of reference of the working committee were to amend the out of date orthography in which it was begun; insert grammatical terms; correct phonetical errors; excise surplus examples; scrutinise it for errors, and finally shape it. With all these effected, the dictionary ceases to be solely the author’s effort. Thus the inclusion of editors as contributing authors of the dictionary side by side with the originator. The present dictionary moreover has more vocabulary than the original as members of the consultative committee who were globally drawn up added some entries. It is in this regard that working sessions were held in different Fulbe locations beyond Kano.

Being an expensive adventure, funds were sourced and received from many northern States of the country and some organisations within and outside the country. The biggest contribution came from the National Universities Commission (NUC) through its Executive Secretary, Dr. Jibril Aminu, who is also an active member of the Fulfulde Language Board. These funds sustained the language Board and the editorial activities of the Dictionary Consultative Committee.

Miss Mary McIntosh and Mallam Ibrahim Ahmad Mukoshy were the pioneering staff of the Centre that recorded the recommendations of the consultative committee as the new dictionary entries. After then, Al-Amin Abu Manga shouldered the secretarial responsibility. After a break, when Al-
Amin Abu Manga left, the Dictionary consultative committee was reactivated in 1989, with a new secretary, Garba Kawu Daudu and three new members: Dr. Gidado Tahir, Dr. Isa Alkali Abba and Dr. Abubakar Bappa Mohammad. For lack of funds, the last consultative committee meeting was held in July, 1990, but Garba Kawu Daudu, the Secretary and Mallam Hassan Moturba, all staff of the Centre were mandated to work on the remaining manuscripts in line with previous activities.

COMPLETION OF THE EDITORIAL WORK

Editing the dictionary was completed in August, 1991, and work on typing the entries was completed in 1992. Meanwhile, the absence of the Secretary delayed proofreading the typed entries until 1996, except for the few proofread by Dr. Abubakar Bappa Mohammad in 1995.

GETTING THE DICTIONARY PUBLISHED

When the Centre could not apparently undertake printing the dictionary, it had to source for assistance. It thus approached the National Commission for Nomadic Education for assistance in November 1996. The commission agreed sponsoring the printing. Thus, the typed manuscripts were taken to the Gaskiya Corporation Zaria printers for typesetting. From that period to December, 1997, typesetting and proofreading had been the activity in the corporation.

THE DICTIONARY

The Dictionary is published in the Fulfulde standard orthography. Two common features of the standard orthography are the doubling of vowels, which is phonemic in Fulfulde, and the making of a coda vowel, semi-vowel, in a
diphthong.

A headword is typed bold, and a Fulfulde word elsewhere is in italics. But a repeated headword in the text is written in tilde. The definition of a headword follows immediately after its other grammatical features like past tense or plural. However, not every headword is defined. The reader is often referred to another entry of the same meaning. In some entries, a headword is followed by another word in parenthesis. That means the one in parenthesis is the same with the headword.

Unlike in most recent Fulfulde dictionaries, this one does not have any dialect identification. Headwords are simply defined. This is done in order not to temper much with the work of the originator.

There are some entries that are divided into numbered sections. These numbers show the different shade of meaning of the headword. But homophones are entered separately. Figuratives under verbs or nouns are entered and defined.

The dictionary has an alphabet of 29 letters. Letter Z, is expurgated as all the entries under it are either Arabic or Hausa loans. The nomadic Fulbe use j as the substitute of the sound. Another phoneme not used in the dictionary is sh, as it is an alternating of s or c.

In conclusion, we can rightly say that the dictionary is truly originated by F.W. de St. Croix, but enormously shaped by the editorial work of several years and by several hands. It is in the light of the above that the dictionary can not take the title suggested by the originator. It therefore bears the names of the editors for their untiring job of thousands of hours. However, 99% of the definitions and entries are those of the originator.

Editors,
June 1998.

xix