

Early Language Documentation by Herero Missionaries

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Overview

- Background, history
- Hahn, Rath, Kolbe
- Motivations, activities, results
- Conclusion

Background, history

German Johann Hinrich Schmelen (1776-1848) founded first mission station in Namibia in 1814.

Rhenish Mission Society:

- founded in 1828, since 1829 in South Africa
- first Nama missionary Franz Heinrich Kleinschmidt 1840
- first Herero missionaries near Windhoek in 1842, competition with Methodists

Carl-Hugo Hahn (1818 – 1895)



Carl-Hugo Hahn (1818 – 1895)

1816 born in Latvia

1842 arrived in Namibia

Married to Emma Sarah Hone

Worked at different stations

Conflicts with mission directors

1873 honorary doctorate

1874-84 head of the German Lutheran community
in Cape Town

1895 died in Paarl

Johannes Rath (1816 – 1903)



Johannes and Anna Rath, c. 1853 (NAN 08473)

Johannes Rath (1816 – 1903)

1816 born in Vienna, Austria; weaver

1845 arrived in Namibia, founded Otjimbingue

1859 his wife and 4 children died in a shipwreck

1861 left Namibia, settled near Cape Town

1903 died near Cape Town

Friedrich Wilhelm Kolbe (1821 – 1899)

1821 born in Gütersloh, Germany; printer

1847 arrived in Namibia, different stations

1852 left Namibia, joined LMS

1869 first publication about Herero phonetics

1877 Cape Town

1883-88 further publications

1899 died in Cape Town

Motivations

- Essential for RMG to spread gospel in local language
- Collecting corpus to study language to help future missionaries
- Endangered language at “brink of extinction”
- Later missionaries and linguists heavily relied on this pioneering research (Bleek, Brincker, Irle, Johnston, Kolbe, Viehe, ...).
- Next generation of missionaries much more productive, influenced by colonial agenda
- Scientific interests: Kolbe

Activities & procedure

- Sources?
- Unhappy with translators
- Pointing
- Compiling word lists
- Informants never mentioned
- Participant observation

Results & products

- First Herero reader 1846
- First Herero sermon 1847
- First Herero grammar 1857
- Translated several Christian texts into Herero
- Corpus planning, linguistic engineering
- Almost 2,000 pages word lists
- 25 Herero fables collected and translated

Lexical engineering & word lists

- Christian terminology, abstract concepts
- No loanwords, mostly relexification
- Word lists descriptive, no Christian terminology, criteria unclear
- No examples for actual or preferred usage
- No standardization

Posselt 1850

- Go, boys; carry the goods out from the boats
- Boy, I am tired of you
- You are dirty (a fool)
- I have warned you enough already
- If you do that again, I shall dismiss you without payment
- I shall take your blanket
- I shall put you into prison

Baum, omuti
 „ wild. Feigen - omukuu ✓
 „ „ „ omukuuca
 „ Stamm - des ovaherero, omumborombongo ✓
 „ einzelner, omunguruse
 „ ein, omuama ✓
 „ „ omuhe ✓
 „ „ omukazu
 „ „ omue ✓
 „ „ omukuzumbua ✓
 „ „ omumbonde; otjimbonde; otjiriamupukhu ✕
 „ „ omungongomui
 „ „ omungondo
 „ „ omunguati
 „ „ omungundi ✓
 „ „ omumpendarina ✓
 „ „ omutenderiti ✓
 „ „ orupapa ✓
 Baumbast, orutha

Gluth, omuzuzira
 " otyichindolia
 " otyineyo
 Gnu, otyimburn
 graben, kupura, tyeza + Götzenbild, otyisenginina
 Grab eundo
 Gras, chozu
 " frisches, otyisepa
 " trocken, chahozu
 " " ombunguru
 " Luch - ondonibora
 " eine Art, ohengahenga
 " " ongumba
 " " onyase
 " pflüchten, chahura

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Thank you!

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