

CONFERENCE REPORT

The Sixth West African Languages Congress was held from March 18 - 22, 1966, in Yaounde, Federal Republic of Cameroun. Although the Congresses have been held annually, under the auspices of the West African Languages Survey, this was the first to be held as a meeting of the West African Linguistic Society, which was formed at the 5th Congress held at Legon in 1965.

About sixty delegates attended, from several West African countries, France, Germany, and the U.S.A. The delegates from the University of Ghana were Dr. J.M. Stewart and Miss M.E. Krapp from the Institute of African Studies, and Miss L. Cripser, Dr. F. Dolphyne and Mr. C. Painter from the Linguistics Department. Three of the five gave papers:

Dr. F. Dolphyne: A phonological analysis of Twi vowels

Mr. C. Painter: The high tone verbal phrase in Gonja

Dr. J.M. Stewart: Tongue root position in Akan vowel harmony

The Congress was opened by the Minister of National Education of Cameroun, and Professor Kenneth Pike of the University of Michigan gave the opening address. His paper fell into two sections. The first dealt with observations on tone, stress and rhythm in a number of languages, some of them Ghanaian, with which Professor Pike has dealt in the last few months. Basari data was used to give a convincing example of rhythmic timing of speech, independent of syllable length.

The second part of Professor Pike's address dealt with syntax, or rather, the structure of discourse; pieces bigger than the sentence. It seems that in the Bariba language, the use of direct or indirect discourse when quoting, in a speech, story, conversation etc., is a complicated affair. In a sentence such as 'He said, "I will follow you"'; the use of direct or indirect discourse, i.e. the presence or absence of a conjunctive element in the quoted sentence indicates whether "I" refers to the subject of the sentence, "he", or to the speaker. Usage also varies according to such factors as whether or not the narrator is one of the characters in the story being told, and whether the person quoted is a chief. Professor Pike's

method was to bring out the underlying regularities by application of his matrix techniques. Grammar on such a wide scale is new in West Africa, and clearly holds interesting possibilities.

Professor Pike's address apart, and unlike last year's Congress, syntax was little discussed. Of the seventeen papers presented in three plenary sessions, nine were on the structure of the verb. Eight, including Mr. Painter's paper, discussed verb structure in a particular language. One, Professor G. Manessy's Typologie Provisoire du Verbe Voltaïque, attempted a general classification of twenty-eight languages according to similarities and differences in their verb systems.

Legon was well represented in the Phonology section with two papers on different aspects of the analysis of Akan vowels. Except for the first part of Professor Pike's paper, the only discussion of tone occurred in a paper by Jan Voorhoeve, The morphotonology of the Bamileke noun. In this language, from Bangangte in Cameroun, the tonemic characterization of a morpheme apparently resides in the pitch level of the following morpheme rather than its own pitch level. For instance, one monosyllabic noun might have "raising" tone, in which case the following word will be higher in pitch, and another might have "levelling" or "lowering" tone, in which cases the following item will be at the same pitch level or a lower one, respectively. In the Bamileke tone system, a succession of down-stepping tones is normal, since low tone is defined as a tone lower than a following high, and high tone as higher than a following high. On the morphotonologic level, loss of a low tone results in a succession of two equal high tones.

In the languages of southern Ghana, on the other hand, the characteristic tone of a monosyllabic morpheme is normally realised on that very syllable, and loss of a low tone results in two high (non-low) tones of which the first is higher than the second. (This type of system has been described by Dr. J.M. Stewart in his The Typology of the Twi Tone System, Legon, 1965).

And so in the Bamileke system, a special mark (upstep) is required for a series of two or more tones of level pitch, but in Twi the mark (downstep) is required for a series of non-level pitches.

This year there were no papers in Historical and Comparative Linguistics. Also missing was last year's interest in the application of the methods of generative grammar to African languages. The University of Ghana approach to phonology was essentially prosodic. The Pike-Summar Institute of Linguistics approach to grammar was represented in papers by, of course, Professor Pike, and by J.T. Bendor-Samuel (Some contrasting features of the Izi verbal system). To a large extent this was Colin Painter's approach. But otherwise it seemed to the writer that contributors concentrated on traditional morphological description, and that theoretical issues were not in the foreground.

The working parties were on Benue-Congo Languages (genetic classification), Oral Literature, and the application of linguistics to the teaching of English and French in West Africa. Most of the Legon delegation attended the working party on the teaching of English and French. Although the teaching of European languages is not strictly speaking in the scope of a Congress on West African languages, it is strongly felt that the knowledge gained in the study of the mother tongues of the pupils has much to contribute to the more rational and efficient teaching of European languages. The working party was especially valuable for the exchange of information between anglophone and francophone investigators. It turned out that more intensive work had been done in this field by the French in West Africa than by the British, particularly at the Centre for Applied Linguistics at Dakar, and at B.E.L. in Paris. It was felt that linguists specializing in West African languages could make their contribution primarily by diagnosing problems in the learning of European languages in terms of interference by African languages. To take a simple example, most West African children have difficulty learning to consistently distinguish "he" and "she" in English, because in their own languages there is no such distinction. The problem can be approached in two ways, through "contrastive analysis", in which the grammars of the students' first language and the language to be learned are compared and the differences pointed out, perhaps leading to predictions about what will give students difficulty, and through error analysis, in which actual mistakes in the English or French of students are studied and perhaps traced to features of the students' first language.

In view of the huge variety of tongues spoken as first language by students of English and French in West Africa, either approach might seem to require an impossible amount of work, except that there are large groups of languages which, while different from each other, differ from

European languages in similar ways, so that their speakers make the same mistakes. Almost all West Africans have to be taught the sound 'th' as in "thing", because almost no West African languages use it.

In accordance with these considerations, the working party recommended to the Council of the Society that a questionnaire be constructed and administered to collect comparable data on the more important languages of West Africa, with special emphasis on tense and aspect systems. Something of this kind has already been done on the major languages of Nigeria, by Elizabeth Dunstan of the University of Ibadan.

M.E. Kropp.

RESEARCH MATERIAL IN THE GHANA NATIONAL ARCHIVES,
ACCRA ON THE HISTORY OF ANLO 1850-1890

The catalogue of material that follows is the result of my own research at the Archives in course of my search for material for the M.A. Thesis on the period.

It is necessary to preface this catalogue with a sketch of Anlo, showing its position and extent and so that the catalogue can have meaning for any one who may consult it. The geography of Anlo is sketched in detail because Anlo's history in the 1880's was greatly influenced by the geographical division of the country into two by the Keta lagoon, the coastal belt and the mainland.

Anlo is the name particularly applied to the Ewe people and country lying on the coast in the extreme south-eastern corner of Ghana. It is bounded on the south by the sea; on the north by Apipe, Wheta, and Klikor; on the east by Some; and on the west by Avenor and Tongu. The Anlo have a tradition of having migrated from Notsie in the Republic of Togo. It is not certain when they arrived in their present home, but it is probable that they were already well established by 1682 when Ofori, the King of Accra and his people were fleeing from the Akwamu to Little Popo.