

pictures, so that the Vai script of to-day does not represent an invention out of the void, but is the result of an historical development from a state where there did not exist characters with a phonetical value, but only pictures with a conceptional meaning. But the system Kisima Kamala was determined to invent was to be nothing but a real script, from its very beginning, with letter-signs of a firm and unequivocal phonetical function. He had no prototypes before him, nor did he make use of any existing system of writing as a model, but constructed his letters or sets of letters at will out of geometrical elements, of strokes and circles and dots. If some outward similarities and convergences with Vai characters resulted, this is mere chance. So instead of comparing Kisima Kamala's invention with the Vai script as to its origin it is more correct to compare it with another West African script, which another contemporary of ours invented a few years ago, namely the script of the Basa people in the neighbouring Republic of Liberia, of which I happened to hear from a missionary living in the Basa country. The inventor of this script, a learned Basa native, also devised a system of arbitrarily chosen figures to serve as letters in a way similar to that adopted by Kisima Kamala. The invention of both these scripts in our day undoubtedly shows evidence of the remarkable intelligence of West-Africans, and of their successful endeavour to elevate the standard of the life and culture of their race. (Communicated by PROFESSOR A. KLINGENHEBEN.)

*The Linguistic Situation in the Western Parts of the Niger Delta.*

With reference to the Rev. J. W. Hubbard's communication on this subject in the October number, p. 490, it would be of assistance to students if he would suggest what other word he would use instead of 'dialect' for the Isoko and Sobo languages. Much difficulty was experienced by me in making a 'schema' for the classification of Southern Nigerian languages, and a better arrangement would be welcome, but it must be one which can be applied generally. I am away from books but think that my description tallies with that of the chief linguistic authority in this region—viz. Mr. N. W. Thomas.

In disagreeing with my views that the Isoko have been known to Europeans for some hundreds of years, Mr. Hubbard ignores the Portuguese and Dutch adventurers who penetrated into these parts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The classification suggested in his last paragraph—i.e. 1. Ibo type. 2. Benin or Aka type. 3. Yoruba type (or ?Aka type). 4. Ijo type—is that generally accepted but it is puzzling to find, in the third division, Ishekiri (or Jekri) applied interrogatively to Aka (or Edo) since Yoruba is very distinctive from all Edo languages and Jekri is decidedly a Yoruba dialect.

(Communicated by P. AMAURY TALBOT.)