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The following news concerns Nigeria.

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Nigerians welcome two new translations

NIGERIA — Two longstanding Nigerian translation projects came to fruition in July on opposite sides of the country.

The modern translations, in Yoruba and Igbo, undertaken by the Nigeria Bible Society in conjunction with the local translation committees that represent the churches in the language areas, and including the Deuterocanon, were launched in Ibadan, Nigeria's second-largest city, in the south west, and Owerri, in the heart of Igboland, eastern Nigeria.



Speaking at the launch of *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo* in Ibadan, on July 20, the Chairman of the Yoruba Translation Committee, the Most Rev Ayo Ladigbolu, gave thanks to God for the completion of a project begun 26 years ago. He said later that he had almost wept publicly for joy.

Chief Emmanuel Oke, one of the initiators of the *Iroyin Ayo* project and the former Secretary of the Translation Committee, recalled that in 1979 the UBS Translation Consultant Dr Eugene Bunkowske told him that, arising from the changes occurring in every language over a period of 50 years, the Yoruba Bible needed to be brought up to date using a modern orthography. Chief Oke then got in touch with the Bible Society of Nigeria (BSN) and the work was put in hand.

He said that when he received the invitation to the launch ceremony, he went to Archbishop Alaba Job, the Catholic Archbishop of Ibadan and Chairman of the translation project, and together they sang a hymn of thanks and praise to God for keeping them alive long enough to witness its launch. (The launch ceremony was presided over by Chief Oke's son, who is 71.)

Mr Ladigbolu said that the reason the translation had taken such a long time partly reflected the scarcity of experts in biblical languages, linguistics and translation science. He called on Church leaders to encourage scholarship in the relevant fields.

Five days later in Eastern Nigeria, the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Owerri was the scene of further joy and celebration as worshippers embraced a new edition of Bible

Nso Ohuu (the Igbo Bible) and an English/Igbo diglot Bible combining the new Igbo translation with the King James Version.

The bulk of this translation was done by the Rt Rev Prof Augustine Iwuagwu. During the 34 years that this translation project lasted, Prof. Iwuagwu, 74, suffered a great deal of ill health, but remained undaunted. Such was his passion for the project that for three years he spent nights working by the light of a hurricane lamp. He took his work with him to all the places he lived in the course of his job.

The two new translations have some features in common. Both were done from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek and both are in contemporary language, which makes them easy to understand. They also come with a Bible dictionary and a one-year reading plan.

The Rev Dr Fred Odotola, the General Secretary of the Bible Society, lamented the rate at which some Nigerian languages are dying. He said that if local languages were to be preserved and promoted, parents should teach their children how to speak them.

He said the cost of the translating *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo* was NGN21.7m and he called on the Christian community to support BSN in absorbing the cost which, he said, was not reflected in the price being charged for the Bibles. (531 words – NIGERIA.???.11.06)

Photo (Bible Society of Nigeria)(low resolution only)

The Rev Dr Fred Odotola, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Nigeria (left), presents copies of *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo*, the Bible in Yorubna, to the Most Rev Ayo Ladigbolu, Chairman of the Yoruba Translation Committee, at the launch ceremony in Ibadan on July 20, 2006.

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