

The Role of Language in the Moravian Missions to Eighteenth-Century Labrador

by
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In 1722 the surviving remnants of the *Unitas Fratrum* from Moravian and Bohemia were given refuge on the estate of Count Zinzendorf in Saxony, where they built the community of Herrnhut. After a spiritual renewal and reorganization in 1727, the Moravians began their missionary work, going first to St. Thomas in the West Indies in 1732¹ and to Greenland in 1733.²

Missionaries from this Greenland mission, suspecting that the inhabitants of the Labrador coast might speak the same language as the Greenlanders,³ established the first Labrador mission in 1771.⁴ Since the missionaries were required to keep diaries, write autobiographies, and provide regular written reports, we now have access to a wealth of information about this period, recorded largely in the German language.⁵

1 J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Missions of the Moravian Church During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Company, 1901), 4.

2 Hamilton, 10. See also Louis Bobé, *Hans Egede: Colonizer and Missionary of Greenland* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1952), 146-148. For a comprehensive history of the Greenland mission by a Moravian historian see David Cranz, *The History of Greenland*, 2 Vols. (London: 1767).

3 Friedrich Ludwig Kölbing, *Die Missionen der evangelischen Brüder in Grönland und Labrador*, Vol. 2: *Labrador* (Gnadau: Hans Franz Burkhard, 1831), 16. Kölbing was archivist of the Moravian archive in Herrnhut from 1811-1830 and used the missionaries' diaries in his history of the missions.

4 Kölbing, 53-57.

5 These records are located in the Moravian archive in Herrnhut, Germany (Archiv der Evangelischen Brüderunität Herrnhut); in the Moravian Church House, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and in the British Moravian Church Archives (Muswell Hill). The Herrnhut originals, part of the missionary collection R 15, are accessible through a finding aid, furnished by O. Peucker in typescript, and covered in rubric 15 K, 36-54. An older deposit, entitled »Missions Deputation II,« also contains early Labrador materials. On the organization of the archive see Ingeborg Baldauf, »Das Archiv der Brüder-Unität in Herrnhut: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte seiner Registraturbildner und der Ordnung und Verzeichnis seiner Bestände«, *Unitas Fratrum: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Gegenwartsfragen der Brüdergemeine*, (Nr. 8(1980), 3-34. The original Labrador documents, now in Bethlehem, PA, are available on

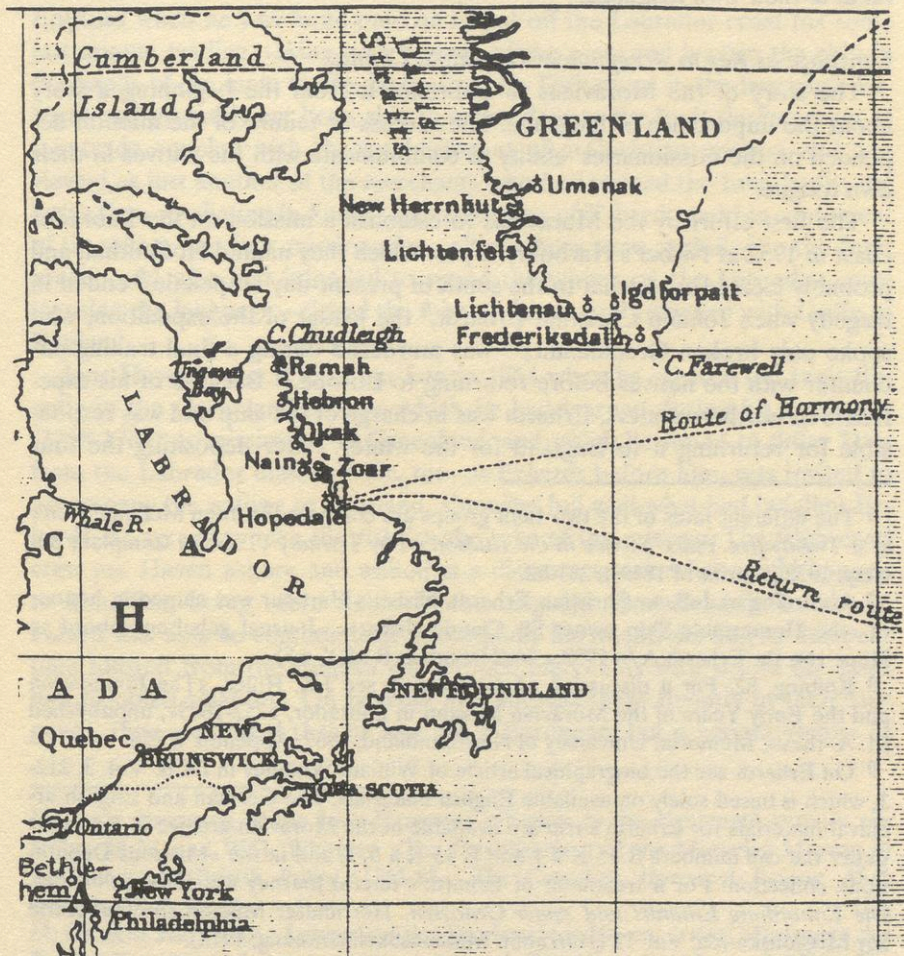
Utilizing these rich sources, this paper examines the role that language played in the early contact period and traces some of the linguistic and lexicographic contributions of the Moravians to Inuktitut. Whereas missionaries are often blamed for destruction of native cultures in their effort to bring these cultures into line with their own world view, in Labrador the activities of the Moravian missionaries actually contributed to the preservation of a culture through their strict adherence to the study and use of its language.

Importance of Language

Language as Preserver of Cultural Identity

Perhaps more so than any other aspect of a culture, language both defines the parameters of those belonging to a particular ethnic group and plays an important role in the preservation of that culture. A present-day example of the importance of language in preserving culture can be found in Canada, where French Canadians fear that the loss of their language would lead to the loss of their ethnic identity. Such a loss occurred on the southern coast of Labrador, where the Inuit, in the absence of Moravian missionaries, were completely assimilated into the French and English communities. The Inuit along the northern coast, as we shall see, retained their language and

microfilm in the Public Archives of Canada and in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, St. John's, Newfoundland [hereafter Bethlehem Collection, CNS]. For an inventory of these records see William H. Whiteley, »Records of the Moravian Mission in Labrador« [1764-1944, St. John's 1960]. The archival materials pertaining to Labrador in the British Moravian Church Archives are available on microfilm in CNS, Memorial University of Newfoundland. For an inventory see William H. Whiteley's »Inventory of Moravian Mission records from Labrador,« St. John's, n.d. In addition to these archival materials there are various original Moravian items pertaining to Labrador in CNS. Bibliographical entries of the latter are accessible world-wide through the electronic library catalogue. The Moravian library from Labrador, with educational materials and translations into Inuktitut, is now part of the Lawrence Lande Collection of Canadiana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, McLennan Library, McGill University, Montreal. For a description of this collection see Davena Davis, »The Gardens of the Lord: A Description of the Moravian Church in Labrador, and the Lande Collection, entitled >The Moravian Missions to the Eskimos of Labrador,<«, *Fontanus*, 2(1989), 27-36. For a catalogue see *The Moravian Missions to the Eskimos of Labrador: A Checklist of Manuscripts and Printed Material from 1715 to 1967*, Lawrence Lande Foundation for Canadian Historical Research No. 7 (Montreal: McGill University, 1973).



Herrnhuter Mission in Grönland und Labrador

Aus: J. Taylor Hamilton, A History of the Missions of the Moravian Church During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Bethlehem, PA, 1901, S. 109

cultural identity, in contact with the Moravian missionaries, who dealt with them in their own language.⁶

Language as Key to Acceptance: The Initial Contact

The story of the Moravians in Labrador is from the beginning a story about the importance of language. The success or failure of the mission depended on the missionaries' ability to communicate with the natives in their own tongue.

The first effort by the Moravians to establish a mission on the Labrador coast in 1752 at Nisbet's Harbour,⁷ a post which they named Hoffenthal, and probably located somewhat to the south of present-day Hopedale,⁸ ended in tragedy when Johann Christian Erhardt,⁹ the leader of the expedition, who spoke only broken Greenlandic,¹⁰ was murdered during a final trading encounter with the natives before returning to Europe.¹¹ Because of his experience in northern waters, Erhardt was in charge of the ship and was responsible for returning it to England for the winter. After depositing the four

⁶ The different fates of the two Inuit groups are compared in John McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (Toonto: Camplain Society, 1932 [reprint of 1849]), 281-82.

⁷ According to Johann Christian Erhardt, Nisbet's Harbour was named in honour of »the Honourable Ship owner Sir Claude Nisbet«. »Journal gehalten anbord ye Hope von Br. Erhardt A/o 1752,« 14 (Herrnhut: R 15 K a 5).

⁸ Kölbing, 82. For a discussion of the location see J.K. Hiller, »The Foundation and the Early Years of the Moravian Mission in Labrador, 1752-1805«, unpublished M. A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1967, Appendix I, 228.

⁹ On Erhardt see the biographical article of William Whiteley in *DCB*, Vol. 3, 212-3, which is based solely on available English materials. The German and English archival materials for Erhardt's trip are available in the Moravian archive in Herrnhut under the call numbers R 15 K a 1 and R 15 K a 5/1, and in the »Missions Deputation« collection. For a treatment of Erhardt's fateful journey see H.G. Schneider, *Die Ermordung Erhardts und seiner Genossen*, Herrnhuter Missionsstudien, Hefte zur Missionskunde, Vol. 11 (Herrnhut: Missionsbuchhandlung, 1913).

¹⁰ See Erhardt's Journal of 1752 (n.7), 13, where Erhardt wished he had Matthäus Stach [one of the original Greenland missionaries] with him, who knew the language better, »denn mein bissel Grönländisch geht nicht weit [because my little bit of Greenlandic doesn't go far]«.

¹¹ Where Erhardt's Journal ends, see the mate Goffe's journal (»Papers Relating to the Exploratory Voyages of 1752-1770,« in »Moravian Missions Documents [1768<!>-1921], CNS, Microfilm # 513, reel 4) and the unedited diary attributed to Matthäus Kuntz, »Unser Reise Diarium nach Nord America vom 16ten May 1752,« Missions Deputation II/2, 11 (Herrnhut).

missionaries Golkowsky, Krumm, Post, and Kunz and assisting them in building the mission house, Erhardt had set off on the return voyage to England when he was lured onto an island off the Labrador coast for some last minute trading, taking with him six of the crew and leaving the ship in the hands of the mate Goffe. Because of his limitations in the language, Erhardt had probably not been able to make clear to the Inuit the intention of fair trade coupled with the establishment of a Christian mission and was viewed as just another of the merchants who had treated the Inuit badly, the latter then retaliating in kind.¹² After the loss of Erhardt and his contingent of six sailors, the four missionaries - all of whom were unskilled in the Inuit tongue and who had intended to spend the winter on the Labrador coast learning the language - closed the mission house and returned with Goffe to England.

Jens Haven¹³ met a different fate in 1764 when he greeted the Inuit fluently in the Greenland tongue, which he had learned during his five years (1758-1763) as missionary in Greenland, and which he found to differ little from the Labrador dialect.¹⁴ He, too, as Erhardt before him, was invited to accompany the natives to an island. Knowing full well what had befallen Erhardt, he agreed to take the risk for the sake of the mission. The frightened crew put Haven ashore and waited at a distance to see what would happen to him. But, being more fluent in the language than Erhardt had been, Haven was able to communicate successfully his intentions and to differentiate himself from the English and French merchants with whom the Inuit had troubled relations. On hearing him address them fluently in their language, they concluded that he was not a European, but a »countryman« of

¹² For a discussion of the Inuit-European relations in the eighteenth century see Hiller, 28-33, and W.H. Whiteley, »The Establishment of the Moravian Mission in Labrador and British Policy, 1763-83«, *The Canadian Historical Review*, 45/1 (March, 1964), 29-50.

¹³ On Jens Haven see »Lebenslauf des Bruders Jens Haven, ersten Missionars der Brüder-Gemeine in Labrador, heimgegangen in Herrnhut den 16. April 1796«, *Gemeinnachrichten*, 1844, 900-25. See also J.K. Hiller, »Haven, Jens,« *DCB*, Vol. 4, 333-4.

¹⁴ Haven reports that »their language is the same as Greenlandic, the dialect no more different than northern from southern Greenlandic, which is less marked than the difference between low and high German.« As example, he gives the Inuit equivalents for *What is your name?* Southern: *Kina Ivlit*; northern: *Kina Iblit*; Labrador: *Kena evlet*. David Cranz, *Fortsetzung der Historie von Grönland* (Barby: Heinrich Detlef Ebers, 1770), 312-13.

theirs and a »friends«.¹⁵ He reported to the Governor of Newfoundland Sir Hugh Palliser that »I had the good fortune to see and to speak with the Indians of Labrador and ... I understood their language better than I imagined by far. The difference between their language and that in Davis Straight is very little. They call themselves Karolit, the very same name those of Davis Straight call themselves by. I would have wished that your Excellency had seen them and me together. The joy was very great of both sides for them to see one that they could speak with, and for me that I understood them.«¹⁶

After a lengthy conversation, he took their leave, but promised to return and asked the Inuit in the meantime not to steal from the Europeans. They replied that the Europeans also steal.

Governor Palliser corroborated the natives' accusations against the Europeans. Interested in promoting peace between the merchants and the Inuit so that the trade and fishery could prosper, he blamed the previous failure of attempts to trade with the natives on »the imprudent, treacherous, or cruel conduct of some people who have resorted to that Coast by plundering and killing several of them from which they have entertained an opinion of our disposition and intentions being the same with respect to them as theirs are towards us: that is, to circumvent and kill them ...«¹⁷

He saw in Haven a possible solution to the problem and credited his peaceful encounter with the natives to his fluency in the language: »The Moravian ... was able to converse with them very well in their own language to their great astonishment and satisfaction, having never before met with any European that could converse with them otherways than by signs. I think a good use may be made of this man ...«¹⁸

Because of his successful contact with the Inuit, Haven was able to obtain permission to establish the first missionary station in 1771 at Nain, followed

15 For Haven's first encounter with the Inuit, see Haven (n.13), 909-10; »John [Jens] Haven Journal of his proceeding from St. Johns in Newfoundland to the Coast of Labrador and Back again [written at St. John's 7 Oct. 1764 and sent to Governor Palliser],« *Missions Deputation*, II/2 (Herrnhut); and »Auszug aus Bruder Jens Havens eigenem Aufsatz, von seinem Ruf und ersteren Versuchs-Reise nach Terra Labrador, seiner Ankunft daselbst, und ersterer Bekanntschaft mit den Eskimoern von 1764 bis 1770« (Herrnhut: R 15 K a 5).

16 'John [Jens] Haven Journal 1764 (n.15) entry of 27th September.

17 »Governor's order requiring that the Eskimo Indians be treated in a friendly manner,« *Public Record Office: C[olonial]. O[ffice]. 194/16*, p. 23.

18 »Letter from Hugh Palliser to the Board of Trade,« Oct. 9, 1764, *C.O. 194/16*, p. 36.

in 1776 at Okak and in 1782 at Hopedale, the latter named in memory of the first failed attempt.¹⁹

Christian Drachart,²⁰ a companion of Haven on his next journey to Labrador and also a Greenland missionary fluent in the Greenland tongue, experienced a similar reaction when he greeted the Inuit in their own language. He was quickly surrounded by ca. 300 natives, who said, »We are friends. Don't be afraid. We understand some of your words.«²¹ Drachart's encounter is another testimony to the importance of language in the initial missionary contact with the Inuit.

That Drachart and Haven were fully accepted not as Europeans but as fellow Inuit is further attested by the response of the natives when the missionaries told them they planned to come and live with them: »Come and build among us, but don't bring any foreigners along, instead only people like we and you are, namely Inuit.«²² Their communication in the Inuit language had set them apart from the Europeans and gained for them a place in the Inuit community.

Language Acquisition

From Word to Script: The First Dictionaries and Grammars

Since it was the policy of the Moravian Church to establish missions in areas where no other churches had missionary endeavours, the missionaries found themselves in the position of having to learn native languages quickly without the usual textbook aids. The process of learning these languages proceeded from the compilation of glossaries and dictionaries to the formulation of grammars. Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg, the biographer of Zinzendorf and Superintendent of the American missions, articulated this method in his 1780 *Account of the Manner in which the Protestant*

¹⁹ For Nain see Kölbing, 53; for Okak, *ibid.*, 79; for Hoffenthal, *ibid.*, 82.

²⁰ On Christian Drachart see his unpublished »Lebenslauf,« (Herrnhut: R.22.35.9). See also J.K. Hiller, »Drachart, Christian Larsen,« *DCB*, Vol. 4, 225.

²¹ See »Journal von der Recognitions-Reise auf der Küste von Labrador der 4 Brüder John Hill, Jens Haven, Drachard u. Schloezer von London aus biß wieder dahin im Jahr 1765«, 93 (Herrnhut: R 15 K a 5). Drachart explains that his Greenlandic is a bit rusty after fourteen years in Germany. While not as fluent as Haven, he nevertheless is able to preach to them at length about the »creator« and »savior« and is glad they can understand him.

²² *Ibid.*, 151.

Church of the Unitas Fratrum or United Brethren Preach the Gospel, and Carry on their Missions Among the Heathen as follows: »As the brethren prefer going to those heathen, who never before had any missionaries among them, ... they consequently meet with more difficulties than usual in learning their language. For among those heathen, who know nothing of reading and writing, one cannot meet with any books or writings, which might help to make the learning of a language easy. They are obliged therefore to shew this and the other thing to the heathen, if they want to speak with them, to observe well the name that they hear and write it down, and thus become acquainted with it. Reducing, in process of time, all this in alphabetical order, it forms a little dictionary. And when they have properly noted down the words which belong to the connection of speech, and which denote this or that action; they then form, perhaps, a little grammar of that language.«²³

An anecdote from Jens Haven's first encounter with the Inuit accentuates how little they knew of books or reading. After he had read Governor Palliser's proclamation, conveying the good intentions of the British government towards the Inuit, he tried to hand the document over to them. But since these people had never seen any written page before, they were afraid of it and refused to take it, believing it must be alive, since Haven had spoken words from it.²⁴

Their fear of the written word underscores the fact that the Inuit tongue was an unwritten language. To begin the task of learning the language, the missionaries had to give this spoken tongue a written form, in order to compile word lists, dictionaries, and eventually grammars. When the German missionaries wrote down the words they heard, they spelled them according to their own German alphabet, the spelling system which is still used today.²⁵

²³ August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *An Account of the Manner in which the Protestant Church of the Unitas Fratrum or United Brethren Preach the Gospel, and Carry on their Missions Among the Heathen* (London: H. Trapp, 1788 [1780]), 50. For a brief biography of Spangenberg see K.F. Ledderhose, »Spangenberg: August Gottlieb«. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1893), Vol. 35, 33-37.

²⁴ See John [Jens] Haven Journal (n. 15) entry of Sept. 5th.

²⁵ See »Grammar of the Eskimo Language as used in Labrador,« translation and abridgment of Theodor Bourquin's *Grammatik der Eskimo-Sprache ...*, 1891, by W.W. Perrett, ca. 1900, in the Peacock Papers, CNS Archives, Vol. I, 5: »As the German alphabet has been used ever since the establishment of the Labrador Mis-

The Greenland Connection

The first dictionaries were prepared by missionaries in Greenland for their work there. Here the Moravians had a predecessor in Hans Egede,²⁶ a Lutheran pastor and missionary in Greenland from 1721 to 1736. When the Moravians arrived in Greenland in 1733, Egede had already lived there for twelve years and had acquired a facility in the language, which he offered to pass on to the Moravians.²⁷ David Cranz, the Moravian historian, reports in his *History of Greenland* about the difficulties encountered by the missionaries, who could not communicate with Egede in their native German but first had to learn Danish as well as the rudimentaries of Latin grammar, since Egede used Latin grammatical terms in his Greenlandic grammar.²⁸ It was especially Paul Egede,²⁹ the oldest son of the Lutheran missionary, who not only helped his father and the missionaries to learn the language but also prepared the earliest grammatical works and dictionaries. The archive of the Moravians in Herrnhut preserves from this early period a hand-written dictionary from 1735 as well as a »Grönländische Grammatica« from 1736. Both works were penned by Paul Egede.³⁰

Very early, however, the Moravians started compiling their own dictionaries, a practice which continued even after they had reached a relative ease in the language. Cranz wrote in 1767 that the missionaries »still frequently consult the most intelligent Greenlanders in point of the language, by which means their dictionary and grammar is daily improving in their hands.«³¹

The genealogy of the Moravians' own reference works begins with a manuscript from 1733 by Christian David, the builder of Herrnhut, who led the first Moravian missionary group to Greenland.³² The manuscript is not a

sion, it is necessary to keep to that, otherwise the pronunciation of Eskimo words will be wrong ... a(ah) b(by) e(a) u(oo) vw(vay) y(ipsilon) z(tzet).«

²⁶ On Egede see especially Bobé. Literature on Hans Egede is listed in the biographical article in Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* [hereafter *BBKL*], fasc. 10 (Hamm: Traugott Bautz, 1975), cols. 1467-8.

²⁷ Bobé, 154.

²⁸ David Cranz, *The History of Greenland*, Vol. 1, 332, and Vol. 2, 412-13.

²⁹ On Paul Egede see *BBKL*, fasc. 10, 1468.

³⁰ The dictionary was published in 1750 as *Dictionarium Grönländico-Danico-Latinum*, and the grammar in 1760 as *Grammatica Grönländico-Danico-Latina*, Royal Library Copenhagen.

³¹ David Cranz, *History of Greenland*, Vol. 2, 413.

³² Christian David, »Grönländische Grammatik und Vokabularium, dazwischen Abhandlungen und Betrachtungen in deutscher Sprache.« (Copenhagen: Riksarkivet, 1734). See Elke Nowak, *Samuel Kleinschmidts >Grammatik der Grönländischen*

polished grammar and dictionary, but appears to be a notebook for personal use. He collected word lists and phrases that would be useful to him in everyday life and in translating prayers, for example the Lord's Prayer. He also searched out declinations and conjugations and thereby became aware of some of the peculiarities of the structure of the language.³³

While Jens Haven represents the first missionary link between Greenland and Labrador, Johann Ludwig Beck provides the lexicographical and grammatical bridge between the two regions. Beck received his language training in New Herrnhut and Lichtenfels from 1770-71 under the tutelage of his father Johann Beck, a veteran missionary and the author of a 1755 grammatical introduction to Greenlandic.³⁴ In 1773 Johann Ludwig Beck accompanied Bishop Paul Eugen Layritz on his visitation tour to the new mission fields in Labrador, served there as Layritz's interpreter, and after the bishop's return, remained in Labrador for twenty-five years, where he laboured as a deacon in Nain and Okak.³⁵ In preparation for his missionary work in Labrador, Beck copied by hand in Lichtenfels, Greenland, the dictionary first started in 1734 by the Moravians, and probably also his father's grammar, and brought these with him to Labrador.³⁶ The missionaries also had access to another Greenland grammar, from 1777, by C.M. Königseer.³⁷ It became routine for each new missionary upon arriving in Labrador to copy by hand the dictionary and grammar as the first step in learning the language. One of these early missionaries, Georg Schmidtman, specifies in his

Sprache <, Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft, vol. 4 (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms, 1987), 122. On Christian David see the literature listed in the biographical article in *BBKL*, fasc. 8, 1234-6.

³³ Nowak, 39-41.

³⁴ »Eine grammatikalische Einleitung zur Erlernung der grönländischen Sprache.« See Nowak, 120. On the elder Beck, see *BBKL*, fasc. 3, col. 444-5. The biographical particulars of Johann Ludwig Beck's missionary service are summarized on a »Diennerblatt service sheet)« in the Moravian archive in Herrnhut.

³⁵ The archival materials of Layritz's visitation are preserved in the Moravian archive in Herrnhut under R 15 K a 11/1. Beck's service is recorded in »Catalogus der Missionare in Labrador,« Bethlehem Collection, CNS, reel 11, 15195-6.

³⁶ Beck's copy of the dictionary is preserved in the Peacock Papers, CNS Archives, Memorial University, St. John's, along with another manuscript, of a Greenland grammar, thought to be contemporary with Beck, but missing the title page, which may be Beck's copy of his father's grammar.

³⁷ C.M. Königseer, »Verbesserte Grönländische Grammatik,« 1777, located in the Moravian archive in Herrnhut (NBVII, R.3 101a); see Nowak, 127.

autobiography that the grammar by Königseer had been especially helpful to him in 1783, when he was struggling to learn the language.³⁸

The subsequent history of the dictionaries and grammars falls outside the scope of the eighteenth century, but shows the same Greenland connection. The two most developed grammars in the nineteenth century are those of the Greenland missionary Samuel Kleinschmidt and his Labrador correspondent Theodor Bourquin.³⁹ The Labrador Eskimo dictionaries published in the twentieth century by Rev. F.W. Peacock, Superintendent of Labrador Moravian missions from 1941 to 1971, are direct descendants of the handwritten works passed on among the missionaries to Greenland and Labrador.⁴⁰

Translations

The study of the Inuit language did not occur in an academic setting but was a necessary prerequisite for missionary work. Thus it is not surprising that from the beginning an effort was made to translate the Bible and other important religious works into Inuktitut. Cranz reports that the earliest Greenland missionaries, besides improving their language, were also engaged »in translating portions out of the holy scripture and hymns, for the benefit of the Greenlanders.«⁴¹ Likewise, the Labrador missionaries translated liturgies, songs, and portions of the Bible into Inuktitut. Among the

38 In »Lebenslauf des am 16ten July 1824 in Nain in Labrador selig entschlafenen verheiratheten Bruders Georg Schmidtman«, *Nachrichten aus der Brüdergemeine*, 1826, Nr. 2, 330. Further evidence of the use of the Königseer grammar in Labrador is the handwritten translation of this grammar into Inuktitut in the Bethlehem collection, CNS, reel 13, 17427-17855.

39 Samuel Kleinschmidt, *Grammatik der grönländischen Sprache mit theilweisem Einschluss des Labradordialects* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1968 [reprint: Berlin, 1851]); Theodor Bourquin, *Grammatik der Eskimo-Sprache, wie sie im Bereich der Missionsniederlassungen der Brüdergemeine an der Labrador-Küste gesprochen wird*, (Nain, 1891). The correspondence of Kleinschmidt and Bourquin on grammatical questions was published by Erik Holtveld in *Kleinschmidts Briefe an Theodor Bourquin*, Meddelelser om Gronland, Vol. 140/3 (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1964). On the development of Inuktitut grammars see Nowak, esp. 23-60.

40 F.W. Peacock, *Eskimo-English Dictionary* (St. John's: Memorial University, 1974); *English-Eskimo Dictionary* (St. John's: Memorial University, 1974); *Eskimo-Synonyms Dictionary* (St. John's: Memorial University, 1974).

41 Cranz, *History of Greenland*, Vol. 2, 412. See also Bobé, 180.

earliest Labrador translations are a baptismal liturgy (1779), 100 songs (1780), a catechism (1790), and selected readings of the Passion narrative (1800). Eventually this effort resulted in the translation of the whole Bible, the Moravian German song books, and numerous liturgical works.⁴²

German Loanwords in Inuktitut

The German linguistic presence of the missionaries is preserved in German loanwords introduced into Inuktitut, a procedure necessitated largely by the absence of cultural meanings and words from the native language. Spangenberg wrote of the conscious introduction of foreign words into native languages as follows. »By and by they perceive, that the heathen want words to express this or the other thing, with which they are either not acquainted, or have never before thought of. They then furnish them with new words, or else the heathen perhaps invent some.«⁴³

The lexical classification of German loanwords for Labrador Inuktitut can be divided into two categories: (a) practical and (b) biblical and theological.

Practical German Loanwords

Many of the practical German loanwords are words not found in the Inuit language but which were required for use in daily life and commerce. They included goods not available in Labrador such as the potato (*Katopalak* [a variation of the German word *Kartoffel*]), wheat (*Weizen*), silver (*Silber*) and gold (*Gold*).⁴⁴ Other loanwords helped regulate daily life, such as the introduction of the German calendar. The Inuit did not have a system of time based on a 7-day week or months or years, but rather on hunting and fishing seasons.⁴⁵ The Moravians needed to establish a 7-day-week system in order

42 For a comprehensive list of these Moravian translations, see »Verzeichnis der von seitens der Missionare in der Eskimo-Sprache angefertigten Schriften (1901),« Bethlehem Collection, CNS, reel 12, 15312-15318. See also »Katalog des Universitätsarchivs der Drucke und Manuskripte von sprachlichen Arbeiten (Herrnhut),« 15-21.

43 Spangenberg, 50.

44 A. Freitag notes in his grammar that these loanwords are capitalized in Inuktitut, presumably following the German practice of capitalizing all nouns. See A. Freitag, *Grammatik der Eskimosprache*, 1839, Bethlehem Collection, CNS, reel 13, 18267-8.

45 For this and the following see F.W. Peacock, »Languages in Contact in Labrador,« *Regional Language Studies*, 5(21 January 1974), 1.

to identify Sunday, the day of worship, and months in order to locate church festivals such as Christmas and Easter. The German names of the days of the week and the months were adopted to fill the void, as well as the German word *Jahr* for year. These German loanwords still appear in the Inuktitut translation of the daily texts which are sent to Labrador from Herrnhut.⁴⁶

Other loanwords were adopted where equivalents already existed in Inuktitut for reasons of efficiency, as in the case of the introduction of German numbers. Kleinschmidt furnishes the following description of the Inuit counting system: »One counts, not as we do to 10, but instead only to 5, i.e. only to the end of one hand; then one begins with the same numbers on the other hand, and then to one and then to the other foot. When all fingers and toes have been used up, then one person is finished and one begins with the second person. When that person is also finished, then the third, etc.«⁴⁷

The missionaries found this numbering system too unwieldy and substituted their own. The German numbers were used with appropriate Inuit suffixes well into the twentieth century. Rev. Peacock testifies that they were used during worship services as late as the 1940's to call out hymn numbers. The last remnants disappeared from the prayer book with the 1971 edition.⁴⁸

Biblical and Theological Loanwords

The missionaries encountered numerous problems in their efforts to translate biblical and theological terms. It was not always possible to find suitable equivalents in the Inuit language or even to explain a term using Inuit words. One needs only to think of the creation story to recognize the difficulties inherent in translating the Bible to people who knew only their northern culture. No Inuit, for example, had ever seen a serpent. Despite their determined efforts to find suitable Inuit equivalents, the missionaries did at times have to resort to incorporating their own German terms into the translations. German words *Tempel* for temple and *Harfe* for harp are characteristic of words borrowed for biblical terms unknown in the Inuit culture. Likewise, animals mentioned in the Bible but unknown to the Inuit of-

⁴⁶ The publication in Inuktitut of the daily texts, *Erkaumajaksat*, appears semi-annually and is available from the Moravian Provincial office in Happy Valley-Goosebay, Labrador.

⁴⁷ Kleinschmidt, 37.

⁴⁸ Peacock, »Languages in Contact,« 2.

ten received German names, such as *Taube* for dove, *Löwe* for lion, and *Kamel* for camel. They also used German words for biblical names and places.⁴⁹

More significant culturally, however, were religious concepts which lay at the heart of the Moravian theology, but for which there existed no analogies in the language of the Inuit. German words were used in Inuktitut for such Christian terms as saviour (*Heiland*) and holy (*hailing* or *heilig*). Drachart relates his difficulty in explaining the meaning of *saviour*, for example. After failing to make the term clear to the Inuit he resorted to comparisons, but his audience concluded only that the saviour was like a great man who would come to save them from the foreigner (he who is not an Inuit). He tried to explain what bad deeds were and then asked, »Don't you want to be saved from your bad thoughts, words and deeds?« They answered: »We don't know«, an indication that Drachart's listeners did not understand the Christian concepts of sin and salvation.⁵⁰

Indeed the German word *Sünde*, meaning sin, is an important religious term introduced into Inuktitut. The missionaries found no Inuit word to express the Christian notion of sin. Drachart struggled with this problem, as illustrated above, when he sought to convince the Labrador Inuit of their sinfulness and need for salvation. The Moravian missionaries introduced the term *Sünde* from the German and sought to render it relevant. Preserved among the early archival materials from Labrador is a single sheet of paper testifying to this Moravian theological imposition. The sheet, dated Nain 28 April 1789, contains 20 different forms of the word *sin*, ranging from choices in grammatical number to an attempt to match as many varieties of sin as

49 For specific examples of these German names and other loanwords see the devotional readings, »Freitags-Lectionen«, Bethlehem Collection, CNS, reel 14, 19504-19805, which contain, among others, the following loanwords: *Tempele* (19523), *Jahrik* (19524), *Profeteneglonet* (19525), *Petrus*, *Johannes*, *Hesekiel*, *Jakobuselo*, *Esralo* (19721); *Paulus* (19765); *Jesus Kristusse* (19765); *Israeliit* (19742); *Testamentib* (19724); *Apostelit* (19679); *Engelit hailigit* (19681); *Satanasib* (19714). For discussion and summaries of the loanwords, see also Peacock, »Languages in Contact« and Albert Heinrich and Erhard Treude, »Einige Entlehnungen aus dem Deutschen im Labrador-Eskimo«, in Leopold Auburger and Heinz Kloss (edit.), *Deutsche Sprachkontakte in Übersee: nebst einem Beitrag zur Theorie der Sprachkontaktforschung*, »Forschungsberichte des Instituts für Deutsche Sprache Mannheim.« Vol. 43, edited by Ulrich Engel and Gerhard Steckel (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1979), 89-93.

50 See »Journal von der Recognitions-Reise« (n.21), 103 and Kölbing, 33-34.

possible, from the »sin-less« (*Sünderotivok* = Er ist ohne Sünde) to the »sin-full« (*Sündolik* = voller Sünde).⁵¹

It can be argued that some of these German loanwords and their associated meanings changed Inuit culture - for better or worse - in a lasting way. The German language became in these instances a deliberate vehicle for new cultural choices.

Summary

Language played an important role in the Inuit/Moravian relations in eighteenth-century Labrador. Fluency in the Inuit tongue in the initial contact was the key to the acceptance of the first missionaries by the Inuit. The missionaries' faithful use of the Inuit tongue, along with their linguistic and lexicographic contributions in the form of dictionaries, grammars and translations, served to preserve the language and cultural identity of the Inuit, so that they did not become totally assimilated into the European community, as did their kinspeople to the south. In spite of their efforts to minister solely in the Inuit language, however, the missionaries did introduce new words and concepts, necessitated by practicality in the case of calendars and numbers, and by their mission role in the case of biblical terms. Although some anthropologists and cultural historians might criticize the missionaries for this imposition of new words and concepts on the culture such as native religious beliefs and nomadic lifestyle, these may have been lost anyway in contact with European merchants and traders, as they were in the south. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Moravian missionaries played a decisive role in preserving the Inuit language. By systematically learning and communicating in the language of the missionized, by giving the language a written form, by compiling dictionaries and developing grammars, the Moravians helped preserve the language and thereby cultural identity of a native group which might have been lost by a purely mercantile European culture contact.

Zusammenfassung

Im Gegensatz zu Johann Christian Erhardt, der des Grönländischen nur begrenzt mächtig war, konnte sich Jens Haven bei dem erneuten Versuch der Brüdergemeine, in Labrador Fuß zu fassen, in diesem der Sprache der Inuit in Labrador verwandten Idiom ausdrücken. Ihm gelang es 1771, die erste bleibende Station der Brüdermission in Labrador zu gründen.

⁵¹ Bethlehem Collection, CNS, reel 26, 38649.

Der Bedeutung, die die Brüdermission der einheimischen Sprache beimaß, ist es zu verdanken, daß die Inuit an der nördlichen Küste Labradors ihre sprachliche und kulturelle Identität bewahren konnten, dies im Gegensatz zu den von den Brüdern nicht besuchten Landsleuten im Süden. Bei der Erforschung des Grönländischen konnten die Brüder auf die Arbeit der lutherischen dänischen Missionare Hans Egede und dessen Sohn Paul aufbauen. Jedoch begannen sie bald, eigene Wortlisten, Wörterbücher und Grammatiken zu verfassen. Johann Ludwig Beck, der 1773 Bischof Paul Eugen Layritz nach Labrador begleitete, kannte die grammatikalische Arbeit seines Vaters Johann Beck und andere frühere Arbeiten. Er blieb 25 Jahre in Labrador und bildete gewissermaßen die Brücke zwischen den Sprachgebieten Grönland und Labrador. Auch zur grönländischen Grammatik von C.M. Königseer aus dem Jahre 1777 hatten die Brüder in Labrador Zugang.

Von Anfang bemühten sich die Missionare, auch liturgische Stücke, Lieder und die Bibel in das Inuktitut Nord Labradors zu übersetzen. Dabei standen sie vor der Aufgabe, für die in Labrador unbekannten Gegenstände oder für biblische Begriffe, die den Inuit in Labrador neu waren, Wörter zu finden oder zu schaffen. Gelegentlich halfen sie sich damit, daß sie deutsche Ausdrücke als Fremdwörter einführten, so etwa »Tempel«, »Harfe«, aber auch »Heiland«, »heilig« und »Sünde«. Wengleich der Einfluß solcher neuen Begriffe auf die Kultur der Inuit nicht übersehen werden kann, haben die brüderischen Missionare jedoch dadurch, daß sie die Sprache der Inuit lernten, sie lexikographisch und grammatikalisch erschlossen und ihr die Schriftform verliehen und damit einen wichtigen Beitrag nicht nur zur Erhaltung der Sprache, sondern auch der Kultur der Inuit geleistet.