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NOTE.—There are many subjects in Africa, such as Racial Characteristics, Political and Industrial Conditions, Labour, Disease, Currency, Banking, Education, and so on, about which information is imperfect and opinion divided. On none of these complicated and difficult questions has Science said the last word. Under these circumstances it has been considered best to allow those competent to form an opinion to express freely in this Journal the conclusions at which they themselves have arrived. *It must be clearly understood that the object of the Journal is to gather information, and that each writer must be held responsible for his own views.*

THE BANTU AND THE SEMI-BANTU LANGUAGES

EARLY in 1882, when reading up questions connected with South-west Africa, prior to taking part in the Earl of Mayo's Expedition to Angola and the Kunene River, I began to realise the remarkably interesting problem of the Bantu Languages, and read with attention the two slim volumes of Bleek's *Comparative Grammar of the South African Languages*. Bleek did not get beyond the phonology, the noun, its prefixes and concords in his comparative study, and he was only able to consult and describe about 34 Bantu languages, for the most part those spoken in the coastlands from the Tana River in East Equatorial Africa down to Cape Colony, and north-west from Cape Colony to Fernando Pô.¹

¹ William Heinrich Immanuel Bleek was a genius in African philology. As a student at Bonn University he gave his attention to African languages, and in 1851 wrote a treatise on them in Latin. This attracting the attention of the British Government, he was offered a post in one of our Niger Expeditions. He could not accept it, owing to delicate health, but I rather fancy he must

The present writer, carrying Bleek's unfinished work with him into South-west and West Central Africa in 1882-3, resolved to finish it; but to finish it in such a way that the scope should as far as possible include all the Bantu languages, and test Bleek's divination that there were in West Africa and the Nigerian Sudan forms of speech which, while lying outside the distinguishing specifications of the Bantu languages, were yet the descendants of sister language groups: in short, Semi-Bantu.

All my subsequent journeys and residence in Tropical Africa were turned to this end: to collect personally, whenever possible, vocabularies from native lips, making a point of writing these down, not from the rendering of interpreters, but from natives born to speak them. In this way I amassed much direct knowledge of the Angola, West Congo, Cameroons, and Cross River languages; those of British East Africa and Uganda, of South Central Africa and South-east Africa, and something of the Temne and Bulom of Sierra Leone. Quite recently also I have been accorded by the French Government facilities for interrogating the Senegalese troops in France, and have thus—as these negro soldiers come from all parts of French West Africa—discovered at least one never-before-recorded Semi-Bantu speech from the Upper Gambia basin, and, further, have been able again to check numerous vocabularies of Koelle's transcription and more accurately define their geographical area.

I should like to diverge at this point to say something about Sigismund Koelle. Like Krapf and Rebmann, Carl Mauch, and other noteworthy pioneers of the British Empire in Africa, he was a native of Würtemberg. He became an ordained minister of the Church of England and entered the service of the Church Missionary Society. By them he was stationed at Sierra Leone, specially to watch over the released

have got as far as Sierra Leone, on the West Coast of Africa, and there have found an opportunity of examining Temne and Bulom. At any rate, he was in close touch with Koelle and other missionary linguists working in that direction, and in the most remarkable manner (seeing the slightness of the material at his disposal) "sized up" the Semi-Bantu languages of Guinea, and insisted on their Semi-Bantu character. His views were long thought extreme and far-fetched, even by the present writer, but the latest researches go far towards proving the accuracy of Bleek's surmise.

slaves whom the British war vessels rescued from slaver ships and disembarked at Freetown. Koelle soon realised that these slaves came from all parts of Tropical Africa; from the West Coast, between the Sahara Desert and the Kalahari; from the very heart of Africa; from the South-east Coast and even from Abyssinia. It would be a fine piece of work, he thought, to write down their languages, or at least a test vocabulary which to a philologist might yield up a sufficient conspectus of the tongue recorded to fix its character and relationships. So he compiled that splendid monument of patient research, the *Polyglotta Africana*, which the Church Missionary Society printed and published (? in 1854). Now what I want to say about Koelle (whose statue should some day be erected in one of the open spaces of Freetown) is this:—I have made it my business during thirty-two years to track down his vocabularies, ascertain the exact locality where they are spoken (his own geographical information taken down from native lips has been wonderfully helpful in this and singularly accurate), and then have them repeated to my own ears; or, if I could not go there, to the hearing and writing-down of some fellow traveller—missionary or Government official—whom I could trust. My examination of the "Senegalese" soldiers in France was particularly helpful in this respect. And the outcome of my researches has been to identify and place accurately on the map all these vocabularies of Koelle's collecting that are Bantu or Semi-Bantu in character; and at the same time to show their trustworthiness. A few press errors have been detected and set right. There is also noticeable in Koelle, as in Krapf, that curious inability of the South German to distinguish between the upper and lower consonants, between *b* and *p*, *c* and *j*, *k* and *g*, *d* and *t*, *s* and *z*. But this confusion is only occasional. Another interesting result of this "trying-out" of Koelle is to show how very little many of these languages have altered in the interval of time—an average of sixty years—between their transcription by Koelle and their utterance at the present day.

I have not only visited a considerable proportion of Bantu Africa and semi-Bantu West Africa myself, but I have had

the further help of the visits to this country of many intelligent Africans who have come to work with me in London or in the country, assisting me to understand and record their languages and to check points in their pronunciation and its phonetic record. But if I had had to rely on my own researches, it is obvious that, even in thirty-three years of intermittent work, my net could not have been cast so as to include nearly every known or surmised Bantu tongue and a large proportion among the Semi-Bantu. Early in my undertaking I met with sympathetic help, notably from members of the great missionary societies—the Baptists of Great Britain and America, the Universities' Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the Portuguese missionaries of Angola, the French missionaries of the Gaboon and French Congo, the American missionaries of Gaboon, Angola, and Central Congoland, the London Missionary Society, the Scottish missionaries of Old Calabar and Nyasaland. George Grenfell's and W. H. Stapleton's MSS. were placed at my disposal by the Baptist Missionary Society and abound in unpublished and invaluable material, the more precious because two or three of the languages they recorded have ceased to exist. The Rev. Theophilus Parr has sent me a complete study of the Fernandian tongue in two dialects; Dr. Péringuey—Bleek's ultimate successor at the Cape Town Library—has had typed for me vocabularies collected by Livingstone, and never before published in any way. The British and Foreign Bible Society have done much to amplify my materials. The British South Africa Company, through their officials in Northern and Western Zambezia, have filled up many vocabulary forms, and have at last brought to light a complete linguistic conspectus of that peculiarly interesting portion of Bantu Africa—the basin of the Upper Zambesi. This quite new work has just been added to by Chaplain Edwin Smith (at present serving with the Army), who produced some years ago one of the best Bantu studies, the *Handbook of the Ila Language*. His MS. vocabularies and notes have solved several knotty points.

Nor have Government officials been in any way behindhand in these paths of research. Through the Hon. R. Coryndon I have received very full information concerning the South

and South-east African Bantu languages and dialects, and in a different direction Lady (Florence) Phillips has rendered much assistance as regards Kafir and Zulu dialects. I owe much in regard to East Africa and Zanzibar to the assiduity of Mr. A. C. Hollis and the Hon. C. W. Hobley and many of their—and my—colleagues, especially those who worked alongside me in my own service as an official. The war, so far from arresting this search after little-known and unwritten tongues, stimulated it, both in the Cameroons and in East Africa. I also owe a special debt of gratitude to Mr. Emil Torday, the Rev. H. Glennie, the Rev. Wm. Forfeitt, Miss Alice Werner, and Mr. A. C. Madan, whose collaboration has extended over many years. It is, indeed, partly due to Mr. Madan that the result of these researches is now being printed and will some day be published by the Oxford University Press.

But one of the objects of this paper is to draw attention specially to the more recent and remarkable among the discoveries that have been made by my helpers and myself. Mr. Bieneman, of the Nigerian Government Service, has collected much information and fixed the geographical locality of one of Koelle's most interesting fragments. If you consult Koelle's *Polyglotta Africana* with a knowing eye, you will find among the unclassified languages Jarawa, assigned quite rightly to the Bauchi country, north of the central Benue. The transcription is only fragmentary, but its Bantu or Semi-Bantu affinities stand out so markedly that they attracted the notice both of Strück and Migeod. To find a language which was almost Bantu in Eastern Nigeria was in itself remarkable, but dared one trust to Koelle's incomplete illustration and geographical definition? Accordingly, I wrote out to the Resident (Mr. F. Beckles Gall) who was governing Bauchi, and he most kindly enlisted the services of Mr. Bieneman, with the result that Koelle's fragment is confirmed, and I am in possession of much more material to theorise from. Then other Nigerian officials and the Rev. W. P. Low have checked Koelle and added much to his information concerning another interesting knot of semi-Bantu in the basin of the Kaduna River, nearer

to the centre of Nigeria and the Middle Niger River. Lastly, as regards the Semi-Bantu group, I have been enabled through the Senegalese soldiers to carry their range into the basin of the Upper Gambia, where I locate the Konyāgi language transcribed by me last autumn. On the same visit to France I added much to our knowledge of the (Semi-Bantu) Fulup, or Dyola tongue, spoken between the Casamance and Rio Grande; and gathered a *little* more information concerning the poignantly interesting Semi-Bantu of Portuguese Guinea, the which we know still almost entirely through Koelle's industry sixty years ago.

One of the most interesting of the new discoveries, however, is that of Dr. Cuthbert Christy, at present in the service of the Sudan Government. Dr. Christy, doing scientific research work in the southern part of the Bahr-al-Ghazal, had his attention directed by Captain White to an undoubted Bantu language spoken in the neighbourhood of the Tembura post and extending its range as far to the north as Wau and latitude $7^{\circ} 30'$ N. This is the Hôma language, and it is the speech of aboriginals and not of recent emigrants from the South. Hôma has borrowed root-words from the unclassified Sudanic speech forms around it, and imitated a little their harsher phonology; but in the main it is not only Bantu, but is closely allied to the Ababwa language of the Upper Wele-Mubañgi, about 200 to 300 miles to the south-east. The fact—apparently—that it is the language of an "aboriginal," long-established, agricultural population would seem to dispose of the explanation that its presence so far north of the Bantu sphere is due to any recent immigration from the south in the agitated tribal movements occasioned by the Dongolawi slave-raiders, or the conquering Azande or Mangbettu. More probably it is a vestige of the days when all the southern part of the Bahr-al-Ghazal region was within the Bantu area, and was a portion of the once continuous belt of Bantu speech which extended, perhaps, two to four thousand years ago, between the Bantu birthplace in easternmost Nigeria and the Nyanza Bantu of the Great Lakes [who are undoubtedly the most archaic in their language at the present day].

The evidence which I have collected, so far, all goes to

show that the Bantu mother language originated somewhere in—or on the border of—Eastern Nigeria; somewhere between the limits of the Middle Niger, the Benue, and the Yomadugu. Alongside it, as sister tongues, there grew up other prefix and concord languages, the ancestors of the speech-forms I call Semi-Bantu. Our most recent discoveries and the right application of old material go to show that there is a sufficient resemblance in word-roots, in phonology, and in syntax amongst the widely scattered surviving forms of Semi-Bantu for us to class them together—a family nearly related to the Bantu, and yet not within the Bantu formularies. They do not—each of these “pockets” of Semi-Bantu, discoverable between the Upper Gambia and the Gambia estuary on the west and the Bauchi Hills and Middle Benue in the east—present such a convincing homogeneity as do the Bantu languages, yet at the same time there is evidence which might be considered to show they had a common origin from some parent or from twin parents in Central Nigeria which were likewise ancestral to the Bantu family. From the information now in my possession I am able to arrange the Semi-Bantu languages thus:—

GROUP A.—*The Cameroons-Cross River Languages*, including Ekoi in many dialectal forms, Mbudikum (Do.), Manyāñ, Bali-Bamum, Ndob, Nso, Indiki, Nki, the Atam or Nde dialects, etc., etc. GROUP B.—*The Cross River-Calabar Languages* (including Korop or Ododop, Akayofñ, Olulomo, Uyanga, Akunakuna, and Efik, etc., etc.). GROUP C.—*The Benue Languages* (including Munshi, Boritsu or Afiteñ, Mbarike, Afudu, and Burum). GROUP D.—*The Bauchi Languages* (Jarawa). GROUP E.—*The Central Nigeria Languages* of the Kaduna Basin (Gurumana, Kamuku or Majinda, Bāsa). GROUP F.—*The Togoland Languages* (Lefana, Santrokofi or Bale, Avatime or Kedeā, Nyangbo-Tafi, etc., etc.). GROUP G.—*The Senegambian or Guinea Languages* (Temne and its dialects of Landoma and Baga, Bulom, Biafada, Pajade, Sarar or Shadal, Bola, Pepel, Kanyop, Dyola or Fulup, and Konyagi).

Group A stands rather apart from the others because of its greater affinities with the real Bantu. The languages of

Groups A and B have been fruitfully illustrated by Mr. P. Amaury Talbot, Mr. Dayrell, of the Nigeria Service, and, more recently, by Mr. Northcote Thomas; anciently by the Rev. Hugh Goldie; and at different times between 1885 and 1888 by myself. My manuscript vocabularies of these languages are considerable. A small portion of them was printed privately by the Foreign Office in 1888. Into Group C comes the remarkable Munshi language. For this, until quite recently, we had to rely on Koelle's accurate, but gappy, "Tiwi" vocabulary. But a few years ago Lieut. Hetley, of the W.A.F.F. Service, kindly sent me a MS. vocabulary of importance, and quite recently the African Society published an article on its syntax from Mr. A. S. Judd, which was quite new information. The other languages of this Group are also illustrated by Koelle, except Burum, which we only know through a translation (Gospel of St. Mark) recently published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. As a matter of fact, except that they are all Semi-Bantu, the languages I have grouped together in C have little affinity with one another, and are only comprised in the same group because of their geographical propinquity. Possibly further research in the Benue basin may reveal others equally "Semi-Bantu," which may act as connecting links. Burum appears to be spoken north of the Benue and the verge of the Bauchi country; the others are all attributed to the south of that river, though Munshi is also heard on the north bank. Burum comes in area quite close to Jarawa, the sole occupant of Group D, but exhibits no sign of near resemblance. Jarawa is said to be spoken in more than two dialects. Whether there are any other distinct Semi-Bantu languages in the mountain country of Bauchi is not yet known.

The Semi-Bantu speech-forms of the Kaduna basin (Group E) in the more central parts of Nigeria are exceedingly interesting. Probably there are others there not as yet recorded. Gbari, an important language spoken east and south of the Kaduna, and likewise the Nupe tongue, are *not* Semi-Bantu, as has been alleged. The Kaduna languages have points of affinity with Jarawa, but have kept rather more to the Bantu standard of syntax.

Leaving the Middle Niger for West Africa we take a big jump over hundreds of miles before we again alight on a Semi-Bantu group. We find this, however, in the *south-west* of Togoland. Here in the small district of Bwem, near the Lower Volta, there are quite a number of distinct Semi-Bantu tongues, each of them restricted to ten, twenty, thirty square miles of territory. They differ mostly quite materially from each other in affinities of word-roots, but yet resemble each other more than other forms of Semi-Bantu. They are rich in prefixes. There can be no doubt they are Semi-Bantu, though they have been much affected by the adjoining Ehwe speech (radically different). Besides those I have enumerated, and several others I did not think it necessary to mention, there are one or two other languages described in my book as being spoken in Central Togoland which are on the borderline: too divergent to be classed as Semi-Bantu, yet still retaining many Bantu features.

Again, another jump, and we land on the Sierra Leone coast and find the nearly extinct Bulom and its relations or dialects as the nearest Semi-Bantu speech to those of Togoland, far away to the east. Bulom has distinct but distant affinities with Temne of Western Sierra Leone. The status of Temne as a Semi-Bantu speech has been denied in latter years by two or three philologists. But I maintain emphatically that it is one, and that its word-roots and syntax connect it both with Bulom and with the numerous Semi-Bantu tongues of Portuguese Guinea. This is made clearer by an examination of the kindred Landoma and Baga languages, which are less specialised than Temne. The languages of Portuguese Guinea—Biafada, Shadal, Bola, Kanyop, etc.—are emphatically Semi-Bantu. So also is Dyola (Fulup, Felup, Filham, etc.). Dyola is spoken from near the Gambia estuary on the west to the Rio Grande on the east. It has recently been well illustrated as to its grammar and word-roots by the industrious Père E. Wintz. But I have studied it independently from Fulup soldiers in France and likewise written down full vocabularies. It is thrilling (if I may treat philology in such a human manner) to find so many "Bantu" roots in this language which is spoken in the western extremity of Africa,

and also to discern such markedly Bantu features (some of them shared by Temne) in its syntax.

A discovery of my own, due to indications given by the French colonial official, M. Auguste Chevalier, is Kon-yagi, a Semi-Bantu language spoken south of the Upper Gambia River. It has distant affinities with Fulup and even Temne. Its phonology is not like that of Bantu, but its prefixes, grammar, and word-roots are.

In spite of the industry of my friends and correspondents and myself, and even though in my book I pass in review some 320 Bantu and Semi-Bantu languages and dialects, our work is still incomplete. There are, indeed, many *lacunæ* to fill. Some of these might be made good before my book is published; others might come in for a later edition. As I cannot expect a very long tenure of life, I am humbly hoping that my work may be a kind of frame into which I shall place an unfinished mosaic or jigsaw puzzle; and that little by little all the gaps may be filled when the other workers find in Africa the missing pieces. In the hope, therefore, of tempting some reader of this JOURNAL to join our band and add his stone or pebble or binding mortar to the structure, I will give here instances of Bantu or Semi-Bantu languages badly in need of further illustration.

In Eastern Equatorial Africa we know that in the south-east coastlands of the Victoria Nyanza there exists a Bantu language (perhaps in two dialects) called *Ki-rori* or *Ki-shashi*. On the strength of several trustworthy explorers' assurances that it is a Bantu language, space for its illustration still remains open in my pages. It may be a near relation of the Nyamwezi tongues, or it may rather belong to the great Nyanza group. Next, as regards paucity of information and possibility of great interest, come *Bena*, *Gangi* and *Bunga*, *Mwera* and *Ki-dondo* of German East Africa. We don't know half enough yet about *Kese* or *Kisi* and *Ki-pangwa* of North-east Nyasaland; very little is recorded of *Nya-lungwa* of northern Lake Rukwa, and *Ki-manda* to the east of that salt lake. The northern *Ngindo* dialects, north of the Ruvuma, are barely known. There is a very interesting language, recorded by Livingstone only, from the north of Lake

Ngami, and thought to extend thence into Western Barotseland—*Makoba*, *Yeye*, or *Bakhoba*. Also very little known are *Nyengo* or *South Luyi* or *Bampukushu*, *Lujazi*, and *Kioko*. I want vocabularies of *Olu-ndombe* and *Olu-koroka* on the South Angola coast, and likewise of *Libolo*, *Kisama*, and *Sofigo* of West or Central Angola (south of the Kwanza). I badly need information about *Shinji*, *Minungo*, *Holo* (or *Hungu*), *Tembo*, and *Usuku* of the Kwango valley, and *Upindi* or *Ukwese* and *Basamba* between the Kwango and the Lulua. But for Mr. Torday's industry we should know nothing about several great groups of languages in Central Congoland, but thanks to his unremitting researches I do know a good deal (much of it as yet unpublished). But I would like to know much more, especially of the speech-forms north of the river and immediately south of the great northern bend of the Congo, such as *Jobo*, *Ikoko*, *Batende*, *Wadia*, *Imoma*, *Lesa*, *Sakata*, and *Batete* (*Ipanga*). Also we have no trustworthy records of the speech-forms on the Lower Sanga River (French Congo), while the Bantu tongues—spoken chiefly by pigmy tribes on the Upper Sanga and between the Sanga, the Lobai, and Mubangi—are shown by the scanty collections of Dr. Outilleau to be of the *highest* interest to Bantu students and deserving of copious illustration. (Some of these are named *Mbimu*, *Gundi*, *Pande*, *Bongiri*, *Bayanga*, and *Kaka*.) In the north-western portion of the Bantu field there is one speech slightly described by Carl Meinhof some sixteen years ago which is of exceptional interest. This is *Bati* or *Bacenga* of the Middle Sannagá. It is quite unlike the surrounding Bantu or Semi-Bantu tongues, has very original features, yet is orthodox Bantu and possesses pre-prefixes. I long for a full illustration of *Bati* (or *Bacenga*).

Among the Semi-Bantu tongues that require study and further illustration to confirm or supplement Koelle are: (1) The languages immediately south of the Central Benue; (2) the languages of the Kaduna; and (3) the Semi-Bantu languages (I have named them) of the coasts and islands of Portuguese Guinea. We also require to know much more about the two western dialects of Temne (*Landoma* and *Baga*).

They are of great interest as helping to link the aberrant Temne with the more obviously Bantu or Semi-Bantu languages of West Africa.

I am aware that the Kisi language (and its relations) of North-eastern Sierra Leone has affinities with the Semi-Bantu, and that the same remark in quite a different way might apply to the Agni or Chi languages and to Nupe, Igara, and even Ibo, of the Lower Niger. But my sieve has already a large mesh; and as my work threatens—as it is—to run to three volumes—at any rate, to two very thick ones—I cannot extend its scope to cover those African languages—doubtless legion—whose word-roots or numerals exhibit faint Bantu affinities. Such questions will receive, however, some treatment in my text.

Perhaps I may close this article by describing the general scope of my book, which has been thirty-two years in compilation. It commences with a history of Bantu research, from the sixteenth century to the present day, indicating that in the five centuries of European exploration of tropical Africa it was the Bantu language more than any other family of African speech that attracted the attention of the white peoples, notably the Portuguese, English, Germans, Swedes, and French. [Practically no attempt was made before the nineteenth century opened to transcribe any West African language outside the Bantu limits. No doubt this interest in the Bantu was aroused by the easy Italian phonology of nine-tenths of this family, the well-marked, logical, and not difficult syntax.] Next follows a general description of the Bantu language type and the features which define it and wherein it differs from other African speech families. Then come a long series of vocabularies of all the known Bantu languages and dialects—nearly 300 in all—and additionally of all the leading Semi-Bantu languages, together with illustrative notes on those Semi-Bantu which it is not necessary to treat in detail. Added to the vocabularies of noun-roots are the numerals, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and negative particles, and the principal verb-roots. Also a setting forth of the *pre*prefixes, prefixes, infixes, and suffixes of each language, so far as they are known. In this arrangement

virtually every known Bantu or Semi-Bantu language is enumerated and placed with more or less accuracy on the map, and all but about six or seven are illustrated to greater or less extent. It is probable that the enumeration—at any rate, so far as distinct languages are concerned—is well-nigh final. More dialects may very well be recorded of which at present I have no knowledge, but I do not think my helpers or myself have overlooked any distinct or important language of these two families, at any rate, of the Bantu.

In succession to the illustrative vocabularies above described, there are many pages of notes on the languages set forth, drawing attention to the special or peculiar features of each and its relationships, political or philological importance, or unimportance.

Then comes a section of the book to which I have devoted much care: an analysis of substantive word-roots, adjectival terms, pronouns, adverbs, and verb-roots, to show which are the most dominant and widespread, to exhibit the proofs they provide of relationship between the groups, and between Bantu and Semi-Bantu; the whole of this analysis being intended to give some clue to the past history of Bantu Africa, to the origin of the Bantu, and the lines of migration of the main divisions. There is an exhaustive treatment of the verb and its conjugation. Finally comes a bibliography, which is intended to give with accuracy the source of my information and the author's name, title of work, date and place of publication in respect of all books, pamphlets, or articles I have consulted, in addition to the many manuscripts in my possession. With regard to these last, measures will be taken for their careful preservation, so that if it be deemed necessary they shall be available for consultation.

The Oxford University Press, at the suggestion of Mr. A. C. Madan, undertook the publication of my book ("A Comparative Study of the Bantu Languages") some five years ago. The first chapters were printed before the war broke out in the summer of 1914. Then the output of proofs slackened and slackened until it occasionally reaches a standstill. This, of course, is one of the hundred effects of the war on all enterprise, and is chiefly due to the abstraction of men for

the army or for special Government work; and, further, to the fact that up to the present, though printing is eminently a work suited to women, women have not been inducted into that increasingly important industry.

However it may be, I trust I may live to see my life's work accomplished, if only because I know of no one sufficiently up in the subject to correct the proofs. I might state that the work is beautifully printed, and that the Clarendon Press have taken very great trouble at its start to cast—do you say “cast”?—a fount of type which ought to be the last word in phonetic spelling.

H. H. JOHNSTON.