

RECENT WORK IN BANTU PHILOLOGY¹

THE Congo languages enumerated in Dr. Cust's *Modern Languages of Africa* are Kongo, Kabinda, Teke, Buma, Yanzi, (now better known as Bangi), Gala (=Ngala), Runga, Rubunga, and Ituka. Very little was known about any of these, except the first,—in fact, of some, nothing whatever was known but the name. Vocabularies of Teke, Buma, and Yanzi were subsequently collected by Sir H. H. Johnston (see *The River Congo*, last chapter, pp. 443-463). Later research has not verified the last three names on the list, either because they were originally due to a mistake, or because the people bearing them have "moved on." Possibly they may be dialects of Lolo, Poto, or Ngombe.

The error of taking the part for the whole has frequently been illustrated in the study of African languages, and not least in the valuable work done by members of the Congo-Balolo Mission, who, to the confusion of philologists at home, have treated Lunkundu and Lomongo as separate languages, they being in reality dialects of Lolo.

¹ *Comparative Handbook of Congo Languages. Being a Comparative Grammar of the eight principal languages spoken along the banks of the Congo River from the West Coast of Africa to Stanley Falls, a distance of 1,300 miles, and of Swakili, the 'lingua franca' of the country stretching thence to the East Coast, with a Comparative Vocabulary, giving 800 selected words from these languages with their English Equivalents, followed by Appendices on six other dialects.* Compiled and prepared for the Baptist Missionary Society of London, by Walter Henry Stapleton, Missionary of the Society on the Upper Congo River. Yakusu, Stanley Falls, Congo Independent State, 1903. This important work should have been dealt with in the JOURNAL ere this, but its philological value and the interest of the questions raised in it, are too great for it to be dismissed with the short notice which is all it could have received at the time.

Suggestions for a Grammar of Bangala (The Lingua Franca of the Upper Congo) with 2,000 words and many useful phrases. Same author and publishers.

Grammatik der Kinga-Sprache (Deutsch. Ostafrika, Nyassagebiet) nebst Texte und Wörterverzeichnis von R. Wolff, Missionar (Berlin I) in Tandala. (Publications of the Berlin Oriental Seminary.)

The tongues treated of by Mr. Stapleton in his *Comparative Handbook* are, like those above referred to, nine in number; but only three names:—Kongo, Bangi (=Yanzi), and Ngala, are common to both lists. The remainder of Mr. Stapleton's items are:—Lolo (spoken by the Balolo in the great bend of the Congo), Ngala, Poto (Upoto and neighbourhood), Ngombe (inland country behind Upoto), Soko (mouth of the Aruhwimi), Kele (west of the Lomami), and Swahili.

There seems to be still a considerable degree of uncertainty about the phonetics of these languages. "I have found it difficult," says Mr. Stapleton, (*Preface*, p.n.), "to come to any definite decision as to the spelling of words, especially so with regard to the ending vowels, and, in some cases, the initial consonants." The sounds which occasion most perplexity are, *d* and *l*, *b* and *w*, *o* and *u*, *e* and *i*. "The word for *tongue* for instance has been spelt *lulimu*, *lolimu*, *lolimo*, *lolemo*, *lulemu*, and now would seem to be settling down at *lolemu*." This might either be due to uncertainty in native pronunciation, (which is apt to vary, especially as regards unaccented vowels,¹ and this, owing to the considerations presently to be adduced, might be the case to an unusual degree in the Congo region), or to the right sounds being different from both the alternatives proposed for expressing them in writing. Cerebral *d*, for example, might be heard by one European as *d*, by another as *l* or *r*. In the same way, the uncertainty between *b* and *w* might be caused by the difficulty of seizing the labial sound noticed by Dr. D. C. Scott in Nyanja (*Cyclopædic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language*, p. 661), and the Rev. W. Govan Robertson in Bemba.

It is curious to find that the Congo languages are all in a highly unstable condition, and some of them destined eventually to disappear—perhaps within a very short time.

¹ It has been the accepted rule that, in Bantu languages, the accent falls on the penult. Luganda and some of its cognate tongues do not invariably observe this rule (perhaps through Hamitic influence), and say *lulimi*, not *lulimi*. In the Congo languages, according to Mr. Stapleton, the law is somewhat different. "The main accent falls on the initial syllable of the stem. When more than two syllables . . . follow the accented syllable, a secondary and weaker accent falls on the penult."

The shifting of population on a large scale is a phenomenon which has gone on, in one part of Africa or another, ever since the continent became known to modern Europe. The "Giagas" of Congo in the seventeenth century; the "Zimbabwas" (whoever they may have been), in what is now British East Africa; the southward advance of the Bantu in the early days of the Cape Colony; the northward march of Mziligazi and Zwangendaba; the migration of the Makololo, and the irruption of the Yaos into the Shire Highlands, in 1861, are instances which will occur to every one. It might, perhaps, be suggested that this recent *Völkerwanderung* in the Congo region was initiated by the Arabs, when their trading and raiding parties first descended the river from Nyangwe in 1877. But the Bangala were then living where they now are, so that their migrations must have taken place prior to the above date. Like the Bobangi, they "have not occupied their present settlements very long. . . . Native informants tell me they came out on to the main River from the Mobangi by way of the Ngiri, and they account for dialectical differences by saying they came out in detachments, and that different inland people, who previously occupied the land between the Mobangi and the Congo, joined the various sections." Just so, I found that the population of a small area in the West Shire District (British Central Africa), was of an extremely miscellaneous character though all were called for convenience "Angoni," and all spoke Nyanja. The headman's father had come from the south of the Zambesi, (possibly as a small child among the boys carrying mats for Zwangendaba's warriors), and had eventually reached the north end of Lake Nyasa. The party skirted the head of the Lake, and worked their way southward (it was at some point during these wanderings, that my informant, who seemed to be between forty and fifty years of age, was born), till they reached Magomero, near Lake Chilwa. Thence, in the second generation, they turned to the west, crossed the Shire, and settled at Ntumbi, where I knew them. Some Magomero or other families, who had joined them on the march, came with them. (These, though habitually speaking Nyanja, knew a lan-

guage which they called Chimatengo, and of which I noted down a few words, though I have not been able to trace its locality.)

"More than one of these languages," says Mr. Stapleton, "is spoken by a small and rapidly diminishing number of people." Mr. Whitehead observed, six years ago, that the original Bobangi tribe "are fast disappearing, and the few that remain may be counted on the fingers," though the language is still spoken by "their slave descendants and the strangers who have come to dwell in their midst."¹ It is not clear whether any of these tribes are actually dying out, as we understand the term, or merely being absorbed by the surrounding peoples, as the Zulus, in Eastern Africa, have become merged in the Anyanja, Baronga, and others. In any case, the result is the same, as far as language is concerned; and a further cause of confusion exists on the Congo:—

"The policy adopted by the Government of manning its posts in the several districts by soldiers and their wives drawn from other tribes, the planting out of instruction camps containing soldiers gathered from all parts, with the mixed communities which grow up around them, together with the passing to and fro of steamers with their mixed crews, are producing changes in the riverine languages of the upper River at a rate undreamt of ten years ago. Already the Bangi language, the Lolo language spoken about Coquilhatville and the mouth of the Lulunga, the Poto language and the Soko language, may be said to be in the melting-pot."

It might naturally be expected that the outcome of all this should be the evolution of a common speech for all the Congo—or, at any rate, the Upper Congo—tribes. And, in fact, the beginning of such evolution is already visible. A jargon called "Bangala" (not to be confounded with the Ngala language, which is, however, one of its constituents) has grown up, and "is spreading rapidly over the whole of that part of the Congo, which has never passed under the dominion of the Arabs." It is compounded of

¹ *Grammar and Dictionary of the Bobangi Language*. (Introduction, p. v.)

Bangi, Lolo, and Ngala,—or rather, its basis consists of the elements common to these. Though tending to rid itself of the alliterative concord and other inflections, "it is by no means the grammarless jargon of Pidgin English, for it has arisen, not from the endeavour of the black man to speak a language belonging to a totally different language-family, but from the endeavour of a number of people of one race, speaking languages of the same family, to reach a common medium of intercourse; though it must be admitted that the unwillingness shown by white men to take the trouble to learn the Ngala language, and to speak it at all grammatically, has sadly marred the product." The Government, forced by the necessities of the case to fix on a common medium of intercourse, has now adopted this idiom, which is "more or less spoken from the Atlantic to Lake Tanganyika, and from the Upper Kasai to the Nile. . . . Already thousands have been born to the State forces to whom 'Bangala' is the only mother tongue they know; and thousands of the workers, drawn from the different tribes of the Congo basin, are forgetting their parent speech, whilst they speak the 'Bangala' with amazing fluency. . . ."

The need for directing a movement which cannot—even were that desirable—be suppressed, and of preventing as far as possible the stunting of a people's mental development through the use of a debased and inadequate jargon, has suggested to Mr. Stapleton the preparation of a tentative Grammar and Vocabulary of "Bangala." The result is a little book, which, no doubt, will prove extremely useful, practically, and which is no less interesting from the philological point of view. "Bangala" has, as already stated, lost the alliterative concord; and adjectives are indeclinable, having a definite prefix attached to their stems, as *mosusu*, "another" (*mondele mosusu*, *nsusu mosusu*, *litambala mosusu*), *mabe*, "bad," (*batu mabe*, &c.). The preposition *na*=and, with, has been substituted for the possessive particle, as *ndeko na moto*, "the friend of the man" (lit. "with the man"); *batu na makonji*, "the people of the chief." The numerals are invariable, those from two to five having the prefix *mi*. There is a curious

tendency to shift nouns out of the third, or nasal (Bleek's ninth) class into the second (MU-MI). There are two reasons for this, one being that second-class nouns have a collective plural of the third class; thus, *mwete*, a tree, *miete*, trees; but speaking of a large or indefinite number, *njete*, trees. Conversely, nouns of the third class are used as collective plurals: *ntako*, brass rods, and transferred into the second for the ordinary singular and plural: *mōtako*, *mitako*. The other reason is "the fact that the Ngombe, the Basoko and the Lokele peoples are steadily ridding their nouns of the nasal which is difficult for them to pronounce. Other speakers, who have been accustomed to use the nasal as the prefix characteristic of these nouns, object to using the stem only, and add the most popular prefix *mo*."

This phenomenon of the indefinite or collective plural is found in Ngala, Poto, Ngombe, and Kele, and also exists in Cwana, where, however, it applies to the third class as well as the second, and *ma* is the prefix used. "To express multitude, as of trees, animals, &c., the prefixes *me* [= *mi*] and *li* [= *si*, or the nasal], are often supplanted by *ma*, e.g. *mothloare*, an olive tree; *metlhoare*, olive trees; *matlhoare*, many olive trees; *nku*, a sheep; *linku*, sheep; *manku*, many sheep." (Crisp, *Notes towards a Secoana Grammar*, p. 5.)

"Bangala" has frankly given up the possessive adjective. The emphatic or "self-standing" form of the personal pronoun is preceded by *na*; so that "my" is literally "with me," and so on. The forms of these pronouns (*ngai*, *yo*, *yeye*, *biso*, *bino*, *bango*), belong to Bangi, though some are also common to the neighbouring languages. *Yeye* is found in Swahili, but the plural forms are somewhat unusual, and, we fancy, peculiar to the Upper Congo. While the inseparable pronominal prefix is used with verbs, as elsewhere, (*na-ko-ya* = I am coming; *o-ko-ya*; *a-ko-ya*), the "self-standing pronoun" can be used in the present tense, without the said prefix. *Ngai ko-ya* is a construction which a Zulu would at once class with *mina hamba*, and such like, as *isipiki* or "kitchen kafir"; yet the tendency which produces it seems to have been at work on the Upper Congo quite

independently of European influence. Mr. Stapleton's note is interesting.

"The Present Tense has long been the subject of derision, as a fine example of the ungrammatical forms current in 'Bangala.' On the lower reaches of the upper River, no tense was known which dispensed with the Pronominal prefixes. This very tense, however, is in use in Lokele, the principal language of the Stanley Falls group, and in the same sense as in 'Bangala,' thus, *imi koke*, I am going, *iyo kokela ongoma lise la lise*, they do so every day. This fact indicates that early criticism of 'Bangala' did not take into account the wide area from which the natives who formed this 'lingua franca' were drawn."

Coming back to Mr. Stapleton's *Comparative Handbook*, we find in the section on the verbs matter for a lengthy treatise. Kongo, as we know it from Mr. Bentley's Grammar, suggests, either that the verb is much more fully developed than in the other Bantu tongues, or that it has been less subject to decay. The "conjugations" are, at first sight, a feature which strikes one as peculiar; but probably they survive in the rules by which the Nyanja "applied" suffix varies from *era* to *ira*, according to the vowel in the verb-stem. Kongo has four conjugations, (a) verbs having *a*, *u* or *i* in their stems; (b) same vowels with a pure nasal; (c) *e* or *o* in the stem; (d) same with a pure nasal. In general, with a few insignificant exceptions, Bantu verbs end in *a*: in Bangi, Ngala, Poto, Ngombe and Kele, they may end in *a*, *e*, or *o*; and these terminations (which influence the vowel of any suffix the verbs may take) constitute three conjugations. Tense-suffixes play a much larger part than we are accustomed to see in Bantu. The Emphatic Imperative (Ngala: *jala-ka*, *bete-ke*, *kolo-ko*) might be the systematic working out of the casual-seeming particles which Zulus employ to add force to a request or command:—*hamba-ke*, *tula-bo*, &c. Or it might be the original structure of which these are mere sporadic survivals.

The negative tenses, again, are worth notice, and pp. 164-173 should be attentively studied. With regard to the Infini-

tive, we find that Ngala has replaced the almost universal *ku* by *la* and Lolo by *jo*. Kongo (except for the verbs *kwenda* and *kwisa*), Ngombe and Soko have dropped the infinitive prefix altogether, while Poto and Kele have reduced it to *o*, which we also find on the other side of the continent, in Makua.

The Derivative Verbs, or "Forms of Verbs," (called by German Bantuists the "Verbal Species"), are peculiarly abundant in the Congo languages. Mr. Bentley, what with secondary and tertiary derivatives and multiple compounds, has concluded that there are over 300 possible forms for any given verb, some of them involving no less than four different modifications. Mr. Stapleton is not altogether in agreement with the method by which this conclusion is arrived at; and I am disposed to side with him, at any rate as regards the Perfect, which is always something of a puzzle.

"According to Mr. Bentley's rule, the Perfect of the Verb must be dealt with as a Verb 'Form.' But it is evident that the Perfect is not a 'Form' of the Verb in the same sense as the causative 'Form.' It is not subject to mood and tense inflexion as are the other 'Forms'; it is really a tense, and as such Mr. Bentley is constrained to find it a place in the table of tenses." At the same time, the student is perplexed by finding that the Perfect is not altogether a tense as we understand the word,—that is, it does not invariably refer to past time, but rather implies a state of completion, as in Zulu, *ulele*, the perfect of *lala* ("sleep" or "lie down"), means "he is lying down,"—i.e., he has lain down, and is recumbent. Or, *ngihlesi kahle* = "I am well," where *hlesi* is the irregular perfect of *hlala*. This usage may be compared with the Greek *olōa*.

The Native stories and proverbs contained in Chapter xi, and the sections introductory to the Comparative Vocabulary (pp. 249-267) are particularly interesting and suggestive. Under the heading "Dialectical Growth" we get some sidelights on the way in which language is transformed. New words are introduced, perhaps by the village orator, perhaps by a passing stranger, or a wife from a distance, and speedily become the fashion. Sometimes the older people resist the innovation, and we get two distinct vocabularies in the same

village. "As a general rule, the native catches at a new word as eagerly as the London street boy seizes the latest slang. In five years at Monsembi I have heard three new names for a gun. First it was called *mbau*, this was followed by *bota*, this again by *bondoki*, and this later by *fataki*. It seems likely now that *bondoki* will live as the name for the breech-loader, and *fataki* for the flint-lock." *Bondoki*, of course, is the Swahili *bunduki*; we find in "*Bangala*" a further modification, through the *bo* being mistaken for the plural prefix, and giving rise to a singular, *mondoki*. The word has, indeed, travelled far from the original *Venediga*¹ It will be agreed by everyone who examines this book, whether he accepts all Mr. Stapleton's conclusions or not, that a real service has been rendered to the cause of linguistics.

The Wakinga are a tribe inhabiting the Livingstone Mountains, which skirt the eastern edge of Lake Nyasa, in German East Africa. Herr Wolff has gathered the materials for the work before us during a seven years' sojourn among them, in the service of the Berlin Mission. Their most powerful chief is Umwimutsi, or Unkwama; but they have four other big chiefs, (*unkuludeva*; minor ones are called *untwa*), whose relations to Umwimutsi and to each other are not specified. Their language very much resembles that of their neighbours on the north and east—the Wasango, Wabena and Wahehe; but markedly differs from Konde. The author's phonetic notation is based on Professor Meinhof's, with the omission of some of the more complicated symbols. *K*, *p*, and *t* are "explosive" or aspirated, "by nature," (as we might say), so that separate signs are unnecessary to distinguish the explosive from the simple sound. *K*, Herr Wolff tells us, sometimes sounds like the German *ch* in *ach*. It is a pity that *x* or the Greek *χ* has not been used to indicate this sound; unless indeed it is meant that it varies in the same word, as *l* and *r* do elsewhere; but this is not clear. *J* apparently has the sound of *dy*, as in Luganda the corresponding sound of *c* (*ch*) is replaced by *ty*:—this last seems to be absent in Kinga. Not having

¹ Arab name for Venice, whence flint guns first travelled to the East and Africa.—Ed.

a native at hand, it is not easy to form an idea of the sound Herr Wolff calls "g mit Kehlverschluss," and writes *g̃*. We own to being somewhat puzzled by the remarks on long and short vowels (p. 1), and, in the last paragraph of the section, the author seems to mean by quantity what is usually called accent.

"Die zweite Silbe der zweisilbigen Präfixe, der anlautende Vokal der Nomina nach Kl. 3 und die vorletzte Silbe eines jeden Wortes sind der Regel nach lang, die übrigen Silben dagegen kurz."

The phonetic changes caused by a change of prefix or termination (e.g. when a noun is formed from a verb, or a verb takes the causative ending *ya*) occupy several pages. In the case of the causative, *y* drops out, and *k*, *t*, *p*, *v*, *h* and *n* all pass into *s*. The prefix of the third class (*eni*) exerts a strong influence on the initial consonant of the stem; the stem of *emene* (a goat) is *-pene*, of *enumbula* (heart) *-tumbula*.

There are thirteen noun-classes. It will facilitate comparison if we give an example of each, adding the number of the class in Bleek's arrangement, which Herr Wolff has not in all cases observed.

1. umunu,	a person	Pl. avanu	B. 1, 2.
2. undomo,	mouth, lip	„ emilomo ¹	B. 3, 4.
3. embogo,	buffalo	„ imbogo	B. 9, 10.
4. ekidenge,	gourd	„ isidenge	B. 7, 8.
5. akapene,	small goat	„ utupene	B. 13, 14.
6. eliho,	eye	„ amiho	B. 5, 6.
7. ulubeki,	stick, wand	„ inibeki	B. 11, 12.
8. uvuhevete,	meal	no pl.	B. 14.
9. ukuswa,	death	no pl.	B. 15.
10. ugunu,	a disagreeable person	no pl. ²	
11. (Locative)	mbanu, (= mu avanu), among people.		
12. „	pantwe, on the head		B. 16.
13. „	kuvukinga, to (or from) the Kinga country.		

¹ *Undomo* for *umlomo*; *ml* becomes *nd* in Kinga.

² This is analogous to what the Rev. W. E. Taylor calls the "ji 'Monster' Class" in Swahili, indicating "something abnormal in size or character," as *jitu*, "an ill-conditioned person." In Nyanja, the prefix, *ci*, sometimes has the same significance. I cannot recall anything analogous to *agw*. [This prefix reappears in Luganda and Lunyoro.—Ed.]

We have a number of adjectives derived from verbs—a stage beyond the relative formation which as often takes the place of the adjective. Thus—*valasu*=white, from *uku-valala*, *-kangasu*,=hard, firm, from *uku-kangala*, *-olosu*=much, from *ukw-oloka*=to increase, *-omu*=dry, from *ukw-oma*. As in Zulu the initial vowel is dropped when an adjective is used predicatively—*ungunda umbaha*=the large garden, *ungunda mbaha*=the garden is large. By an extension of this usage, noun and adjective may both use their initial:—

tsungwa mbaha="that is an elephant, it is large."

The numerals are: 1, *-pamato*, 2, *-veli*, 3 *-datu*, 4 *-ni*, 5 *-hano*, 6 *ntanatu* (explained as a contraction of *umtatu na tatu*), 7 *lekelakupamato*, 8 *nana*, 9 *budikakupamato*, 10 *kitsigo*. The words for 7 and 9 apparently mean "leave one (finger)," and "shut up all but one";—*budika* means to have the hand closed, with the thumb between the middle and third fingers, in order to show the number five.

On a superficial view, we find many points in this language to remind us of Yao, especially in its phonetic changes; very probably it supplies a link between Yao, Hehe and Sango. Herr Wolff has, we are glad to see, paid some attention to the folk-lore, and supplies eight stories, which are well worthy of study, as well as a number of riddles, and a song. The song is an address to a chief, of the same nature as the *isibongo* of the Zulus, except that it dwells not on his powers in war, but on his generosity to his subjects. The riddles are of the usual kind:—"What walks, day and night, without resting?—The river." "What cannot be caught?—The wind." Some show a certain degree of observation. "One passes by, playing on the *eligombu* (a stringed instrument).—Answer: the *elidede*" (a kind of wasp, whose buzz is meant). "What is it of which both ends are alike? (of which you cannot distinguish the front from the back.) *Esyagaha* (the larva of the bee.)"

The stories are very interesting. In the first the jackal plays the same trick as in "Le Chacal, la Colombe et la Panthère" (Jacottet's *Contes Populaires des Bassoutos*, p. 38),

where he eats up the panther's cubs one by one, while pretending to take care of them, and deceives the mother by showing her the same one several times over. In the Kinga tale, it is a woman with four children who suffers, and the sequel is disastrous for the jackal :—the mother calls on all the animals to come with her to the witch-doctor, who makes a great fire, and challenges those present to jump over it in order to prove their innocence.¹ All do so in safety, except the murderer, who falls into the fire and is burnt. In "The Heron's Feather," as in "Masilo et Masilonyane," the Xosa "Unyengebule," and a number of other stories, a murder is made known by a bird which, though killed over and over again, perpetually comes to life. In the story of "The Lake," where a boy is buried alive by some malevolent neighbours, his voice is heard by his sister when she comes to draw water near the spot. The girl was afraid at first to speak of this, but finally told her mother, who came down with her, heard her son's voice, and fetched a hoe to dig him up. He was not dead, though "decomposed on one side." They carried him home and kept him in the house for three days. On the fourth, the parents and sister went out to hoe, leaving the boy with strict injunctions on no account to fetch fire, should any strangers come to ask him to do so. Some chiefs came and sat down by the hut to smoke. They sent him for fire, and when he declined to bring it, threatened to beat him. He then complied and was at once transformed into water—the site of the hut becoming a lake. The chiefs (very naturally) fled, and the disaster was made known to the parents (as in the last story) by a bird. The tale ends with a curious touch. "Then they (the parents) went to the people who had buried the boy, and hanged themselves in their hut. But they (the murderers) killed them completely." That is, they "made siccar" in case the hanged ones might recover and accuse them to the authorities.

In "Unyandemula," a girl who has been carried off by witches is restored to her mother on condition that she must

¹ This incident of the ordeal frequently occurs in other combinations, as where the Hare makes all the other animals jump over a string (in *Contes et Chants des Baronga*, p. 103).

never be scolded; the taboo is broken, and the girl becomes water. All these stories are well worth a careful examination—firstly in order to determine the elements which they possess in common with other Bantu folk-tales, and the variations introduced, and secondly for the realistic details of native customs and ways of thought mixed up with their excursions into the marvellous.

A. WERNER.