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## A New Perspective on Bantu Expansion and Classification Linguistic and Archaeological Evidence Fifty Years after Doke

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### INTRODUCTION

Striking similarities in structure and vocabulary among the Bantu languages are such that the analyst cannot fail to note their common ancestry once descriptive data are available. Indeed, the genetic relatedness of the so-called Bantu languages has been uncontroversial for more than a century. The common origin of the Southern African Bantu languages had been noted very early in the nineteenth century by Lichtenstein and others, but the credit for 'discovering' the wider unity of the Bantu languages is usually accorded to Bleek, who coined the term 'Bantu' (*Bâ-ntu*) to refer to the family in 1858 (Silverstein [1968] 1993:17-18).<sup>1</sup> Determination of this genetic connection is usually based on (a) a repertoire of inherited common lexical stock, and (b) a distinctive system of grammatical genders, or noun classes, marked by prefixation and extensive concordial agreement patterns (Guthrie 1948:11).<sup>2</sup>

Almost immediately after Bleek coined the term *Bantu*, there was a reification of this linguistic label into an ethnic one. Later, the classification of these languages effected ethnographical considerations. As Wilson and Thompson noted (1969:76), the classification of Bantu-speaking people is based upon 'a marked tendency for differences in

custom to coincide with differences in language'. The classification of individual communities into one or another language group (as opposed to the classification of groups into the larger 'zones'; cf. below) is relatively straightforward. The minor disputes usually involve a discord between linguistic classification and perceived cultural affinity, and typically, though not always, they occur in geographic boundary areas (for example, the Lovedu are said to be Sotho in their language but Venda in social organisation). The tendency to parallelism in linguistic and cultural groupings, and the possibility that such groupings have a priori historical significance have granted linguistic classifications a central status in the historical literature.

The first comprehensive classification of the Bantu languages was unquestionably that of Doke (1945). There are, by various estimates, between 300 and 800 Bantu languages, the difference arising from the well-known difficulty of differentiating language and dialect groupings. Obviously, the sheer number of related languages, spread

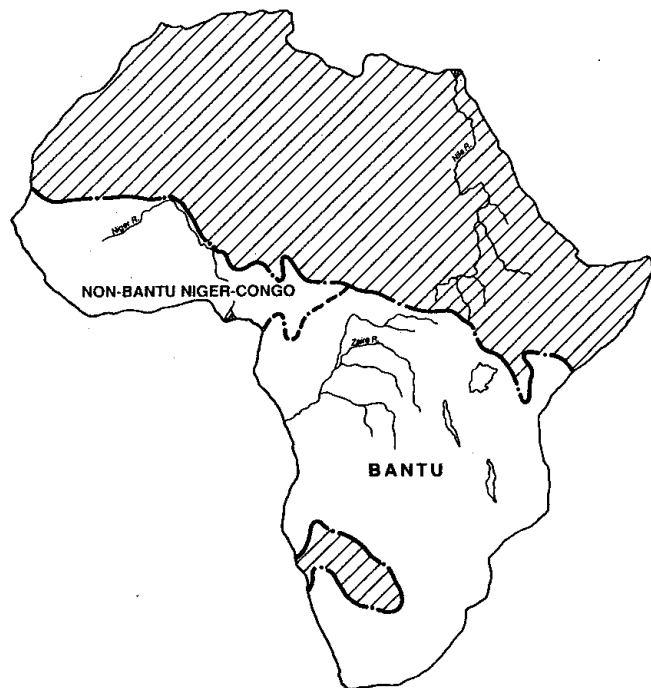


Figure 1. Present-day distribution of Niger-Congo languages, including Bantu sub-family.

over the southern half of the African continent (Figure 1), calls for a system of classification if for no other reason than to 'evolve some order out of the chaos' (Doke 1945:1). Doke's primary objective, however, was not to classify Bantu languages; rather, the classification was a by-product of his catalogue of linguistic studies prepared for the International African Institute. Consequently, there are notable gaps; in many instances data for particular languages were scanty, and Doke was guided by his intuition and 'feel' for languages. Doke also noted that, 'it is not our purpose to record all the dialects, or even all the languages, but to make reference only to the more important ...' (1945:1).<sup>3</sup> Doke seems to have lost interest in classification, and it was his student, Desmond Cole, who expanded the scheme. He imposed a numerical grid, and was responsible for its complete publication in 1961. It is a curious feature that Guthrie (1948) barely acknowledges Doke's scheme, although the two are strikingly similar in many respects. In the same fashion, Cole's later publication of Doke's classification overlooks Guthrie's (1948) full-scale classification. Perhaps because Doke had a strong descriptive bias, language classification, particularly with regard to its historical implications, never became a major activity of Doke or his followers.<sup>4</sup> It is nevertheless fitting to consider progress in this field since Doke's comprehensive classification nearly fifty years ago.

### THE BASES OF DOKE'S AND GUTHRIE'S CLASSIFICATIONS

To evaluate the progress in classification, it is useful to recognise four broad types of classificatory schemes: *genetic*, *typological*, *areal*, and *referential*. These four types address different needs and goals; consequently, their data and methodology vary (cf. Heine 1980:295-98; 1993:1-2). Only genetic classifications have historic implications.

Of the above-mentioned scholars, Doke is the most careful in not confusing referential and genetic classification.<sup>5</sup> All early schemes of Bantu, however, were referential, that is, they were admittedly ahistorical, designed solely to impose some system of reference upon the chaos presented by the sheer number of languages. Some of these schemes were conservative; for example, Bryan (1959) provided a list of eighty-three separate groups and single units, carefully avoiding any claims of closer relationships. The association of language groups into 'zones', on the

other hand, was a regular feature of the work of some scholars, most notably Doke and Guthrie.<sup>6</sup>

Doke first defined *groups* as 'aggregations of languages possessing common salient phonetic and grammatical features, and having a high degree of mutual understanding'; on the other hand, the division into *zones* was 'mainly a geographical classification', although Doke (1945:1) also defined the zone as an area 'characterised by uniform or similar linguistic phenomena' [emphasis added] (Figure 2). This terminological distinction between group and zone was borrowed by Guthrie (1948:73), who noted, 'the group is a unit with a purely linguistic significance, whereas the zone is not' (Figure 3).<sup>7</sup>

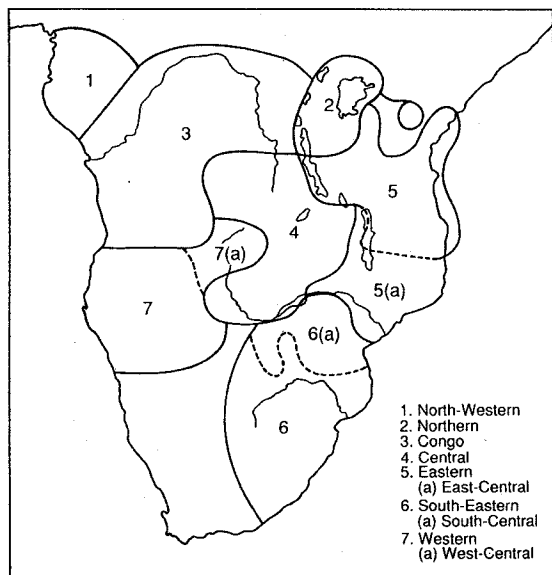


Figure 2. Doke's Bantu language zones.

The assignment of dialects and languages to particular 'groups' by Doke and Guthrie follows from the relatively shallow time depth they postulated for a period of common identity (for example, Proto-Nguni). Doke does not directly address the question of intermediate development, but Guthrie (1948:73) explicitly excludes the possibility of reconstructing intermediate stages:

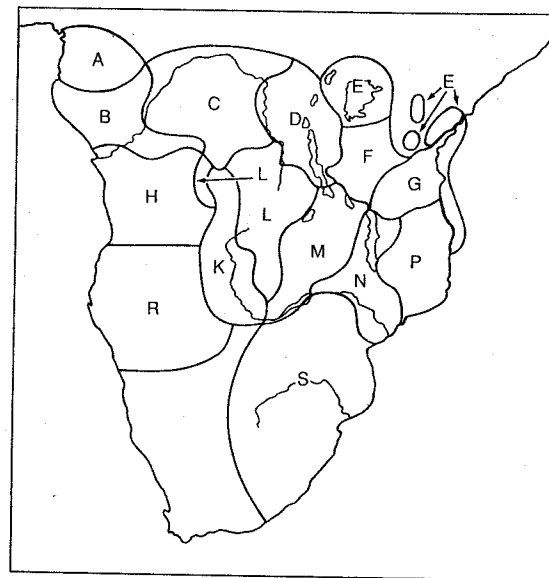


Figure 3. Guthrie's Bantu language zones.

Any who may have looked in vain for some indication of the closeness of the relationship between one group and another should bear in mind that there is no standard against which to measure such relationships ... [I]deas on this subject ... could not have a truly objective basis.

These two early scholars were careful, then, to note that the arrangement of groups into zones was – to a greater or lesser extent – a convenience of organisation and that the demarcation between zones was somewhat arbitrary. Despite these caveats, these zones have been transformed by a generation of scholars from a diversity of disciplines into groups of languages (and peoples) implicitly sharing a period of common development and therefore common (intermediate) ancestry distinct from other groups within the Bantu family. Such confusion is vaguely suggested by Doke's later work (1954, for example) where schematic representations of language relationships closely resemble 'family trees'. Guthrie himself seems to have forgotten the 'practical' basis of his early classification (Guthrie 1948:27), for in his magnum opus *Comparative*

*Bantu* (1967-1971), he used these practical zones as if they were genetic units.<sup>8</sup> All his speculation about the homeland and history of Bantu-speaking peoples is based upon this fundamental error (cf. Vansina 1979:291-92).

### DEGREES OF RELATEDNESS

Linguists have long devoted their attention to the subgrouping of languages within particular zones or arbitrary geographic areas (for example, Van Warmelo 1927) and to the reconstruction of proto vocabulary. Guthrie (1970:38) provides a family tree of sorts (Figure 4;

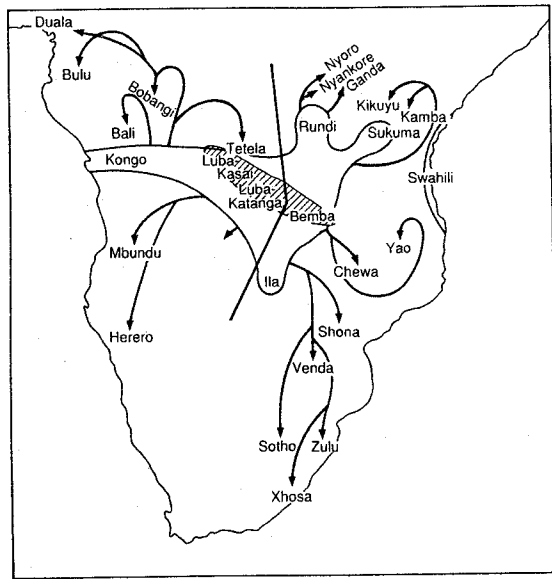


Figure 4. Guthrie's (1970) genealogical tree. Hatched area represents the central homeland.

cf. Guthrie 1971:II,27), and he postulated a Bantu nucleus in Katanga, in more or less the geographic middle of present-day Bantu-speaking populations, thus explicitly rejecting Greenberg's (1955) earlier postulate of a homeland in the Cameroons. Guthrie's nuclear area was accepted by Cope ([1971] 1993) and by a generation of London scholars, who

struggled valiantly to maintain the canon, but Greenberg's earlier hypothesis is now almost universally accepted by scholars from all disciplines, in part because it is based on a wider genetic classification.<sup>9</sup>

It is to Guthrie that we also owe the basic distinction between Eastern and Western Bantu (Figure 5). One important feature of an Eastern vs.

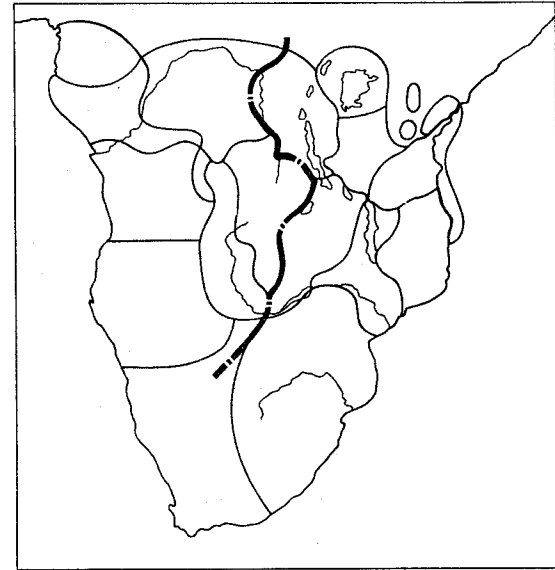


Figure 5. Guthrie's Eastern-Western Bantu division.

Western division is its historical implications: the two units are claimed to represent valid sub-groups within the family. Until recently it was generally believed that Eastern Bantu evolved out of Western Bantu somewhere along the eastern side of the tropical forest (for example, Ehret 1973, Heine 1973). In Heine's classification most languages to the east and south-east of the forest belong to an 'East Highland Group' that includes Doke's Northern, Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Zones (Figure 6). The essential point for us now is the high correspondence between Heine's East Highland Group and Guthrie's Eastern Bantu, as well as Dalby's (1975) Proto-Bantu 3. This view of Eastern and Western Bantu has been particularly influential among archaeologists and historians.

There are no good theoretical reasons to insist that Eastern Bantu was

generated out of Western Bantu. On the contrary, so-called Eastern Bantu must have evolved in the original Cameroon homeland after Western Bantu speakers had moved into the tropical forests of the Congo Basin. Archaeological research has a bearing on these points.

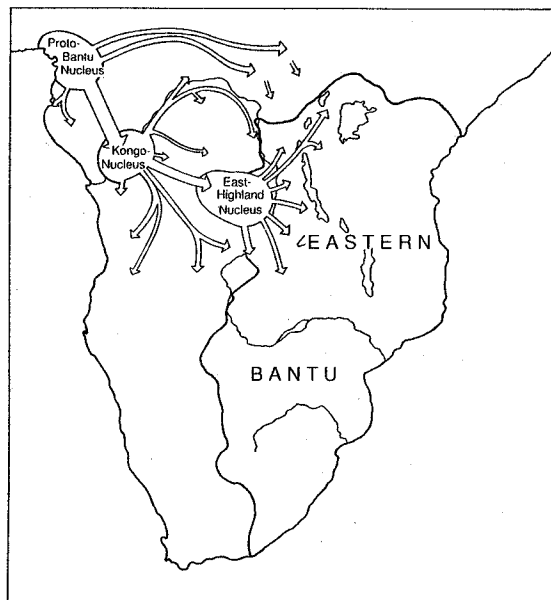


Figure 6. Heine, Hoff and Vossen's (1977) reconstructed expansion of the East Highland Group.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The general correlation between Iron Age archaeological entities and the Bantu language family is well known (Huffman 1970, Phillipson 1977, Posnansky 1968), but the evidence is often misunderstood. First, at European contact only Bantu speakers had an Iron Age way of life. This lifeway did not simply comprise settled villages and the production of metal objects. For Eastern Bantu speakers, it included *inter alia* hereditary chiefs, the exchange of cattle for wives, a patrilineal ideology about procreation and a belief that ancestors influenced daily life. In Southern Africa at least, this world view generated a specific settlement

organisation known as the Central Cattle Pattern. This is cogent because the complex internal organisation of a settlement is most probably the specific product of a specific world view. As far as one can tell from the ethnographic record, the Central Cattle Pattern was associated with a world view held exclusively by Eastern Bantu speakers (see, for example, Kuper 1982). Western Bantu speakers, on the other hand, tend to be associated with a matrilineal ideology of procreation, with marriage involving brideservice to a future father-in-law, with leadership by 'big men' who achieve their position through talent and influence, and with settlement patterns based on generational organisation (Huffman 1989a).

Secondly, some Western and Eastern Bantu groups can be connected through material culture to various Iron Age entities. Material culture can reflect group identity because it incorporates an arbitrary but nevertheless integrated and repetitive code of cultural symbols. To be used and understood, this code has to be learned by a group of people speaking the same language. Ceramic style is part of this integrated and repetitive code. Archaeologists use ceramic style in particular to recognise prehistoric groups because ceramics are often highly decorated, and are the most common remains on Iron Age sites. By tracing backwards in time period by period the ceramic styles associated with a language family (for example, Sotho-Tswana), archaeologists can often determine the antiquity of that language in any one area. In Southern Africa, the ceramic styles made by Shona-speaking peoples can be traced back to the fifth century AD and the beginning of the Iron Age.

At this time most ceramic entities, or facies, in Southern Africa belonged to a single Tradition, called Kalundu. They shared the same stylistic structure (defined as the same vessel profiles, decoration positions and type of motif combinations) and they shared the same stylistic types (defined by combinations of profiles, positions and motifs [following Huffman 1980]), differing only in percentages of individual motifs in individual positions; their similarities are therefore significant. Since one branch of this Tradition is conclusively linked to Shona speakers, all other regional variants were most probably produced by early Eastern Bantu speakers as well.

A similar evidential link can be made between Swahili and the Early Iron Age Urewe Tradition in East Africa. Since Urewe and Kalundu both belong to a larger Chifumbadze Complex (Phillipson 1985), the entire Complex can be associated with Eastern Bantu.

Significantly, this Chifumbadze Complex contrasts markedly in structure and most stylistic types with the Early Iron Age Naviundu

Tradition in Central Africa. Furthermore, Naviundu can be linked to Western Bantu on geographical, cultural and chronological evidence. The structural contrast between Naviundu and Chifumbadze, along with this other evidence, demonstrates that the link between Bantu and many Early Iron groups is not based on simple coincidence. The spread of these archaeological entities is therefore a reliable record of the spread of people speaking early forms of the Bantu language (Figure 7).

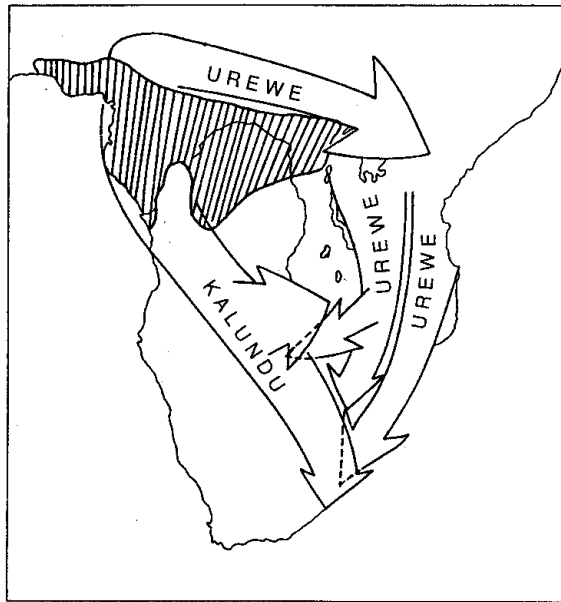


Figure 7. Early Iron Age migrations between AD 100 and AD 600. Hatched area represents the equatorial forest.

In this paper we subscribe to the idea that there is a vital relationship between language, material culture and culture, though *not* in any linguistic deterministic way. The vital relationship is there because language is the principal vehicle for thinking about the world and transmitting those thoughts to others. This approach is certainly not novel. For example, Murdock (1959:12) claimed that 'in the absence of written records, linguistic relationships provide by far the most dependable evidence of historical connection'. We would only want to

draw attention to the importance of archaeological data to demonstrate the time depth of these historical connections.

### METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Heine (1980:299) noted the sharp distinction between classification schemes of Bantu before and after 1972. The post-1972 period, initiated by Henrici (1973) and Heine (1973), was driven by diachronic concerns and sought to establish an a priori genetic classification as opposed to the referential schemes of Doke and Guthrie.

A methodological point is appropriate here: to proceed with subgrouping it is necessary to distinguish between:

- a. shared innovations,
- b. parallel innovations,
- c. common retentions and
- d. diffused features, that is between features held in common due to:
  - (i) innovations within a common period of development,
  - (ii) innovations with different linguistic geneses,
  - (iii) inheritance from a common ancestor, and
  - (iv) the influence of one group of speakers upon another.

Only the first of these has much value in establishing subgroups (see, for example, Hock 1986:578-80; cf. also Schadeberg 1980:317),<sup>10</sup> whereas the third, that is, retained features, can be used to demonstrate family relatedness, not degree of relationship. Nevertheless, it is the third of these features, in the form of inherited lexical items in an expected form, that provides the basis for Guthrie's classification and for most subsequent work in Bantu language classification. This weakness is shared with the variety of approaches classed under the heading of lexicostatistics, all of which share other common elements (Heine 1980:300):

- a. the data used are purely lexical,
- b. judgements of relatedness are based on the presence or absence of cognates,
- c. there is an *assumed* one-to-one relationship between the percentage of shared cognates and the relative degree of genetic relationship.

In addition to differences in computational methods, these approaches differ in terms of whether they rely on a random list of vocabulary (for example, Henrici 1973) or some version of a 'basic vocabulary' (for example, Heine 1973, Coupez *et al.* 1975). The approaches also differ in terms of whether they restrict data to all cognates or to only 'regular (expected pattern) cognates'. Henrici's (1973) method exhibits the common drawback of assuming that rate of vocabulary retention/loss is somehow correlated with historical development.<sup>11</sup> The kindest thing that one could say about this assumption is that it is unproven; in fact, however, it is patently false. The particular problem of borrowing within Africa is well known. It is simply easier to recognise the influence of unrelated languages, for example, the influence of Khoisan on Bantu phonetic and morphological systems, than the influence of genetically and typologically related languages, for example pre-historic Sotho influences on Nguni.

There are numerous problems with the methodology of lexicostatistics precisely because of patterns of movement and contact. These need not concern us here since one of our arguments is that lexical data are largely inappropriate for purposes of genetic sub-classification. The relative degree of relationship among cognate languages can be obscured by simple lexical comparison. The restriction of the data base to regular cognates is particularly naïve; speaker contact leads to speech influence that disturbs patterns of regular correspondence. As David (1980:639) observed, 'The assumption of independence of languages since their separation, or even that all languages are equally interdependent with all their neighbours, can clearly not be maintained.' Such contact is obviously independent of genetic relationship. Despite the attraction of lexicostatistics on account of the seemingly straightforward nature of the data, the mirroring of linguistic classification and language distribution should give the analyst pause.

One conspicuous problem with the exclusive use of lexical data for purposes of comparison and classification is well known in Austronesian linguistics, namely the effect of word taboo on vocabulary retention. Dyen (1963:63-64) was among the first to note that this factor might account for unexpectedly low cognate percentages. Since word (particularly personal name) taboo is fairly widespread among Bantu-speaking peoples, it is possible that this phenomenon has produced a significant skewing effect in lexicostatistical work. Simons (1982) surveyed word taboo throughout the Austronesian domain; in one instance, he found that 59 per cent of the Swadesh 100-word list was

potentially subject to taboo based on the use of everyday words in personal names (1982:162).<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Lithgow (1973) documented a striking 19 per cent change in basic vocabulary over a fifty-year period in Muiuw. In Dyen's study, tabooing languages scored an average 8 per cent to 13 per cent fewer cognates, which would certainly be significant in the Bantu data. In some Austronesian languages, the skewing may be as high as 15 per cent to 20 per cent on a standard 190-word list (Simons 1982:169-70).<sup>13</sup> As Simons noted, two factors might be responsible for name taboos having greater effect on vocabulary replacement than expected: (a) the small size of speech communities, and (b) social systems characterised by patterns of extensive family relationships (1982:191). Surprisingly, the potentially complicating factor of taboo and its effect on vocabulary has received no attention in the literature on Bantu lexicostatistics.

What is notable about most lexicostatistically-based classifications of Bantu languages is that they agree to a surprising extent. For present purposes, the relevant point is that although there has been considerable refinement in the classification of languages in the western part of the Bantu domain, the eastern half continues to be seen as a single valid linguistic subgroup.<sup>14</sup> This is Heine's East Highland Group, a subgroup of the Congo Zone (VIII) (Heine 1973:173; Heine *et al.* 1977:61-62) which represents the vast majority of the languages traditionally labelled as Bantu. While rejecting the foundation of Guthrie's historical scheme, Heine's classification reinforces the idea of a unitary Eastern Bantu.<sup>15</sup> (cf. also Heine 1993: 8-12)

### A NEW VIEW OF 'EASTERN BANTU'

Working independently, we began to suspect that there was something seriously wrong with the Eastern-Western division of Bantu languages, particularly with the conceptualisation of 'Eastern Bantu' in the sense propounded by Guthrie and later revised by Heine. First, in a re-examination of the Zambian Iron Age, it was found that Bemba-speaking people did not conform to the world view, social organisation and settlement pattern typical of Eastern Bantu (Huffman 1989a). Instead they were markedly 'Western'. Second, the typological diversity of the so-called Eastern languages is great enough to call their fundamental unity into question.

We then embarked on a joint project to refine the concept of Eastern

Bantu. Using Sotho-Tswana (S.30) and Nguni (S.40) as a datum for Eastern Bantu, and Kongo (H.16) and Chokwe (K.11) as a datum for Western Bantu, we compared cultural profiles (that is, world view, social organisation and settlement pattern) and grammatical elements (such as locatives, diminutives, aspectual systems) of several language groups commonly classed as Eastern. In particular, we looked at Chaga (E.62) and Kamba/Kikuyu (E.55/E.51) in the extreme north-east and Ila/Tonga (M.63/M.64) in Zambia. Quite independently, we found that Chaga conformed to the Eastern datum but that Kamba/Kikuyu and Ila/Tonga were decidedly 'un-Eastern'. The Kamba/Kikuyu, for example, claim their origins in matrilineal clans, traditionally lacked hereditary chiefs and were not 'cattle people' historically. There is, in fact, a close intersection between the diagnostic cultural profiles and the independent linguistic assignments. A longer paper will discuss the linguistic and cultural data in further detail.

In addition to our independent results, other linguistic analyses present similar reassignments. In a series of provocative articles that deserve to be more widely known, Bastin (1980, 1983) undertook a preliminary study of 'grammatical statistics', the comparison of grammatical traits within the Bantu languages. Based upon a consideration of 52 phonological, morphological and syntactic traits, Bastin submitted these data to group average computation. Examples of phonological traits include the realisations of nasal-oral consonant sequences, short-long vowel oppositions, progressive assimilation of vowels in suffixes of the type \*-id-, and so forth. In the morphological realm, there are features such as patterns of diminutive and locative formation, presence or absence of particular noun classes, for example, Cl. 11, 19, 25, and patterns of concord for the numerals 'two' to 'five'. Finally, syntactic traits included patterns of relative formation, negation, and subjunctive.

There are various methods of analysing these grammatical data, but they provide no support for a neat Guthrie-Heine Eastern division. Instead, they provide a three-way classification of Bantu languages. The first of these comprise Doke's North-Western and Congo Zones (Guthrie's zones A, B, C, part of D), that is, the north-west of the Bantu domain, which has been long recognised as the most divergent area.<sup>16</sup> The second is a co-ordinate pair of language groups. The first element of the pair comprises Doke's Central and Western Zones and part of East-Central (Guthrie's zones H, R, K, L, and M and at least some of Zone N). The second includes the Northern and most of the Eastern Zones (Guthrie's J, F, and parts of E, G, P). The third major branch of the Bantu

language tree is essentially a coastal belt from the north-east through the South-Eastern Zone. It includes all of the South-Eastern languages, that is, Doke's South-Eastern Zone (Guthrie's Zone S), and some of the Eastern and East-Central Zones (Guthrie's N, P, G and E). It includes, *inter alia*, Shambala, Swahili, Pokomo, giTonga, Tsonga, Zulu, Sotho, Venda, Makua, Sena, Nyanja, Shona, and Chaga. It is exclusively this branch that is most appropriately labelled *Eastern Bantu* (Figures 8 and 9). The term *Western Bantu* might be used to label the two other branches; however, it will not serve any useful purpose since it does not correspond to any single unitary entity. This lack of unity is not surprising: the complexity within the Western branch has generally been recognised as greater than the complexity of the Eastern branch, though part of the problem here has traditionally been lack of adequate documentation.

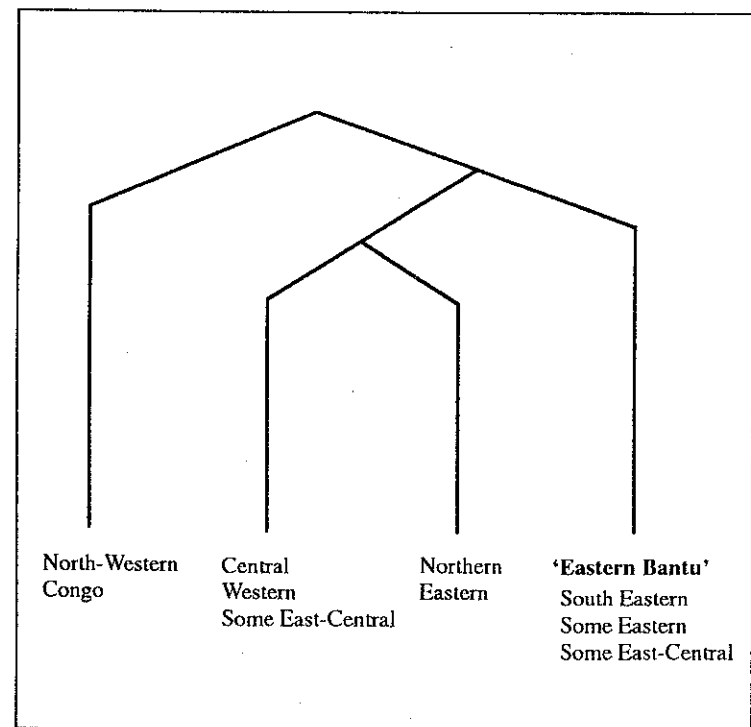


Figure 8. Proposed classification of Doke's language zones.



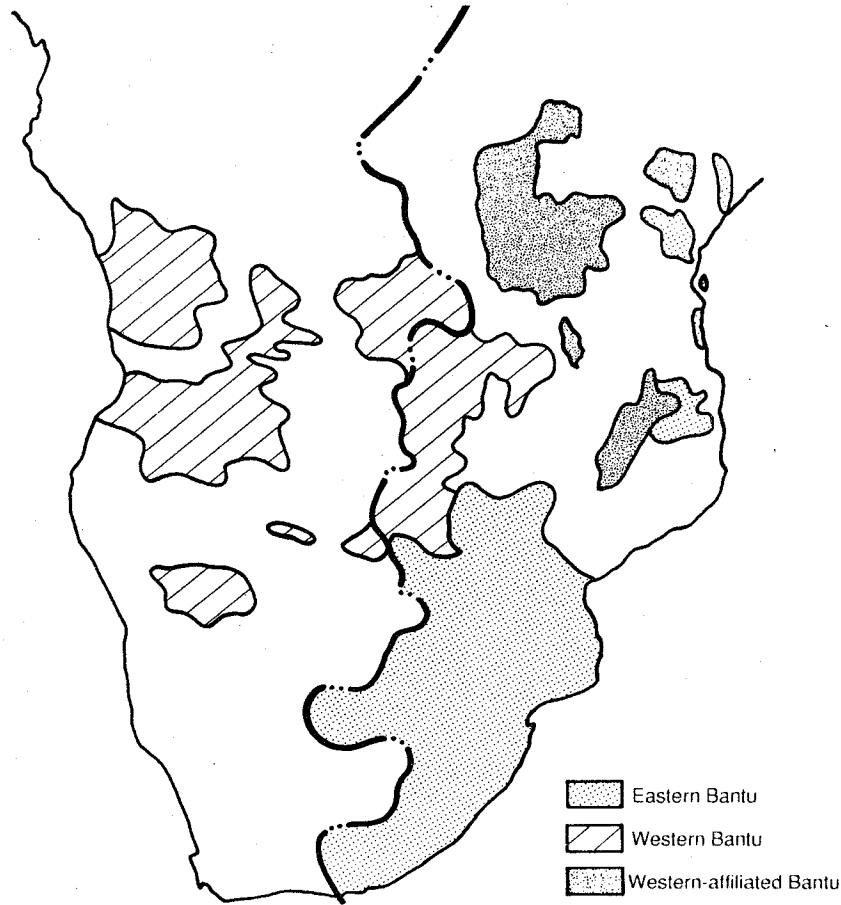


Figure 9. Proposed distribution of Eastern, Western and Western-affiliated Bantu language groups.

Based on a reanalysis of the Guthrie 28 test language data, which were also the basis for Henrici (1973), Flight (1988) offers a lexically-based classification which is on the whole compatible with our view of Eastern Bantu (Figure 10). As Flight (and others) noted, the 28 test languages are heavily weighted towards the east, but since the present interest lies in the chimeric nature of 'Eastern Bantu' they suffice for

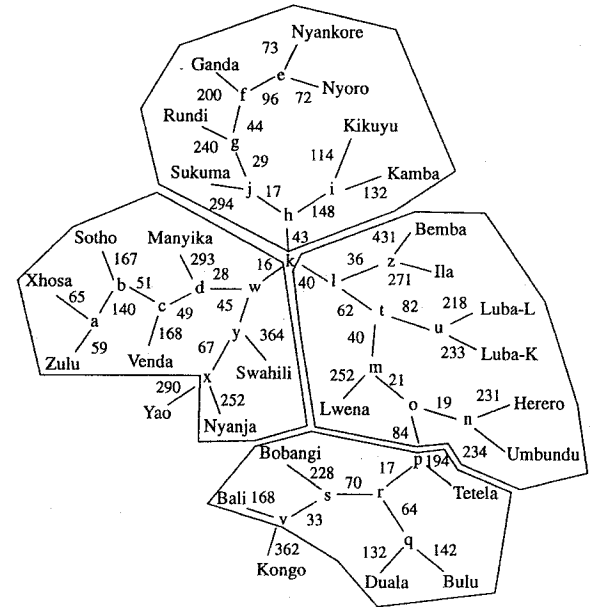


Figure 10. Classification of 28 test languages according to Flight (1988). Apart from the placement of Yao and Kongo, the results parallel the proposed classification.

present purposes. In particular, note that Swahili is among the 'closest relatives' for the southern languages; it is more closely related to the southern languages than to languages such as Kamba, Kikuyu, Bemba and the Interlacustrine languages.

### WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, it is appropriate to briefly sketch a view of a more recent Bantu expansion that is concordant with the classification proposed here. At about AD 1000, there was a major migration from the Western Bantu heartland across Central Africa, forming what anthropologists know as 'the matrilineal belt' (for example, Richards 1939). Later, between AD 1200 and 1300 there was a migration from East Africa in two streams, termed Moloko and Blackburn on account of distinct ceramic traditions

that represent, respectively, the Sotho and Nguni peoples (Figure 11). It is thus not surprising to find that the closest linguistic relatives of Southern Bantu languages are in the extreme north-east, namely, Swahili, Pokomo and Shambala.

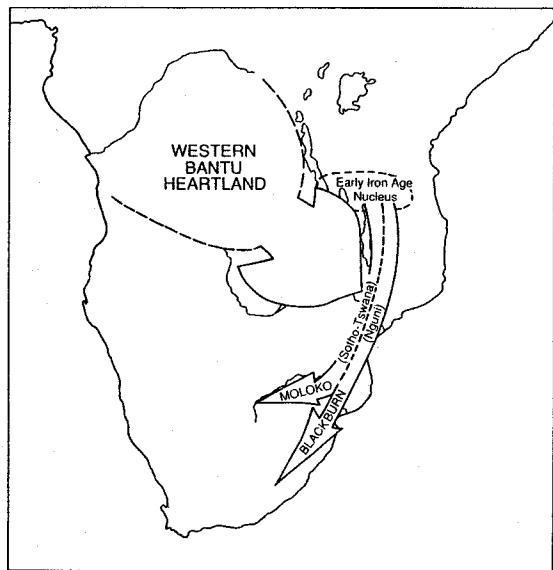


Figure 11. Late Iron Age migrations between AD 1000 and AD 1200. NB: Early Iron Age nucleus shown only for the Moloko and Blackburn ceramic groups.

Obviously, we have only been able to sketch the outlines of the reclassification of Bantu languages. The evidence is conclusive that the traditional view of an Eastern-Western dichotomy is untenable. We have not been concerned with terminology here; we are concerned with ancestry. Indeed, we propose to retain the traditional name 'Eastern Bantu'. The domain of Eastern Bantu, however, is considerably narrower than previously thought. Future research must look to enlarge the data base for grammatical classification and refine statistical methods of analysis. The promise of this new approach, as we hope to have demonstrated in this paper, is that there is a closer intersection of the classifications provided by linguistics, anthropology, and archaeology.

## NOTES

1. The term *Bantu* has distinctly unfortunate overtones in South Africa, where it was once used an official population designator by the Nationalist government. The term is used today only in its linguistic scope. See Doke ([1960] 1993) and Vansina (1979/80) for complementary reviews of the history of comparative Bantu linguistics.
2. Guthrie proposed four defining criteria, but three of these are broadly typological and not recognised as having any validity for genetic classification; his criterion of cognate vocabulary is the only exception to this criticism (Watters 1989:403).
3. Nevertheless, the African Music Society in 1949 adopted Doke's scheme in their cross-classification of music according to instrument, type and language.
4. Indeed, Cope described Doke's classification as 'the least of his contributions to Bantu linguistics' (1993:150).
5. Vansina describes the difference between the two approaches by noting that 'Guthrie was "practical", that is, a little more arbitrary than Doke but with more descriptive data' (Vansina 1979:291).
6. Both classification schemes are wrong in a number of details, but as Cope ([1971] 1993) noted, there is a surprising degree of correspondence between Doke's outline and the better-known classification of Guthrie. Cope's paper, which deserves to be more widely known and cited, offers important critiques of both scholars' approaches. Further, Cope was one of the first scholars to bring an important problem to light, namely the poor intersection of relations among Bantu language subgroups postulated by linguists, anthropologists, and archaeologists. Unfortunately, Cope accepted Guthrie's ideas on the origins of the Bantu-speaking peoples, and his discussion of Bantu expansion (1993:164-167) must therefore be disregarded.
7. Doke (1945) provides the most complete statement of 'characteristics' for the various language zones. It is important to note that these characteristics are extracted from the grouped languages *following* their assignment into zones. It is obvious, then, that these features can have no value in describing or inferring relationships among groups. Among the salient features of the South-Central zone are (Doke 1945:97):
  1. a bridging between the Central zone and the South-Eastern, with certain resemblance to East-Central,

2. monosyllabic noun prefixes with latent initial vowel,
  3. ideophones,
  4. peculiar phonetic phenomena including implosives, affricates and 'whistling fricatives'.
8. Similarly, Ehret (1973) put forward a view of Bantu history and expansion wherein the historical groups of people are based upon Guthrie's language zones, that is, he treated referential units as genetic ones.
  9. Some scholars tried to blend Greenberg's and Guthrie's opposing views into a unified scheme, according to which the original homeland was, as Greenberg claimed, in the Cameroons, but the 'original Bantu' moved from there to Shaba (Stage I), where they fragmented and expanded 'from coast to coast' (Stage II) (for example, Oliver 1966). The history of this synthesis of opposing viewpoints into a unified framework, termed 'The London Paradigm', is insightfully discussed by Vansina (1980:297-300).
  10. Shared borrowings are, however, excluded from consideration here. Most historical linguists would reject or at best grudgingly accept as a weak heuristic the claim that 'areal relationship, for example, in the form of shared loanwords, may be indicative of a common genealogical development and thus of genetic relationship patterns' (Heine 1980:297). One has only to consider classical Greek loans in modern European languages (Indo-European and otherwise) to see the flaws in this approach. Yet, this is precisely the approach used by Ehret to validate his 'proto-Eastern Bantu' (1973:3). The plausibility of many of Ehret's comparisons has been challenged by Polomé (1975:171) and others.
  11. This idea has obvious links to, but must be distinguished from, glottochronology in its strict sense.
  12. The majority of Bantu language groups also form personal names from everyday vocabulary. The best known example of name taboo among Bantu language speakers is the *hlonipha* language of avoidance practised by Nguni women. Although such an extensive system of taboo seems not to be found outside of Southern Africa, name taboos (parents-in-law, chiefs, recently dead, wild animals) are widespread.
  13. As Schadeberg (1980:317) noted with regard to Heine's classification, the cohesion of branches and groups is not particularly strong. For example, the percentage of cognate words in the 100-word list among languages of the different primary branches varies from 20 per cent to 32 per cent; the range for languages of the

- different sub-branches of the vast Congo branch is from 26 per cent to 44 per cent. The confounding effect of word taboo, comparable to that in Austronesian, would therefore be significant.
14. This generalisation is less true for Henrici's (1973) classification, which postulates the Southern Languages (Doke's South-Eastern Zone; Guthrie's Zone S) as a branch co-ordinate with all Bantu languages other than those in the extreme north-west of the domain. Cf. also Coupez *et al.* (1975:156).
  15. A rough sketch of some relations within this group is provided by Coupez *et al.* (1975:151-54). They compared 57 languages, all of which belonged to Heine's Congo Branch, but Doke's East-Central Zone (Guthrie's Zones N and P) are unrepresented in their data. None the less, they subclassify these languages into fourteen subgroups, three of which comprise Heine's East Highland Group. However, the only notable split is between Doke's South-Eastern Zone and the other 'Eastern' languages. Given the extensive influence of Khoisan languages within this zone and the high prominence of name taboo, the special status of this zone is not surprising in any lexicostatistically-based classification.
  16. The striking divergences between this area and the rest of Bantu have often been noted (for example, Henrici 1973). Bennett and Sterk (1977) hypothesised that Zones A, B, C and (part of) D, which they name the Equatorial Group, are more directly related to Ekoid and Mban-Nkam languages than they are to the remaining 'Bantu languages' (Zambesi Bantu, in their terms), whose closest linguistic relative is Tiv. This position is explicitly rejected by Schadeberg (1986), who argues for a view of 'Guthrian Bantu' as a valid subgroup of Bantoid, which is itself a subgroup of Benue-Congo. The position of the North-Western languages within the larger family is not directly relevant to present concerns, and it is not pursued further here.

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## C.M. Doke and the Development of Bantu Literature

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### INTRODUCTION

The centenary commemoration of the birth of C.M. Doke comes at a portentous moment. It has come at a time when we are preparing for a new millennium, a time when signs of revolutionary change in South Africa, for better or for worse, are looming in the horizon. These changes will have far-reaching repercussions for Bantu languages and literatures as well as for other forms of artistic expression in general.<sup>1</sup> It is on this account that the present state of play needs to be assessed, in terms of the past, the present, and the foreseeable future.

Literature written in Bantu languages has inherited an unfortunate legacy imposed upon it by the Nationalist Government's policies of the past, so that the reaction to the language policy turned the literature into an embattled field of discourse, resulting, in turn, in the association of Bantu languages with all that was negative in the post-1948 era. Since then, literature written in the Bantu languages has always been marginalised, as for instance at the symposium on 'Book Publishing in South Africa for the 1990s', held at the South African Library in Cape Town on 22-23 November 1990. Virtually nothing was said in that context about publishing in the Bantu languages. The conference thus denied the existence of Bantu languages by their omission.

A brief survey of literature written in Bantu languages in South Africa reveals a state which is far from granting us the comfort of complacency.

It is a literature which has travelled a long way, and yet it still has a long way to go. While the missionary presses such as Morija and Mazenod in Lesotho, Lovedale in the Cape, and Marianhill in Natal, have become synonymous with South African Bantu literature, very few individuals can claim a place in having influenced the growth of literature. Among these few we can count Clement Martyn Doke. In this brief contribution, I shall provide an overview of his contribution in the development of Bantu literature in South African languages.

There are basically four recognisable ways in which Doke made his mark:

1. His early collections of what he referred to as wisdom-lore.
2. His encouraging reviews of newly published works in journals such as *Bantu Studies* (later *African Studies*) of which he was editor from 1931 to 1953, and *South African Outlook*.
3. His consistent review of developments in the field of literature *qua* literature.
4. His consistency in encouraging translations of classical works from other languages.

My main purpose here is to place Doke as a landmark in the development of Bantu literature, so that his era can be compared with the present, and perhaps the future.

### DOKE'S CONTRIBUTION

Between 1935 and 1953 Doke was editor of the Bantu Treasury Series of poetry and drama published by the Witwatersrand University Press in Johannesburg. In that capacity, his most direct contribution to the growth of Bantu literature came in the form of eleven publications. In Southern Sotho the greatest essayist and dramatist, Mofokeng, and the poet and dramatist, Mocoancoeng, were published by the Witwatersrand University Press. In Setswana, Plaatje's Shakespearean translations, in Zulu, B.W. Vilakazi's poetry, *Inkondlo kaZulu* (Zulu Songs) and *Amal' Ezulu* (Zulu Horizons), J.J.R. Jolobe's Xhosa poems, *Umyezo* (An Orchard), and essays *Amavo* (Traditions), Mqhayi's Xhosa poems, *Inzuzo* (Gain) in 1943, L.D. Raditladi's Tswana drama, *Motswasele II*, and Robert Shabaan's Kiswahili essays, *Kielezo cha Insha*, to name but a few who have survived the test of time, were also published in this series.

Plaatje's translations, no doubt inspired by Doke (notwithstanding their difference of opinion as to which works were most suitable for translation), were followed by many other translations of English classics into various Bantu languages. Among these, we can name the following: a Sotho translation by H.H. Lekhethoa of Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* was followed by a Venda version, *Ku Hluvuka* (1953) by S.T. Baloyi; *Macbeth* was translated into Xhosa by B.B. Mdledle, *u-Macbeth* (1957); *Julius Caesar* was translated into Xhosa (1956), Venda (1957), and Northern Sotho by Mdledle, Baloyi and C.N. Phatudi, respectively; Ntsane translated *The Merchant of Venice* (1961); and *Twelfth Night* appeared in Zulu (1961). Not only Shakespeare's works attracted translators. *King Solomon's Mines*, *Nada the Lily*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Treasure Island*, *Prisoner of Zenda* and *Cry the Beloved Country* were all translated in one or the other of the Bantu languages.

Doke's editorship of the Bantu Treasury Series, and his advocacy of translating works into one or other of the Bantu languages opened the way for other publishers to take an interest in Bantu literature. The period after 1953 can arguably be termed 'the Doke era', for his concern for the growth of literature in Bantu languages had a far-reaching impact. This becomes even more evident when it is seen in the context of the Bantu Education Act, which made many scholars desert Bantu languages as a form of protest against the Bantu Education Act's abuse of these languages. These scholars expressed the view that the languages were divisive, and they resorted to English as a unifying language, as Mphahlele later argued (1973).

Of note among Doke's persistent support for translations from English into Bantu languages is his long letter to the editor of *The South African Outlook*, in the column headed 'Our Reader's Views'. Doke made a detailed survey of translations from Western European languages into Chinese. He observed, quoting a Chinese reviewer, that:

An examination of the translations from English authors shows that the novelists are represented by George Eliot, Fielding, Defoe (including *Moll Flanders*), Kingsley, Swift, Goldsmith, the Brönte sisters (*Wuthering Heights* and *Villette*), Scott, Conrad, Mrs. Gaskell and Dickens (*Old Curiosity Shop*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Dombey and Son*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Christmas Carol*, *Hard Times*)... The poets are represented by Spenser (*Faerie Queene*), Browning, Burns, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Ernest Dowson. Five Shakespearean plays (*Merchant*

of *Venice, As You Like It, Twelfth Nights, Henry VI, and Romeo and Juliet...*) have been translated by separate translators. The drama is represented by Galsworthy (seven of his plays), Pinero, Sheridan (*School for Scandal*) and Shaw (*Mrs Warren's Profession*). (Doke 1942:155-56)

After considering further translations from other European languages, Doke concluded his letter by writing, 'I thought the above lists might be of help when it comes to choosing suitable text-books for translation.'

Though the range of translations available in Bantu languages at present varies from the sublime to the ridiculous in terms of translation skills and adaptation of texts, some of these works have undeniably given life-blood to the growth of Bantu literature. It is therefore regrettable that the Language Boards and publishing houses are now *de facto* rejecting the translation of literary works. Students of Bantu literature in South Africa should be encouraged to do research on translated works so that they can evaluate and assess their contribution, and then come to a conclusion as to whether this Dokean legacy was justifiably forsaken. *A priori*, one understands that the ideal is to encourage more original writing in Bantu languages, but the danger is that the blind pursuit of this ideal may result in the publication of works of a very low standard in the pursuit of so-called purity.

In 1932 Doke was convenor of the Inter-University Committee for African Studies which had been set up to look into 'the state of Bantu languages in the Union of South Africa, and possibilities of further research'. Doke wrote a report of this meeting, in which he recorded a number of suggestions which opened the way for further developments in Bantu literature. On Xhosa folklore he noted the scarcity of material, and he suggested that 'a definite publication on Xhosa Folk-lore is a real need'; he also recognised Mqhayi as an important writer. Xhosa was acknowledged as the leading language for the development of biographical and historical works. Doke also noted the need for translation of works from other languages, suggesting that 'a Xhosa committee should make a careful selection of English works suitable for translation' and that:

The same literature committee should examine MSS submitted for publication, with a view (i) to recommending them to publishers (such as Lovedale), (ii) to seeing that they are revised so as to secure correct agreed orthography, and (iii) to exploring the

possibilities of securing funds from philanthropic sources to be spent in subsidising the publication of approved works. (Doke 1933:12)

This passage clearly indicates that Doke was fully committed not only to the increase of publication but also to an attainment of high standards, with correct orthography, and to the creation of channels for publication.

Southern Sotho and Xhosa were identified as leading languages in terms of what had been published at the time, while gaps in the production of Zulu literature, which had only produced its first novel in 1930, were identified. Doke noted that, 'Folk-lore in Zulu has been very fortunate in the work done by H. Callaway ... It would be of great value if Native writers could be encouraged to do more writing of the type done by Mbata and Mdhladhla' (Doke 1933:14). The dearth of 'proverb-lore' and school-books was also noted: 'Zulu is singularly defective in works of imagination, and an effort should be made to arouse interest in this direction among Native teachers.' Among practical suggestions made by Doke was that Mofolo's *Chaka* should be translated into Zulu: 'It is rather a great shame that up to this day this text has been translated into Afrikaans, English, French, German, but not in any of the South African Bantu languages.' The suggestion mentioned above with regard to the translation of English texts into Xhosa was applied to Zulu. Other languages also received attention, with a keen observation on shortcomings in the literature available at the time. At present, there is a need for modern scholars to examine, from time to time, the direction in which Bantu literature is developing.

Following some of the observations made by the Inter-University Committee, a number of studies of folklore, based upon Doke's own preliminary work, were undertaken by scholars such as Vilakazi and Mofokeng who worked directly with Doke. Thus Doke created a legacy of scholarship in the study of Bantu folklore, which had now advanced considerably. The period between 1931 and 1953, when Doke was actively involved in committees which investigated the grammar and literature of Bantu languages, is a period during which some of the greatest writers of these languages emerged. In Doke's reviews new works were not denied praise and encouragement where and when it was due. Unfortunately at present none of the journals mainly concerned with Bantu languages and literature publish regular reviews of literary works. This was formerly a feature of *Bantu Studies* (later *African Studies*) under Doke's own editorship, *LIMI*, and the *Journal of South African*

*Languages* (now the *African Journal of African Languages*) in its early stages in the 1980s, but the practice has been abandoned.

It is also interesting to note that after 1953 a number of Afrikaner publishing houses took an interest in publishing Bantu language literature. It is at this time that the literature becomes a focus for divergent interests, some motivated only by economic gain, others by political allegiance to the post-1948 status quo. Comparing some of the works which were produced under Doke's editorship, and also by publishing houses such as Shuter and Shooter and Oxford University Press, or the missionaries who continued to publish in Bantu languages, one notices certain new tendencies which seem to betray ideological leanings. The Afrikaner publishing establishment singles itself out in this regard (Maake 1992). We leave it as a challenge to students of Bantu literature to study the context and content of works produced by these publishing houses, in order to measure the influence of these tendencies. Doke's involvement in the publishing of Bantu literature is clearly outlined in his own reviews, critiques, reports and surveys.

In pursuit of the above interest, the student of Bantu literature could undertake, for example, a diachronic study of a series of books or genres produced by a given publisher, or a synchronic study of works published by different publishers, in order to investigate whether there is any trend which seems to be in keeping with the Nationalist Government's policy of censorship, or any religious or political dogma. The student may also study prize-winning novels, taking note of competition rules, in order to assess how these have influenced the production of literary works. The student could also collect rejected manuscripts and correspondence between publishers and writers to acquire a more explicit picture of publishers' expectations. This, together with other methods of research, could open the way to a better understanding of the forces at play in the forging of our literatures.

Although Doke's concern transcended those of publishers who are only interested in school readership, he was certainly concerned with the publication of books for schools. In the latter regard, he also produced school primers. It remains a challenge for students of Bantu language and literature to assess the merit of his Xhosa, Zulu and Ndebele Readers, published by Longmans. There is no need to mention at this point that those produced by educationists such as Engelbrecht and Thejane for Southern Sotho, were perfect examples of a policy which was indifferent to the growth of our literature. The renaissance of interest in producing literature meant purely for school readership in the 1950s coincided with

or resulted in the emergence of a number of publishing companies which had some direct or indirect links with government policy. And this development marks a turning point in Bantu literature.

The literature which was produced during and after the implementation of the Bantu Education Act has received ample attention, and there can be no moral justification for the role which some publishing companies played in its dissemination. Some of them are still leading publishers of Bantu literature in South Africa. It is sad to note that some of them are still dominating the field, and they seem destined to continue to do so into the new millennium. It is in view of this situation that one cannot help but be grateful for the role Doke played in inspiring translations and original writings in Bantu languages, a role which has hitherto not been properly recognised, especially in the debate about the domination and control of this literature by the missionaries at the turn of the century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, and from and beyond the Doke era.

From one perspective it may seem that some of the best works which contributed to the growth of Bantu language literature were those translated from English. However, in post-colonial or neo-colonial (whichever perspective one wishes to take) discourse, this may be seen as an imperialist imposition upon the languages, in the sense that this literature carried the baggage of its source culture. On the other hand, it may be argued that great works of art may be indigenised into the target culture, and that their literary merits remain intact even in their new culture. It is in the former context that Doke's motives, though guided by a genuine desire to see Bantu literature flourish, may be seen as misguided, if not imperialistic.

It cannot be denied that Doke was also instrumental in encouraging publications of a high standard in Bantu languages. This is clearly indicated by his sensitive recognition of good works and his most encouraging reviews. Though he was essentially a grammarian, his language studies often digressed into sharp observations on Bantu literature. In a discussion of aspects of Bantu languages, Doke made a general observation of the 'oral bases' of Bantu literature:

The oral bases of Bantu literature include the following phenomena: (a) methods of word-building such as lead to daily enrichment of a literary language by means of inflexion, compounding, praise terminology, and the use of ideophones; (b) the remarkably rich and powerful proverb lore of the Bantu, and their riddles; (c) the universal song phrases, developing in certain



areas into the praises (e.g. *izibongo* of the Nguni and *dithoko* of the Sotho); and (d) the wonderfully rich field of folk-tales, for which the Bantu are richly renowned, and which merge into Bantu legendary history and form the basis for Bantu fiction on the one hand and Bantu history on the other. (Doke 1948:287)

This is also a challenge open to students of Bantu literature to study Doke's reviews and those of other critics of his time, together with the works themselves, to see how the reviews have influenced the direction of this literature.

### POST-DOKE ERA

The saga of the influence of Bantu Education on the growth of Bantu literature has dominated the discourse on this literature, and saying any more on that topic will not throw any new light on this subject. The hope is that this commemoration, together with other promises of change, will mark a new era in our literature. However, a sad reminder of the post-Dokean legacy on Bantu literature was brought to our attention by Dorothy Driver who remarked that:

The economics of publishing, including the ethics of textbook prescription, needs to be thoroughly investigated: one of the largest suppliers of black schools is [De Jager-] HAUM (Hollandsche Afrikaanse Uitgewers Maatschappij), owned by Hervormde Kerk, which funds the Conservative Party. (Driver 1991:163)

While the need for such investigation is clearly evident, certain tendencies, namely that the prescription of school literature, cannot be matched with the aims found in Doke's ideals. Except for a few good works, the literature which has dominated the school syllabus since the beginning of the 1960s is not something we can boast of. Some good writers emerged only in the early 1980s, among these I would cite the prize-winning novelist I.M. Moephuli (*Peo Ena e Jetswe ke Wena!*) and C.T. Msimang (*Buzani KuMkabayi*), with due respect to those writers whose works we cannot quote here. These two novels were, ironically, published by De-Jager-HAUM. One writer worth mentioning is L. Molefe whose classic *Isizwe Esisha* has all the hallmarks of a great work.

It is tempting to believe that the Doke approach of translating from classics of other languages into Bantu languages, which has been forsaken by some Language Boards, should continue to be part of our literary production, at least until such a time as we have enough works to match the best in other languages. It is for this reason that I am indeed grateful that we have had men such as C.M. Doke, whose contributions in directing and stimulating the growth of Bantu literature will remain monuments in the long road which our literature has travelled.

An interesting development is the re-emergence of publishing companies like Oxford University Press, Macmillan, Longman (Maskew Miller Longman); the continuity sustained by Shuter and Shooter, Witwatersrand University Press in collaboration with Hodder and Stoughton on publishing in Bantu languages, the birth of new publishers like Bard Publishers, the interest in African languages from publishers like Skotaville, and many others, are promising signs for the future. In addition there is an increase in the literary competitions which have been established in the last five years. We hope that there will be fair competition with publishers which dominate the school syllabus, J.L. van Schaik, Educum, De Jager-HAUM, and Via Afrika.

### NOTE

1. The word 'Bantu' is used in this paper instead of 'Sintu'. Our insistence on the re-adoption of this term derives from an attempt to retrieve its original meaning and to strip off the connotations which it gained from the beginning of the Nationalist Party rule and the Bantustan system.

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## C.M. Doke's Contribution to Translation Studies

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In this overview of C.M. Doke's work in the field of translation, I would like to draw attention to one of the main driving forces evident throughout his life. Without attempting to understand this force, we would simply be viewing this man and his life's achievements in terms of our own paradigm, and through our own lenses.

Tribute has been paid on several other occasions to Doke's very remarkable contributions to scholarship.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of his scholarly work is clearly in the fields of Bantu linguistics, folklore and literature,<sup>2</sup> and his work in these fields has not only attracted considerable attention: many have had a powerful formative influence in their fields. Of all of his multi-faceted scholarly contributions, it is his translation work that is the area most overlooked, overshadowed as it is by his many massive scholarly tomes, scarcely of much interest to the scholarly world. Of what interest is his Lamba translation of Ruth in 1922, or the Xhosa hymnal in 1932, or a catechism in Zulu in 1935, or Lamba Bible stories in 1940, or even the complete Lamba Bible in 1959, to mention but a few of Doke's work on translation? My main thesis is that it is Doke's translation work and the interests that lie behind it that provide, more than anything else, the key to understanding much of his motivation and life's work. If I am correct, his work on translation gives a clue to the man.

Desmond Cole, in the citation written for Doke when the latter was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of the Witwatersrand in 1972, alluded to the prejudices and biases of our society, which tend to reflect little interest in certain of Doke's contributions. In this regard he

mentioned specifically Doke's translation of the Bible into Lamba, together with his translations of catechisms, hymnals, and ministers' manuals into several Bantu languages. He commented that:

... all these constitute in themselves an outstanding achievement for any one man's lifetime. However, these were secondary activities. In his professional field his contribution is unrivalled. (Cole 1972:25-26)

From what I know of Doke I doubt that he would have viewed his translation tasks as 'secondary activities', although they do pale somewhat in terms of their published volume compared with his dictionaries, grammars, and other scholarly linguistic and ethnological works. I would like to substantiate the view I have outlined that these translation works are a window into the soul of this extraordinary scholar.

The only occasion on record (to my knowledge) when Doke demonstrated exuberant elation was on the publication of his translation of the New Testament into Lamba. He himself describes how on receipt of the newly published volumes, together with a gift of a new pair of pyjamas from his mother, he donned the pyjamas and raced around the mission compound followed by some sixty excited schoolboys. He wrote: 'They only saw the new pyjamas! It was the completion of the New Testament that gave me the elation' (Doke 1956:11). The year was 1918, and we can perhaps understand the excitement of the young man of twenty-five on receiving in published form the Word of God, the fruit of his labour in translation. We can chuckle at the picture of the reserved and somewhat austere man of later years in his pyjamas racing around a compound on a bicycle. But, and we must not miss this, this demonstration of exuberance is linked not to some great academic achievement, but to the completion of the New Testament translation.

This story is particularly significant. The motivation from and commitment to the Christian message is evident throughout Doke's life.<sup>3</sup> His work on Bantu linguistics, folklore, literature and all else *started* with his going to Lambaland in 1914 for the communication of the Christian gospel. He left Lambaland in 1921 only because of severe attacks of malaria (Fortune 1972:ix), but he continued throughout his life to work for various Christian causes. These included serving as Editor of the Baptist denomination's newspaper for some twenty-five years, acting for a few years as the first principal of its newly-founded theological college, writing several papers on Christian topics, and, in the last ten years of his life, writing no fewer than eleven major papers on Christian theological

topics. Regarding his research and writing, he began on Christian subjects, continued these throughout his very busy working life, and ended with major work in the same area – the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and their message. His entry into the scholarly field was through this route, and he remained constant to that commitment throughout his life.<sup>4</sup>

But we return to Doke's works on translation. His earliest published work (1917) was a scripture primer in Lamba, followed a year later by the Gospel of Mark. He completed the New Testament in only seven years or somewhat less. This was no mean achievement, considering that it involved learning an undescribed language and culture, and mastering its grammar and vocabulary sufficiently to be able to undertake the highly specialised work of Bible translation. Today, with all the sophisticated textual and computer aids for the translator, as well as much greater insight into linguistic analysis and cultural understanding, the average time for a translation of the New Testament from scratch is some fifteen years.<sup>5</sup>

While most of the young Doke's early work was concerned with producing or translating materials into Lamba, his scholarly interest in Bantu linguistics began to surface when he left Lambaland for his year of study at London University and his taking up an appointment as lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1922. But even on the boat to England in 1921, he was busy translating Genesis and Exodus (published in 1929). In 1922/23, he was busy with three further books of the Old Testament (Jonah, Ruth and Samuel). There was then a gap of some years, and in 1938 the Psalms appeared in print together with the New Testament previously published. In 1941 further portions of the Old Testament appeared, and in 1946, 1949, and 1950 various Old Testament books that he had translated were published. The task was finally completed in 1956, and the complete Bible in Lamba was published in 1959. Most of this work was his own translation, only portions being revisions of the initial draft translations of certain Old Testament books produced either by the Reverend E. Holmgren of the Swedish Baptist Mission<sup>6</sup> (Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) or by his sister, Olive Carey Doke (Esther and Job).

All this was no mean achievement. This is especially the case when one remembers that Doke had only seven years among the Lamba people before leaving Lambaland for health reasons. Most of these translations were produced, it would seem, without the direct contribution of Lamba speakers. Today this kind of approach by a non-mother-tongue speaker, without continuous interaction with and extensive checking by speakers of

the language, would be considered a very dubious basis from which to undertake a major translation task. Doke himself expressed his concern about continuing with the Bible translation, having been so long away from the field.<sup>7</sup> A brief visit in 1950 refreshed his knowledge of the language after an absence of thirty years, and he was encouraged to continue.

His procedure in this latter phase of translating the Old Testament into Lamba was to send his handwritten translations for checking by Lamba leaders and then for typing by his sister, Olive, who was living and working in Lambaland. He comments that

...we [Doke and his sister] have been in weekly correspondence on all sorts of difficulties, getting me needed information, discussing renderings, and coming to decisions on uniform principles. (Doke 1956:12)

This reflects the highly meticulous approach Doke took to all his work, heightened no doubt by the consciousness of his responsibility as translator of the Word of God.

I wish to draw attention to the ongoing nature of his translation work, paralleling all his other, better known contributions throughout his fifty years of publishing activity. How he managed to fit in all this work, not only on the Lamba scriptures, but also in editing hymnals in Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho, along with catechisms and ministers' manuals, while he was simultaneously producing all his major grammars and dictionaries in Zulu, Sotho or Lamba, Bushman phonetics, Shona dialectology, as well as other topics, quite defies the imagination.

To give some idea of his multifaceted productivity, Doke's works dealing with translation are listed below, alongside his other scholarly works, with year of publication or completion (the latter for those not published and which are marked by an asterisk). Titles are in simplified citation form. It should be borne in mind that in many cases the date of publication followed the date when the actual research was done by a year or more.<sup>8</sup>

SECULAR ACADEMIC WORKS	TRANSLATION/TRANSLATION RELATED
1917	Lamba Scripture Primer, 22 pp.
1918	Lamba reading book, 16 pp. Gospel of Mark in Lamba
1919	Three articles on Lambaland

- 1921 Article on the infinitive in Bantu New Testament in Lamba
- 1922 *The Grammar of the Lamba Language*, 157 pp. Jonah, Ruth and Samuel in Lamba
- 1923 Articles: Phonetics of Zulu  
Lamba social control  
Zulu clicks
- 1924 Articles: Qhung phonetics  
Bantu languages  
The Bushmen  
Bantu philology
- 1926 *The Phonetics of the Zulu Language*, 130 pp.  
Articles: Lamba folklore  
Philology
- 1927 Articles on the Lamba, Baila, folklore  
*Text Book of Zulu Grammar*, 341 pp.  
*A Grammar of the Sotho Language* (ed.), 209 pp.  
*Lamba Folk-lore*, 570 pp.
- 1928 Articles: Ila phonetics  
Languages of South Africa  
Lamba cosmology  
Orthographies of South African langs.  
Bantu grammar classification
- 1929 Articles: Pronunciation of Bemba Genesis and Exodus in Lamba  
Word-division in Bantu
- 1930 Article: Lamba aphorisms
- 1931 *Unification of Shona Dialects*, 156 pp.  
*A Comparative Study of Shona Phonetics*, 298 pp.  
*The Lambas* (ethnology), 408 pp.
- 1932 *Graded Zulu Exercises*, 56 pp. Xhosa Baptist hymnal (ed.)
- 1933 Articles: Literature in S. Bantu Article: Bantu Bible translation  
Phonetics of Zulu  
Aushi vocabulary  
Earliest Shona vocabulary

- \*Dialect standardisation  
*English-Lamba Vocabulary*, 134 pp.<sup>9</sup>
- 1934 Article: Lamba literature
- 1935 Articles: Vernacular textbooks      Baptist catechism S.Sotho (ed.)  
Early Bantu literature      Baptist catechism Zulu (ed.)
- 1936 Articles: Bantu literature  
Bushman phonetics  
Bushman culture
- 1937 Articles: Zulu language pioneers  
S.Bantu languages  
\*Lamba-English dictionary, 1957 pp.<sup>10</sup>
- 1938 Article: Earliest Bantu records      Methodist prayer/hymn Zulu  
*Lamba Grammar*, 484 pp.      Psalms in Lamba  
Baptist catechism in Xhosa
- 1939 Articles: Language in S.A.      Methodist Zulu catechism (ed.)  
Lamba folk tales
- 1940 Articles: Bantu lexicography  
Bantu language pioneers
- 1941 Lamba Bible stories
- 1942 Article: Native languages of S.A.
- 1943 Article: Bantu philology      First Aid (ed.) in English,  
Zulu  
*Outline Grammar of Bantu*, 56 pp.      Xhosa, Sotho<sup>11</sup>
- 1944 Articles: Conjunctive writing  
Folk tales  
Bantu linguistics
- 1945 Bantu bibliographical studies,      Baptist ministers' manual  
119 pp.      Sotho  
Baptist ministers' manual  
Zulu  
Abridged Baptist hymnal  
Xhosa  
Abridged Baptist hymnal Zulu

- 1946 Longmans Zulu readers      Baptist ministers' manual  
Xhosa
- 1947 Longmans Zulu and Ndebele readers  
Articles: Bantu wisdom-lore  
Vilakazi's contributions
- 1948 Articles: Bantu, a language family  
Basis of Bantu literature  
Linguistic research programme  
*Zulu-English Dictionary*, 903 pp.
- 1949 Longmans Ndebele readers      Lamba Old Testament stories,  
2 edn.
- 1950 Longmans Zulu and Ndebele readers      Baptist hymnal Xhosa  
Articles: Bantu languages: typology      Old Testament books in Lamba  
Schreuder's contribution      Baptist hymnal Sotho  
Bantu (encyclopedia article)
- 1953 *Zulu-English Dictionary*, 2 edn.  
918 pp.
- 1954 *The Southern Bantu Languages*,      Article: Hope  
262 pp.
- 1955 Article: Xhosa religion (ed.)  
*Zulu Syntax and Idiom*, 234 pp.
- 1956 Article: Compass points in Bantu
- 1957 S.Sotho grammar, 491 pp.      Article: Bible transl.  
difficulties  
Article: Tribute to Dr Mofokeng
- 1958 *English-Zulu Dictionary*, 572 pp.      Article: Scripture translation  
*Zulu-English Vocabulary*, 342 pp.  
\*South-Central African tales, 110 pp.  
Article: Dr Edwin Smith
- 1959 Articles: Bantu language pioneers      Lamba Bible  
Early Bantu literature      Lamba Bible dictionary  
R.D. Macminn's ling. work  
Lamba folklore  
\*Lamba tales of the Little Hare, 60 pp.

- 1960 Articles: Earliest Bantu records  
Bantu philology
- 1961 Articles: *History of Bantu Linguistics*, 129 pp.  
H.W. Woodward's ling. work
- 1963 *English-Lamba Vocabulary* (rev.), 179 pp.  
*Graded Lamba Grammar and Exercises*, 261 pp.
- 1964 Bible translation into Afr.  
languages
- 1966 Article: Holy Spirit in Bantu
- 1967 Ministers' manual in Lamba
- 1968 Lamba biography
- 1972 *Lamba-English Dictionary* (rev.), 2 525 pp.

Doke had not yet completed the Lamba Bible translation when he retired from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1953, but despite continuing ill health, he was still committed to giving the complete Bible to the Lamba people. We see this in a letter to the Principal of the University just prior to his retirement where Doke stated that:

It is my hope, on retiring, to go to the Coast (probably in Natal) and continue, if possible, with research work and with the Bible translation into Lamba. There are several research projects, already stated here, which would have to await completion till then.<sup>12</sup>

In an attachment to this letter, Doke lists as one of his current activities as serving on a committee currently busy with the translation of the Bible into Zulu. All this took place while he was still pressing on with the abridgement of his Zulu-English/English-Zulu dictionaries, and on the eve of his retirement! His completion of the Bible translation into Lamba in 1956/1957 (published in 1959) was obviously one of the high points of his life. But the many hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of hours of labour involved in this work are scarcely likely to attract the attention of scholars.

Doke reflected on the difficulties and challenges in Bible translation in several articles published over several years on translation, the first in 1933 entitled 'Bible translation among the Bantu', then 'The concept of

hope among the Bantu' in 1954, followed by 'Some difficulties in Bible translation into a Bantu language' in 1957, 'Scripture translation into Bantu languages' in 1958, and 'The translation of "The Holy Spirit" in Bantu languages' in 1966. Following the fashion of his day, Doke states that he was in full agreement with the practice of preferring 'to err on the side of the literal translation, while preserving, as far as possible, Lamba idiom, rather than to attempt anything like the method followed by James Moffatt in his translation into English' (Doke 1956:12).<sup>13</sup>

This 'source orientation' approach to the text no doubt meant that Doke's Lamba translation could scarcely 'speak to the heart' in the way that a more 'dynamic equivalent' translation does. But evaluation of the translations Doke produced will best be done by Lamba speakers acquainted with translation theory and practice. More or less literal translations of the type explicitly endorsed by Doke were the type produced for many African languages at the time, and Doke in this was only following accepted norms. Bible translations today tend to be more of the 'dynamic equivalent' type, that is, they attempt to reproduce the impact of the original text, as far as possible, in the target language and culture, and so are more 'target language' orientated in grammatical form, idiom and cultural context.<sup>14</sup>

Doke's articles on specific difficulties in Bible translation into a Bantu language are illustrated mainly from Lamba. They deal, *inter alia*, with differences in the grammatical structure of Lamba (exemplifying Bantu languages) and Indo-European (New Testament Greek) or Hebrew, including such issues as differences of gender and verb tense systems, and honorifics. He deals also with problems concerning typical kinds of lexical difficulties involved in translation. Doke's article (1966) on the translation of 'The Holy Spirit' into Bantu languages reflects special interest in this problem, and he quotes from several languages as he grapples with the problem of how best to reflect the personal properties needed for adequate translation of this term. The problem is that the most obvious Bantu language noun equivalent usually belongs to an intrinsically non-personal noun class.

Quite apart from his success or otherwise in handling the many hundreds of technicalities and difficulties which had to be assessed and decided in the various translations he undertook, Doke's contribution to the thousands of lives affected by his translated texts is incalculable. This was, I suggest, the heart-beat of this very reserved scholar. He commented in later years on his feelings in being able to deliver some translated portions of the Lamba Bible while on a visit to Lambaland in 1950:

What a joy it was to visit once again Paul the Leper, and to hand him a copy of this book. I shall never forget how he took the volume between the stumps of his poor, maimed fingerless hands, and seemed to smooth it caressingly, as he said 'Here is a feast of new things from God for me.' (Doke 1956:11-12)

In closing, this overview of Doke's contribution to the translation field<sup>15</sup> is intended not so much as a critical evaluation as a drawing of attention to the magnitude of what he undertook, and his reasons for doing so. Even his immense work on dictionaries in Lamba and Zulu, as well as his grammatical descriptions of several languages, relate directly to this task. Here, I submit, and especially in his translation of the Bible, with all his related work on hymn books, ministers' manuals and the like, is an essential part of understanding this complex man. He was not only an outstanding scholar. He was a man dedicated to the Word of God and the enlightenment of his fellow man. His life's work attests this dedication.

### NOTES

1. Some general overviews of Doke's life and work are found in Cole (1972), Fortune (1972) and Oosthuizen (1972).
2. The term 'Bantu' is used in this paper in the sense that Doke used it, and in which it is used internationally by linguists, namely to refer to the large family of languages distributed south of a line running roughly from Kenya to the Cameroons. The southern and south-central members of this family were Doke's particular fields of study.
3. An interesting note on his self-effacing humility is shown in his declining any presentation from the University of the Witwatersrand upon his retirement after a distinguished thirty-year period of service. A letter from the Principal, H.R. Raikes, to Doke dated 2 September 1953 (in my possession) responds to Doke's wish to decline any presentation. Raikes suggests that perhaps Doke would be willing to accept a cheque to be presented privately. This letter is annotated and initialled in Doke's hand 'Prefer no steps be taken'. A subsequent letter from the Principal of 22 September notes this wish with much regret and states that 'we shall of course abide strictly by your wishes'.
4. It can be argued that Doke's work in Bantu linguistics was *servant to*

his overriding commitment to the communication of the Gospel and especially Bible translation. He communicated widely with missionaries in the field, and specifically produced his *Outline Grammar of Bantu* in 1943 with wider missionary needs in mind. See also Note 10 below on his extensive Lamba-English dictionary.

5. This is the experience of Wycliffe Bible Translators, the largest single Bible translation agency in the world, whose members are currently working on scripture translation in more than 800 languages throughout the world.
6. Doke commented in a letter (a copy is in my possession) dated 7 April 1953 to Mr E.H. Creasey, who was evidently helping with the typing of the manuscript of the Lamba Old Testament: 'I have at last finished the Isaiah revision. It is really a new translation, and except for the fact that Holmgren had put so much into it, I would rather have translated it myself.' This suggests quite some frustration on Doke's part with the draft from which he was working.
7. 'Before going to Lambaland on that occasion [his visit to Lambaland in 1950 as President of the Baptist Union], I had come to the conclusion that I could do no more Lamba translation: I was getting too 'rusty' after 30 years away from the country and the people.' (Doke 1956:12)
8. This list is extracted from 'C.M. Doke: list of publications and manuscripts' in *African Studies*, vol. 30 (1971). A few non-linguistic articles on Christian topics are not included in my abbreviated list, nor have the several substantial documents on Christian doctrinal topics in manuscript form which Doke produced between 1962 and 1970.
9. The *English-Lamba Vocabulary* of 1933 was produced as early as 1916. A copy of the original manuscript is in my possession. Doke must have prepared this early dictionary as an aid to his own learning of the language and to assist in the translation of the Bible into Lamba which he commenced shortly thereafter. The vocabulary already has the form of his later and more sophisticated dictionaries. Synonyms and related forms are listed for each entry, and the perfect tense form of each verb is given. This is a surprisingly 'mature' kind of dictionary, produced just two years after Doke started work on Lamba.
10. Doke's *Lamba-English Dictionary* of 1937 was obviously prepared with the needs of the Lambaland missionaries in mind. Only six copies in typescript were produced, the original plus five carbon



copies. Doke told me personally that he did not have this published because the work was not quite up to his scholarly standard. He did, however, re-issue this work in 1972, again in six typescript copies, but in the then-current Lamba orthography. He could not be prevailed upon to have the copies made in xerox form, so the many diacritic and special phonetic characters were laboriously hand-written in each of the six copies. It should be noted that this, the last of his scholarly undertakings, completed when he was seventy-one years old, was done specifically for the needs of the new generation of Lambaland missionaries (from Australia), who had requested further copies. His daughter, Erika, had to brush up on her typing to produce the manuscript, and the Secretary in the Department of African Languages at Rhodes University, Patricia Scott, assisted with part of the typing.

11. These First Aid manuals for St. John's Ambulance in 1943 seem to be the only secular translated work which Doke edited.
12. Personal letter from Doke to the Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand, dated 26th November 1951. A copy is in my possession.
13. In the same context, Doke cites the first translator of the Xhosa Bible, John Appleyard, with approval and quotes him as follows: 'the translator ... can only give the words of Scripture, but not their theological interpretation. The very fact that on certain passages commentators are in disagreement, renders it all the more necessary for the translator to keep close to his original, so that the reader may be able to weigh the interpretations of others, and judge for himself'. Doke's comment on this view is, 'With this we are in full agreement ...'
14. Examples are *Good News for Modern Man*, also known as *Today's English Version*, or the Afrikaans equivalent, *Blye Boodskap*, both produced by the South African Bible Society in several editions and printings. Recently produced translations of the Bible into the various African languages of South Africa are also of this type.
15. Doke also contributed significantly to many secular translations produced for the various southern Bantu languages by actively encouraging mother-tongue speakers to produce such translations. This aspect of his contributions to the translation field has not been treated in this article, but it is discussed in N.P. Maake's 'C.M. Doke's contribution to Bantu literature' elsewhere in this volume.

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