LIVING SPEECH

IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH AFRICA

AN ESSAY INTRODUCTORY TO THE

BANTU FAMILY OF LANGUAGES

BY

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PREFACE

THIS Essay, it is hoped, may serve to interest the general reader in a subject of some importance in its bearing on the future of Central and South Africa, to invite the attention of students of Language to a form of it which seems to deserve more study than it at present receives, and to appeal to all acquainted with Bantu in any one of its many dialects to compare the statements here made with the facts known to themselves. In the end it may be that justice will be done to a subject, which if only from a geographical point of view has some claim to be called a great one.

This threefold purpose has involved some difficulty of treatment, and will lead to criticism in details. For instance, Bantu words have been only sparingly introduced for purposes of illustration. The first class of readers would probably pass them over, the second might well expect more, the third will have a stock of their own to refer to. But the consequence is that much here stated will seem to have little to support it. The fact is, that the subject of each chapter, even of many single paragraphs, requires a whole treatise for its separate elucidation, and a single Essay could in no case adequately represent the total bulk of literature on Bantu subjects, which is large, scattered, and often difficult to find.

Here it will be enough to say briefly that the dialects best known, though at best imperfectly known, to the writer are—the Swahili of Zanzibar and sundry dialects of the East Coast, Nyasaland, and Northern Rhodesia, and that the books at hand for further information and reference have been but few. The following may be mentioned among those most accessible to English readers—Sir H. H. Johnston's article on the Bantu Language in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and chapters on Languages in his books on various parts of Tropical Africa, especially the latest, *George Grenfell and the Congo*; Father

Torrend's *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, written nearly twenty years ago, but still valuable as a compendium of facts then known, ably surveyed; Professor Tucker's *Introduction to the Natural History of Language*, and among the many volumes dealing with particular dialects, Stapleton's *Comparative Handbook of Congo Languages*, and Scott's *Cyclopædic Dictionary of Mang'anja*. The facts in this last volume, and the striking suggestions interspersed throughout it, have been freely utilized in this Essay. It is a store-house, which no student of Bantu can afford to neglect.

But apart from the exact knowledge of the details of dialect, one or many, constant familiar contact with Bantu speech in one form or another for nearly thirty years constitutes a basis which gives to general impressions and conclusions a force greater to the writer than his actual command of facts, or the meagre selection of them here presented to the reader, would convey. And the object has been to write an Introduction to Bantu,—not to its formal Grammars or Dictionaries, but to a great block of Human Speech, viewed as a whole,—under necessary limitations as to the point of view.

For convenience, the Bantu Family of Languages as a whole is often referred to as Bantu, and the people speaking any dialect of it as Bantus.

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CONTENTS

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

PART II

WORD-BIRTH

PART III

WORD-GROWTH

PART IV

SUPPLEMENTARY

PART I. INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

PRESENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE OF BANTU

AFRICA has produced many a new thing in the world's history, but never more than in the last half-century. Yet the remarkable Family of human speech which is most characteristic of it as a continent, that which at present occupies almost exclusively its central and southern parts, can hardly be said to have received the attention which, if only as a novelty, it might be expected to command. Even now, when the Native Question in the whole of this region takes its place among the foremost in the social and political horizon—not only in view of the recent union of South African States under the British Flag, but of the interests of the European nations who find vast tracts of the continent both east and west under their control—the importance of the Bantu language seems but little recognized.

Partly, no doubt, the fact is due to the position of Philological science in general. It appears to be hardly regarded, at any rate in England, as a science seriously entitled to the name. For periodicals garnering the products of pioneer work and isolated studies of portions of the vast agglomerate of Bantu dialects; for books dealing with such monographs, digesting and arranging their results, and bringing them into relation with other branches of the world-wide science of Human Speech; for Professors engaged in research, or in teaching the results of work done in all parts of the world,—for all these it is to Italy and France and above all Germany, that attention must be mainly turned. Even when the British Association met a few years ago in South Africa, and held sessions so far north as the Victoria Falls, and when every one connected with it must perforce have come in contact with the Bantu in speech and

person, and some must have been struck with the portent of 'Kitchen-Kaffir', which does duty in many parts as linguistic medium between black and white,—even then it appears that no recognition was thought worth according to the great linguistic ocean in which they were plunged. A few more or less ethnological aspects of the native population were allowed consideration, but of studies of Bantu speech, as such, in general or particular, not one.

Yet it cannot be said that the matter is an unimportant one. Unity of speech, or at least the possibility of mutual understanding and easy inter-communication, is one of the most potent factors making for or against the political unification and social progress of the black race. Again, few indications are more suggestive than language, of the actual and latent powers of the race whose nature it reflects; the actual powers of thought, feeling, and expression; and still more the potentiality of development in these and other directions. It would probably surprise some statesmen as well as scientists, if it should appear that the Bantu Family of speech is by no means a promiscuous agglomerate of barbarous dialects, multiplying with the wild and wayward luxuriance of tropical growth, and diverging rapidly into mutual unintelligibility or even degraded caricatures of the utterance of civilized beings. On the contrary, there is much evidence to show that a striking unity both of grammar and vocabulary underlies the speech of the whole vast region, a unity which under favourable conditions of general peace and increasing inter-communication might rapidly be reinforced, re-emerging (as it were) where almost lost in backwaters and under-currents, reasserting itself when obscured by strange phonetic disguises due often to influences only transient or local,—a unity which, under the stimulus of education, social aspiration, and the growth of a native press, might in no distant future give large sections of the Bantu race a racial self-consciousness and power of united action, against which its present rulers might do well to be forewarned, if not fore-armed. Much more so, if it should further appear, that Bantu speech is such as in fact indicates considerable possibilities in the people, of whose mental characteristics it is the

reflex and to which it is the key,—possibilities which, with due allowance of time and opportunity for development on the one hand, and allowance for the total absence hitherto of writing (alphabet, books, records of any kind) on the other hand, may yet win a place in the world's regard. Its richness, flexibility, expressiveness, and present living power of forming at will and selecting suitable forms for the embodiment of new general ideas and new objects, as well as of varieties and refinements of those already existing, will be attested by all who are really well acquainted with almost any single dialect of Bantu. That its powers are so little exerted as to bring their very existence into doubt, is hardly more remarkable than that Demosthenes did not deliver the *De Corona* from his cradle.

To scientists, Bantu speech may be expected to bring novel and useful contributions towards the solution of some of the most important as well as the most remote and difficult problems of human language,—its origin, lines, and stages of development, modes of differentiating roots, meaning of the forms of declension, conjugation, and of some of the Demonstrative (pronominal) parts of speech. And lastly, these contributions can hardly fail to modify and extend knowledge of human nature itself, ever striving to express its own limitless aspirations within the limits of human capacity for producing sound.

It must be granted that at present, and probably for many years to come, a complete and exact survey of Bantu speech cannot be looked for, and general conclusions about it must be in some degree hypothetical. Geographically, its habitat is large. Practically, it is made very much larger by the relative inaccessibility of large portions of it. The number of dialects (whatever definition of dialect may be adopted) and even of groups of dialects is also large. Few individuals make them a subject of serious and careful study. Officials have many other things to attend to. Settlers have to make their living. Travellers seldom can go below the surface. Most of the work is done by missionaries, simply because their immediate objects make it indispensable to understand and be understood. Moreover, few students of any class start with any special equipment of philological knowledge or training for such work, or even

with any generally accepted guide to correct representation in writing of the sounds, which are the sole material to be dealt with. Hence even such results as are obtained are often difficult to understand and compare. Nevertheless a large amount of work has been done, and its volume rapidly increases. Any bibliography of works dealing with or written in Bantu runs into hundreds of items, but completeness is hard to obtain, because for the most part the works themselves are produced by local presses or by special societies, with a practical and limited aim and no close relations with the world of general literature. The majority of such works are small Grammars and Vocabularies in handbook form, collections of native stories, accounts taken down (sometimes by phonograph) from natives of native customs and history, and attempts at translation into a Bantu dialect of educational and religious books.

On such material, collected and compared, are founded a few works of larger scope, (in English very few,)—Bleek's pioneer *Grammar* of half a century ago, Kolbe's *Language-Study of Bantu*, and Torrend's *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages* (1891), Stapleton's more recent *Comparative Handbook of Congo Languages*. As an approximate survey of the whole field, nothing seems at once so comprehensive and so worthy of attention as Sir H. H. Johnston's Essay in the *British Encyclopædia*, and another in the latest of his great series of volumes dealing with different regions of Central Africa, *George Grenfell and the Congo*, though in this last work his immediate results relate mainly to tracing the source and movements of the great tide of Bantu speech, and defining in a map its position and boundaries. It might have been supposed that the mere growth of official contact between England and Africa, the responsibilities of administration, and the pressing need for mutual understanding between white and black, in the East Africa and Nyasaland Protectorates, as well as in the South and Rhodesia, would have forced the subject to the front, as a matter of policy and obvious precaution. But the facilities for learning in England any of the most important dialects appear to be extremely small; the Universities, old and new, make no provision for its study or teaching, and

the limited attention paid to Bantu in so recent and important a book as Professor Tucker's *Introduction to the Natural History of Language* shows how little the whole subject is before the learned world.

Perhaps the most useful contribution that can be at present offered to the subject as a whole would be to assume the two works last mentioned (Sir H. H. Johnston's and Professor Tucker's), as for the time defining it from the point of view of history and geography on the one hand and of scientific philology on the other, and then to confirm or modify them by a view based on dialects forming a part, though only a part, of the whole mass of Bantu.

CHAPTER II

BANTU AS A SUBJECT OF STUDY

If somewhat scanty attention has so far been given in England to the Bantu Family of Language, it will be hardly denied that as a phenomenon, gradually revealed in the last forty or fifty years, it is sufficiently striking.

To take first its external features only: as a whole it is new, it is on a vast scale, by its isolation and its solidarity it is especially fitted as a subject for scientific examination, and it is the last of the kind, combining all these features, which the world can provide for the solution of the important problems of philological study. Beside all this, there is its intrinsic character and individuality as language.

Gradually the results of the labours of hundreds of workers, beginning with the early days of Portuguese discovery and enterprise, increasing slowly till the last century, and then with rapidity towards its close, have been accumulated and compared. They came from independent sources and regions far apart—the Cape, the Congo, the Cameroons, Zanzibar, Uganda, Nyasaland—first from the coast regions, then gradually from points here and there in the huge intervening spaces. At last it became clear that all Africa from a line somewhat north of the Equator to the Cape (with the exception of scattered groups of Pygmies and Bushmen, of Malays and Hottentots of the south, and Arabs) was in a real sense of one speech. The northward boundary just referred to was drawn with some precision and finality in 1908. [See the map in *George Grenfell and the Congo*, by Sir H. H. Johnston.] The boundary is doubly guarded. The broad belt of sandy desert, which severs the north coast of Africa from the rest of the continent and is prolonged into Arabia, pierced only by the Nile valley on the east and various caravan routes in other parts, is itself a barrier against pressure from the races and languages of the

outer world. South of the desert comes indeed a broad fringe of tribes of diverse origin and diverse speech, but all alike in so far as the contrast is in the main clear between them and the Bantus of the south, and valuable not only as another barrier, but as a measure showing how little they are mutually affected by contact except actually on the border line.

Southward, the coastline of the continent is the only boundary of Bantu, and this also carries important consequences. It is of course a coastline of singular uniformity, unbroken by inland seas, gulfs, or even (with few exceptions) by good harbours, while the rivers are almost all made difficult by shallows and sand-bars at their outlet, and in no case allow of navigation by large vessels for any great distance from the sea. Thus another great natural barrier has preserved Bantu speech from external influences which might affect its purity and the course of its natural development. Full allowance may be made for the infiltration of some small element of foreign words from the coast, whether Phœnician, Persian, Indian, or Portuguese. But the only alien elements in the Bantu area itself, and those of no great importance, are those already referred to—the Malays of Cape Colony, who are not numerous, the Hottentots, who are rapidly losing all separateness as a race, the scattered and scanty hordes of Bushmen, marsh-dwellers, and forest Pygmies,—and the Arabs, who as settlers and slave-traders have for centuries penetrated more deeply than any race into Central Africa, and whose marked influence on speech will be referred to again in connexion with Swahili.

On the whole there can be no part of the world where so vast a volume of human speech has been longer or more effectively safeguarded by natural barriers from any large measure of external interference than the area occupied by Bantu.

But it is not only its scale, its comparative isolation, and its presumable freedom from adulteration, that gives the phenomenon exceptional interest as a subject for scientific study. However remote in time its origin may be, and there are certainly indications of its being of a primitive type, there is some ground for believing that its chief epoch of expansion

in Central and South Africa is comparatively recent. In *British Central Africa* (1898, p. 480) Sir H. H. Johnston gives reasons and promises many others for fixing that epoch as beginning about 2,000 years ago. Taken as a working hypothesis, this may mean that (in addition to the fact of its present geographical position and distribution in Africa) the spread, movements, and developments of Bantu in that area have taken place within fairly definite chronological limits, and those relatively small. Hence a new interest and possible value of Bantu, as throwing light on the kind and amount of dialectic variation and phonetic change taking place in a comparatively short time under conditions favourable to natural life and growth in speech. Philological grounds are also given by Sir H. H. Johnston (who has had unequalled opportunities for forming an opinion, both from his official career in many parts of the Bantu area, and from his command of the assistance of others) for fixing approximately several important points. The chief are—the starting-point from which Bantu speech proceeded to extend itself, viz. the region of Mount Elgon in Northern Uganda, and the lines of successive extensions, each now showing different characteristics, to the westward, to the south-west, and to the centre and south-east (see *George Grenfell and the Congo*). Further, it appears that the two earlier advances, including the dialects of nearly the whole Congo region and the German South-west African province, show phonetic differences in the direction of decay and obscuration of the original type, more marked in proportion to their distance in time and space from the starting-point. The same may be said generally of leading dialects of the east and south-eastern regions, Yao, Makua, Tonga (of Delagoa Bay), and Zulu,—as compared with the comparatively pure and unchanged current of a primitive type found along the line, and on the east, of the great Central Lakes from Uganda to the Zambesi. Hence it appears probable that this central chain of dialects, including those of Lake Nyasa and parts of Northern Rhodesia, provides a good field for the study of the purer type of Bantu. In one or other of them, both the main elements, radical and formative, appear to exist in forms more

favourable than elsewhere for comparison with others of the east, south, and western regions, and for provisional use as a standard by which to recognize and estimate the various linguistic processes illustrated by them, whether of decay, regeneration, or analytical development analogous to that which is widely recognized in other types of speech.

The above sketch is, it will be remembered, of the nature of a reasonable working hypothesis, subject to criticism and correction, but useful meanwhile as at least a theory for verification as time goes on. Final conclusions must depend on the completeness and accuracy of a comparative survey of the whole vast field. The difficulty of such a survey was due at first to lack of material. Now the mere volume of accessible facts to be sifted and mastered makes the difficulty even greater. Meanwhile, the hope of advance appears to lie in each worker in the field contributing his own quota of fact and theory to the common stock, defining his own limitations of knowledge, and waiting for similar bodies of evidence to accumulate, till local and limited views are placed in their right light, and truth emerges from a just estimate of them all.

It is needless here to enter into the difficulties of merely stating facts of language. The facts are sounds, and as sounds can only conventionally be represented at all on paper. At every step the first-hand student is baffled. The same word will sound differently, as pronounced by the lips of different speakers. It may also sound differently to the ears of different hearers. The sound as heard, or supposed to be heard, may be symbolized by many different ways of writing it. Nevertheless, the phonograph can never supersede writing as the vehicle of common communication of knowledge, and it remains to acquiesce from the beginning in a merely approximate representation of the facts at issue. Symbols must be used for sounds, and used under the ordinary limitations of type and space, without even the help of some kind of musical notation to relieve the dismal contrast between a dead level of black letters and the infinite modulations of any human utterance.

Again, it is impossible for a student of language to adduce all the facts on which his conclusions rest. All that could be

written down would form but a small proportion of the whole which go to form a theory or (still more) to train the judgement. The majority pass through the mind, or at least the ear, and are forgotten perhaps beyond recovery, but none the less they leave their impress, strengthen or weaken (perhaps unconsciously) previous impressions, and give edge to the tool in dealing with new facts that follow. Consequently, in such a subject as Language, and except for the purposes of a strictly scientific treatise, a selection only of facts can be presented to a reader,—examples, in short, quite disproportionately few as compared with arguments and conclusions resting on them, but valuable in proportion as they are really examples and not exceptions, types and not oddities of speech, in proportion (in fact) to the care and insight shown in their selection.

As to the chapters which follow,—thirty years of contact with Bantu speech, beginning with the Swahili of the East Coast, and ending with various dialects of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, guarantee a certain familiarity with some details of the great whole, but are hardly compatible with the wide study in books exhibited by others, which might put such details in a truer light. Nevertheless, if advance is to be won, it seems necessary that partial and imperfect contributions should be made and weighed. The present object is not to introduce Bantu in connexion with any special dialect, or even to outline with any formal completeness its characteristic grammatical system, but rather to give a view of it as a distinct type of human speech and a possible key to some of its deepest problems,—under the limitations above described.

CHAPTER III

BANTU IN RELATION TO GENERAL PHILOLOGY

FROM the nature of the case the study of Bantu, in proportion as it becomes more exact and more complete, may be expected to throw more light and new light on many of the deeper problems of Philology,—more especially on the processes of language-making in all its stages.

The translation of thought and impression into sound, the interaction of mind and matter, the blending of spirit and mechanism—incarnation in fact, seems in Bantu to be going on before the eye. Free in a remarkable degree (as has been shown) from interference of non-Bantu influences or intrusion of alien modes of expression, free also from the fetters of writing and the exacting demands of literary style, even free for the most part from the conditions imposed by continued residence of large communities in the same spot under settled conditions, Bantu speech has every chance of reflecting life, the natural movements, the instinctive efforts of the human spirit, exercised if not developed in an environment which encourages in every way the free interaction of nature and humanity, the mutual influences of man and the world he lives in. The only sounds supplied from without are those of nature—winds, woods, and waters, insects, animals, and birds. Besides social intercourse and the operations of domestic life, war, hunting, and agriculture are the chief experiences acting on the mind and challenging expression in sound, i. e. in words. Each tribe or group of tribes, each clan, even each village is often free to adopt, reject, change its words to suit its own needs of mutual understanding, without reference to any other consideration whatever. If self-preservation did not in some regions step in to force tribal organization into prominence, (with all its necessary consequences of dwelling together in large villages, and surrender of individual rights in face of the constant menace of impending war and possible extermination by powerful neighbours,) rapid and complete divergence in speech would

naturally follow even more largely than is the actual case, (see Stapleton, *Handbook of Congo Languages*, Part ii. A. Dialectical Growth). Where the need of organized and united self-protection is reduced to a minimum by the adoption of some natural barrier against a hostile world—the deserts by the Bushmen, the swamps and marshes by the Watwa, the forests by the Pygmies—it is not to be wondered at if language within the barrier serves its purpose there, but is unintelligible beyond.

Hence Philology might be expected to turn to Bantu as *a priori* likely to exhibit human speech in forms and under conditions which would throw light on its mode of development and even its origin, as well as on the uniformity of the workings of the human spirit in its endeavours after self-expression. Such expectation will certainly not be wholly disappointed. It may safely be said that there are few questions of interest in the whole range of philological science on which Bantu has not a bearing: whether remote or unimportant, may be left to those who are most competent to decide. Some of the positive features of Bantu may be shortly summarized. The sound-system, based on the syllable consisting of a consonant, followed usually by a vowel, is easy, flowing, even melodious, and would be more so if not for the prevalence of the 'hard' consonants and the vowel *A*. In this respect, Swahili has been compared to Italian. It is also singularly free from difficult sounds or combinations, and such as exist are largely local and traceable to outside (non-Bantu) influences, e.g. the clicks of Zulu to Hottentots or Bushmen, the gutturals sometimes heard in Swahili to direct imitation of the Arab. The richness and fertility of sound-combination, actual and potential, directly fitted for effective expression,—implying as they do a language capable of keeping pace with and supplying the needs of minds growing in capacity for differentiation of their own ideas and the assimilation of new ones,—have impressed every student of a Bantu dialect in proportion to his acquaintance with it. The process of word-building, or rather of word-growth, is singularly transparent. The raw materials of speech are largely recognizable,—the roots to which all forms point and to which many can be traced, the interjections which form by

themselves a notable and large element in speech and are the base of a much larger. The prefixes, infixes, and suffixes—one or more of which are associated with every word—are on the whole clearly defined in form and to some extent in meaning. At the same time, most of the grammatical terms used in relation to European and other languages can without strain be applied to Bantu speech, and receive a measure of illustration and even explanation from it,—the form and meaning of declension, the differentiation of stems, the systems of tense-forms, moods, conjugations, even syntax,—these and others are points in which study may expect to be repaid. An attempt will be made to indicate some of the directions in which results more or less important may be looked for and without difficulty obtained. Such results are of course largely confirmatory of previous philological conclusions, but suggest new grounds for some as well as modifications in others.

A few words are necessary here as to Swahili, the East Coast dialect of Bantu. It still serves admirably the purposes of a *lingua franca* in Central Africa, surviving the breakdown of the old commercial system based on the slave-trade, which was the chief source of its vitality in the interior, and made it widely and commonly known. Faithfully reflecting the mixture of African and Arab elements in the coast-population, carried by their representatives along every trade-route of the many which up to the present generation converged from all parts of the region of the great Central Lakes and the Congo basin on Kilwa, Mombasa, and Zanzibar,—readily adopting, assimilating, and making familiar Arabic words for all new ideas and many old ones, never losing but in some ways materially simplifying its own essentially Bantu grammar, the loss of which would have sacrificed its power as a medium between the African and the outer world,—Swahili is for these reasons excellent as an introduction to Bantu, though *not* the best for scientific study of it. The requirements of the foreign (almost entirely Arab) element not only introduced many new words and even for the commonest things displaced many old ones, but the Bantu element on the Coast was itself not a pure one. Its vocabulary was largely influenced by the

drifting of thousands of slaves from every tribe within reach of the trade into its always mixed population. The slaves brought numbers of words and forms together, which never coexisted in any one of the dialects of the interior, and which, though true Bantu, do not reflect faithfully any particular locality or stage of development in Bantu speech. Moreover (as has been said), the grammar, and especially the tense-system, had to be simplified for the use of the Coast, and while achieving a real gain in definiteness of meaning, lost much of the richness, vividness, and variety, which is at once the beauty and the difficulty of many a dialect in its own home in the heart of Africa.

Swahili, then, is of great practical use and importance, not only as largely the official language of the British East Africa Protectorates, the German province of East Africa, and the Belgian Congo, but also as an easy and adequate example of true Bantu grammar, and a key to it wherever used. But for the purest examples of natural and unadulterated developments of the Bantu word and sentence, the truest reflection of the Bantu mind, feelings, and capacities in its speech, attention would be better turned to a dialect in the region of the Great Lakes—Victoria Nyanza, Tanganyika, and Nyasa. Singularly valuable in this connexion is the *Cyclopædic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language* by the late Rev. David Clement Scott. What is of value in the following chapters on Bantu will be largely due to the facts so accurately and fully recorded in that book, and still more to its singular and inspiring suggestiveness. No other book on a Bantu dialect seems to approach it as an extraordinarily able and truthful collection of the facts of a single dialect, illuminated by the sympathetic insight of a sensitive and philosophic mind, enthusiastically appreciative of the capacity and promise of native thought. That it is not a mere Dictionary has been a stumbling-block in the way of its use by some, but the only subject of real regret is that the author did not live or have the leisure to connect and follow up the scattered hints and suggestions with which it abounds, and so give its true completeness to a work of such unique interest and value.

PART II. WORD-BIRTH

CHAPTER IV

GERM-SOUNDS, OR MONOSONANTS

LIFE—life in sound, living speech, speech which is not to be found in books or is half dead if put there, which refuses to be photographed in type, and even if phonographed fails to make a trumpet really speak, speech which postulates life, the living speaker, the living hearer, and the life around them, as its very atmosphere and condition of its intelligibility, indeed of its very existence as language—this if not the first, is the last and truest impression given by Bantu. It is certainly the dominant idea under which to attempt its interpretation. Life rather than mechanism, word-birth and word-growth rather than word-formation or word-building, and organic living rather than mere constructive processes, are the expressions suggested by the survey of even written specimens of Bantu speech. Not only roots and stems, words familiar enough in all works on language, but germs and seeds, branches, flowers, and fruit are terms almost demanding use as fittest for true descriptive purpose. From the first a written letter or symbol is felt not only as a partial and inadequate representation of the truth of a sound, but as an actual restraint on the power to grasp and realize its nature. It challenges and necessitates criticism, as implying greater fixity than exists, and a machine at work rather than living spirit playing on an instrument. Hence in Bantu, more perhaps than in other languages, endless and often fruitless arguments are apt to rise and flourish as to the nature of certain sounds in themselves often more definite than definable,—the changes, interchanges, substitutions, modifications, which they admit of, in a dialect or as between different dialects—, arguments tending as usual to become more dogmatic in proportion to the impossibility of demonstrative proof.

Symbols, however, have to be selected and used. And it is fortunate that the letters of the English alphabet are on the whole singularly sufficient as a guide to practical appreciation of Bantu speech, however inadequate to reflect its actual pronunciation and accent. In fact, several English consonants can be dispensed with, and at most a few rather unusual combinations of them required, though every student in actual contact with Bantu will probably desiderate one or two special characters in addition, if only to protect himself from the charge of making fanciful or even impossible statements as to phonetic fact. Here it will be assumed that as there is a close general similarity between the organs of speech in all individuals of the human race, so in Bantu, at any rate, the sounds produced by them for the purpose of mutual understanding can be classed on the principles, and symbolized by the letters, commonly given in English works dealing with the subject of phonology. While English vowels will be limited to the more fixed values * given them on the Continent and especially in Southern Europe, the consonants are given their common values, limited to one where more than one is in common use.

If we start, then, with the English alphabet and omit only *C* (except in the combination *CH*), *Q*, and *X*,—three superfluous letters sometimes usefully employed to represent clicks where these are found,— it will be convenient to arrange the letters in the way likely to be found most suggestive and useful in dealing with Bantu, as well as in the main most commonly accepted as a sound physiological basis,

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} & & A & & \\ & (E) & & (O) & \\ I & & & & U \end{array}$$

This arrangement may be taken to suggest, so far as Bantu is concerned, that the vowels *A*, *I*, *U* are (so to speak) the cardinal points of the vowel-system, and that *E*, *O*, if also original, are also vowels in some degree secondary and intermediate. They often are representative of fusion or coalescences of *A*, *I*, and *A*, *U* respectively, where such fusion is admissible. In all questions involving *E* and *O* in Bantu, it is well to bear in mind the possibility of their resolution into

* A = ah, E = ay, O = oh, I = ee, U = oo.

a more original form, involving two sound-elements instead of one.

The connexion of the three cardinal vowels *A*, *I*, *U*, with three leading groups of consonants is so close and important as to make it advisable to include them in the following Table. The various descriptive terms included suggest in some degree the basis of a classification, which will further justify itself practically in application to Bantu.

TABLE A.

	(1) Palatal (back)		(2) Dental (middle)		(3) Labial (front)	
Vowels	*A*	(*E*)	*I*	(*O*)	*U*	
Semi-vowels	*H*		*Y*		*W*	(*Ŵ*)
Nasals	*NG'*		*N*		*M*	
Stops, full	*K*	(*CH*)	*T*		*P*	
„ half	*G*	(*J*)	*D*		*B*	
Liquids	—		*L*, *R*		—	
Spirants	—		—		*F*, *V*	
Sibilants	—		*S*, *Z*		—	

As this Table is used for reference in much that follows, a few explanatory remarks are here added by way of anticipation.

1. Each of the above consonants has its ordinary English value, and represents a sound common in Bantu, except that—

H is not used in some dialects.

G is *not* used for *J* (as in *age*), nor *S* for *Z* (as in *bees*).

M and *N* have two values, not always easy to distinguish, (*a*) as consonants, nasalizing the sound that follows, and pronounced in close connexion with it, (*b*) as sonants or semi-vowels, having a distinct syllabic value,—as if *UM*, *IN*,—and generally representing a distinct formative element in a word. The distinction is important but not commonly indicated in type. So also is the close connexion of sonant *M* with *U* and *W*, and *N* with *I* and *Y*, in Bantu phonetics, so close that each may represent the other, as well as be combined with it.

Moreover, important phonetic (mainly euphonic) changes are connected with the combination of *M* or *N* with other sounds.

L and *R*, though often distinguished in sound, are practically interchangeable, and both are often represented in pronunciation by *D*.

W, *B*, and *V* are common ways of pronouncing a single peculiar sound, distinct from them all, and widely used in Bantu, one of the few (beside local clicks) which are not easy for a non-Bantu to pronounce. It is in fact a *W* pronounced with an approximation to *B* on the one hand, or to *V* on the other. It is here called modified *W*, written, when necessary, *Ŵ*. The *B* in the word Bantu is a convenient illustration, represented as it is in various dialects by *B*, *W*, or *V*, or sometimes altogether dropped.

2. It must not be supposed that Bantu is limited to syllables beginning with a single consonant from the above Table. Subject to some phonetic limitations, the following may be noted here :—

The commonest and most characteristic syllables are a nasal (*M* or *N*) before, or the corresponding semi-vowel (*W* or *Y*) after, any of the consonants, or both together, e. g. *mp-a*, *pw-a*, *py-a*, *mpw-a*, *mpy-a*.

In some dialects the sibilants (*S*, *Z*, also *SH*, *ZH*), and Spirants (*F*, *V*) are often 'hardened' by prefixing a 'stop' consonant (*T*, *P*, *D*, *B*, not *K*, *G*), e. g. *ts-a*, *dz-a*, *pf-a*, *bv-a*. And these combinations may be nasalized as above.

The use of *H* is limited to certain dialects, but is common and of great importance in Swahili. But a faint aspirate or 'check' is heard in some dialects after the 'stop' consonants (especially) which sometimes indicates a difference of meaning, and is written *h* or ', *pha* or *p'a*, *tha* or *t'a*, *kha* or *k'a*. It is not often of importance.

The above is not an exhaustive account of possible combinations of consonants in Bantu, but sufficient for purposes of illustration in what follows.

If we take, then, Table A as a useful aid, and remember once for all the limitations already described (Chap. II), under which all general theories about Bantu as a whole in this book are made, it may be said that every Bantu word, however lengthy and elaborate its form may be, is likely to be traceable to a single sound, which may be regarded as the germ of the

word. As a sound, it may be called a Monosonant—i. e. any sound capable of separate pronunciation, whether represented by a vowel, semi-vowel, or consonant—rather than a monosyllable. A monosyllable usually implies a vowel, or a combination of vowel and consonant. But all consonants, except *K*, *P*, *T*, are capable of a degree of separate sonances, and the root-meaning of a word in Bantu is often attached to a single consonant, followed indeed by a vowel (necessarily in the case of *K*, *T*, *P*), but by different vowels, carrying the possibility of implied difference in meaning. Hence Monosonant seems a fitter term than Monosyllable to describe the rudimentary germ of speech.

Such monosonants appear to be the ultimate basis of speech in Bantu, and in the next chapter grounds will be given for believing that they can reasonably be recognized as such, also that a monosonant starts from the first with many capacities for differentiation and consequent expressiveness, that it can acquire further definiteness and distinction by juxtaposition with a similar element, and that at length the simplest form of what can be called a word in Bantu emerges by a union of two such germs. Once united as parts of a whole, a new distinction appears between them, one taking (as it were) the lead and expressing the main or root idea of the combination, the other in a subsidiary position as qualifying the first, giving it a special aspect or bringing it into relation with other words. These may conveniently be called the Radical and Formative elements of a word, as commonly recognized in other Families of speech.

In Bantu, however, it may be found that both radical and formative, and especially the latter, are more clearly recognizable throughout; their relations and functions in word-building more regular and characteristic; the power of selection and employment at will for appropriate expression of ideas more free. Hence it is possible that the study of these basal or germ sounds may throw light on the early history of human speech—among other things on the nature of the distinctions commonly known as declensions in nouns, conjugations, moods, tenses, &c., in verbs, to explain which Comparative Philology has not hitherto been able to penetrate far into the past.

CHAPTER V

MONOSONANTS, INTERJECTIONAL AND ADVERBIAL

So far it has been stated, mainly as theory and by anticipation, that the recognizable basis of all Bantu speech is to be looked for in single sounds, called here Monosonants. At this point it will be convenient to present the simplest of them in a tabular form, arranged alphabetically, and in each case with a vowel, though the vowel is not in itself necessary (except to give sonance to *K*, *P*, *T*). This Table B is in fact a rearrangement of the letters given in Table A.

TABLE B.

A	*E*	*I*	*O*	*U*
Ba.	*Be*	*Bi*	*Bo*	*Bu*
CHa	*CHe*	*CHi*	*CHo*	*CHu*
Da	*De*	*Di*	*Do*	*Du*
Fa	*Fe*	*Fi*	*Fo*	*Fu*
Ga	*Ge*	*Gi*	*Go*	*Gu*
Ha	*He*	*Hi*	*Ho*	*Hu*
Ja	*Je*	*Ji*	*Jo*	*Ju*
Ka	*Ke*	*Ki*	*Ko*	*Ku*
La	*Le*	*Li*	*Lo*	*Lu*
Ma	*Me*	*Mi*	*Mo*	*Mu*
Na	*Ne*	*Ni*	*No*	*Nu*
NG'a	*NG'e*	*NG'i*	*NG'o*	*NG'u*
Pa	*Pe*	*Pi*	*Po*	*Pu*
Ra	*Re*	*Ri*	*Ro*	*Ru*
Sa	*Se*	*Si*	*So*	*Su*
Ta	*Te*	*Ti*	*To*	*Tu*
Va	*Ve*	*Vi*	*Vo*	*Vu*
Wa	*We*	*Wi*	*Wo*	*Wu*
Ŵa	*Ŵe*	*Ŵi*	*Ŵo*	*Ŵu*
Ya	*Ye*	*Yi*	*Yo*	*Yu*
Za	*Ze*	*Zi*	*Zo*	*Zu*

This table gives 110 monosyllables. Are these the basis of all Bantu speech? If so, how so?

The answer, if any, can only be found by reference to Bantu as it exists at the present day. Probably no sort of written record of Bantu speech, in Arabic or European letters, goes back further than a few centuries (see Preface to Torrend's *Comparative Grammar*), and a record of an earlier age on any scale useful for the purpose of drawing general conclusions is hardly conceivable. The case is very different with regard to some other families of speech, Sanskrit, Hebrew, and ancient Egyptian. Even then the origin of human speech seems far too remote and inaccessible to make 400 or 4,000 years any real difference. The important matter is not lapse of time, but degree of change necessarily involved, not the age but the stage of a given specimen of speech. Thus an answer suggested by dialects now spoken in Central Africa may be as satisfactory (or unsatisfactory) as any other, considered as evidence bearing on their original form. It is all that can be offered and must be left to justify itself, without discussion at present as to their inherent right to be regarded as specially primitive in type, but only with the remark that there is no inherent impossibility of one dialect of one family of speech being, if not primitive, a fairly preserved survival of much that is primitive, and so far a useful guide to sound conclusions.

Mang'anja is the name given to a Bantu dialect spoken in the region immediately south of Lake Nyasa and along the valley of its outlet, the river Shiré, and is closely allied to others on the shores of the lake, especially on the western side. It is the subject of the book already specially described, Scott's *Cyclopædic Dictionary of Mang'anja*. In this book over 150 such monosyllables as those in Table B are given, with short descriptions and some illustrations, i.e. many more than appear in that table. The additions may be accounted for by reference to the explanations appended to Table A, showing the many combinations of two or more consonants possible, and in some dialects (Mang'anja among them) commonly used.

Not only do these 150 monosyllables exist as separate elements of speech, but at least three differences can be recognized in their common use, differences which seem to be a valuable indication of stages in linguistic history. They are used as

(*a*) simple interjections, (*b*) interjectional adverbs, (*c*) verbs, words which are verb-stems, not merely verb-roots—but this third use is limited strictly to the first column, i.e. monosyllables ending with the vowel -*a*. This limitation will be shown hereafter to be important, and in fact marks the difference of a whole stage in linguistic development.

The name 'interjection' is not adopted from its suitability in this case, but because it is the common grammatical term for a 'part of speech' which is not in a grammatical sense a word at all, i.e. not capable of entering into such exact grammatical relations as the others. Hence, it is commonly credited with a minimum of value and meaning, and is often almost entirely overlooked. Certainly this has been hitherto the case in all works on Bantu which are most generally known, except in Scott's *Mang'anja*. Even in Stapleton's *Comparative Grammar of Congo Languages*, the whole subject is represented by a single section under the title 'Onomatopoetic vocables'. The fuller meaning of interjection, as used of these monosyllabic rudiments of speech, will be shown later in this chapter.

A single illustration may here be given of the three uses of monosyllables from the syllable (sound) *Pa*.

As a simple interjection, *Pa* may suggest a blow, and a light rather than a heavy one, on a soft object rather than a hard one.

As an interjectional adverb, *Pa* may qualify a preceding noun or adjective, by which its range of possible suggestion is in a degree limited, e.g. following *utsi* (smoke) *pa* suggests spreading in clouds, following *nyumba* (house) *pa* suggests fullness, crowding. Or it may be used with a verb, e.g. *mtengo* (tree), *uli* (is), *pa*, straight, upright, in place.

As a verb, *Pa* may mean variously, do, place, put apart, kill. But as will be shown hereafter, *Pa* as a verb is a composite syllable, and in some meanings certainly a contracted one, and this is also the case with its further common uses as an adverb of place, 'here,' and as a preposition of place, 'at.'

For the present, the features to be specially noted are these. As a simple interjection, the monosyllable so used is vaguely expressive. As a sound, it suggests without by itself defining. As an interjectional adverb it is qualitative, its suggestiveness

is used to qualify, descriptively or otherwise, another element of speech, which in turn reacts on its suggestiveness by limiting it to the particular case. The smoke (e. g.) would not be described as upright, nor the house as spreading. In connexion with its use as verb, it must be remembered that while any of the syllables in Table B may be, andmost are, used as interjections and adverbs, only those ending in *-a* are (with rare exceptions) used as verbs. When this is taken in connexion with the general rule in Bantu that all verbal forms (except in the subjunctive mood) end in *-a*, the conclusion clearly follows that in this case the final *-a* involves a second element, i. e. *Pa* as a verb is probably *p(a) -a*. This stage of combination of at least two simple elements will be considered later. For the present, the two simpler uses of the monosyllable require further explanation, and first as to the nature, use, and possibilities of the simple interjection in human speech generally.

Simply as sound, produced by human organs, an interjection need not differ from other sounds whether of inorganic or organic nature. It is often simply an imitation or reproduction of them. But used by a man, as means of self-expression or of communication with fellow men, the interjection cannot but, from the first, reflect the human spirit. It may be merely the sound of the open vowel *A*, as pronounced (e. g.) in Southern Europe. But as uttered by a man, and (it may be assumed) addressed to a man, in an environment including at least two human personalities, with all their endowments of passion, intelligence, and will, in the atmosphere and surroundings of a particular moment in the life of each, with every sense and faculty alert (however unconsciously) to understand and be understood,— then a mere sound takes on a wholly new and important character, and may have effects as telling, for illumination and action, as an electric spark. As uttered by a man, its force and meaning is inevitably coloured by attitude, gesture, and look, it is defined by the particular organ or sense affected, employed, or appealed to, by objects present, instruments used, and further by the special occasion and general circumstances, immediate cause or obvious purpose of the utterance, the speaker's relation to his hearer, his knowledge of the intelli-

gence and sympathy of the other, and the probable effect upon him,—all the complex elements, in fact, which surround and enter into the simplest movements of human life. Moreover, no sound is so simple as not to admit of many degrees and shades of change. The sound *A* may be uttered in a colourless inexpressive way, be slowly drawled, or have a sharp, clear-cut effect. In either case its pitch may be high or low, its tone smooth or rough, musical or grating, its emphasis weak or strong. It may be uttered singly or repeated, and when repeated be repeated with one of the changes just described. In fact, a whole conversation can be carried on, case argued, transaction discussed and concluded, by sole use of interjections or ejaculations, largely even by natural variations of one. Possible combinations of such elements as those mentioned suggest almost limitless possibilities of a single monosyllable.

Vague, ineffective, almost useless as interjectional speech may and must seem to those not familiar with it or with men who habitually use it, it is nevertheless a fact which deserves far more thorough study than it has received, if ever the problems of origin and growth in human language are to be solved. It is possible that the 'speaking with tongues' of the new-born Apostolic Church was the interjectional reflection, through human organs, of ecstatic glimpses of the transfiguring glories of Divine Incarnation in human life, requiring sympathetic interpretation by one himself on the same high level of 'inspiration' to become intelligible on the plane of ordinary human hearing. Similarly on a lower plane it might be expected that interjections are well understood by a hearer on the same level of civilization as the speaker, and yet require further interpretation to be usefully intelligible to the ear of the white man. Where writing is absolutely unknown, and no visual image in the mind affects sound-production, a new meaning attaches to the expression Living Speech. Compared with Bantu in its present fluid or gaseous condition, the literary languages of the modern world are relatively as hard and lifeless as those only known to us in the writings of the distant past. Bantu language is always and only sound; speaking, not writing. Hence the futility of judging of its possibilities by

its present condition only, or of criticizing its supposed clumsiness, limited vocabulary, and lack of exact expression, without due reference to its present circumstances and the stage of civilization to which it belongs. Those who know its more than sufficiency for all present needs are not likely to doubt its promise in the future.

What has been said so far of the interjection in general, may now be applied to the present case.

A simple interjection in Bantu may be described as a single sound or syllable, used as an element of human speech, with a meaning sufficiently defined by—

(*a*) intrinsic differences as sound, such as duration, pitch, stress, and quality (the rate, amplitude, and form of air-waves),

(*b*) special accompaniments, such as facial expression, gesture or movement, attitude or position, on the part of the speaker,

(*c*) general conditions, such as time, place, and circumstances, including characters and characteristics of the speaker and also of the hearer.

The number of possible combinations available for suggesting difference of meaning may be illustrated as follows :—

The syllable *Pa* may be pronounced either normally or long or short, i. e. *Pa*, *Pā* (*paa*), *Pă* (*pah*). These three varieties of pronunciation may be attached to *P* in combination with each of five other consonants (combinations common in Mang'anja, for instance, *PW*, *PY*, *PF*, *PS*, *PH* = *P'*) producing three varieties of the six syllables *Pa*, *PWa*, *PYa*, *PFa*, *PSa*, *P'a*, eighteen in all. Each of these syllables are commonly nasalized in Bantu by *M* prefixed. The thirty-six resulting syllables may easily be differentiated by light or strong stress or emphasis, producing a total of seventy-two. And if further differences (say. three only) of pitch, or place in the scale, are not used (as in Chinese) to distinguish words, it shows that Bantu does not exhaust all its natural resources when it uses seventy-two monosyllables based on the letters *Pa* alone. *Pe*, *Pi*, *Po*, *Pu* can of course be similarly treated.

Each of the seventy-two can further take on a different shade

of meaning, according to the sense appealed to, or affected—sight, smell, taste, touch, as well as hearing, and each of these be effectively determined by the various special accompaniments (of look, gesture, movement, attitude) and general conditions just enumerated.

If these considerations be applied (as they may be) to each of the monosyllables in Table B, it will be seen that the interjectional basis assumed for Bantu is sufficiently broad. It is obvious, moreover, that objection cannot reasonably be brought against the interjection on the score of being necessarily too vague for intelligent use. It cannot be set aside or disregarded as other than a real, even the most real, element in human speech. Any human utterance, however brief, that is adequate to the occasion, i. e., sufficiently indicates what is intended to be conveyed, has as good a claim to be a true word as many a polysyllabic and sesquipedalian product of modern scientific nomenclature. The study of it may be difficult, indeed it has probably been kept out of sight largely by its difficulty, but it certainly may claim to be useful and even necessary. From the nature of the case, it can only be studied on the spot, i. e. among Bantus, and by a qualified observer, not only familiar with a dialect but sympathetically appreciative of their modes of self-expression, and such observation (it must be remarked) is just what cannot be reproduced by the phonograph. The sound alone is not the whole fact as a rudiment of speech. And it is not the least valuable feature of the Mang'anja dictionary so often referred to, that it seriously attempts to show the value of the interjection, and record systematically facts throwing light upon its uses and nature.

Again, the interjection does not deserve disregard, much less ridicule, on the ground that (so far as now appears) the same sound has from the first very different applications, supplies the root or basis, in fact, of large and distinct groups of words, springing from the same root but from different original meanings of it. In fact, the interjection cannot without violence be detached from its surroundings. Richly suggestive in itself, it takes colour instantaneously from any and every element in the environment, and illustrates the intense,

if somewhat chaotic and unrestrained vitality of new creations. It is indeed more living than its subsequent developments, depends less on itself as sound for its own expressiveness, challenges the human spirit to understand the human spirit, with a minimum between them as vehicle of communication. Its implied attitude is not so much—Do you not hear? as, Do you not see? Do you not feel my meaning?

More than enough has now perhaps been said to indicate the claims of the interjection on the attention of the student of Bantu. They may be strengthened by what follows in later chapters. The significance of its use as an 'interjectional adverb' requires now to be briefly recalled and re-stated. This use is in fact the commonest in existing dialects of Bantu. A simple interjection placed after a word qualifies its meaning by added description or merely added emphasis. Its own meaning is at the same time limited to what is appropriate to the idea of the word, to the function of qualifying it. There is a gain on both sides from the juxtaposition. The word gains in definiteness, the interjection gains also in usefulness. It has a function, although in a sense a subordinate one, in relation to another element of speech. It is, at an early stage of language, what the adverb, with its characteristic grammatical use as qualifying verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, is at a later. But it has a further and perhaps important significance. It suggests the nature of the first step in the process by which simple interjections in Bantu become words in the full sense, capable of having and developing definite relations with other words. In Bantu of the present day, after doubtless many centuries of existence and change, words have long come into existence, and the interjection appears mainly as qualifying words. But it is not unreasonable to infer that in an earlier and more primitive stage, in which interjections were the current coin of speech and words had not won their way to supersede them, interjections were similarly used to qualify interjections with corresponding effects of action and reaction upon each, the first of a pair being qualified by the second, the latter being limited to illustrating and defining the former. Here it is possible to see the beginning of what at

the later stage are called the Radical and Formative elements of speech, — juxtaposition involving mutual limitation and then gradual differentiation of function, the first member of the pair giving the dominant idea, the latter so far subordinate and utilitarian as to give it a further aspect, and eventually relation. It is easy to see how one tends to represent the living germ of meaning, and the other the also living but also more mechanical element in its presentation as a word. 'Missing links' will probably remain a feature in this as well as other chains of biological development. But in Bantu at any rate the gap to be filled may be found less difficult to bridge than elsewhere. At any rate the suggestion just made seems in harmony with other facts characteristic of Bantu noted in following chapters.

It remains to notice in passing another class which may be called 'Interjectional Adverbs', belonging to a later stage of growth, but largely illustrated in the Mang'anja dictionary and of importance as a feature of Bantu. They are formed themselves from fully-formed words, mostly verbs, but put back (as it were) into the earlier (interjectional) stage, not so much by the instinct of reversion to old type as of attempt to utilize and extend it. They are used side by side with other adverbs, and generally consist of two or three syllables. Simple examples are: *mpira* (a football) *utumuka* (verb, is blown up) *tumu*, tight, related to the verb *tumuka*. *Kavalo* (the horse) *aenda* (verb, goes) *gogodo gogodo*, cantering along, related to the verb *gogodola*.

CHAPTER VI

ROOTS

THE monosyllables of Table B, assumed as the basis of Bantu speech, have been so far treated as furnishing interjections of two classes, the simple and the adverbial, differing only in use, not in form. And the suggestion has been made, that in the juxtaposition and (at a later stage) union of interjections in these two uses is to be found the origin of the (so-called) Radical and Formative elements, both of which are in Bantu necessary to constitute a word, whether verb or noun, or at least are found invariably to coexist in all such words.

The next step is further to examine this all-important phenomenon, the emergence of the word from the stage of interjection. If germ, seed, embryo, are terms suited to describe the interjection, it now becomes inevitable to use the term Root.

A Bantu root may be described as a monosonant, which is strictly not yet a word or even in all cases a pronounceable sound, but a rudiment or germ of speech, interjectional in the comprehensive sense above explained, sufficiently definite in meaning to be capable of and invite combination with another of a similar nature. Such union, when consummated, issues in a word, capable of definite logical and grammatical relations with other similar words. Hence the appropriateness of the word root. Germ and seed lead on naturally to a new stage of vitality, still (as it were) underground, but demanding emergence in a new form, based on their union and (as it were) mutual absorption, the result being a product belonging to a new region of life—the word, verb or noun, with its endless possibilities of varied growth, modification, and uses for the purposes of expression. Whatever the interjectional germ, seed, or root may be, it does not in Bantu become suitable

to play the part of a word, without union with another. To become a verb, a root is insufficient without *-a*, as final vowel. To become a noun, it must indeed have a final vowel, not necessarily a second root, but also and primarily an initial sound of one of several well-marked and distinct forms. In other words, a second element must appear in every word beside the root, in the case of a verb a suffix, in the case of a noun a prefix.

The view has been implied so far, that the two elements forming every word are of similar origin, i.e. originally of the nature of interjections, and it will probably be admitted as a reasonable working hypothesis that they are so. Incidentally, reasons may appear for thinking that in some cases they may be clearly recognized as each equally, if vaguely, significant of an idea. But taking Bantu words as they must be taken, in the present stage of development of the whole Family of speech, with unknown centuries of growth and changes behind it, it is clear that in such words one element conveys the main idea, and may be usefully called Root or Radical, while the other is not indeed without meaning, but in fact and function secondary to the first, its meaning being used as a qualificative, perhaps of an adverbial kind. If its qualificative use is mainly kept in view, for whatever reason, then this second element may well receive its usual name of Formative, without forgetting that it has or had a root-meaning of its own.

A further step in definition is useful and almost necessary in view of the leading characteristics of Bantu speech. The whole word-building, or word-growth of Bantu rests on the use of formatives, in the sense just described. On their nature and position as regards the radical element depend all the distinctions corresponding to such common grammatical terms as stem, voice, conjugation, mood, tense, person in verbs, and class or declension and number in nouns. On them rests the whole system of Bantu concord, and they enter largely into the important group of words usually classed together under the name Pronouns.

Formatives are used at least as much after as before the root, and may therefore be divided into prefixes and suffixes.

There are some, however, of importance, which in verbs are never initial or final elements, and when this class requires separate distinction it may be said to consist of Infixes. As a rule, however, it is convenient to call formative elements preceding the root Prefixes, and those following it Suffixes. More exactly they may be divided thus:—

1. Prefixes, including
   (*a*) initial prefixes—
   (*b*) pre-radical infixes.
2. Suffixes, including—
   (*a*) post-radical infixes
   (*b*) final suffixes, or affixes.

Most finite verb-forms contain all these, often several infixes. Most nouns have one prefix and one suffix.

The relation of a root, as described at the beginning of this chapter, to the interjection will appear more clearly in the chapter following, and later will be given reasons for regarding the so-called Prefixes of nouns as entitled in reality to be called the root-syllables (Chapter XII).

CHAPTER VII

VERBS AND NOUNS

THE position so far reached may by way of recapitulation be briefly summarized.

Table B has been taken as a list, typical but not exhaustive, of monosyllables forming the basis of Bantu speech, and *Pa* as an example of them.

Bantu, as it now exists, uses *Pa*—

(*a*) as an interjection, e. g. describing a blow;

(*b*) as an adverb, following and qualifying a word, e. g. *utsi pa*, smoke in clouds;

(*c*) as a verb, with various meanings in different dialects, but always involving *p*(*a*) as conveying the root-meaning in each case, and a formative termination *-a*, common to verbs generally. (*Pa* has also other important uses.)

The explanation, offered as a key to the existing facts, suggests the following phases of development:—

(*a*) First, interjections, such as *Pa*, as the only original material of speech, suggestive themselves and defined by environment.

(*b*) Second, two interjections, used together and reacting on each other, the first suggestive, the latter tending to be qualitative,—the typical formula being *pa pa*.

(*c*) Third, two interjections, united and tending to fusion, the former conveying the general dominant idea (root), the latter supplying the (formative) element necessary for relating it to other similar combinations,—the typical formula being *pa-pa*, whence *p*(*a-p*)*a*, *pa*. This union constitutes a word, verb or noun, and all forms of these and other words consist of recognizable formative elements used before or after a root.

So far as 'root' suggests root-meaning, it will of course be recognized in the first and second as well as in the third stage,

in the interjection as well as in verbs and nouns. But its importance lies in its use as a particular element in words, which begin (*ex hypothesi*) with the third stage. Hence it is used here mainly of this third and of subsequent stages of word-growth.

It may now be broadly stated, that each of the sounds given in Table B, taken as samples of all the more important, and not as a total of Bantu resources, appears recognizable in one or other of the dialects of Bantu, as possessed of three distinct values (reflecting, it would seem, stages of growth), viz.: Interjectional, Radical, and Formative, and that the most characteristic expression of Bantu as Living Speech is found in the full and free use of these materials in word-formation, especially of the latter two. There is no reason for expecting that any one dialect will alone supply evidence to justify the statement. What is suggested is, that as the survey of Bantu becomes more comprehensive and complete, evidence is likely to accumulate, and meanwhile any single dialect or group of dialects may furnish a quite sufficient foundation.

A simple illustration, founded on the consonant *T*, may now be given by way of anticipation, and afterwards in a more expanded form:

Tiánatítitititi. This group of sounds might be written phonetically for English readers *teeyahna teety teeteetee*. Used in Living Speech it may mean 'the children are tapping lightly', or again, 'the children are putting themselves in line,' or bear other meanings,—determined quite sufficiently by the circumstances or a simple gesture,—a movement of the finger or a sweep of the hand. Here it shows a similar sound *ti* (*tee*), used as interjection, formative, and radical.

The group may be divided grammatically into *Tiana titi tititi*, and analytically, *Ti-ana ti-ti, ti ti ti.* The first of these words is in Nyanja a noun, root *-ana* 'child', with the formative prefix *ti*, indicating plural number and with a diminutive meaning. Thus *tiana* 'little children'. In the second word, the first *ti* is the same as in *ti-ana* but now the formative is prefixed to a verb, effecting grammatical concord between the verb and its subject *tiana*, while the second is a verb, common

indeed in Bantu but peculiar in form, as one of the very few not ending in *-a*. The meaning of the verb is general, 'do, act,' and the union of prefix and root without any infix to mark tense indicates action simply. Thus, *titi* 'they (children) do!' The repetition three times of the interjection suggests a repeated action of one of the kinds suggested by the sound *ti*, such as a series of taps (cf. *tick tick tick*) or a series of the objects present (one, two, three).

No identity of origin is here asserted as to the similar sounds used as interjection, formative, and radical. The two latter must have long linguistic histories behind them. What may be noticed is, that in Living Speech sounds vague in themselves convey in each particular case a meaning quite sufficiently definite for the speaker's purpose, being defined by his tone, gesture, or look, by the context of the communication, the hearer's sympathetic attention, and the circumstances generally. Vary any of the concomitants, and the sounds may bear a different but not less clear meaning. The sound-material—meagre in form, rich in suggestion—is not so much a word-germ as a multitude of germs, and planted in the soil of infinitely varying circumstances gives rise quite naturally to words of similar and also of widely different meaning. This is an explanation, as far as it goes, of the fact in Bantu and in other languages, that roots identical in sound may have diverse significance. The key to original divergence, if such it was, has passed with the circumstances of the period. Once begun, its history may not be recoverable. Nevertheless it may well be a fruitful study to trace as far as possible the connexion of groups of words obviously springing from a common root, and estimate the trend in each case back towards a single source.

Such study is endless and to the general reader irksome. At the risk of defeating one of the objects of these chapters, some further illustrations are added, based on the same letter as before, *T*, and again drawn mainly from Nyanja.

T, combined with the vowels, gives the syllables *TA*, *TE*, *TI*, *TO*, *TU*. Each of these may be recognized in Nyanja as interjection, radical, and formative.

1. Interjection, simple and adverbial.

Ta, with its many possible varieties simply as sound, conveys the idea (among others) of striking, with suggestiveness as to force used, object struck, instrument employed. It conveys also (for whatever reason) an idea of stretching, open, extended, flat—an idea observable in many verb stems based on this sound. (Cf. Latin *jacĕre* and *jacēre*, strike and struck flat.)

Te suggests the idea of cutting or tearing a firm material or substance, implying a certain degree of force. *Tati te* means 'we tear (it)'. It denotes also, with a particular intonation probably, clear, nice, exact definition or completion, e. g. in describing the roundness of the full moon, the completion of a garden plot—*kuzungulila te* 'neat rounding off'; also with a sharper intonation, splitting and scattering, e. g. of dry seed-pods, some of which 'go-off' like a pistol-shot in the African forest. The meaning of openness, stretching, clear space, is reflected in many words based on *Te*, as well as *Ta*.

It must be remembered that in *Te*, as in other cases, *E* often represents a coalescing of *A* and *I*.

Ti, as has been observed on p. 40, is used as a simple interjection. As an adverbial, it qualifies with an idea of large amount, or rather completeness, fullness, tightness, e. g. *kujala ti* 'to be full up', *madzi ti* 'water to the brim'.

To, pronounced shortly as *tŏh*, describes certain sounds, e. g. discharge of gun, and acts corresponding to them. Also as adverbial, it has an idea of fullness, compactness, completeness, similar to *Ti*.

Tu, pronounced shortly as *to͝o*, is used similarly to *To*, e. g. of a gun-discharge, and adverbially of a leaping movement (as of a locust, or in ball-play) or of falling rain. Repeated two or three times it suggests objects in series or succession, as *Ti*.

Such interjections as *Twe*, *Twi*, *Tyo*, *Twa*, *Tya*, *Tso*, *Tsi*, *Tse*, can also be illustrated from Nyanja. (See Scott's *Dictionary*.)

2. Radical.

In passing from interjection to radical, the stage of words is entered. In Bantu, all words consist of a radical and a formative element, as already stated, but though as elements of a verb or noun they are inseparable, they may be here considered separately.

Of the five syllables *Ta*, *Te*, *Ti*, *To*, *Tu*, the first, *Ta*, is used as a verb in Nyanja. It is the only possible regularly formed verb in the series. As a word it is composite, including a radical and formative element. As a verb, the final *-a* is formative, being characteristic of verbs as such, but admitting of variation in some parts of them. The radical element is therefore *Ta* (or possibly *T* only), and as a verb *Ta* represents *T(a)-a*. It has at present in Nyanja two meanings, (*a*) 'do', —a general meaning, as might be expected from an interjectional origin and simple monosyllabic form, and (*b*) 'finish', a meaning less vague, and easily connected with the first.

Te-a or *Te-ya*, *Ti-a* or *Ti-ya*, *To-a*, or *To-wa*, *Tu-a* or *Tu-wa*, all occur as verbs in Bantu, but as disyllables may be passed by here. Their form suggests that *Ta* also, as a verb, involves two syllables, as well as elements, *Ta-ya* or *Ta-wa*,— whatever the second (formative) may be. Both *Ya* and *Wa* are also common verbs of general meaning in Bantu.

Ti is a syllable deserving further remark. It is used as a verb, and as such is one of the very few which appear to consist of a single element, and at any rate does not, like other verbs, take a final formative *-a*. It is remarkable also as extremely general in meaning, indicating little more than an activity, which may be translated according to circumstances as 'do, act, say, think', and moreover in various forms supplies the place of an almost universal subordinative conjunction, i.e. a form suggesting the connexion of a dependent on a principal sentence without in itself defining the meaning of the connexion. (See Chapter XV.)

3. Formative.

As a formative, the syllable *Ta* is used in the Nyanja dialect in at least three ways:—

(*a*) as a verb-suffix, both as *Ta* and (nasalized) *Nta*, as in the verbs *ta-nta*, *ka-ta*, *pa-ta*, and many more.

(*b*) as a verb-prefix, giving emphasis to an imperative form, as *ta-taya* 'do throw away', *ta-tanta* 'do go across'.

(*c*) as a tense-infix, denoting completion, e. g. *i-ta-ta*, it is finished ('done finish'). In Swahili *-ta-* is the regular tense-sign of the future.

In (*b*) and (*c*) it is easy to recognize in *Ta* the force of the same syllable as a verb 'do, finish'. In fact it is the verb used as a formative. In (*a*) the connexion of meaning is not so clear.

But the whole subject of formatives is a natural transition to that of word-growth in general, and of all those developments which are the chief subject of Grammars. It will therefore be dealt with in the next chapter. But to complete the sketch of the use of the *T-* monosyllables as an element in Bantu speech, it may be briefly traced here in some noun-forms, though these also will be more fully treated hereafter.

It has been already stated that to form a verb, a root must have *-a* attached to its final vowel. To form a noun, it must normally have one of a limited number of prefixes. It is interesting to note that each of the monosyllables *TA*, *TE*, *TI*, *TO*, *TU* appears in common Bantu words as the base or radical which with a noun-prefix forms a noun. Without conjectures (though some are obvious and tempting) as to the connexions of meaning between the noun and its radical (and interjectional) base, it is enough to adduce the following from Nyanja and other dialects, each with the noun-prefix *U-*.

U-ta, a bow (weapon).

U-te, spittle.

U-ti, inner part, or substance of a tree. *M-ti*, the same radical with another noun-prefix, is a common word for 'tree' in Bantu.

U-to, any sticky fluid, gum, &c.,—like *u-te* but more general. *M-to*, is a common word for 'river'.

U-tu, nature or substance of a thing,—sometimes human nature, *m-tu* being the common word for 'man', while *ki-tu* is 'thing'. In some dialects *mu-tu* means 'head', and in these *mu-ntu* (*tu* nasalized) is used for 'man'.

This illustration of the uses of the syllables based on *T* might be largely expanded, and similar illustrations of the other syllables in Table B be multiplied almost indefinitely, each being taken in turn and traced in the different forms and meanings of words of which it is the base or root. *P* and *K* would prove especially fruitful of interest and suggestiveness, followed out in any good dictionary of a Bantu dialect. But it is in its grammar that the characteristic features of Bantu, as a distinct Family of speech, are mainly to be looked, and it is to the development of the formative elements, which is for the most part singularly clear and striking, rather than to that of meaning, which is often intricate and obscure, that attention will mainly be drawn in the chapters which follow.

Before leaving this part of the subject, two further illustrations may be briefly given:—

With one or two possible exceptions, all the monosyllables ending with *-a* in Table B actually occur in Bantu as verbs, in their simple or nasalized form, or both. Many of them convey such simple or general meanings as might be expected from their short and simple form, e.g. 'be, do, make, act, come, go'; others have special meanings and some several meanings, which suggest that their present monosyllabic forms are not original, but represent contraction or actual phonetic decay.

Secondly, the interjectional meanings of *Pa* were briefly illustrated at pp. 28–9, but a note may be added on the other monosyllables formed on *P* with a vowel,—as found in Ñyanja.

Pe, (*a*) pronounced rather shortly, may indicate completion, e.g. *kudya pe* 'finish eating, get it over'; *yamba pe* 'get the first stage over'; *enda pe* 'go and have done with it',—or again, light beating [like *Pa*] as of wind, *pepa pe* 'blow softly'.

(*b*) With a prolonged *e* (*pay*), it suggests quiet, rest, silence, e.g. *kali pe* 'it is still'.

(*c*) With a short *e* (*peh*, or as in 'met'), it describes opening out, show, e.g. *nsalu pe*, calico spread out.

Pfa, *Pfe*, *Pfi*, are used in describing water spirting, bark being stripped from the tree, a weapon piercing, respectively.

Pi is appropriate to such actions as a sharp blow, stirring porridge with a stick, firing a gun, extinguishing fire, clapping hands, sucking with the lips, covering so as to conceal an object, and others.

Po is variously descriptive of crackling or splitting, clapping the hands, sound of a pop-gun, a fall or breakage, closing or shutting, ending and completion.

Pu is used after words expressing shutting together, inhaling a smell, striking a blow, wind blowing, water pouring.

Psa is used of squeezing, grazing slightly, dragging a net, sweeping; *Pya*, of darkness closing in, of something thin or slight; *Psi*, of pressing, and of sucking; *Pwe*, of breaking, bursting; *Pwi*, of splitting, cracking, also of sewing; *Pyu*, of whistling, and also to describe red colour.

All the following interjections find appropriate use in describing the act of striking according to the instrument used, object struck, force of the blow, &c.:—

Ga, *Ba*, *Be*, *Ndwa*, *Nde*, *Mbi*, *Pi*, *Ti*, *Di*, *Pwa*, *Pwe*, *Wi*, *Pu*, *Pi*, *Go*, *Gwa*.

These illustrations should be taken in connexion with the general description of the possibilities of the interjection previously given.

PART III. WORD-GROWTH

CHAPTER VIII

VERBS

So far, the life of Bantu speech has been traced in its three earliest stages: first the simple interjection, owing its suggestiveness partly to sound-variation, partly to the whole circumstances surrounding and tending to define each particular utterance; secondly the interjection further defined in a degree by juxtaposition with another preceding it and gradually limited to a semi-subordinate or adverbial use in relation to the first; thirdly, the union of these two interjectional germs resulting in the birth of a word, consisting essentially of a radical and a formative element, analogous in a certain sense to soul and body,—a word which is grammatically a verb or noun. This third stage will now be taken as a new basis, and further steps traced by which advance in social evolution presumably met its own needs of increasing definition of meaning by further differentiation of the earliest forms of words. As this is meant to be an Introduction to Bantu speech generally, and not a formal account of its grammar, what appears to be the natural order will be followed—which means the treatment of the verb first, and not, as is usual in Grammars, of the noun.

It has been noted that the same simple monosonant or monosyllabic elements (Table B) supply the material of each of the three stages already dealt with. The same is true of the further stage now to be considered. The first step in verb-differentiation is effected on the general principle that any of the monosyllables of Table B which end in *-a*, can be combined as a suffix with any others in the same Table to form a new series of verbs. Though the final *-a* of the new compound verb properly belongs to the whole verb as such, it

will be convenient to regard the new final syllable as a suffix itself ending with *-a*.

The gain of this combination is obvious. The simple monosyllabic verb of vague and several but suggestive significances, and ripe (as it were) for a further advance in definiteness, is able to provide itself with a considerable number of new forms, each fitted to give definite expression to one or other of the phases of suggestiveness contained in the simpler original, and so far to fix and stereotype them as separate verbs. The process is carried out with considerable regularity and completeness, and marks the first of a series of stages, in which successive suffixes, applied in a certain order to the original root-verb, furnish abundant means not only of embodying particular varieties of meaning in new verb-stems, but of exhibiting these meanings under the various (grammatical) aspects of Voice (active, passive, and neuter), Mood (indicative and subjunctive), and (partly) Conjugation (affirmative and negative).

The simple combination of two monosyllables, the first being the root and the second a suffix ending in *-a*, forming a new verb, with a distinct meaning simply as a verb, will be first illustrated.

The twenty syllables theoretically available in Table B (not of course by any means all that are available in Bantu) are as follow:—

A, Ba, CHa, Da, Fa, Ga, Ha, Ja, Ka, La, Ma, Na, NG'a, Pa, Ra, Sa, Ta, Va, Wa, Ŵa, Ya, Za, (twenty-two).

These syllables used as suffixes to all the monosyllables in the Table would produce over 2,000 disyllabic verbs. Allowing on the one hand for comparative rarity in Bantu of some of the twenty-two syllables (e.g. *Ha*), comparative vagueness in the sound of others (*CHa* tending to be pronounced like *Ja*, *Fa* like *Va*, *Ŵa* like *Ba* or *Va*, *La* like *Ra*), and on the other for a preference in many for a nasalized form when used as suffix, it may be conjectured that about 2,000 such disyllabic verbs will be found to form the ground-work of a large proportion of the total of verb-forms in any given Bantu dialect. The connexion in meaning between the disyllabic and the

root verb may be difficult to trace, or (under the countless influences which act and react on living speech) be wholly lost, but in form the great majority will consist of some such simple combination as given above.

The syllable *Ta* may again be taken for illustration, in connexion with the Nyanja dialect, and the opportunity will be used to show not only some of the disyllabic verbs formed on it, with their present ordinary meanings, but also some of the trisyllabic and polysyllabic ; the formation of which will be explained later.

Ta, as an interjection, has been already mentioned as indicating (*a*) striking, (*b*) stretching, and as a verb meaning (*a*) do, (*b*) finish.

It is combined with the suffixes—

-ba, (nasalized) *Ta-mba* 'spread'. Hence *Tamba-lala*, *Tamba-tula*, *Tamba-suka*, *Tamba-sulila*, *Tamba-lilila*, *Tambwa*, *Tambitsa*, *Tambsa*, *Tambsya*,—and other verbs.

-da, (nasalized) *Ta-nda* 'spread, extend'. Hence *Tanda-la*, *Tanda-lika*, *Tand-iza*, *Tand-izika*, *Tand-ula*, *Tand-uka*, &c.

-ga, (nasalized) *Ta-nga* 'make a beginning'. Hence *Tanga-lala*, *Tanga-ta*, *Tanga-tila*, &c.

-ja, used for *-ga* in some forms of the verb. *Ja-ja* is a common verb in Swahili.

-ka can be recognized in the extended compound *Taka-nya* 'spread', also in *Taka-lala*, *Taka-sa*, *Taka-sika*, *Taka-ta*, &c. *Taka* is also a very common Swahili verb, 'want.'

-la, is seen in *Tala-la*, *Tala-ma*.

-ma, *Ta-ma*, whence *Tama-nda* 'show trust in', *Tama-nga* 'run'.

-pa, *Tapa* 'put in parts, divide, spread'. Hence, *Tapa-sa*, *Tapa-ta*, *Tap-ika*, *Tap-ilana*, also *Tapsya*, *Tampsya*.

-sa, seen in *Tas-ika*, *Tasa-ma*, *Tasa-mika*, *Tasa-lila*, *Tasa-lula*, also *Tansa*.

-ta, *Ta-ta* 'pant, struggle', and (nasalized) *Ta-nta* 'cross (stretch, extend) over'. Hence *Tanta-lika*, *Tanta-niza*, &c.

-wa, *Ta-wa* 'run away'. Hence *Tawa-lika*.

-ya, *Ta-ya* 'throw away'.

-za, (nasalized) *Ta-nza* 'stretch'.

The above is a mere selection from words at present used in one dialect not by any means exhaustively examined. Yet it will be seen that thirteen out of twenty-two monosyllables in *-a* are used as suffixes to form disyllabic verbs. Of those not found here, i.e. *-cha*, *-fa*, *-ha*, *-na*, *-va*, other dialects might supply examples. And the various series of suffixes incidentally noted, (two, three, four, or five together in different arrangements), could be added to indefinitely.

It seems unnecessary to multiply illustrations, though *Pa* would furnish an interesting series of such disyllabic verbs as—

Pa-mba, *Pa-cha*, *Pa-nda*, *Pa-nga* or *Pa-nja*, *Pa-ka*, *Pa-la*, *Pa-ma*, *Pa-na*, *Pa-pa*, *Pa-sa*, *Pa-ta*, *Pa-wa*, *Pa-ya*, *Pa-nza*.

And *Ka* another:—

Ka-mba, *Ka-nda*, *Ka-nga*, *Ka-ka*, *Ka-la*, *Ka-ma*, *Ka-na*, *Ka-pa*, *Ka-sa*, *Ka-ta*, *Ka-wa*, *Ka-nta*, *Ka-za*.

As form rather than meaning is now in view, a table will sufficiently suggest how each vowel in Table B plays its part in the production of disyllabic verbs. Gaps in the Table merely represent a limited experience, not that difficulty would be found in filling them from a wider knowledge of Bantu.

P, T, L.

-nda	*Pa-nda*	*Pe-nda*	*Pi-nda*	*Po-nda*	*Pu-nda*
	Ta-nda	*Te-nda*	*Ti-nda*	*To-nda*	*Tu-nda*
	La-nda	*Le-nda*	*Li-nda*	*Lo-nda*	*Lu-nda*
-nga	*Pa-nga*	*Pe-nga*	*Pi-nga*	—	*Pu-nga*
	Ta-nga	*Te-nga*	*Ti-nga*	*To-nga*	*Tu-nga*
	La-nga	*Le-nga*	*Li-nga*	*Lo-nga*	*Lu-nga*
-ka	*Pa-ka*	*Pe-ka*	*Pi-ka*	*Po-ka*	*Pu-ka*
	Ta-ka	*Te-ka*	*Ti-ka*	*To-ka*	*Tu-ka*
	La-ka	*Le-ka*	*Li-ka*	*Lo-ka*	*Lu-ka*
-la	*Pa-la*	*Pe-la*	*Pi-la*	*Po-la*	*Pu-la*
	La-la	*Le-la*	*Li-la*	*Lo-la*	*Lu-la*
-sa	*Pa-sa*	*Pe-sa*	*Pi-sa*	*Po-sa*	*Pu-sa*
-ma	*Pa-ma*	*Pe-ma*	*Pi-ma*	—	*Pu-ma*
	La-ma	*Le-ma*	*Li-ma*	—	*Lu-ma*
-ta	*Pa-ta*	*Pe-ta*	*Pi-ta*	*Po-ta*	*Pu-ta*
	Ta-ta	*Te-ta*	—	*To-ta*	*Tu-ta*
-mba	*Pa-mba*	*Pe-mba*	—	*Po-mba*	*Pu-mba*
	Ta-mba	*Te-mba*	*Ti-mba*	*To-mba*	*Tu-mba*
	La-mba	*Le-mba*	*Li-mba*	*Lo-mba*	*Lu-mba*

Here again illustrations might be multiplied indefinitely. For the present purpose it is enough if the above clearly indicate a stage and a principle in the growth of the Bantu verb. The disyllabic verbs are in fact so numerous and important as quite to overshadow the simpler verbs on which they appear to be founded, and in general it is quite sufficient to trace verb-forms back to one of these as a Primary Verb or Root.

This chapter may well be closed with a quotation from Scott's *Mang'anja Dictionary*, part of an incidental note on *MI-*, and following a short table of disyllabic verbs like the preceding. 'The same analysis can be made of the whole language: and the general grip of the language resolves itself into (*a*) the general idea contained in the simple *L* or *D*, (*b*) the various modifications (often slight) introduced by the different vowels, *La*, *Le*, *Li*, *Lo*, *Lu*, (*c*) the extension of these into such pronounceable corrections as *La-mba*, *Le-mba*, *Le-nda*, *Lo-nda*, &c., and (*d*) the modifications of these to produce the various syntactical ideas of normal grammar.'

CHAPTER IX

VERB-SUFFIXES

FROM the preceding chapter the question naturally arises: Has each of the various suffixes mentioned a specific meaning in connexion with the root to which it is suffixed? and if so, can it be accounted for?

Here an admission must be made and a line drawn. It appears that Bantu research has not so far produced any comprehensive collection or comparison of verbs with similar suffixes, e. g. of disyllabic verbs ending with *-nda*, *-mba*, *-nga*, *-la*, *-ta*, &c., on which to base a general conclusion as to the idea conveyed by the suffix as such. Probably many more dictionaries will have to be compiled and grammars written, before a satisfactory collection is possible. Much less has it been possible to connect such meaning of the suffix with other meanings of the same monosyllable as interjection or verb. Yet the general identity of these monosyllables, as sounds, in their various uses is obvious, and holds out a prospect of fruitful investigation in the future.

But a line may be drawn among the suffixes, important though by no means in all cases clear. They may be divided into two classes. Some suffixes once attached to a monosyllabic or even disyllabic root-verb appear to become an organic and inseparable part of it, fixing upon it a meaning often widely divergent from that of the original verb, and constituting the whole form itself a new and independent root in relation to all subsequent grammatical changes. They become as it were a woody part of the word-growth, retaining essential usefulness as part of it, with a certain loss of vitality and power of removal or alteration. Other suffixes have a large amount of independent vitality. They can be used practically at pleasure. Each supplies a special aspect of the root-idea, and is suffixed to it for this purpose. Each can be removed, and another put in its place, to alter the aspect, or they can be used together in

various combinations or groups. They resemble the green and growing part of a vegetable organism. The two classes to some extent run into each other, but may usefully be considered apart.

To the former class of Fixed Suffixes belong for the most part—

-(m)ba, -(m)pa, -(n)da, -(n)ta, -(n)ga, -(n)ja, -la and -ra, -(n)cha, -fa, -ma, -sa, -va, -ŵa.

Practically these may be regarded as merely formatives, that is, elements whose original, living, organic, and particular meaning has become merged in a generalized, semi-mechanical, and in a sense subordinate function. United with a monosyllabic root, they form a compound which is itself a new and permanent root-verb for all the purposes of dictionary and grammar. The suffix singles out and crystallizes (it may be supposed) one of the possible varieties of meaning suggested by the root,—how, it is difficult to say, but possibly by giving prominence to one of those elements in the environment of living speech which have been so often alluded to, as able to supply sufficient practical definition to the vague but rich suggestiveness of the root itself. The monosyllables *Fa*, *Pa*, *Ta*, which as separate verbs describe acting, making, placing, doing, and *Sa*, *Za*, often used of movement, might well lend themselves as suffixes to such a use. Only in the case of *Ma*, used as a suffix, does a fairly definite idea seem traceable in many of the compound verbs including it, viz. relative fixity, of condition, state, position—an idea which appears in the common verb *ima*, also *sima*, *simama*, and others. Such verbs are sometimes recognized as forming a class, and called Stative. Another group, sometimes called 'Extensives' (in contrast with 'Intensives' described at p. 56), is distinguished by an extended suffix, or rather combination of suffixes, and contains the idea of action on a large scale, sweeping, wholesale, comprehensive in nature or effects. Such 'extended' suffixes are *-aila*, *-aula*, *-olola*, *-ulula*, and others.

It remains to be noticed here that the Fixed Suffixes are themselves found combined in some verbs, producing trisyllabic and still longer forms, e.g. *Ta-ma-nga*, *Ka-ma-ta*, *A-mba-sa*,

Ta-mba-la-la, and so on. But in general verbs so ending are regarded as base-words, not directly resolvable into simpler elements, and assumed as such in dictionaries, to which recourse may be had for further details.

Suffixes which are movable, or partly fixed and partly movable, are the following—

-sa (also *-za*, *-sha*, *-zha*).
-la (*-ila*, *-ela*, *-ula*)
-na
-ya
-ka (*-ika*, *-eka*, *-uka*)
-wa

All these suffixes are of great importance, and constitute one of the most living elements in Bantu speech as it at present exists. Within limits hereafter outlined, they can be used or not at pleasure as suffixes of any of such verb-stems as previously described, from monosyllables upwards. In each case they have a specific effect on the meaning of the verb, and they are used not only singly but in many combinations, freely formed at each speaker's will and only limited by his powers of utilizing their meaning to express his own. In fact, this is one of the main features which give the Bantu verb its extraordinary richness, actual and potential. Any verb-stem, with a suitable meaning, can as a rule be made the base of some twenty or thirty others, all reflecting the root idea in various lights, sometimes curiously limited by usage to a particular aspect and limited significance, mostly quite free and unrestrained in growth, and each again bearing the whole luxuriant super-growth of voices, moods, tenses, and person-forms, to the utmost limits of its powers of logical extension. To follow out a single root-verb in all its possible derivatives and their grammatical developments in all their forms, though strictly germane to the purpose of this Introduction, would require a disproportionate mass of illustrative detail, which can be found elsewhere. (See Scott's *Mang'anja Dictionary*, Stapleton's *Comparative Grammar and Vocabulary of Congo Dialects*, and the introductions to Madan's *English-Swahili* and *Swahili-English Dictionaries*.)

Here some brief explanations may be offered of each of the six movable verb-suffixes just enumerated. Only it must be remembered that these are peculiarly living parts of present daily word-formation in Bantu, and that therefore remarks can hardly be made upon them which will not seem to require modification, when viewed in the light of any particular dialectal usage.

—wa

As final syllable of any verb-form, *-wa* in general denotes the 'Passive Voice'. As such, it may be suffixed to any verb-stem whatever (the final *-a* of the stem being dropped or changed to *-i* or *-e* in the new combination, see below), and the whole structure of a passive voice, conjugations, moods, tenses, &c., be raised upon it, as well as other verb-stems, and the many nouns, which can be formed on verb-stems at every stage of evolution. Thus in Swahili, *Pend-a*, active, 'love,' *Pend-wa*, passive, 'be loved.'

As to origin, *Wa* is a syllable widely used in Bantu as a verb meaning 'be', and it is obvious to compare the English passive 'be love-d' with a possible Bantu Passive of similar elements, *pend-wa*, 'love(d) be.'

—ka

Here ample allowance must be made for differences between dialects and within a dialect, but one of the most general and regular uses of *-ka* as final suffix is to denote a 'Neuter Voice', side by side with the passive, in capacities for use in further verb-formation (as indicated above), similar in meaning and translation, but without implied reference to an agent. Thus—

Pend-a, active, 'love.'

Pend-wa, passive, 'be loved' (by some one).

Pend-eka, neuter, 'be loved' (a loved object, in general).

(As in case of *-wa*, the connecting vowel is *i* or *e*.)

The remaining suffixes are regularly used to form the four classes of derived verb-stems, commonly distinguished as applicative, causative, reciprocal, and reversive. Only a general description of these classes is given here.

—la

(1) With the vowel *i* or *e* preceding it, i. e. as *-ila* or *-ela*, this suffix has the effect of exhibiting the root-idea as in relation to another, and in almost any of the relations commonly indicated in English by a preposition following the verb. It may be briefly described as attaching such words as 'to, at, from, for, by, with, against, about' to the root-idea, and generally as a substitute for prepositions in Bantu. Vague and unsatisfactory as this may seem, especially for literary purposes, and judged by the standards of written speech, this vagueness can in many ways be lessened by the use of various compound prepositions and prepositional phrases, but in practice gives little inconvenience, where living speech has its natural setting in life and circumstances.

(2) With the vowel *u* prefixed, a wholly different effect is produced. The verb becomes what is called reversive. The suffix *-ula* has some of the force of the English prefixes *un-*, and *dis-*, giving an idea of reversal, change to the opposite, or still more generally of analysis, disintegration, dispersal, annihilation. In this suffix, the vowel *-u* appears as the more important and distinctive element, since the *-la* is often exchanged for *-ka*, with the effect of *-uka* producing a neuter instead of an active voice. Alike in *-ila*, *-ela*, and *-ula*, the consonant *L* shows a characteristic weakness and evanescence as a sound between two vowels, and in some dialects disappears, leaving, as in Swahali, *-ia*, *-ea*, *-ua* as carrying all the force of the fuller forms. This relative unimportance of *L* and importance of the vowel *e*, *i*, or *o* may indicate that *-la* as a movable suffix is not the same in origin as fixed *-la*. *-ola*, as a suffix, is commonly a contraction of *a-u-la*.

—sa

Other forms of this suffix are *-sha*, *-za*, *-zha*, *-tsa*, *-dza*, and, like *-la*, are preceded by *i* or *e*, i. e. *-isa*, *-isha*, &c. The general effect of their use, as suffixes to any verb-stem, is to denote an exhibition of force, energy, power, or will in connexion with the root-idea of the verb. The description is necessarily comprehensive in terms, because it has to include two quite

distinct fields of meaning covered by the same suffix, which are usually called intensive and causative. The fact is, the idea of force or will conveyed by the suffix may be conceived either as intensifying the idea itself of the root, acting as it were within it, or as external, and taking effect upon it. Thus in Swahili, *piga* 'strike', *pig-isha* either (*a*) 'strike hard' (intensive) or (*b*) 'cause to strike' (causative). Many curious and delicate shades of meaning can be conveyed by this suffix, e. g. many kinds of causation, not only direct, such as force, compulsion, but also indirect, such as persuasion, suggestion, permission, or merely acquiescence in an effect or consequence. In general, its significance is best represented in English by an appropriate adverb, just as that of the suffix *-la* by a preposition.

—ya

This suffix is often used as a causative in the sense just explained, and may be classed with *-sa*. And it may be noted that *ya*, *sa*, *za*, as monosyllabic verbs, commonly denote energy in motion, 'come, go.'

—na

This suffix, unlike *-la* and *-sa*, is always preceded by *a-*, and *-ana* supplies the reciprocal class of derivative verb-stems. Its effect is to attach to the root-idea that of mutuality, interaction, action and reaction, combined action, or association. Thus in Swahili, *pendana* 'love each other', *pigana* 'exchange blows, fight', *liana* 'all cry together', *fuatana* 'follow with, accompany, go together'.

A list of the possible or even common combinations of the above, or illustrations of their use in refinements of expressiveness, is out of the question here. For instance, the suffix *ita* may itself be repeated twice or even three times with suggestion of 'to' (an object), 'with' (an instrument), 'for' (a purpose), i. e. *-ila*, *-ilila*, *-ililila* may be combined with *-ana*, as *-ilana*, or *-anila*, or with *-isha*, *ilisha*, *ilanisha*, and this with *-wa*, forming a passive *-ilanishwa*, and each of these may conceivably be the starting-point of other similar

series, or sets of series, and so on without limit. There is literally no getting to the end in this direction of the potential capabilities of Bantu expression, and that in respect of any of the verb-stems in any stage of evolution from the monosyllable. Verbs may be found again and again in many dialects ending with such combinations as *-aila*, *-aula*, *-auka*, *-ola*, *-oka*, *-ulula*, *-ululula*, *-ulumula*, *-mbata*, *-mbatula*, *-ukula*, *-ukusula*, *-olola*, *-ololoka*, *-olomula*, *-okomeka*, *-ongola*, *-nzula*, *-famula*, *-ulunga*, *-ndama*, *-mbala*, *-umata*, *-nyangula*, *-ngalala*, *-nyenta*, *-nyanga*, *-manga*, *-nganta*, &c. All these and many others on examination appear to be merely agglomerations of formative elements, surviving (for whatever cause) in connexion with (it may be) particular roots, because hitting off some special aspect of the idea in a highly suggestive or picturesque way, and the curious result sometimes follows, that the formative element seems to run away from the radical, embodying in itself sufficient expression of an idea, so that the original base or root-syllable becomes of little account, and may be represented by different letters, such as *p*, *t*, or *k*, without affecting the meaning. To quote Scott's *Dictionary* once more—a note on the word *mbuna*—'Here again are seen the great features of the language, namely (1) the conscious touch each word has with its root-idea, and (2) the modal forms that breathe through and mould these ideas. Verbs become but modal forms of root-ideas; and the most common combinations simply show, by beautiful gradation to less and less common forms, that the whole material of the language consists of certain nucleated ideas in a scarce-breathed consonantal resource (*setting*?), moulded into speech by a rich and full modalisation. This modification in the verb is final, in consonants (*nouns*?) it is chiefly initial.' (There are signs of lack of final revision in the text.)

Before leaving the subject of verb-suffixes, the final vowel *-a* requires further remark. It has been already characterized as the universal final sound of all true Bantu verbs with very few exceptions. In Swahili the many verbs ending with other vowels are of foreign, mostly Arabic, origin. Strictly, however, the use of final *-a* is limited to those parts and forms of the verb conveying an objective meaning, or fact as fact, e.g. in

the indicative, imperative and (so called) infinitive moods. But when the meaning is subjective, and the idea of the root is to be represented as conceived in the mind, as purpose, or contingency, as thought of rather than realized, i. e. in the subjunctive (or subjective) mood, then final *-a* is changed to *-e* very generally in Bantu. Final *-i* is also found in some negative tenses of the verb in many dialects, and this may be clearly attributed to the presence of a common and forcible particle of negation, *i* or *iai*, or to *si*, both of which may further be recognized in a common verb *sia*, used to imply negation. In this case the negative particle first followed the full verb-form, and afterwards was absorbed and took the place of the final *-a*. Whether the final *-e* of the subjunctive (subjective) mood represents the fusion of *a* and the negative sign *i*, subjective idea being indicated by elements expressing not objectively real, can only be at present matter of conjecture.

One other widely used verb-form, ending in *-e*, or *-ile*, will be noticed in connexion with the subject of Tense (p. 62).

CHAPTER X

VERB-PREFIXES

So far verb-suffixes, or formative syllables following the root, have been considered. These have been shown to convey the distinctions described in grammars by the terms derivate stems, voices, moods (in part), negative and affirmative conjugations (in part). Single and combined, they provide material for a larger number of different fixed verb-stems based on a monosyllabic root, and for a rich crop of derivative verb-stems formed at pleasure from any verb-stem of suitable meaning. All stems, fixed and derivative, may have active, passive, and neuter forms, each with its full equipment of conjugation, moods, and tenses. Drawn out in full grammatical detail, the luxuriant growth of forms in a single Bantu verb can best recall once more language descriptive of tropical vegetation, an equatorial forest of huge trunk-roots throwing up stems, with many crossing and interlacing branches, the wealth of leaves often almost concealing their supports and hiding the trunk from view, while all parts contribute to develop the final beauty of flower and fruit, the sounds of common daily human talk.

This is, however, in some degree anticipation. Many a language may in a measure admit of being illustrated by the same metaphors of plant-life and growth. Yet in Bantu, life seems peculiarly present and at work in the free moulding of materials, and the wide choice open in several directions for the conscious as well as instructive self-expression of the human spirit,—and this not only in verbs but in nouns, and by use of prefixes as well as the suffixes so far described.

To pass, however, from the suffixes to the prefixes of the verb, is to pass into a somewhat different atmosphere. Any one familiar with a Bantu dialect will feel that there is a difference, which may have its origin in a different stage or age of speech-development, and that the prefix is the later of the two. The

genius of the languages seems to expend itself first on the elaboration of the embodiment of the root-idea, and afterwards to provide for its adaptation to the need of expressing its relation to time and subject. It is as if the master-workman had laboured at perfecting the main block of his weapon, its forging, tempering, shape, and finish, and left the mechanism of discharge, lock and stock, to other if not less able hands. The suffixes of a verb-stem seem welded into a solid homogeneous, yet flexible whole, while the prefixes which represent relation of tense and person are by comparison separate, detachable, and interchangeable parts. This difference may be illustrated by the fact, that any verb-stem once complete with root and suffixes, one or more, but with final vowel *a*, admits at once of being used as a noun as well as a verb. It is only a matter of prefix. *Mu-* placed before any verb-stem connects the verb-idea with a person, *Ku-* forms with it the infinitive mood, i.e. a general verbal noun. Thus *M-penda* means (in Swahili) 'one who loves', *M-pendeya* 'one who pleases, a flatterer', *M-pendelewa* 'a favourite', while *Ku-penda* means 'loving', *Ku-pendeya* 'giving pleasure', and so on. On the other hand, other prefixes, used in a certain order, adapt the verb-stems to express relation to time, subject, and object, and these must now be briefly reviewed.

Their character of comparative separateness and detachability as contrasted with the suffixes, is attested by the fact that from the first in some South African dialects the verb-prefixes have been written as separate and distinct monosyllables, not as groups of monosyllables, much less as forming one word with the verb-stem which they qualify as to tense and person. Whether this system of spelling is better, in practice or theory, than the other of writing each group of prefixes, root, and suffixes as a single verb-form, is still an open question, but the coexistence and extended use of the two cause much difficulty in the study of Bantu.

Verb-prefixes are of two classes, one marking distinctions of Tense, the other of Person, or more exactly of Subject and Object. The initial prefix of every finite verb-form, i.e. in the indicative and subjunctive mood, combined or not with

a particle of negation, relates to the Subject. The tense-prefix, single or compound, is strictly a pre-radical prefix, and, when used, follows the subject-prefix. The object-prefix, when used, follows the tense-prefix.

Tense-Prefixes

No exhaustive list of monosyllables used as tense-signs can be given here. In the dialects here chiefly kept in view, most of the monosyllables in the A column of Table B are so used, and some others, viz.—

A, *Ba*, *CHi*, *Da*, *Fa*, (*n*)*Ga*, *Ka*, *Ma*, *Na*, *La* (*and Ra*), *Sa*, *Ta*, *Ya*, *Za*. Also *Ku*, *Ki*, *Ko* (*for Ka-u*), *Me*, *Le*, *Li*, *Lo* (*for La-u*).

Combinations are also used, e.g. *a-li*, *ka-na*, *nga-li*, *ka-ku*, *ta-ku*, *fa-ku*, *za-ku*.

It is, however, probably misleading to connect any of the tense-prefixes directly with the interjectional monosyllables which they resemble in form. It is more likely that they all represent the later stage of actual words. Some are obviously simple verbs of the monosyllabic type, such as *li* 'be', *fa* 'do', *ka* 'go', *ma* 'remain', *sa* 'come', *ta* 'do', *ya* 'go', *za* 'come', lending themselves easily to subordinate or 'auxiliary' use in connexion with other verbs. Others may be of similar origin or be residua of longer verb-stems worn down by use. Others, again, are common as noun-prefixes, and recall the capacity of verb-stems to be used with them as nouns, e.g. *ki*, *chi*, *ku*.

As tense-signs, it is difficult to attach definite meanings to some of them, except within the limits of a particular dialect. In fact, apart from mere difference in pronunciation and phonetic disguise of identical words, there are few points in which the individuality of a dialect as such more clearly asserts itself than in the particular selection of tense-signs which it habitually employs, and the particular sense it attaches to each. Few dialects seem to agree altogether in this rather important point. Some, otherwise closely alike, differ in this.

Again, the primary distinctions of time, past, present, and future, so important in modern written languages, are by no

means clearly marked as a rule in Bantu. Swahili is a characteristic exception, practical usefulness having limited its tenses mostly to single and clear meanings. But in Bantu generally distinctions are conveyed of a different kind, modal rather than temporal, or modal as well as temporal, aspects of the root-idea (whether act, state, or process) analogous to light and shade, colour, perspective; and such distinctions as simple act or fact apart from time; as general, particular, habitual; as continuous, momentary, or repeated; as near or distant, past or future; as actual or conditional, and so on. With such resources 'the swift and subtle instinct of the native narrators, selecting, changing, and mixing tense with tense, unfolds to a hearer alive to every tone, look, and gesture, a picture, or rather panorama, which written language could hardly reproduce' (*Wisa Handbook*). On the other hand, a simple 'Aorist' tense serves to describe a past war or future campaign equally well with a present battle, in terms of living speech.

By including all the different ways in which auxiliaries and other elements may be combined, lists of sixty or seventy tenses in some dialects have been compiled.

The general uniformity of structure in Bantu must not be allowed to obscure the fact of exceptions. In at least one case a tense distinction is widely expressed by a change in the final syllable of the whole verb-form,—final *-a* becoming *-ile*, *-ele*, or only *-e*. This form will be found discussed in grammars.

The person-prefixes of a verb serve to define its subject and object. They effect concord or grammatical agreement between them and the verb, and are syllables closely connected with the class prefixes of nouns, and with pronouns. They will therefore be mentioned again in a later chapter.

As outcome and recapitulation of what has been said, the following general analysis of Bantu verb-forms may be given here.

1. Prefixes—
   (*a*) defining subject, in respect of class, number, and person (see next chapter).
   (*b*) Tense-sign.
   (*c*) defining object, when required.

2. Root, conveying the verb-idea.
3. Suffixes—
   (*a*) of stem, including fixed stems, i.e. new root-verbs, and derivative stems.
   (*b*) of Voice (passive, neuter).
   (*c*) of Mood (indicative and subjunctive).

Take for example, (Swahili) *ulimwambia*,

u-li-mw-AMB-i-a

u (subject-prefix) 'you', *li* (prefix of past tense) 'did', *mw* (object-prefix) 'him', *amb* (root) 'say', *i* (suffix forming applicative stem) 'to', *a* (indicating active voice, indicative mood), i.e. 'you said to him' ('you-did-him-say-to').

CHAPTER XI

NOUNS

NOUNS in Bantu are for the most part traceable, like verbs, to single letters or syllables as their base or root, and, as in verbs, these bases are in origin presumably interjectional, in the sense already explained (Chapter V). Obviously, often the same bases are the root of both verbs and nouns. Nouns, however, actually monosyllabic in root are, like verbs, comparatively few, and those mostly expressive of common objects, e.g. *(m)tu* 'a person', *(m)ti* 'a tree', *(m)to* 'a river', *(li)so* 'eye', *(u)ta* 'a bow'. (The bracketed part does not belong to the root of the word.) The majority of nouns as well as of verbs are found in the next stage, combining two or more germ-elements, and in later stages and fuller combinations the parallelism continues, nouns being formed at every stage from the developing verb-stem.

Apart, however, from this practical identity as to base and stem, the noun and verb are very clearly and definitely distinguished. To become a verb-word, a root has to be followed by the sound *-a*, as its final vowel or suffix. To become a noun-word, the root-syllable may end with any vowel, not necessarily involving any new or fixed element in addition to the original interjectional monosyllable, but it must be preceded in all cases (with only apparent exceptions) by one of a limited number of formative syllables as prefix. These syllables are the well-known class-prefixes or classifiers, which figure so largely in all accounts of the Bantu Family of Speech.

Except to notice that in nouns with monosyllabic roots, *-a* (the final vowel of all verbs) is less common than *-e*, *-i*, *-o*, and *-u*, the final vowel of nouns may be passed over for the present. In such nouns they do not seem to convey any special differences of significance beyond that of the interjectional sound, as such.

In noun-roots of a later stage, involving (as in verbs) other formative elements, the terminal vowel or syllable does in some cases carry a distinct aspect of the root-meaning, or a wholly different one. Thus (in Swahili), *m-pend-a* 'one who loves', *m-pen(d)-zi* 'one who is loved', *m-pend-o* 'love'; or in Nyanja *m-pand-a* 'a branch, or part', *m-pand-e* 'shell ornament', *m-pand-i* 'a destitute person', *m-pand-o* 'a seat', *m-pand-u* 'a front tooth'. Sometimes agent and instrument (for instance) are thus distinguished. The possibility of using five different final vowels, multiplied by the great number of possible verb-stems springing from a single root, and these again multiplied by the possibility of using different classifiers with each of the many nouns which can be formed from them, is a further striking illustration of the great potential richness of Bantu speech. But this subject must be left to be followed out in detail in the various grammars.

Here the classifiers, or distinctive noun-prefixes, claim special attention, and first as to their general significance as a system. Probably the systems of declension, and of division by gender, in other languages would repay comparison. But the present object is not comparison, but to characterize the Bantu system as it now exists. To an individual of the Bantu-speaking race, nothing becomes an intelligible object of thought without being *ipso facto* conceived in relations or under limitations referring it to a general class, and this for the most part instinctively and (so to speak) automatically, but also in the case of novel words and ideas by selective preference. The whole range of knowable objects and ideas thus falling into classes, the number of such classes might be expected to be large, whether in respect of intrinsic natural differences of things or of possible points of view from which they are regarded. As a matter of fact, the number to a Bantu is seldom more than eight. The simple syllabarium of Table B supplies plenty of material for extending indefinitely the number of groups by the use of distinctive prefixes. On the other hand, a relatively small and in many ways curiously limited selection is made from that Table,—sixteen or seventeen monosyllables out of the whole.

The fact may possibly point to some inherent weakness,

deficiency or limitation, in the Bantu mental equipment, a natural incapacity for appreciating phenomena in their infinite variety, or to a peculiar faculty for grasping certain broad aspects of phenomena, which are to the Bantu all-comprehensive, and yet not as a fact recognized as dominating and crucial by other races. It may stamp the Bantu mind as of a different, not to say lower, quality as compared with others, or as possessed of an instinctive gift, which may prove a clue to real discovery in human nature. It is at any rate a striking and characteristic peculiarity.

The nature of the Bantu categories themselves is by no means clear, at least as to original or inherent meaning. The system has nothing whatever to do with gender or distinctions of sex, real or imagined. No Bantu prefix distinguishes sex as such. A superficial similarity can at once be noticed between the final vowels of Bantu nouns, *-a*, *-e*, *-i*, *-o*, *-u*, and the stem-vowels which assign *mensa*, *dominus*, *rex*, &c., to their respective declensions. But the Bantu vowel has no such definite function, as has been stated above. Nor do the English noun-terminations, *-ness*, *-ship*, *-dom*, and others suggest more than an analogous classification. The prefix, not the suffix, is the all-important classifying formative in Bantu nouns. But though the systems of classification may have no common distinctive features in formation, it is quite possible that the Bantu classifiers may throw light on a principle underlying both. At any rate the Bantu prefixes represent a relatively early stage in language-growth. Their present forms are not likely in any case to be the earliest of all, but many are singularly distinct and seemingly well-preserved, and (under many limitations, which involve separate and detailed study) convey still distinctions of meaning, which are living ones, and involve actual if instinctive selection for use at the present day. The same noun-stem may be referred to four or five classes, with a difference greater or less of meaning. Various noun-stems may be transferred from one class to another, and so be invested with a new aspect. The same nouns may even be in different classes in different dialects, and yet have the same meaning as to objects denoted. But this by no means disproves the fact,

that a general survey is still able to detect common distinctive characteristics for the most part attaching to objects included in a given class, more clearly in some than others, and that in nouns as well as verbs the human spirit in Bantu has materials which it is free to deal with, mould, and fit to the form which its instinct or reason selects as best for its purpose of expression. In this respect also Bantu is speech still alive.

CHAPTER XII

NOUN-PREFIXES

I

A PHENOMENON so characteristic and interesting as that of the Bantu Class-prefixes of nouns seems to call for somewhat full and detailed treatment, though at the same time much will seem to any student of Bantu to be omitted or inadequately represented.

The following are the prefix-syllables in forms found in dialects of the Central Lakes region, with a few common variants, given first in alphabetical order for comparison with Table B, then in other arrangements according to use and meaning:—

In (*N*)	*Mi*
Ka	*Mu* (*M*)
Ki (*CHi*)	*Tu* (*Ti*)
Ku	*U* (*Ŵu, Bu*)
Li (*Di, I*)	*Vi* (*Fi*)
Lu	*Wa* (*Ŵa, Ba, Va, A*)
Ma	*Zi*

Pa is sometimes added, but has a different use, and (with *Ku, Mu*) is noticed in Chapter XV.

They may next be divided as Singular and Plural, the leading forms only being given:—

Singular.	Plural.
Ka	*Ma*
Ki	*Wa*
Li	*Mi*
U	*Vi*
Ku	*Zi*
Lu	*Tu*
Mu	

In is used both as singular and plural.

The classes are formed on the basis of various combinations of singular and plural prefixes which for the most part are as follows :—

	Sing.	Plur.	
Class 1.	*Mu*	*Wa,*	e. g. *mu-ntu* 'person', *wa-ntu.*
2.	*Mu*	*Mi,*	e. g. *mu-ji* 'village', *mi-ji.*
3.	*In*	*In,* / *Zi,*	e. g. *in-kuku* 'fowl'.
4.	*Ki*	*Vi,*	e. g. *ki-ntu* 'thing', *vi-ntu.*
5.	*Ka*	*Tu,*	e. g. *ka-nwa* 'mouth', *tu-nwa.*
6.	*Li*	*Ma,*	e. g. *li-se* 'hoe', *ma-se.*
7.	*Lu*	*Ma,* / *Zi,*	e. g. *lu-kwa* 'bark', *ma-kwa.*
8.	*U*	*Ma,*	e. g. *u-ta* 'bow', *ma-ta.*
9.	*Ku*	*Ma,*	e. g. *ku-twi* 'ear', *ma-twi.*

The order and numbering of the Classes are arbitrary, and they are conveniently distinguished as the *Mu-Wa* class, *Mu-Mi* class, and so on.

It is hardly to be expected that the earliest forms of these prefixes, still less the original source (interjectional or other) of forms and meanings, should be within the reach of investigation, present or future, and to suggest etymological theories seems peculiarly futile till the bases of Bantu speech are more fully understood. But a certain amount of light may be thrown on both meanings and forms.

As to form, the marked Bantu predilection for the nasals *M*, *N*, and the vowels most closely connected with them, *U*, *I*, seems reflected in the class-prefixes, and indicates a high value attached to them as vehicles of expression. *A*, *I*, *U* are the only vowels used in them. *Mu*, *Mi*, *Ma*, *In*, *Ki* (*Chi*), and *U* are the most stable, widely used, and perhaps best-preserved; *Ka*, *Tu*, and those including the weaker consonants *L*, *V*, *Z*, i. e. *Li*, *Vi*, *Zi*, less so. *Ku* is used with few except verbal nouns, i. e. as a sign of the infinitive mood. The use of *Ma* and *Zi* as plural prefixes of several classes (excepting the two first) points to a decline from an earlier standard of distinctness, as between class and class.

The prefixes are found in both longer and (in some cases) shorter forms. Each prefix is used in some dialects in a di-

syllabic form, its own vowel being placed before it, e. g. *u-mu*, *a-wa*, *i-mi*, *i-ki*, *i-li*, *u-lu*, *a-ka*, *u-u*, &c., a change which may well represent an earlier actual reduplication of the prefix, i. e. *mu-mu*, *wa-wa*, *mi-mi*, &c. The fuller form seems to add a faint demonstrative meaning, like that of English 'a, the', in addition to its use as defining class. It will be shown later that the class-prefixes supply the base of the pronominal demonstratives generally, and the full reduplicated forms, *mu-mu*, *u-u*, *ka-ka*, *li-li*, &c., are actually used as such.

Some of the class-prefixes are also found in a shorter form. In general, the class-prefix of a noun is also the prefix of every adjective, pronominal or other, and of every verb-form by which it is qualified. It is in this repetition or reflection of the noun-prefix as the prefix of parts of speech grammatically related to the noun, that the characteristic Bantu system of concord consists. In most cases, the noun-prefix and the concord-prefix are the same. But where a nasal is used in the noun-prefix, it disappears in the concord-prefix. The corresponding prefixes are therefore:—

Class-prefix	Concord-prefix
mu	*u* (with some exceptions)
mi	*i*
ma	*a* (or *ya*)
in	*i* (sing.), *zi* (plur.)

The loss of so important an element as the nasal is remarkable, but may be due to gradual loss of living significance in the sound itself and then to phonetic decay.

II

As to the distinctive meaning, at present if not always attached to the various class-prefixes, certain clear lines may be drawn. But a review of words found (in one dialect or another) placed in the same class, and the fact that the same root sometimes occurs with different prefixes (but the same meaning), point on the one hand to the improbability of each prefix itself being traceable to any one defining significance, and on the other to the probability that the whole group of words placed in any one dialect under the same class has been

formed under many influences, such as are known to operate largely in speech generally,—analogy, association, adoption from tribal, local and personal reasons, and many others.

The *Mu-Wa* class is the premier class. Whatever else it includes, it includes objects highest in the scale of existence and characteristically human beings. The prefixing of these syllables to any verb-stem forms a noun denoting a person, e. g. *m(u)-penda* 'one who loves', *m(u)-la* 'one who eats'. The root *-tu* with prefix *M-* means 'a person, man-thing', with prefix *Ki-*, 'a thing' merely.

Moreover, a kind of honorary rank (so to speak) may be attached to a noun of another class, by transference to this class; the rank of a person, even when it denotes an animal or inanimate object, and even without it losing its own class-prefix in the singular. Its rank will be shown by the plural prefix *Wa-*, and be attested in both singular and plural by the concord-prefixes corresponding to the class *Mu-Wa*. Thus the rabbit (*sungura*, *kalulu*) hero of many an African fable, is treated habitually as 'Mr.' Rabbit, so is a fishing-net (*kombe*) in some dialects, and many other objects, for whatever reason of association, affection, or instinct of suitability.

It is true that *M(u)* is also the sing. prefix of another class, but here too (as will be seen) its significance is relatively high: also the plural prefix *Ma* of other classes has one specific use in conferring distinction on a person, office, or object. And it is possible that the *Mu* of the premier class was at an earlier stage distinguished by an extended form. For instance, in dialects where *mu-tu* is used for 'head', the word for 'person' is pronounced *mu-n-tu*, not as commonly *mu-tu*; i. e. the nasal sound is emphasized.

Of the *Mu-Mi* class perhaps the clearest general feature is its connexion with life on a lower grade than that of personality. Thus a typical class of objects included in it is trees and vegetable life, and its range includes many things to which the idea of life naturally attaches, objects and operations showing or suggesting life, or connected with its support and well-being. The plural prefix *Mi* seems singularly stable in form and universal, as only and always the plural of this class.

Initial *M* is not invariably a class-prefix. It may be the first letter of the root, or by phonetic change for *N*.

Of all the remaining classes it may be said that they do not characteristically include living objects as such, but only as having some other more or less definite feature.

In, with plural *In*, or, when greater distinctness as plural is required, *Zi*, can hardly be said to have a definite general meaning as classifier, except in contrast with all the others. The sound is itself a weak one, sinking to *N* or a mere nasalizing of a following consonant, or changing or disappearing if phonetically incompatible with it. Hence nouns properly assigned to this class may in some cases seem exceptions, as having no distinctive prefix. They include many names of animals, and the *In* class may perhaps be best regarded as the 'Inclusive'.

The prefixes *Ki*(*Chi*)-*Vi* (*Fi*, sometimes *Zi*) mark a class which may be called that of the Concrete, Particular, or Peculiar, a class characteristically including things separate, individual, and particular, or things in some way contrasted with others of similar kind and so far different from them. The root-meaning of words in this class may differ widely, but this general character seems attached to them by the prefix of particularity. They denote particular places, particular instruments, particular actions, things by comparison peculiar, large or small, strange or familiar, pleasing or the reverse, and so on. Thus in some dialects it is regularly diminutive, in others augmentative. In many it is used to denote special sort, kind, or quality. Attached to the name of a tribe, it very commonly designates its language (as being a leading and distinctive characteristic), as contrasted with its members (in the *Mu-Wa* class), and also its country (in the *U-Ma* class). Both prefixes are often used to form adverbs, i. e. to supply words specially used as qualifying and particularizing others.

The *Ka-Tu* class might almost be marked as a sub-class of *Ki-Vi*, for it is to a large extent limited to the expression of particular smallness or relative unimportance, as the special aspect of a root. This felt limitation of meaning may account for this class not appearing in some dialects, and only in the

singular or plural in others. Diminutive is the most obvious term to denote the class as a whole.

The *U-Ma* class has a clearly marked character in contrast with the *Ki-Vi*, viz. its characteristic inclusion of words used in an abstract sense,—such words finding in no other class such suitable expression of their quality as abstract. The fact of the absence of plural prefix *distinctive* of the class fixes attention on the singular, in which abstract ideas are usually expressed, as in the present day embodying its chief use and special significance. This in no way prevents the inclusion of a large number of other words in the class, many conveying the ideas of inner part, inner nature, substance, material, essence, going (as it were) below the surface of the sensible and concrete, many also to the inclusion of which no obvious clue remains.

Lu-Ma, or *-Zi*, supplies another class which in the plural form is not distinguished from some other classes. So far it may be expected to be, like the preceding, inclusive and general in meaning except in the singular. Like the *Ka-Tu* class, it is not preserved in some dialects which retain the other classes. It may be inferred that even in the singular the force of the prefix, only distinguished from *U* by the weak consonant *L*, is now so far obscured as not to be urgently called for by the practical requirements of self-expression. Nevertheless *Lu* has a fairly clear value and practical usefulness, more easily felt than described, where singleness as such needs special expression. This need arises in direct connexion with two classes, viz. *In*, where singular and plural have no separate form, and *U-Ma*, which includes many objects not abstract in meaning, and for them wants a singular form of non-abstract significance. Hence the two plural forms, *zi* being appropriate when the noun itself connects most naturally with the *In-* class, *ma* when with the *U-* class. Thus *inzi* often means 'fly' (insect), or 'flies' generally, *chinzi* 'a large fly', *kainzi* 'a small fly', while *lunzi* conveniently describes 'a (one, single) fly'.

There remain two classes of nouns, both with the general plural *Ma*, common to some other classes, and in the singular *Ku* and *Li*.

The *Ku-Ma* class, where it exists, has a very small content,

and may be presumed to have lost whatever importance or distinctness it possessed. Not only are the nouns few, but the singular prefix has so little singular meaning as often to be retained in the plural, i. e. the plural consists of both prefixes *Ma-ku-*. On the other hand, *Ku-* as a prefix of verb-stems is almost universal in its use of forming the verb-noun called and used as the infinitive mood. It then has no plural form, but connects itself at the same time not so much with class-prefixes as such, as with *ku* used (together with *mu* and *pa*) as a preposition and adverb. These will be noticed in a later chapter.

In the *Li-Ma* class, *Li* maintains its independence and stability in form more successfully than in meaning. Though the *L* is a weak element and often disappears, it is sometimes reinforced by being pronounced as *D*, and even *J* (= *DY*). When *L* is lost, *I*, though perilously akin to *IN*, *N*, asserts itself in pronunciation as distinct from it and never disappears without a trace. Sometimes the trace consists in a mere hardening of the initial sound of the root, which may be pronounced with a slightly 'explosive' force. Or the root may be used absolutely without prefix, the mere absence of all prefix being by its exceptional admission in this one case equivalent to its presence and clear evidence of its original existence. Phonetic reasons account for the only other case in which a prefix seems wholly absent, viz. in some nouns of the *In-* class.

The possibility of the use of a plain root-syllable as the singular makes it easy and common to put foreign (non-Bantu) words in this class, and also encourages a tendency to make *ma-* a universal prefix in the plural.

As to meaning, it must again be allowed that it is difficult to assign one with any definiteness, and at the same time sufficient comprehensiveness. It is more easy to feel than describe, and in this case is not easy to a non-Bantu to feel. The plural prefix *Ma*, however, in this class stands out with some clearness, as conveying the idea of dignity or distinction, especially in relation to a person or office, but also of magnitude and grandeur of objects of all kinds. This is

especially the case in dialects, in which *Ki-Vi* is limited to a diminutive meaning (smallness or unimportance). In this case, the *Li-Ma* class takes the place of augmentative. It is characteristically used of the fruit of trees, the tree being itself in the *Mu-Mi* class.

Illustrations which would be out of place here may be found in Bantu dictionaries, and the more easily because nouns are mostly grouped together under the class-prefix of the singular. If arranged under the root-syllables, the shades, or actual differences, of meaning assumed by the root-idea in connexion with various class-prefixes are clearly seen, and the resources of expressiveness placed at the command of the speaker's instinctive or deliberate choice. And if root-syllables are further extended to include verbs with their numerous stems, fixed and derivative, and the various bases they furnish for combination with noun-prefixes, especially *Mu*, *Mi*, *Ki*, *Ka*, *Ma*, and *U*, the normal wealth and potentialities of speech may be yet more clearly realized. Dr. Scott for the most part in his *Mang'anja Dictionary* passes them over, as too numerous to allow of being (within his limits) written down, and too easily and regularly formed to require it.

III

In concluding this chapter, some remarks made in the previous one may be re-stated and developed. It is possible that the noun-prefix system of Bantu, as a system and apart from any particular meaning of each prefix, has important significance. To the Bantu there are two successive stages in the natural mode of apprehending an object or expressing an idea. The mind begins with a general conception and proceeds from it to a special. Every noun by the mere fact of utterance as a noun first suggests, both to speaker and hearer, a common character of many phenomena, a large district (as it were) of human observation and reflection, an atmosphere or region of thought, in which a particular object may be looked for,—all this by the prefix. Then follows a more precise naming of an object, but still an object already (before naming) marked off by its prefix from other large groups of phenomena, and so

also from other words involving precisely the same root-syllable and yet by their prefix definitely distinguished from it.

What was the actual origin of the prefixes as sounds, what their earliest meanings, what even is the significance to a native now of inclusion in a class, may not be ascertainable. But the mental process implied is of interest in itself and may have its bearings on the history of human speech in other parts of the world.

When an object is said to be referred to a category or class, the class is obviously prior in thought to the object which is referred to it. And the class is a wider and vaguer conception than the object, for it includes many objects of very different meaning. The prefix, then, which signifies the class is prior to the noun-root, and the noun-root might with greater accuracy be called a suffix of the classifier, than the classifier a prefix of the noun. If this is a true account, as far as it goes, of the logical relation of prefix and noun-root, there seems to be no reason why it should not be used further, not to prove, but to throw light upon, the actual chronological history of the prefix-system generally.

In the absence of any strong presumptions to the contrary, it would appear from what has been said in an earlier part of this essay, that as in the history of the verb, so in that of the noun, (*a*) simple interjectional sounds supply sufficiently definite expression of ideas to represent in the one case certain acts or states, in the other certain objects, the ordinary course of natural selection accounting for any tendency to differentiation in one direction or the other; (*b*) the interjections being vague as sounds, though richly suggestive, greater definiteness is obtained by subjoining another element, of the same kind but by its own significance limiting the first; (*c*) the union of two such elements produces by similar process a verb-word and a noun-word. The number of monosyllables, suited to indicate objects in a general way, that is, classes rather than individuals, may have been large to begin with, but gradually limited by the course of natural selection to a small group, such as the class-prefixes of the present day, while the second element tended, like the suffixes of the verb, to increase in

number and importance in a manner strictly analogous to the multiplication of verb-stems. By virtue of their growing usefulness as defining objects within the limits of the general group idea conveyed by the first element, the second or suffix-element became the more actually important, and in fact conveyed what may be rightly called the root-meaning of the noun. A similar usurpation on the part of verb-suffixes has been noticed, with the result that the monosyllabic base-sound retains a minimum of significant force.

Some such view as the above appears to suit the prefix-system in its present stage. The noun-prefix represents the original sound corresponding to an object as vaguely conceived in a primitive stage of the human mind, the child-mind (as it might be called) of humanity. The noun-root represents the supplementary sound, ever growing with human progress in defining power, and so of separate importance. There are many signs, as has been shown above, that the existing prefixes are a survival, their usefulness largely lost or diminishing, and their forms showing (in some cases) the weakness of decay. Under the new social conditions spreading rapidly in Central and South Africa, it is impossible not to anticipate that the prefix-system so characteristic of Bantu, and interesting as collateral evidence as to the earliest forms and processes of growth of human speech, will be further simplified and limited, and even ultimately disappear.

PART IV. SUPPLEMENTARY

CHAPTER XIII

ADJECTIVES

AN Introduction to Bantu might well be limited to the subject of the verb and noun. All that is most characteristic gathers round these two 'parts of speech'. But a short account may be added of a few other classes of words, involving among other things points of contrast and differences in regard to other Families of Language; and this without the necessity of using illustration too technical for readers unfamiliar with a Bantu dialect.

Adjectives usually claim the next place to nouns. But the adjective is a 'part of speech' very sparingly used in Bantu. Not many dialects are likely to furnish more than a dozen or two of examples of words which can be called adjectives and adjectives only. Such adjectives have mostly a common and general meaning, such as, 'great, small, long, short, many, few, all, other, different, self, good, bad.' They follow the noun which they qualify, and always have a prefix corresponding to that of the noun, as has been already mentioned (p. 70).

The scarcity of true adjectives is, however, more than made up for by the abundance of means for supplying their place,—means which are no doubt used as the fittest for their purpose by the instinct of Bantu people,—viz. by nouns and verbs.

Briefly, and apart from the few adjectives already mentioned, nouns are qualified in two ways.

The first is the use of what is best described as a preposition with a general meaning such as 'of', followed by another noun. So, in English, a house of wood, a man of honesty, is the equivalent of, a wooden house, an honest man. But even in this simple use of words, Bantu insists on a characteristic

feature. The letter *a* conveys the meaning of the preposition 'of', but the preposition itself is never used without a prefix of concord, corresponding to the class-prefix of the noun qualified. It always appears as *wa*, *cha*, *la*, *ya*, *za*, &c. And inasmuch as in speech the preposition is never separate, but always 'pre-posed' to a noun, it has all the effect in Bantu of forming an actual prefix to the noun which it precedes and is often written as forming one word with it, thus making an adjective in agreement with the principal noun.

So imperious is the Bantu tendency to form adjectives in this way, that in one dialect at least (Nyanja), actual strain, not to say violence, is applied to the resources of the language in order to exclude any other adjectival form. Thus *-kulu* is a common adjective meaning 'great'. Most dialects connect it at once with a noun by the use of the corresponding concord-prefix. Thus 'great fish' would be expressed by '*nsomba zikulu*', *zi-* being the prefix corresponding to *nsomba* in the plural. But 'great fish' in Nyanja is *nsomba zazikulu*. *Za* is the preposition *-a* with its proper concord-prefix as usual, but *zikulu*, as a noun following it, is a linguistic curiosity. The usual form and class to express 'greatness' is *ukulu* (*U-Ma* class of abstracts), and *nsomba za ukulu* would be a sufficiently regular, if unusual, mode of expression. But *nsomba zazikulu* can only be translated as 'fishes of greatnesses', and even then *zikulu* as noun-form is an arbitrary (though possible) grammatical creation. The system is carried out with thoroughness, each noun-prefix in turn being used with the root *kulu*. Clearly even now the individual significance of the noun-prefix is so weak as to be negligible, as not necessarily affecting the root-idea. Traces of a similar tendency are to be found in other dialects.

The second substitute for an adjective is a verb in any finite form of the indicative mood. Broadly speaking, in Bantu, no 'relative pronoun' (like 'who, which') is required to make any verb-form conveying a simple statement in any tense available as a relative clause, i.e. as an adjectival expression. At most a demonstrative of the shorter form ('this' or 'that') is used before the verb, in concord of course with the antecedent to which it refers. Swahili is an apparent rather than a real

exception. In English 'the book I gave you', or 'the book that I gave you', is equivalent to 'the book which I gave you'. And in Bantu *mtu wafa* may mean 'the man is dead', or 'a man who is dead, a man dead, a dead man'. When the fullness of the Bantu tense-system in many dialects is remembered, each of its forms being available for 'adjectival' use, it is easy to see why the verb so largely supersedes the simple adjective,—each verb-form being able not only to indicate an attribute of quality or activity simply, but also all the additional variety with which it is invested by difference of stem and tense. For instance, a man may be described as a thief merely, or as a professional thief, or of thievish propensity, an habitual thief, or a man actually engaged in thieving,—according to the tense-form used.

CHAPTER XIV

PRONOUNS

THE words usually classed as Pronouns are so common and important in all languages, so indispensable in most for the simplest communication between man and man, so interesting therefore for purposes of Comparative Philology, that room may be allowed here for a short description of their leading features in Bantu,—the more so as they form links between its many dialects and tend to emphasize their strong family likeness. They supply also further illustration of facts and theories already noticed in connexion with nouns and verbs. The description is mostly positive and generalized, details being left to grammars, and critical comparison with other languages to the reader.

Demonstratives.

The structure of the pronominal adjectives meaning 'this, that' is singularly simple and transparent. They are all based on the noun-prefix syllables, and fall into three divisions, indicating respectively (1) 'this,' nearness, in fact or thought, to the speaker (that is, me), (2) 'this' or 'that', nearness, to the person spoken to (that is, you), and so relative distance from the speaker, (3) 'that,' distance from both, or nearness to a third person (that is, him). The earlier form of the first series was probably the noun-prefix doubled, e. g. *mu-mu* 'this person', *wa-wa* 'these persons', *mi-mi*, *ki-ki*, *u-u*, &c. As now used, the form is commonly the noun-prefix in the concord form, i. e. without the nasals *m*, *n*, and with its own vowel prefixed, e.g. *u-u*, *a-wa*, *i-i*, *iki*, *aka*, *ulu*, &c. Thus it appears that emphasis laid on the noun-prefix conveys the meaning of a weak demonstrative, 'the, this.' The second form is usually the same as the first, with final vowel changed to *-o*. This

change may possibly connect the form with the second personal pronouns *U* (you), *O* being often a contraction of *A-U*.

A widely used combination, taking the place of both the preceding forms, consists of the noun-prefix followed by the syllable *-no*.

The third form introduces another element. It consists of the noun-prefix (the non-nasal concord forms) followed by a syllable, of which the characteristic is *L*, or a kindred sound such as *D*, *L Y*, *D Y*, *J*. The final vowel may be *-a* or *-e*, or in some cases *-o*.

Thus in concord with *Ki-tu* 'thing', are found such forms as—

iki (Swah. *hiki*), *kiki*, *kino*, 'this';
iko (Swah. *hicho*), *kiko*, *kino*, 'this, that';
kilya (Swah. *kile*), *kija*, 'that.'

Similarly constructed forms correspond to all the other noun-prefixes, and the resemblance of Latin *hic*, *ille* is noticeable. The *h-* in the Swahili pronouns, as in some other Swahili formatives, may represent the loss of an earlier consonant, i. e. *hi-ki* for *ki-ki*, as was suggested above. All the above forms are often used with a nasal (*N*) prefixed.

The possessive adjectives are also simple in structure. They consist generally of the prepositional root *-a* (see Chapter XIII) with the proper concord-prefix of each class of noun qualified, combined with a syllable identical with or representing a personal pronoun. Thus in agreement with such a word as *Chi-fua* 'breast'—

Sing.	Plur.
ch-a-ngu or *ch-a-nji*, my	*ch-a-tu* or *ch-etu*, our
ch-a-ko, your	*ch-a-nu*, or *ch-enu*, your
ch-a-ke, his	*ch-a-wo*, their

In the plural forms, the distinctive *-tu*, *-nu*, *-wo* are easily identified with the personal pronouns meaning 'we, you, they', as given below. The forms in *-etu* imply the fuller forms *-a-i-tu*, due perhaps to the tendency noticed previously to give a noun-form (with noun-prefix) to the root-word following the preposition *-a* (see p. 79).

In the singular, on the other hand, the personal pronouns are not so obviously represented, and this fact may be connected

with a common tendency, due partly to courtesy, to allude more or less vaguely to a single person actually present. Thus *ngu*, a nasalized form of the weak demonstrative, seems to represent 'I' by 'this (person)': *-ko* seems to combine a general demonstrative *ku* (described in Chapter XV) with the *-o* of the demonstrative adjectives of the second division, which again may connect with the personal pronoun *U* (you): as *-ke* (*ku-ye*) with forms of the third personal pronoun.

The Personal Pronouns now require fuller notice. Amid considerable dialectic variety, the following facts stand out clearly in Bantu. In each a single characteristic element is traceable, though liable to be obscured, even practically lost, by connexion with sounds used, in some cases clearly, to emphasize it, but tending to supersede it. Hence longer and shorter, often enclitic, forms of each.

In the singular:—

I, me, is represented by *M* or *N*, followed by *i*, or *e*, in such forms as *mi-mi, mi-ye, ine, -ne, newo*;

You, by the corresponding vowels and semi-vowels, i. e. *U* (*W*), and less commonly *I* (*Y*), e. g. *we-we, we-ye, iwe, -we, wewo*;

He, she, by the same vowels, but in many dialects a weak demonstrative is preferred. Thus *ye-ye, i-ye, we-ye, -we, -ye, wewo, u-gu, ngu, u-u*.

In the plural:—

We is represented by *S* or *T*, sometimes *F*, and followed by *u* or *we, wi*, or *i*, e. g. in *si-si, swi-swi, swe-wo, ife, fwe-wo, se-o, -fwe, -swe*;

You, by *M* or *N* followed by *u*, or *ni*, e. g. *ni-nyi, mwe-wo, imwe, -mwe, -ni*;

They, by *Wa* or *A*, followed by *u* or *o*, e. g. *wao, au, -o, iwo, awo*.

Thus the general types may be summarized, as

	Singular	Plural
First Person,	*M, N*, with *e* (or *i*),	*T, S*, with *u*
Second Person,	*W, Y*, with *e* (or *i*),	*M, N*, with *u*
Third Person,	*W, Y*, with *e* (or *i*),	*Wa* with *u*

When a personal pronoun forms the subject of a verb, the

verb has always a corresponding person-prefix of concord as initial syllable. Thus:

	Singular	Plural
First Person,	*n*, *ni*, *ndi*	*tu*
Second Person,	*u* (*zv*)	*mu*
Third Person,	*u*, or *a*	*wa*

The same person-prefixes, inserted after the tense-sign (if any) and before the verb-root, represent the person as object of the verb, except that in the singular *ku* takes the place of *u*, of the second person, and *m* that of *u*, *a*, of the third.

Without giving any detailed list of words used in asking questions, and as such classed as interrogative particles or pronouns, the principle which explains most of them deserves mention. Precisely as might be expected in living, always unwritten, speech, a question in Bantu is largely a matter of suggestion, rather than of definite and formal expression, and this either (1) merely by tone of voice, as indeed often in modern literary language, not by form or order of words; or (2) by a word or syllable so used that by its position in a sentence or otherwise it challenges remark and answer, e. g. by abruptly bringing a sentence to an end, with the felt effect of leaving it unfinished, thus implying a claim on the hearer to complete it himself. This principle accounts for most particles classed as interrogative.

Such is *ni*, preceded by a defining prefix, e. g. *wa-ni*, *a-ni*, *nda-ni*, *sya-ni*, *li-ni*, in all of which words *ni* appears to carry one of its common general meanings, viz. 'is', and the various forms suggest 'They are—? He is—?' (i. e. 'Who—?'); 'It is—?' (i. e. 'What?'); 'The (time of day) is—?' (i. e. 'When?'). It is possible that *-pi*, *-kwi*, as suffixes meaning 'where?', may represent *p(a-n)i*, *k(u-n)i*, similar to the above. Again, the interrogative suffixes *-ndu*, *-nzi*, *-ndi*, *-ndo*, are founded on *ni-lu*, *ni-zi*, *ni-li*, &c. ('is it—?, are they—?'), in reference to different classes of nouns. In some dialects, *li*, also meaning 'is', is used in just the same way, and also the curious verb *ti*, already several times characterized. In Nyanja, *kuti* is used for 'where?', but merely conveys a general suggestion in a more or less interrogative tone, 'that is to say? saying? it is?', which

is enough to challenge reply, custom limiting it ordinarily to a statement as to locality. A simple noun-prefix used without a noun is by itself quite a sufficiently striking phenomenon to excite curiosity, and challenge a reply, as to some object indicated, *Ki? u? wa? zi?* ('it?)' suggesting 'what?'.

And here common modes of expressing a negative may appropriately be mentioned. No word as such conveys in Bantu, or perhaps in any other primitive language, an idea of simple negation or non-existence. But there is no difficulty in signifying denial, refusal, contradiction, 'no, not so, I will not,' out of the abundant resources available for self-expression as between man and man. Roots suggesting 'leave off, stop, let alone, lack, be without', or 'cut short, end', are so available, and appear to account for some syllables used as negatives. Such are *sia* (whence perhaps *si*, and even *i*, *ai*, *iai*), *leka*, *ta*, *kana*, *kata*. The Swahili sign of the negative in verbs is *si*, and *ha*, *-h* here again representing a lost, but important, consonant, such as *t*(*a*), *k*(*a*), *p*(*a*), appearing in other dialects. But no such aids are really necessary. Tone, emphasis, position of a syllable, are ample. In fact, some demonstrative forms are used as direct negatives, depending solely on intonation and emphasis to distinguish them from positive assertion. Moreover, one regular way of expressing a negative is to make an ordinary affirmative statement followed by a mere interjection,—its abrupt and forcible introduction being quite enough to deny or contradict the statement just made, as implying 'no, not so, just the opposite'. *Cha*, for instance, is so used in the Tonga dialect of Lake Nyasa. Elsewhere *li-li*, *ku-ku*, *a-a*, used with proper intonation, are effective negatives in relation to a particular object or subject in an actual case, though nothing but a duplicated noun-prefix.

CHAPTER XV

ADVERBS, PREPOSITIONS, CONJUNCTIONS

IT has already been pointed out that in Bantu the place of two 'parts of speech' is largely taken by derivative stems of the verb,—that of the preposition by the applicative, of the adverb by the intensive stem—, and adequately for the purposes of living speech. Also the adjectival preposition *-a* has been noticed, and this may be considered the only preposition properly so called. Its sole use is as a preposition. It may be traced in *na* 'with' (for *ni-a*, *n-a*), though *na* is also used as a conjunction meaning 'and'. It is often combined with *ku*, *mu*, *pa*, forming *kwa*, *mwa*, *pa*, the meanings of which are explained below. The common Swahili preposition *katika* is formed by the noun *kati* and the preposition *-a*, with its proper concord prefix, with the meaning 'above, in the matter of, as to', as well as others, local and temporal. Many other compound prepositional expressions are formed in the same way, from nouns or adverbs followed by *-a*, e. g. *mbele ya* 'before', *juu ya* 'above'.

Ku, *Mu*, *Pa* form a remarkable group of Bantu monosyllables, quite apart from their use as roots, and also as formative elements in a large number of nouns and verbs. They are remarkable for their wide, if not practically universal, occurrence in its dialects, and on the whole for the persistence in all dialects of their general distinctness in form, meaning, and use.

As to form, *Ku*, and *Mu*, seem to be primary and irreducible, and *Pa* does not necessarily involve any second element, though as a verb-stem and perhaps as a preposition it may represent *p(a)-a*.

As to meaning, each preserves for the most part a definite though wide and general idea, viz.:—

Ku, environment, surroundings, circumstances, neighbourhood, proximity, exterior, 'about.'

Mu, internal position, interior, 'in.'

Pa, position generally, place in space or time, 'at.'

As to use, they are capable of independent significance as interjections, but are regularly employed as prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions.

As prepositions, they are followed by a noun, and often written as a part or prefix of it. But, however written, they are not to be regarded as belonging to the Class-prefixes already described, though *ku* and *mu* are found among them. The noun following has its full prefix-form, but the *Ku*, *Mu*, or *Pa* preceding affects it in two distinct ways, either as a preposition merely, or as forming with it a practically new noun, the combination taking concord-prefixes of the same form, *Ku*, *Mu*, *Pa*, in qualifying adjectives and verbs.

Thus, *mu-zi* is a noun of the *Mu-Mi* class meaning 'village'. With *ku* as a preposition merely, *ku muzi* may mean variously 'at, to, from, in, by, near, about a village', according to context or obvious purpose of the speaker. With *ku* as a kind of secondary prefix, *ku-muzi* may indicate a village and its surroundings, or more particularly its suburbs, gardens, neighbourhood, and be treated as a new noun, e. g. *ku-muzi kukoma*, 'the whole village is a nice one,' or 'in a nice situation'. Similarly *mu nyumba* may mean 'in, into, from within, in the matter of a house', or 'the interior of a house', e. g. *munyumba muda* 'the inside of the house is dark'. And *pa mto* may mean 'at, to, from, by the river', or (*pa-mto*) 'the river bed'.

Closely connected with this is the use of *Ku*, *Mu*, *Pa*, in supplying in combination with nouns adverbial expressions, such as *Ku-mulu* 'above, up, on the top', and often in triple series, i. e. *kumulu*, *mumulu*, *pamulu*,—*kunsi*, *munsi*, *pansi*,—*kukati*, *mukati*, *pakati*, and so on. And hence, by adding the preposition *-a*, many compound prepositions, e. g. *kumula kwa*, *pakati pa*, &c. But *Ku*, *Mu*, *Pa* are also capable of independent use as adverbs, especially of space and time, often nasalized, as *nku*, *mmu*, *mpa*, and are suffixed to verb-forms, as enclitics, in the forms *-ko*, *-mo*, *-pa*.

Other adverbs and ways of forming adverbs may be passed over here, but one important class already referred to deserves

further attention. In Nyanja there appears to be a specially rich crop of adverbs of a peculiar semi-interjectional kind, but of two or more syllables, formed from verb-stems built up of several formatives by dropping or changing the last and grammatically most significant syllable, and leaving the stem truncated. Probably their reversion (as it were) from a stage of fuller development of the verb to an earlier interjectional type, though a legitimate use of resource and an enrichment of the language as a whole, has led to their receiving little notice as a distinct class of adverbs. The following are a few taken at random from Scott's *Dictionary*:—

Verb:	Adverb:
lambula	*lambu*, and *lambi*
cheka	*cheku*, as well as *che*
yasama	*yasa*
gogodola	*gogodo-gogodo*
yaluka	*yaluke*
godama	*gadu, gada-gada*
pyolika	*pyoli*
pilingula	*pilingu*

Conjunctions, especially those which introduce dependent sentences, such as 'when, where, until, since, if, unless, in order to, lest, because, although, so that, as' and others, play such a large and important part in modern written languages, and the dependent sentence itself is the subject of so many elaborate rules in Greek and Latin, that it is not easy to realize how far they can be dispensed with, and the same meaning sufficiently expressed in different and simpler ways. However, after what has been repeatedly urged as to the conditions of living speech, it will be enough briefly to show how the place of dependent sentences is supplied in Bantu. There are, in fact, three different ways:—

(*a*) Once again the simple syllables *Ku*, *Mu*, *Pa*, used (see pp. 86–7) as demonstrative adverbs, 'thereabout, therein, thereat,' appear as conjunctions, regularly used to introduce dependent clauses of the adjectival, i. e. local, temporal, and relative kinds, 'when, while, until, where, whither, whence, as,' and as a rule precede a verb-form in close combination with it. A few nouns meaning (for instance) 'time, place,

cause' are also similarly used for 'where, when, because, in order to'. But, not to enter on grammatical detail, one characteristic and widely spread tendency in Bantu everywhere is to introduce a dependent clause of any kind, i. e. to supply the place of almost any conjunction, by using a simple verb meaning 'say, saying'. And the commonest verb so used, at least in the Central Bantu dialects, is the anomalous verb *Ti*, which has already often been mentioned. Either in the infinitive mood *Kuti*, or in a finite form with person-prefixes, or in some form stereotyped (as it were) for this particular use, *Ti*, meaning vaguely 'act, think, say', is used to introduce not only reported speech, but subordinate clauses in general. Other words meaning 'to speak' are used elsewhere, as *Kwamba* in Swahili, *Gore* in Chuana.

(*b*) The subjunctive mood without conjunction supplies a dependent sentence, especially final, 'in order to,' but also temporal 'when', and that rather because of its intrinsic subjective meaning than because it carries any idea of strict grammatical subordination. In *a-enda a-site* two verbs meaning 'go' and 'buy' are used side by side, the first in the indicative stating objective fact, 'he goes, he went,' the second (in the usual Bantu position for limiting and defining the preceding word) in the subjunctive, suggesting a subjective purpose or consequence—'with buying in mind, in order to buy, that he may buy, so as to buy'. The buying was not as yet an objective fact, and the same word (in the subjunctive form) would in some dialects be commonly used by itself as one way of expressing a future tense, i. e. 'he proposes to buy, he will buy,'—the future being viewed as existent only in idea, not realized in fact.

(*c*) Lastly, as may naturally be expected after all that has been previously said about the conditions of living speech, Bantu often dispenses with dependent clauses altogether in the freedom of its power to express their meaning in other ways. Under the circumstances of unwritten language, it is often quite enough to place two simple co-ordinate sentences together, and by their relative position alone suggest an intended relation between them. 'You move, you

die. Drink, and you are cured. He does that, he falls. She held the child, it would fall. Should they take poison, it would kill them. He went home, he found food ready,'—are certainly expressive, if not eloquent and forcible ways of saying, ' If you move, when you move, because you move, you die—You must drink in order to be cured.—If (because) he does that, he will fall.—She held the child, lest it should fall.—When he went home, &c. Such modes of expression could be illustrated to an indefinite extent, and are a common feature of Bantu, wherever spoken.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

It cannot be considered premature to invite increased attention to Bantu, as Living Speech. Dialects are rapidly being reduced to writing. The blight of literary form is gathering on the plant. If sound itself is but one element in the full expressiveness of human utterance, its translation into terms of another sense carries it yet further from the first efforts of the human spirit to make its thought incarnate. Writing began well as picture, better indeed than sound. Developing on that principle, it might have become ideally a gallery of Turnerian dreams of form, light and shade, and colour, more eloquent than music. Developed on another, it becomes a line of shorthand scratches. Thus newspapers in Bantu are finding and creating a reading public in South Africa, Zulu books are used by Angoni in Nyasaland, mission and other presses on the East Coast, in the region of the Great Lakes, and in the Congo State are spreading books and periodicals far and wide. The volume of native correspondence is a weighty element in the service of mails. Before the end of the century Bantu will be drowned in ink.

Not that the change is deplorable: out of death will no doubt issue new life. That Bantu should be passing into the literary stage only adds to its importance as a factor in the future of Africa. Literature may stereotype and perpetuate some of the deeper cleavages between groups of dialects, not least through long-established differences in modes of spelling. But the unifying tendencies will not be less strong, and give an imperious significance to language in the future of the race. Language alone need be no great barrier to its ultimate unification. It will lend itself easily to the formation of racial blocks meanwhile. The 'slave' of the Congo and Angola (in 1909), the 'coloured people' of the Cape Colony, the 'nigger'

of the Transvaal, the 'childman' of the better-managed Protectorates, the 'inferior animals' or 'brutes' of some other regions, the embryo-superangels of the missions,—all will have the chance of wide mutual understanding, whatever may be the end. Unruly children may well try again and again to 'bar out' the paternal 'governor', especially from a house more theirs than his. But if only what was best in British character and life was before it, there might be little to fear for the future of Bantu Africa.

Meanwhile, Bantu speech even in books is still alive. Its powers as such might just now (1909) well be envied by a modern world, urgently and somewhat anxiously looking for suitable and easy expressions of the new phenomena connected with human flight, as also still with bicycles and motors. Aviation, aeroplanes, bi-planes, aerostats, dirigibles, semi-rigids, aeronautics,—these and other terms are floating uneasily in the air, like some of the objects they serve to represent. A Bantu, left to himself, would have little difficulty in supplying exactly suitable terms for every variety of machine and movement. His prefixes would class them as living things, or new objects, or (between the two) as mainly movement or mainly machine. Probably he would name at once the bird (beast or insect), whose flight or form or character would to a nicety, and most happily, recall each type. Verb-suffixes would express modes of flying, driving-power, steering, speed, with nouns derivative to describe each person and object connected with each function,—all based on one or more root-words connecting them all with flight.

As with aviation, so with other ideas and objects as they dawn on Bantu intelligence. Means to express them will not be wanting. His ethics may so far find two words or so enough to cover all distinctions known to him between the merest flaw and deadly sin, his aesthetics the same number for all pleasures and pains of sense, taste, and feeling, where two hundred would but moderately equip a civilized mind; his appreciations of colour are mostly limited to three varieties, and those mainly dependent on light and shade. But for all that concerns his house-building, cooking, cultivating, forestry,

care of cattle, hunting, fishing, fighting, and the like, or an argument for his rights, there would be found no lack, taking the various dialects together, of a nomenclature as full and for its purposes as exact as that of a modern miner or engineer.

But the facts of Bantu as it now exists do not only show its actual and potential richness,—relative of course to the requirements of each age and stage, but also advancing with social evolution, growing with the growth of men. They also raise questions and suggest answers which affect the study of all Families of human speech. What some of these are, may perhaps be gathered from the preceding chapters. They bear on the one hand on the earliest materials of language, and the steps of combination by which first words are developed, and then all the forms of them by which differentiation of ideas and grammatical relations to other words are expressed. On the other hand they suggest that the world dawns on human consciousness as almost a blank, at least as a comparatively colourless and empty picture, and that its details are gradually deprived by ever-growing perception of relations, a process reflected in the corresponding growth of forms of speech.

A fuller recognition of the interpretative significance of environment in living speech seems to vindicate the title of the simple sound, monosonant or interjection, to be treated seriously as a reasonable basis of language generally, and to show that there is nothing improbable, much less degrading, in resemblance amounting to identity, as sound, between the beginnings of human self-expression and the cries of birds and beasts. If acts, feelings, objects of sense, are not distinguished as such in the earliest stage, the sounds reflecting them will not be verbs or nouns as such, but germs of both. But unlike bird and beast, the man's mind moves on, alive to differences, capable of perceiving relations, and using each mental gain as a step to another. The mind of a child, and the mind of a child-race, the mind young in years and the mind young in development, seem to illustrate the movement, and move alike, —the use of sound keeping pace with mind. In Bantu, sounds combine, and words emerge, verbs and nouns of the shortest and simplest kind. Both develop in the same general

way, by additions or suffixes to the root-sound, each suffix giving new distinctness to the root-idea, or to one of the many possible meanings it suggests. The verb is far the richest and most flexible in its development, but it places its riches largely at the disposal of the noun. At first, however, the verb aims only at the fullest and most precise embodiment of its special idea. Later, it proceeds to introduce the idea in each case by prefixes, fixing subject and tense, i.e. the 'who, what, when, how' of the act or state. When the 'I' and 'you' are present face to face, and an object before both, 'give,' with (say) a look or gesture, is enough. There is no real need of 'I give it to you'. And 'give yonder' or 'give to-morrow' is as effective as, 'I will give it you some day.' The verb-prefixes of person and tense seem clearly a later growth, a refinement of a more conscious and developed stage.

Similarly the noun began, if Bantu has been rightly interpreted, with vague sound-elements, including potentially any number of objects seen instinctively as having a common feature. The Bantu seems literally at first to have seen 'men as trees' and 'trees as men' (*Mu-tu* 'living thing (man)', *Mu-ti* 'living tree'), both in the mental category described by *Mu*, though not altogether content to leave them wholly undistinguished within it (the plurals are *Wa-tu*, *Mi-ti*). But the further element, which distinguished the individual within the class, asserted its natural right, as time went on, to predominant importance, and usurped not without reason the title to be considered the root-syllable of the whole compound form. So much so that the Bantu seems to have dropped many of his perhaps numerous 'general-object' prefixes, and to the few remaining to have attached diminishing importance, though never losing the instinctive sense of obligation to retain them. To him their meaning is still a living one, involving links, likenesses, associations clear and dear to him, though a non-Bantu can draw but few clear lines among them.

It remains to recall the point of view from which this essay has been written. Its base has been a comparatively small number of dialects scattered over the eastern and central region of the Bantu area. They are believed to be well fitted

in many ways to be treated as typical of Bantu generally in the most perfect form at present extant. But however little this assumption, necessary for the immediate purpose, is shown to be justified by those whose knowledge rests on other dialects, one or many, they may be able to recognize the evidence adduced and conclusions drawn as having a *pro tanto* value in their bearing on Bantu as a whole, and to see under various disguises in the dialects known to themselves facts and tendencies which give these conclusions support. Not finality, but a contribution towards it, is here offered, and it is by the multiplication and comparison of such partial contributions that at last the complete synoptic survey may become possible, which will fit each into its proper place, and put Bantu in its true significance before the world.

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