



African History Seminar (November 3rd 1960)

The evidence from linguistic classification south of the Zambezi

- ① The nature of languages Partly by historical accident and partly because of the composition of various languages linguistic descriptions of languages are ~~frequently~~ ^{sometimes} made to fall into the following sub-sections:
- Description of the audible components of languages
 - Description of the forms or "set figures" of these audible components linked with the attempt to abstract or isolate fictional nuclei for the purpose of simplifying description
 - Description and Equation of meanings with those of the language of description (e.g. English) or more advanced identifications of the meanings of ~~the forms~~ ^{the elements} in the target language.
 - Statement of relationships including the study of sense and non-sense.

- Note:
- predominantly concerned with speech-sounds
 - predominantly concerned with words and their fragments
 - predominantly concerned with the meanings of the lexical elements
 - predominantly concerned with sentences and their fragments.

Linguistic criteria ^{underlying classifications} ~~there are very few~~ ^{including} classifications of

Language classifications according to single or complex criteria
 The comparison of one language ^{with} another may be made entirely in the field of speech-sounds (phonetics or phonology) or it may be made entirely in the field of words and their components (grammar or morphology) or it



(i.e. vocabulary items)

may be made entirely in the field of the lexical elements when the translated meaning serves merely as an identifier (lexicology, etymology) or finally it may be made in the field of sentences (syntax).

In practice comparisons are mainly ^(and primarily) limited to comparisons of vocabulary items, ~~but even though these are~~ but they may be extended to comparisons of grammatical items. Thus e.g. Meinhof links the Bantu languages not only because they have certain items of vocabulary in common but also because they share grammatical items and systems of items. ~~On the~~ ~~same hand~~ ^{if a proportion of their vocabularies} ~~if the vocabulary~~ is not shared by two languages ^{they may be distinguished apart} ~~even though~~ their grammar may be very similar (e.g. ^{Temne} ~~Temne~~, ^{Laka} ~~Laka~~ ^{Laka} which ^{are} ~~not~~ ^{not} regarded as Bantu languages ~~in part~~.)

~~Even though~~ It is difficult to judge ~~the problems~~ ^{study} ~~merely from a knowledge of Bantu and the~~ ^{relationships homogeneous languages and the} ~~relevance of the~~ ^{(between vocabulary and grammar as criteria} ~~approx distinction~~ will become ~~app~~ more apparent from the material on the ~~S. B.~~ non-Bantu languages.

There are few satisfactory and genuine classifications of languages according to the total language complex. In part this arises from the difficulty of knowing ~~what~~ ^{again} ~~how to~~ ^{and weight} add up the various ^{components of a language} ~~sub-categories~~ in making a ~~statistically valid comparison~~ into the complex of features that are a language. Essentially the groups of languages (some 80-100 in Prof. Guthrie's classification) ~~signify~~ ^{illustrate} the most feasible ~~comparison~~ and grouping of ^{complexes} characteristic ^{complex} features. Doke's classification of the S. Bantu languages is another good example of grouping according to complexes of features. These remarks do not apply to Prof. Guthrie's recent lexical ~~the~~ ^{comparisons} ~~primary~~ which have been mentioned in this seminar from time to time.

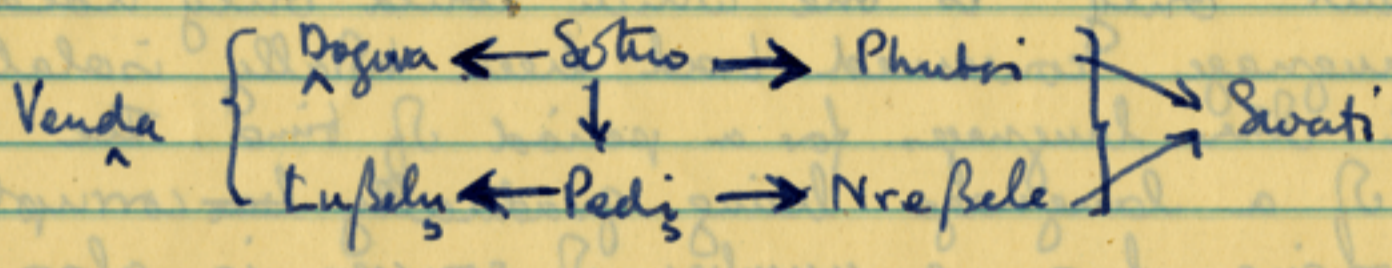
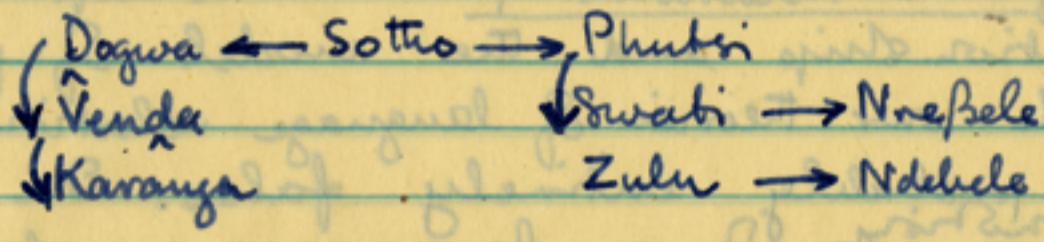


Concept of genetic relationships The concept of genetic relationship and the model of parentage from which our theories of language relationships derive is probably entirely false. In itself the usual ~~concept~~^{notion} of a language as deriving from one parent only is one which could only hold if the language concerned had been totally isolated from all other languages for a period of time. The ~~concept~~^{model} of a language being gradually ~~but~~ corrupted by borrowing from a number of sources is also inadequate and can only apply in very specialised cases.

~~A new concept and model of linguistic growth is required in which not only processes of~~ A model that would be satisfactory should not only cover the handing over of a ready-made language system from one generation to another.

Essentially the facts we have to contend with are that a complete ready-made language system is handed over from one generation to another. In the development of the language we must ^{firstly} not only consider the possibility of internal change (e.g. dialect pronunciation of the same language) but also the possibility of injection of external or environmental features (e.g. acquisitions from foreign languages, local specialisations, etc.). In addition to the processes involved here we must also consider those that might exist: if two languages were to exist side by side within the same community.

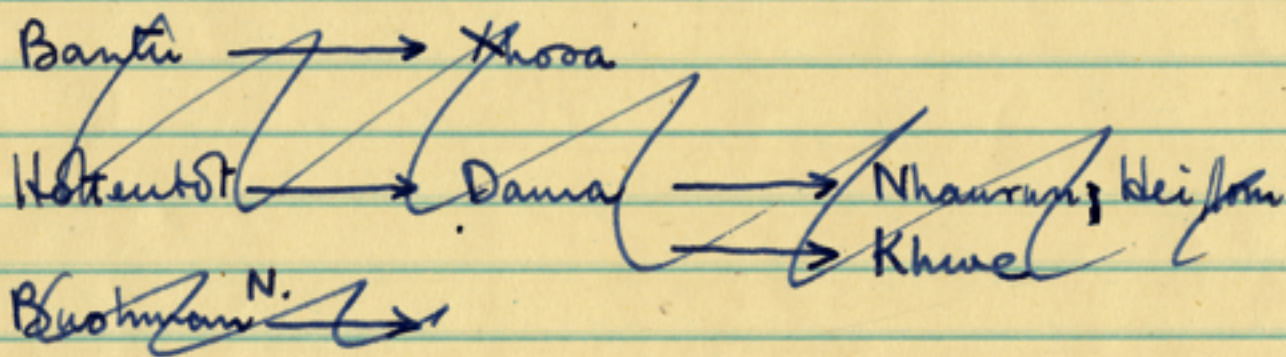
When we speak of two languages being related it must be made clear how far-reaching the claims of relationship are intended to be. From the historian's point of view he ~~is~~ would be helped quite



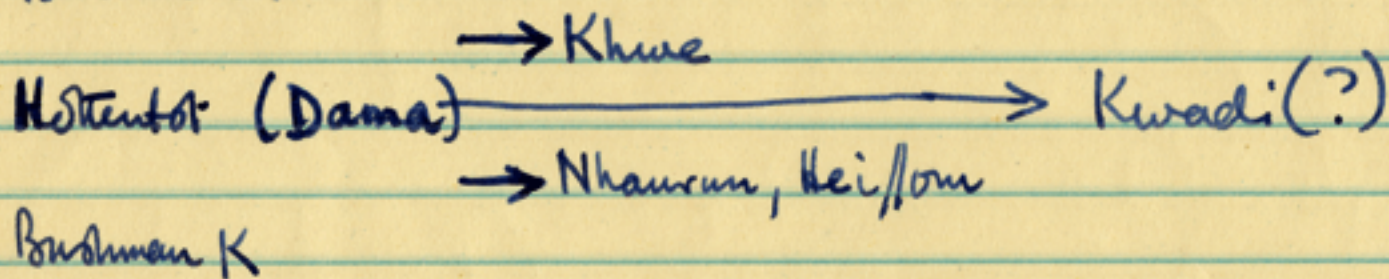


The language families represented in Southern Africa are as follows:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Bantu languages | } | Xhosa |
| Hotentot languages | | Kwadi |
| ^{Negative} Bushman languages | | Nhaurun, Kei//om |
| | | Khwe languages |
| Khoisanoid Bushman languages | | |



~~Bushman K.~~
Bantu (Xhosa)
Bushman N

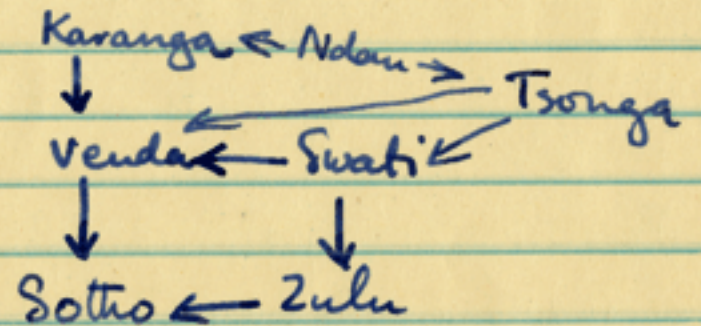


Kwadi(?)



considerably if a statement were made

- (a) The grammatical relationships of modern languages
- (b) The lexical ^{relationships} homogeneity of the languages concerned and the ^{vocabulary} sources that can be inferred from the degree of universality of lexical items.



Sotho — Phutsi — Swati



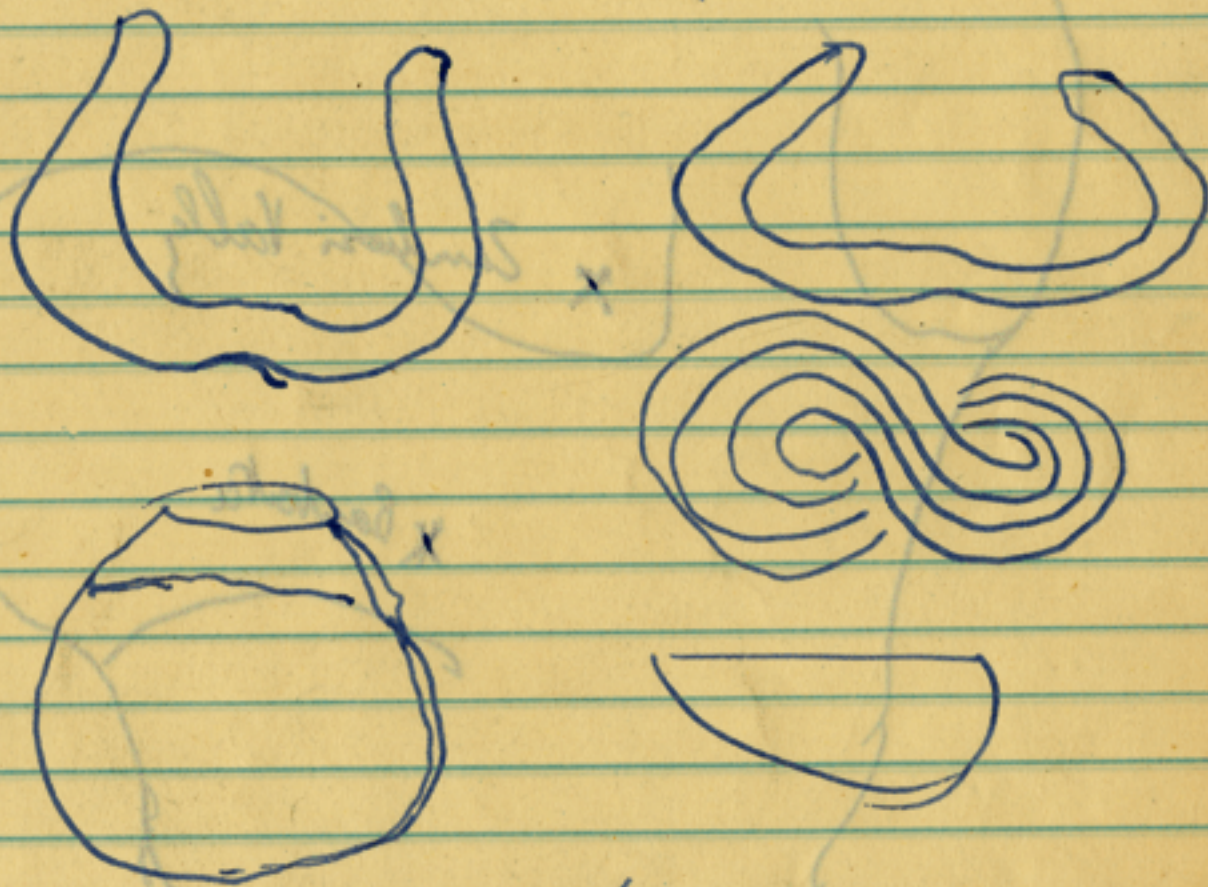
African History Seminars Oct 20, 1960.

Channel ware : a) dimple-base
b) patterns or channeling
c) rim with definite edge.

Nubian origins : Zankou, Kordofan, 300-200 AD
Darfur . . . ?

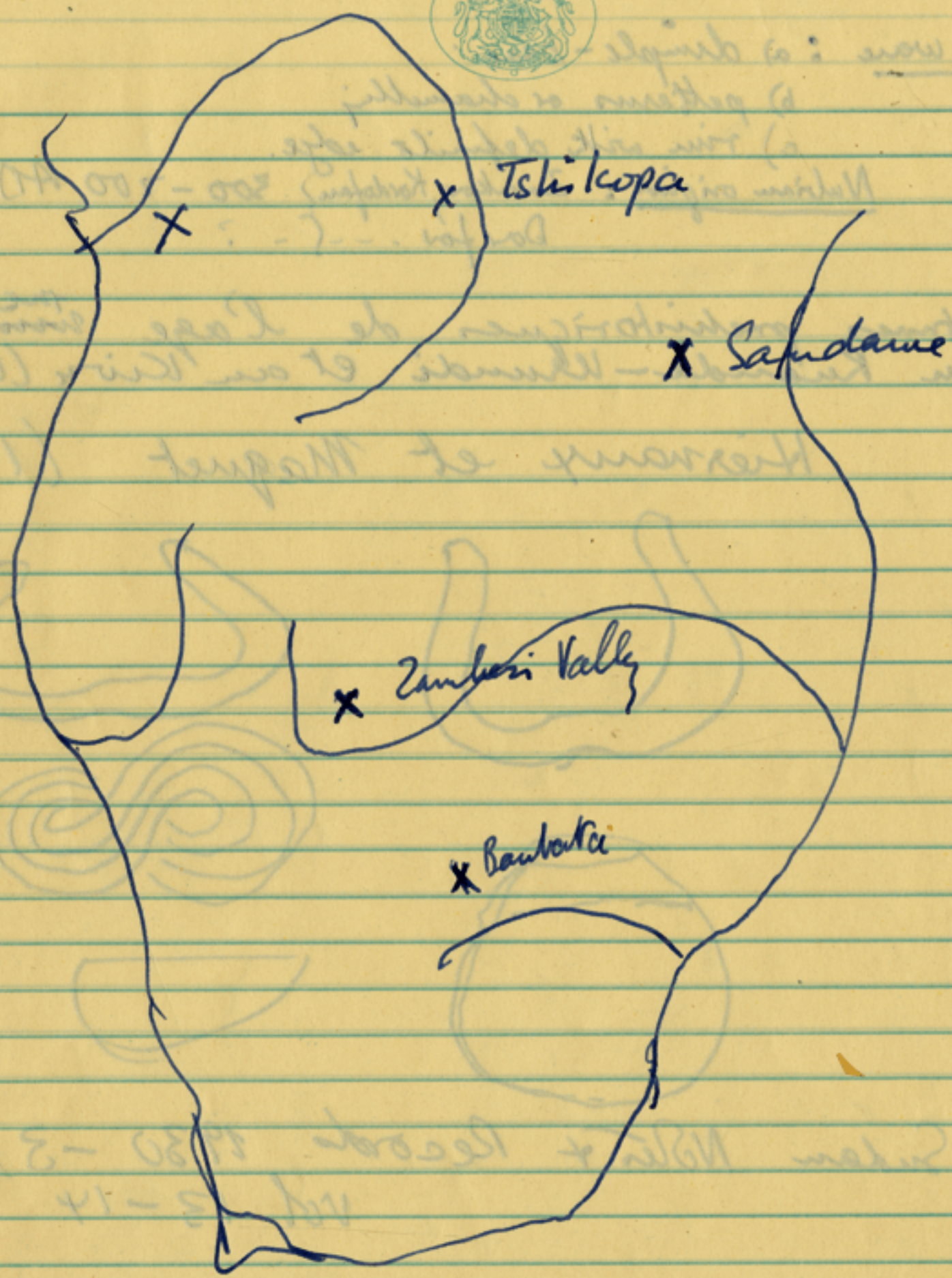
Cultures préhistoriques de l'âge ^{métaux} ~~bronze~~
au Rwanda-Urundi et au Kivu (Congo Kivu)

Hiernaux et Maquet (1960)



Sudan Notes + Records 1930-31
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