

SOME LINGUISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE CULTURAL HISTORY
OF THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT LAKES
AND THE NEIGHBOURING REGIONS

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Section 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the study

As a contribution to the general study of the history and civilization of the people of the Great Lakes and the neighbouring regions, this paper aims at (i) showing the degree and patterns of relationship between the various languages in the region, (ii) giving certain indications of the cultural history of these people through the analysis of the cultural or special vocabularies used in their languages. The data for this study was extracted from a research project which is currently being undertaken by the writer to describe the Bantu languages of the western and southern parts of Tanzania—thanks to a research grant allocated in 1979 by the University of Dar es Salaam.

1.2 Geographical Extent

The languages which are here referred to as "the languages of the Great Lakes" are those which are found between or around the Great Lakes, namely Lake Nyanza (Victoria), Lake Kivu, Lake Edward (Kaihura), Lake Albert (or Mobutu) and the northern and eastern parts of Lake Tanganyika. The area in which these languages are spoken extends from about 2° North to about 4½° South, and from about 28° on the West to about 34° on the East. The countries in which these languages are spoken are Rwanda, Burundi, the eastern parts of Zaire,

the southern and western part of Uganda and the northern parts of Western Tanzania.

1.3 Some Demographic Information

These languages are spoken in one of the most populous parts of Africa. Although the area is hardly 300,000 square kilometres, it has a population of more than 18 million speakers. The highest density of population is found on the fertile Western Highlands of Burundi and Rwanda as well as on the islands of Ukerewe and Ukara.

Section 2

CLASSIFICATION AND GENETIC RELATIONSHIP

2.1 Aim of Language Classification

One of the aims of language classification is to show the historical development and genetic relationship of a given set of related languages. Synchronically, such a classification would give us an indication of the degree and patterns of relationship between the languages concerned, in this case, the languages within or around the Great Lakes. From our own practical experience, we know that most of the people who speak these languages are linguistically and culturally very close, but what we do not know is (i) how close these languages are, (ii) the hierarchical order of the linguistic relationship and (iii) the expected degree of intercomprehension between these languages.

2.2 Earlier Studies on Classification of these Languages

The earliest significant and comprehensive attempt to classify the Bantu Languages of Central and Eastern Africa was made by Guthrie (1948). This classification grouped all the Bantu Languages into 15 zones. The interlacustrine Languages were placed in two of the zones, namely Zones D and E. However, in the same zones, Guthrie included languages

which were not particularly close to the interlacustrine languages. For example, in Zone D he has a number of interlacustrine languages under Group 60 (i.e. D 61 Nyarwanda; D 62 Rundi; D 63 Fuliro; D 64 Subi; D 65 Hangaza; D 66 Ha; D 67 Vinza). However, in the same Zone he included Holoholo and a number of Languages from Zaire which, as he admits himself, were not closely related to the interlacustrine languages. On the other hand, he put the remaining interlacustrine languages under Zone E. In Group 10, he had most of the languages found in present Uganda (i.e. E 11 Nyoro; E 12 Toro, E 13 Nyankole, E 14 Chiga; E 15 Ganda; E 16 Soga; E 17 Gwere, E 18 Nyala), while Group 20 comprised those interlacustrine languages found in present Tanzania (i.e. E. 21 Nyambo; E 22 Haya; E 23 Zinza; E 24 Kerewe; E 25 Jita). However, in this same zone E, Guthrie included also languages like Kikuyu (E 62), Chagga (E 51) and even some coastal languages like Nika (E 70) and Pokono (E 71). The significant parts of this work were the details of the languages which were classified and the description of the common features found in these languages.

The second significant classification attempt was of Bryan (1959). In her work, she included most of the interlacustrine languages under "Inter-Lacustrine Group". The languages included Jita, Kerewe, Zinza, Haya, Rundi, Rwanda, Chiga, Toro and Nyoro. Her classification also mentioned "Twa", "Hina" and "Karagwe" as languages; while "Kara" was described as a dialect of "Kikerewe" and erroneously located on the eastern shores of Lake Nyanza (Victoria). Ha and Vinza were excluded from the group, presumably for geographical reasons. However the significant part of this work is that it gave an indication of the population, the geographical location and some linguistic information about these languages.

The third and most recent attempt that the author is aware of, is that of Nurse (1976 and 1979), which aimed principally at quantitatively evaluating the degree of similarity between the Bantu Languages of East Africa. This study was a result of a survey carried out in Tanzania between 1973 and 1975. This survey was based on a quantified application of the lexicostatistical method. According to the results of Nurse's study, the interlacustrine group is part of a larger group which he called Lacustrine. The sub-grouping was as follows:

Lacustrine

11 Luhya

S. Luhya (Lagooli, Isuxa etc.)

N. Luhya (Saamia, Masaba etc.)

12 E. Nyanza/Suguti

East Nyanza (Kuria, Ngurimi, Suba, Lluzu,
Shashi, Zanaki, Nata etc.)

Suguti (Jita, Kwaya Ruri, Regi)

13 Interlacustine

North Nyanza (Ganda, Soga, Gwere etc.)

Rutara (Nyoro, Tooro, Nyankole, Chiga, Nyambo,
Haya, Zinza, Kerewe.)

Western Highlands (Rwanda, Rundi, Sufubi, Mangaza,
Ha, Vinza etc.)

This study has been regarded so far as the most objective and comprehensive survey of the languages of this region. Unlike the other survey this one was based on detailed and quantified data.

Although each of these classification attempts has made a major contribution to the nature of the relationship between the languages spoken around the Great Lakes, no specific attempt was made to show the degree and patterns of relationship between the individual languages. One should

note however that in the classification of Nurse, a statistical overview was given to show the various percentages of relationship between all the languages in the same group. No genealogical trees were, however, given to show the various degrees of relationship between the individual languages.

2.3 Research Techniques and Methodology

The present survey is based primarily on a lexicostatistical study of a word-list of 200 basic core vocabulary items mainly adapted from Guthrie's word-list. This list is supplemented by a word-list of about 70 cultural vocabulary items. The two lists were adjusted on several occasions in order to exclude any cases which were likely to distort the results. The respondents were all first language speakers of the respective languages who were mainly drawn from staff and students at the University of Dar es Salaam.² Unfortunately it was not possible to find speakers of all the languages concerned, especially on the Zairean side. It was thought that a 200-word-list would give a more accurate picture than the traditional 100-word list based on Morris Swadesh.

2.4 Quantification of Results

After the collection of data, the next task was to compare every pair of languages to determine the degree of relationship between them. In order to ensure accuracy and objectivity, a five point scale was introduced during the quantification process:

- 5 points for perfect cognation (prefix and stem)
- 4 points for minor phonological differences
- 3 points for morphological differences (difference of prefix)
- 2 points for significant phonological differences
- 1 point for any doubtful cognation
- 0 point where no cognation exists

Table of percentages of Relationship

90.7	88.4	97.8	50.9	50.6	50.6	51.1	52.0	48.3	51.2	54.6	50.9	48.1	50.8	45.8	42.3
90.2	80.8	52.6	52.0	53.6	53.9	51.3	51.3	50.9	56.9	56.8	54.8	55.3	55.0	49.4	44.1
65.0	55.5	54.3	54.0	51.4	51.1	49.6	45.1	49.6	53.6	51.4	51.9	53.1	53.0	48.0	44.1
96.2	75.1	96.2	75.1	74.4	74.4	68.1	75.7	68.1	69.0	65.0	46.6	53.1	54.6	51.7	50.3
75.3	74.9	75.3	74.9	74.9	74.9	66.3	75.2	66.3	69.8	65.2	46.2	53.7	55.1	51.3	50.6
94.8	52.6	52.6	52.6	52.9	52.9	70.1	80.2	70.1	64.1	76.4	48.2	52.5	51.7	51.1	53.7
52.9	80.2	52.9	80.2	57.7	57.7	70.2	80.2	70.2	64.8	76.2	48.4	53.0	51.3	51.1	53.4
69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	67.9	67.9	57.7	69.6	57.7	64.8	67.9	47.7	52.9	54.0	48.7	54.8
76.4	76.4	76.4	76.4	68.0	68.0	69.6	76.4	68.0	64.8	68.0	47.4	51.2	56.4	56.7	58.9
55.1	55.1	55.1	55.1	53.0	53.0	53.0	55.1	53.0	56.9	56.9	47.7	52.9	56.8	56.7	54.2
56.9	56.9	56.9	56.9	59.9	59.9	56.9	56.9	56.9	59.9	59.9	48.9	52.9	59.9	53.5	54.2
48.9	48.9	48.9	48.9	46.2	46.2	46.2	48.9	46.2	48.9	48.9	50.1	72.3	50.1	46.2	47.7
72.3	72.3	72.3	72.3	56.4	56.4	56.4	56.4	56.4	56.9	56.9	48.9	52.9	56.4	56.7	54.2
57.9	57.9	57.9	57.9	53.5	53.5	53.5	57.9	53.5	56.9	56.9	48.9	52.9	56.4	56.7	54.2
48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	54.2	54.2	54.2	48.6	54.2	56.9	56.9	48.9	52.9	56.4	56.7	54.2
51.6	51.6	51.6	51.6	54.2	54.2	54.2	51.6	54.2	56.9	56.9	48.9	52.9	56.4	56.7	54.2
Ganda	Ganda	Ganda	Ganda	Suba	Suba	Suba	Suba	Suba	Suba	Suba	Pezi	Pezi	Pezi	Pezi	Pezi

From the above, the following observations are made: (a) The fact that the group of languages indicated that intercomprehension among these languages is very high. This indicates that they could be regarded as dialects of the same language. (b) It is assumed that the

For above, it is assumed that the

the languages surveyed in this group are: Rundi, Ha, Hangaza, Rwanda, Chaga, Nyankole, Toro, Nyoro, Nyambo, Haya, Kerewe, Zinza, Sumbwa, Jita, Pezi, Suba, Ganda.

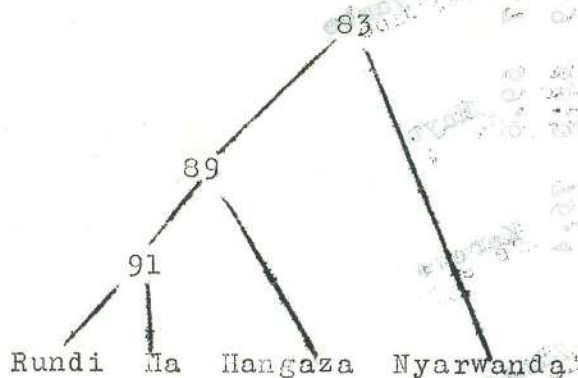
2.6 Classification of the Languages

Assuming that linguistically close languages are the ones with a relatively high degree of common vocabulary we would arbitrarily take 65% (or approximately $\frac{2}{3}$) as a good figure for reasonable intercomprehension. (In fact, this decision was supported by First Language Speaker intuition and comprehension tests.) Where a group average is

65% languages in that group have not only close linguistic affinity by but also a sense of common history and culture. The following were found to be such groupings. For convenience's sake I have adopted Nurse's nomenclature.

1. Western Highlands Group

The languages surveyed in this group were Rundi, Ha, Hangaza, and Nyarwanda. Other possible languages in this group are Vinza, Subi, Shi, Fulero, Havu, Hunde and Nyanga. The genetic tree for the surveyed languages of this group is:



From the above, the following observations could be made: (a) The fact that the group average is 83% is an indication that intercomprehension among the people who speak these languages is very high. Linguistically, they could be regarded as dialects of the same language.

or above, it is assumed that the

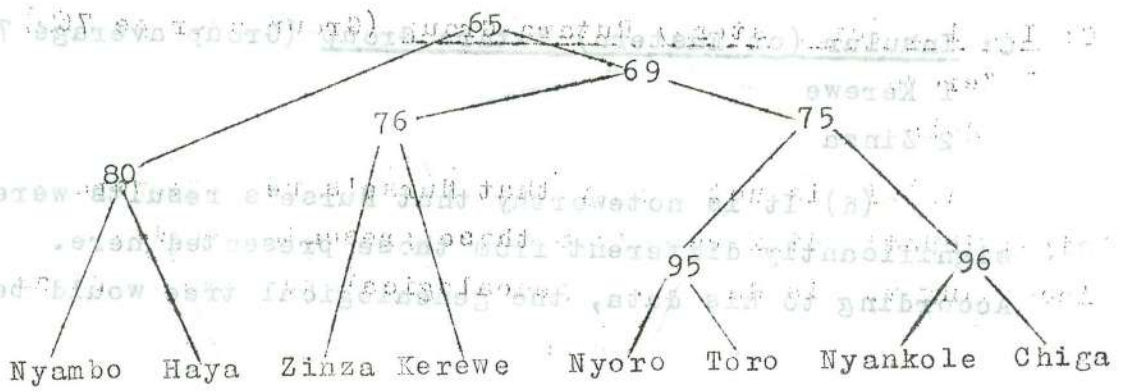
(b) There is an apparent continuum from one language to another without clear-cut linguistic boundaries. Also the degree of linguistic differences between two adjacent languages depends on the location of the speakers in relation to the other language.

(c) Contrary to earlier speculations, Rundi is linguistically closer to Ha (90%) than it is to Nyarwanda (79.8%). Clearly, after the remarks made in (b) above, one would say that the results might have been influenced by relative locations of the informants. Why is important to note however is the fact that a number of Rundi speakers consider themselves linguistically closer to the Ha speakers than to any other language. Unfortunately Nurse's figures for Rundi and Nyarwanda are not available for comparison.

(d) Once the data for the remaining languages is obtained a more complete genealogical overview will be established.

2 Rutara Group

The languages surveyed in this group were Nyambo, Haya, Zinza, Kerewe, Nyoro, Toro, Nyankole and Chiga. The genealogical tree for this group is as follows:



From the above results, the following observations could be made:

(a) The fact that the group average is 65% is an indication that there is intercomprehension among the people who speak these languages. The degree of this intercomprehension would vary from language to language and may be influenced by sociological and geographical factors. However the group average in this case is much lower than that of the Western Highlands group.

(b) The ethnic distinctions in some of the cases may be regarded as resulting from sociological rather than linguistic considerations. This is especially the case between Nyankole/Chiga (96%) and Toro/Nyoro (94%). In fact each pair could be regarded as two close dialects of the same language. As mentioned above, it is possible that at certain geographical points these languages could be more divergent than the figures suggest.

(c) It is possible to suggest three geographical non-contiguous sub-groups as constituents of this group. This would be as follows:

A: Northern Rutara Group (Group average 75%)

1 Toro/Nyoro

2 Nyankole/Chiga

B: Southern Rutara Group (Group average 80%)

1 Haya

2 Nyambo

C: Insular (or Eastern) Rutara Group (Group average 76%)

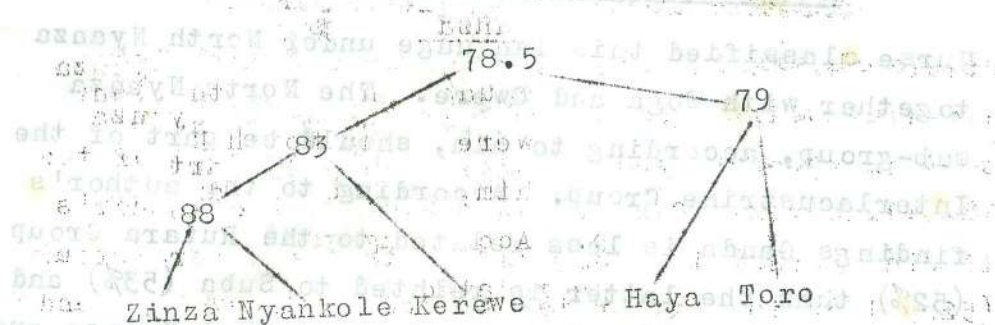
1 Kerewe

2 Zinza

(d) It is noteworthy that Nurse's results were significantly different from those presented here. According to his data, the genealogical tree would be as

From the above results, the following observations

could be made:



Although his results do not include Nyambo, Chiga and Nyoro, one notices that his patterning is different from the one presented above. According to Nurse: (1) Zinza is closer to Nyankole than to Kerewe, (2) Haya and Toro are very close (79%), (3) Nyankole is closer to the southern Rutara languages than it is to the other northern one, namely Toro. Other findings, including structural comparisons and first language speakers' intuitions, have tended to confirm the present author's findings.

(e) Although according to the various systems of the former chiefdoms in the area, the Nyankole are considered unique, with its system of Bagabe, the language spoken by the people in the area has not shown to be any different from the other languages in the Rutara Group.

3. The Other Lacustrine Languages

The term "Interlacustrine" has traditionally been used to cover only the languages described in (1) and (2) above, namely the Western Highlands and the Rutara Group. However, other languages in the region have shown considerable links with the former. In the present survey, the interlacustrine languages were compared with Ganda, Jita/Regi, Suba and Sumbwa.

The results were as follows.

structural and phonological evidence as well as first language speaker's intuition. It might be useful if this time all the informants are picked from the village and a more rigorous sampling procedure is adopted.

2.7 Conclusion from the study

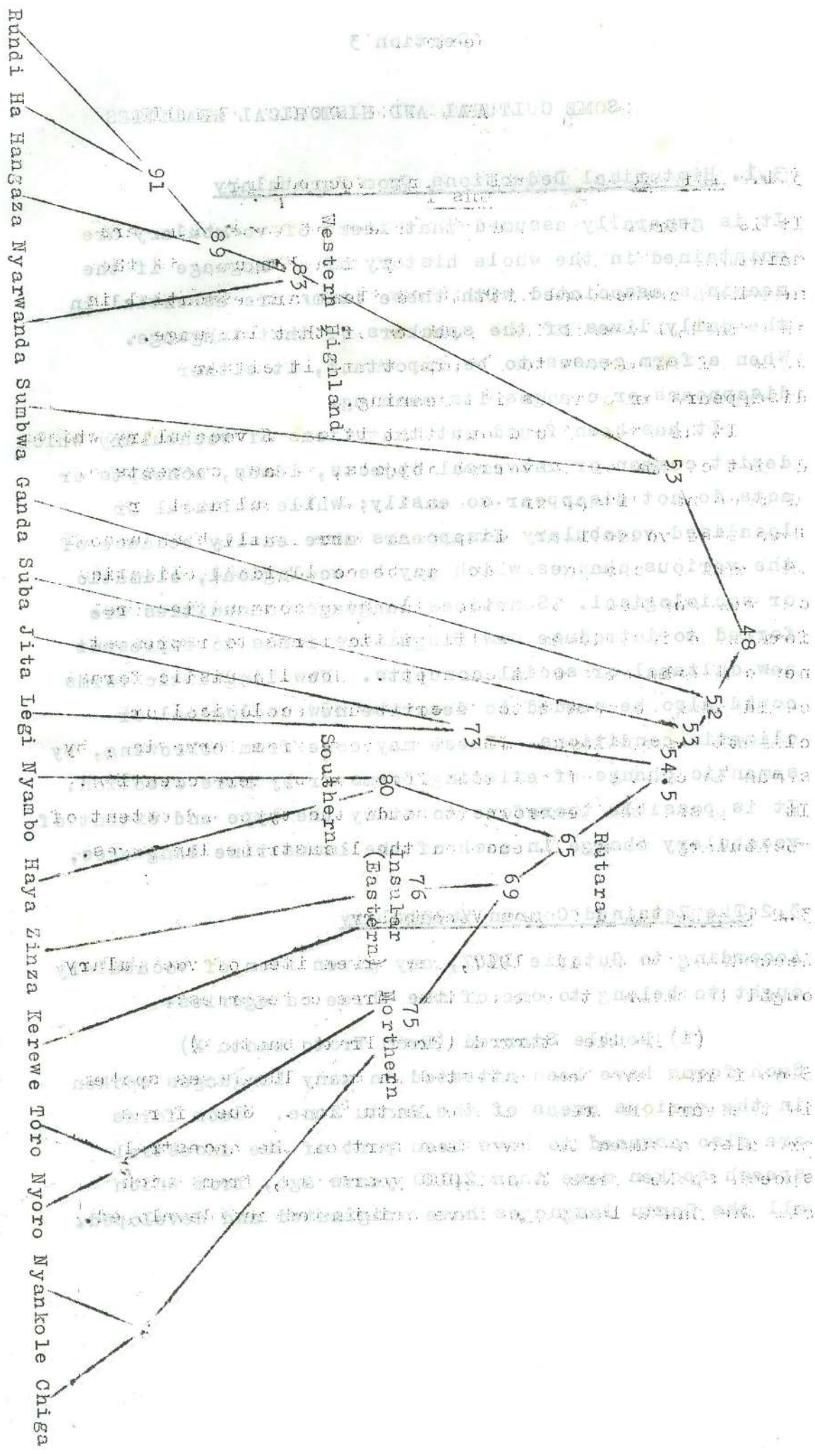
The results of this classification allow a number of

(i) The entry of the two interlocking groups (namely the West Highland Group and the Ratan Group) is linguistically very significant. Both of them have a relatively high degree of interlocking.

(ii) The two groups are linguistically distant from each other with a mean average of 50%. As a result, interlocking does not exist between the respective languages. For example, a Ratan speaker would not understand a West Highland, although these languages are very similar. In fact, they have in common only 45% of their vocabulary. Hence, the term 'interlocking languages' should, at the intermediate level, be limited to geographical considerations.

(iii) The other interlocking languages are relatively related to the two interlocking groups. There is no interlocking between these languages in the region with the interlocking languages, except perhaps where both languages are spoken simultaneously as it is the case between Tira and Kereve.

(iv) The study has confirmed a number of earlier findings, particularly those made by Natus (1952), but in some cases it has significantly differed from the earlier findings. The therefore calls for further research. More research should concentrate on more



Classifications derived from this study

Section 3

SOME CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL REALITIES

3.1. Historical Deductions from Vocabulary

It is generally assumed that items of vocabulary are maintained in the whole history of a language if the meanings associated with these items are essential in the daily lives of the speakers of that language. When a form ceases to be important, it either disappears or changes its meaning.

It has been found out that items of vocabulary which depict common or universal objects, ideas, concepts or acts do not disappear so easily; while cultural or localised vocabulary disappears more easily because of the various changes which may be ecological, climatic or sociological. Sometimes language communities are forced to introduce new linguistic forms to represent new cultural or social concepts. New linguistic forms could also be needed to describe new ecological or climatic conditions. These may come from borrowing, by semantic change of existing forms or by mere creation. It is possible therefore to study the type and extent of vocabulary change in each of the lacustrine languages.

3.2 The Retained Common Vocabulary

According to Guthrie 1967, any given item of vocabulary ought to belong to one of the three categories:

(i) Double Starred (From Proto Bantu X)

Such forms have been attested in many languages spoken in the various areas of the Bantu Zone. Such forms are also assumed to have been part of the ancestral speech spoken more than 2,000 years ago, from which all the Bantu languages have originated and developed.

(ii) Single Starred (From Proto)Bantu A or B

Such forms have been attested in many languages in the Bantu Zone, but since they are found in only one side of the Zone (East or West), they are considered to be a later innovation of either of the two original dialects (A or B) which were formed from the ancestral language when dispersion to the West and then to the East took place. However, it is also possible, as Guthrie himself mentions, that some of the items described in this category might have belonged to the ancestral language, only that they have not yet been attested in the other languages.

(iii) Unclassified Vocabulary

Such forms would be attested in a number of the languages in the Bantu Zone. But they would neither be considered as general forms nor as specifically belonging to one part of the Zone (East or West). Such vocabulary would be seen as much later innovations within individual languages or groups of languages after the two Proto-Bantu dialects branched off further.

In the present study it would be of interest to see which of the category (i) vocabulary has been retained from Guthrie's list of the double starred items. A close study of the list shows that all the lacustrine languages have together retained a number of forms from the supposedly ancestral language which include the following (the examples given are from one of the lacustrine languages).

Parts of the body =

back of body = umugongo	leg = umugulu
ear = ukutwi	tongue = ululimi
eye = eliiso	tooth = izimo
head = umutwe	

Common Adjectives

bad = -bi	short = -gupi
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Some Numerals

two = ibiri five = itano

three = isato ten = ikumi

Some common animals, birds, insects

bird = inyonyi locust = inzige

Some common Verbs

to be = kuba to dream = kulota

to bewitch = kuloga to drink = kunwa

to buy = kugula to eat = kulya

to come = kwiza to laugh = kuseka

Some Domestic Animals

dog = imbwa fowl = inkoko

Human names

child = umwana person = umuntu

Common Natural Phenomena

famine = injala tree = umuti

moon = umwezi year = unwaka

rain = injula

Usable material or foodstuff

firewood = inkwi oil = amafuta

meat = inyama root = umuzi

The interlacustrine region (Western Highlands/ Rutara) does not seem to have many common items of vocabulary from the eastern Proto-Bantu dialect (see Guthrie 1967).

The common ones are as follows (examples from Kirundi).

fire = umuriro know = kumenya

front = imbere stay = kwicharara

frog = igikere obanana = igitoke

horn = ihembe trap = umutego

hyena = empfisi spear = ichumu

smell = kunuka water = amazi

3.3 Adoption of New Vocabulary in the Interlacustrine Region

Most of the vocabulary which has been retained is the basic core vocabulary, that is, vocabulary which is basic in any language. Such vocabulary would depict parts of the body; common natural or geographical phenomena; domestic animals; common wild animals, birds, and insects; the lower numerals; some common adjectives and personal pronouns; and some common verbs.

On the other hand, a lot of cultural, sociological, climatic and ecological vocabulary items could have changed to fit in with new situations.

It is in analysing these different vocabulary items and making some historical interpretations that we can arrive at a valid description of the cultural history of the people of this region.

3.4 Some Interpretations of the Cultural History

The following is an attempt to reconstruct some of the cultural history on the basis of evidence from the nature of the available items of vocabulary. Each Group will be discussed separately:

1. The West Highlands Group

(i) The Ecological Environment

The vocabulary reveals that the people in this group were exposed to the Savanna most of the time since they branched off from Proto-Bantu. They were in constant contact with Savanna animals like the hyena (impfisi), the elephant (enjovu), the leopard (ingwe). However, the ecological condition could not favour the gazelle, the lion and the rhinoceros. Probably the terrain was hilly and was grown by low grass with scattered trees. Such an environment would not provide good habitat for the lion, the gazelle and the

rhinoceros. It appears also that generally these people had very little experience of ecological environment involving water (lakes or rivers). This assumption is supported by the findings of A. Ntabona (1981, p.37) which show that among the animals which were commonly used in Kirundi tales, no mention is made of river or water animals. For example, no hippopotamus (invubu) or crocodile (ingona) is mentioned.

(ii) Hunting and Fishing Activities

It appears that hunting (uguhiga) and fishing (ukuroba) were done very occasionally because most emphasis seems to have been laid on agriculture and animal husbandry. This is confirmed by C. Bishikwabo (1981 p.78) when he observes that only on river areas was there any fishing done, and even then it was carried out by children and shepherds as a hobby.

(iii) Agricultural Activities

The vocabulary reveals that one of the most important activities of these people was agriculture. The common crop which can be traced back to Proto-Bantu is millet. The historical origins of this crop might explain the special and privileged role it played in most of the interlacustrine areas.

The other crops which might have been introduced later are sorghum, yams, beans and pumpkins. Afterwards, other crops were brought into the area. These included bananas, sweet potatoes, maize and tobacco. The banana became the most important crop because not only did it provide food but it also provided ready ingredients for beer, and leaves as building materials. Hence several names are found which describe the various species of bananas. Beer was prepared in a canoe - shaped trough (ubwato). These observations confirm statements made by C. Bishikwabo (1981, p. 72).

The tools used for cultivation were the hoe, the axe, the machet and the sickle. However, from the fact that no Proto-Bantu terms of these implements have been retained,

one can deduce that either slightly different types of tools were used or the whole agricultural process was influenced by superstratum or substratum elements.

It is probable that there was extensive fallow system at the beginning, but then more intensive cultivation was introduced as people became more sedentary and as the populations on the land started to cause land problems.

(iv) Animal Husbandry

One other important activity in this area was animal husbandry. The most important domestic animal was the cow (inka). However since the word inka does not arise from Proto-Bantu, one is inclined to believe that either there was a slight difference in the referent, or some substratum or superstratum elements cropped in. Both these reasons could be shown to be true on the following grounds:

(a) the word inka has a monosyllabic stem -ka (i-being the pre-prefix and -n- being the nominal class prefix 9). Normally Bantu nominal stems are disyllabic or, occasionally, trisyllabic. One might be inclined to believe that it is a borrowed word or a most recent innovation.

(b) Only the Western Highlands Group uses the term inka for "cows." This is also the areas where we find the Tutsi pastoralists. It is possible therefore that the word was introduced when the long-horned cattle were brought to the area.

(c) The few adjacent areas where the term inka is used (e.g. among the Legi and Jita) one finds also the long-horned cattle. One could therefore conclude that the name was introduced together with the cows.

The other domestic animal found in this region is the goat (impene/ihene). Although the goat as a domesticated animal can be traced from the Proto-Bantu period, the stem pene can only be found in isolated parts of the Eastern Bantu Zone. This means that the term

was introduced later in this area. However the fact that all the Western Highlands languages use it provides evidence of their common history in dealing with domestic animals. In all of these communities the importance of the goat diminished as cattle assumed a more central role in society. It is no wonder therefore that no mention of goat was made in the traditional tales (See A. Ntabona 1981, p.37). On the other hand, we are told that the goat was used in some of the Ha communities for bartering (see C. Mbiliza, 1981).

There were also other domestic animals kept in the region, namely sheep (intama) and chickens (inkoko). The place of cow milk (amata) was particularly important, and in certain cases sacred. As such, there was special vocabulary associated with milking, preserving milk and so on.

(v) Iron Works and the Making of Tools

The vocabulary reveals that these people have preserved the Proto-Bantu art of making iron. As such, it is thought that metallurgical activities were in existence even before the arrival of the pastoralists. This observation tends to support the archaeological findings (See Wane 1981). However, in view of the new names given to most of the tools and weaponry, one would be inclined to think that some substratum or superstratum elements influenced iron-making. There is evidence to show that iron-making was a clan activity and that it was the specialization of certain clans, just like canoe making or salt preparation was the specialisation of certain communities. The two most popular tools were the hoe (isuka) and the axe (eshoka). The most important weapon was the spear (ichumu).

(vii) Works of Art

The most important work of art was pottery making. This was done by both men and women. There was no clan restriction as in the case of iron-making. Pottery making

could be traced very far in history since the Proto-Bantu terms have been preserved. The other works of art include tannery, sculpture, and extraction of salt and oil. The extraction of salt depended on the topographical location of the people in relation to possible salt centres. Plaiting of the hair (ukusuka) does not seem to have been practised in the early periods, at least as it was done in the other communities. Women might have used special decorations on their body, including beads (urudedede or urunigi).

(viii) Social Life:

These people have preserved the art of hut making (inzū) as in Proto-Bantu, although the term now means also "family" or "homestead". There are no particular initiation records. The paying dowry seems to have been considered a very important item in marriage. Polygamy (uguhalika) must have been considered an act of the rich and a manifestation of one's social and economic status.

Softened skins and tree bark were used for making clothes. Social gatherings and dancing (ugutanba) were very popular. Actually, there are terms for dancing and singing with joy. The drum was a very important social and political element and it was often associated with the chief (umwami).

Beliefs in supernatural life were very strong. Often ancestral spirits (abazimu) were mentioned or revered at important ceremonies.

2. The Rutara Group

(1) The Ecological Environment

The vocabulary reveals that people in this group were also exposed to a savanna ecological environment most of the time since they branched off from the Proto-Bantu, and that they have mostly stayed in plains where the

gazelle (impara) could also be found. They were also in constant contact with some savanna animals like the hyena (empisi), the elephant (enjojo) and the leopard (ingwe).

It appears that these people were more associated with river and water activities than their neighbours in the West Highlands. They were in contact with the hippopotamus (enjubi) and the crocodile (gonya). They also made canoes (obwato). But the use of these canoes was limited. They were not used for extensive fishing or trading (as the Ganda on the northern side of Lake Nyanza (Victoria)).

(ii) Hunting and Fishing Activities

It appears that hunting (okuhiga) was not particularly important. As in the Western Highlands Group, it was done very occasionally. The weapons used were the spear (eichumu), the bow and arrow (obuta/omwambi) and traps (emitego). Honey gathering was also carried on.

Fishing was also done. But the extent of the activity depended on the ecological environment. In the northern part of Rutara, much of it was done in Bunyoro and the Kigezi area. However, the ethnic groups which became more associated with water like the Haya and Kerewe became also more involved in the fishing industry. For some of these groups the fish has taken a significant role in their lives, hence the numerous names for the various species of fish.

(iii) Agricultural Activities

It seems that one of the most important activities of these people was agriculture. As in the West Highlands Group, the millet was the only crop which could be traced from proto-Bantu. This crop had a very significant place in many of the Rutara communities. Sorghum was also cultivated mainly for beer and making porridge. The process of flour making has not changed from proto-Bantu practice which was grinding (okusa) between two stones. Pounding in a mortar seems not to have been common.

Other crops which were introduced later include sweet potatoes, beans, peas, groundnuts, cassava and the banana. The banana acquired a very significant place (even replacing millet as the privileged crop) in some of the communities. This was used as food or for making beer. The leaves were also used for building houses. Like in the case of the Western Highlands group, beer was prepared in a canoe-shaped trough (obwato).

The tools for cultivation were the hoe (efuka) and the axe (empango). It appears that some of the more sophisticated tools were acquired from elsewhere. Some of the communities like the Toro, for example, lacked the term for "axe". They had to paraphrase "the eater of trees" (endyamiti). Oral literature mentions that some of the art of iron-making was acquired from Rwanda.

(iv) Animal Husbandry

The only domestic animals whose names can be traced from Proto-Bantu are the goat (embuzi) and the fowl (enkoko). It seems that some cattle could also have existed there earlier, but that new dominant elements were brought in the cattle industry. One possible explanation is that the long-horned cattle were introduced to the Rutara Kingdom by the Hima pastoralists and that the quality, numbers and sociological impact of these animals changed the role of cattle in these communities. This must have taken place before the Rutara dispersion which seems to have taken place more recently. The hypothesis that cattle husbandry was introduced or reinforced by some substratum or superstratum elements possibly by the Hima pastoralists in the region, could be proved by the following arguments.

(a) the word ente has a monosyllabic stem -te (e- being the pre-prefix and n being the nominal class prefix 9). As observed earlier, normally Bantu stems are disyllabic (or occasionally trisyllabic). One might be inclined to believe that it is a borrowed word or a most recent innovation.

(b) The word ente is only found in the lacustrine region. The only other non-Rutara group to have the term is North Nyanza. For example, the Ganda word for "cow" is ente. It is no coincidence therefore that where the term is used, the cattle are the long-horned type. In all the other parts where people use the Proto-Bantu -gombe (cow), the cattle are normally short-horned Zebu type or a mixture of the two species. One might therefore be inclined to conclude that the name ente was associated with the introduction of the long-horned cattle in the area.

It appears that pigs were not common in this place. Only wild-pigs (empunu) were widely seen and were regarded as a serious danger to crops.

(c) Iron-Working and the Making of Tools

The vocabulary reveals that these people have preserved the proto-Bantu art of working on iron. One can conclude therefore that, as in the Western Highlands area, the metallurgical activities were there even before the arrival of the pastoralists. In fact oral traditions reveal that there were two important metallurgical centres, one in Bunyoro (Kayonza) and the other in Kigezi area. Also some isolated places existed in Ankole area and were operated by certain clans. The fact that the word which means iron ore (obutare) also means market place in Ankole and Chiga languages might suggest that metallurgical centres in these areas also became market places for exchange of goods. Tools like the hoe, the axe, the machet and the knife were exchanged for foodstuff and salt.

Apparently the metallurgical activities were not as wellknown in Ukerewe and possibly Uzinza (This is also confirmed by Wane, 1981, p.399). This may suggest that those who migrated to these areas were not experts in the art or perhaps the geological conditions in the new areas could not favour any metallurgical activities.

(vi) Works of Art

Pottery was carried out fairly extensively. The pots (enyungu) were moulded (okubumba) from clay. There is not much evidence of other artistic activities from the vocabulary.

(vii) Social Life

Dancing and singing were part of festival or ceremony activities. As in the Western Highlands Group, the drum (engoma) remained a royal instrument and was beaten only at royal functions where the Hima were rulers. The expression okulya engoma (literally "to eat the drum", meaning "assume kingship functions") illustrates the way the drum was associated with kingship. In other non-royal functions, the rhythm to any dancing was effected by beating the openings of pots (enyungu) of different shapes and sizes.

The Marimba was not known except among the Banyabütumbi near Lake Edward. Instead, the harp-shaped instrument (enanga) was played. This is still common among the Haya and the Kerewe. The dancing (okuzina) was done in the same manner as the Western Highlands area, except that there were less decorations.

Polygamy was considered an act of the rich and a way of social promotion. There is no evidence in the vocabulary to suggest anything on supernatural life.

3. The other neighbouring peoples

Looking at the vocabulary of the other lacustrine languages one notices the following:

North Nyanza (Represented by Ganda)

These communities were associated with river and water activities more than the Western Highlands and Rutara Groups. They used canoes for both trade and fishing. Like the Rutara group, they have also had influence from

the pastoral Hima, especially with regard to the introduction of the long-horned cattle.

Suguti (Represented by Jita)

This group, although found in the far eastern side of the lacustrine region, seems to have been in contact with the Tutsi pastoralists. The name for cow is ingia (same origin as inka). The cattle in this area are also dominantly the long-horned ones.

The East Nyanza (Represented by Suba)

There is no significant trace of substratum or superstratum elements from the interlacustrine communities. There are no evident traces of Tutsi/Hima pastoralist influence.

West Tanzania (Represented by Sumbwa)

No significant trace of substratum or superstratum elements from the interlacustrine communities is evident.

However some Tutsi pastoral elements can be traced here and there. For example whereas umugore means "woman" in Kirundi, it means "queen" (ngole) in Sukuma. The word for cow is ng'ombe, just like in most of the Bantu Zone.

Moreover what is significant about this group is that some of its linguistic communities have not been long associated with river or water activities for such a length of time that they have lost nearly all of the original vocabulary describing water animals, fishing and sailing, (e.g. the Sumbwa).

Section 4

CONCLUSION

4.1. Summary

To conclude, one may point out that the languages of the Great Lakes can be grouped into very closely related linguistic entities with a determined hierarchy of genetic relationships. The intermediate relationships between the different entities are not as obvious as it was thought earlier.

The cultural history of the region is very complex. There is still evidence of inherited elements from the ancestral Bantu language. However, due to ecological, climatic, cultural and sociological changes, there have been a number of innovations. Also there is a trace of either substratum or superstratum elements which have created the socio-cultural complexity of the area.

4.2 Contribution to the History of the Area

The interest of this study is that it has confirmed some of the earlier findings but also raised a number of questions on some of the earlier statements. However, the study does not claim to have answered all the questions regarding the cultural history of the area, nor does it claim that the inferences it has made are everywhere correct. The purpose of the study was to provide some linguistic interpretations of the cultural history on the basis of the linguistic facts found in the area. It is important therefore that the collaboration with other social scientists like historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, anthropologists and the like should continue. Clearly that is the only way in which we can confirm findings made through other disciplines.

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- 3 Nurse has even a lower figure, i.e. 47.75%.

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