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Learning South African languages:

the historical origins of standard Xhosa, and the uses to which the written form of the language was put

c. 1770 - 1935

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed

Kim Brereton Mathiesen
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation centres on the social history of the Xhosa language as it became codified into writing during the nineteenth century. My particular interest is in why efforts were made to learn written Xhosa, and how the written form of the language was used variously by travel writers, missionaries, converts, interpreters, indigenous speakers, the educated African elite, and professional philologists between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. The outcome of the uses to which the language was put was the construction of a standard form of the language.

Thematically, the study is divided into three parts. In the first part, the earliest efforts at transcribing Xhosa into writing are examined in the travel accounts of the early explorers in southern Africa. Their word-lists are located in the broader context of post-Enlightenment ways of seeing the world. Applying the ideas of classification employed in the natural sciences, language was used a means of rendering an unknown landscape and its unknown people ordered and understandable. And drawing on the growing discipline of comparative philology, language was used to try and understand the history and nature of its speakers. Although their authors may not have been aware of it, these early word-lists, descriptions and classifications created apparatuses of power which could be wielded over the indigenous people and their languages.

The second part examines written Xhosa as it became a crucial aspect of the evangelical mission in the eastern Cape. An examination of the processes leading to the construction of standard Xhosa reveals the pivotal roles of missionaries in the specification of which language form became elevated as standard; the development of an orthographic system to represent the sounds of Xhosa in writing; the establishment of a rule-bound grammar to determine correct usage of the language; and the compilation of dictionaries and the translation of texts to fix the meanings of words in ways that often suited the requirements of a Christian and western world-view. One of the most important outcomes of the interaction between the various mission groups, interpreters, converts and the educated African elite was the elevation of the Nqiqika dialect of Xhosa as standard to represent the amalgam of language forms, not necessarily related, spoken in the eastern Cape. I argue that this written version of the language was something new, an invention born of this interaction. Although the missionaries drove the process, standard Xhosa was deeply influenced by indigenous speakers who initially acted as interpreters wielding great power, and who later harnessed the written version of the language as a new vehicle for expressing aspects of their culture, as a form of resistance, and as a means of social differentiation from other locals.

In the third part I explore the new meanings which the learning and uses of Xhosa took on when it became part of the academic curriculum of South African universities in the early twentieth century. An examination of the struggle which the School of African Life and Language at the University of Cape Town underwent in order to justify the importance of studying African languages reveals the tensions between detached scholarly interest in indigenous languages, and their practical utility as instruments for the effective governance of 'natives'. An important outcome of the fact that an indigenous language like Xhosa was considered worthy of studying, even if this was largely to suit the needs of government and mining houses, was that Xhosa in its written form became the property of academics and universities -- who now had the power to complete the process of standardisation through orthography and dictionaries.
PREFACE

After decades of writing in English, the Kenyan author and academic, wa'Thiong'o Ngugi chose his mother-tongue, Gikuyu, as the language through which to express himself, forcefully arguing that African writers using European languages for their literature are adopting false masks, masks which cannot bear the weight of the African experience. As an undergraduate student I was deeply interested, not as much in Ngugi's literature per se, but in his motivations and his thinking. I asked questions about how language is used to negotiate identities, how the choice of what language to use is the difference of what mask to wear. I began to question the essentialist position that there can be a 'true' language to represent Africa, or a 'true' identity to experience Africa. And I started to become aware of the fictionality of all languages -- a fictionality, which in the case of many African languages, has largely been influenced by those against whom Ngugi would like to define himself.

This long-standing fascination with language and language usage found a channel in a course I took with Dr. Carli Coetzee in the English Department entitled 'Debates in Southern African Languages and Literatures'. It was here that my attention was drawn to the work of my supervisor, Associate Professor Patrick Harries on the Swiss missionaries and the Tsonga language. It was also in this course that my interest in the early transcription and translation of African languages was sparked. And so the first acknowledgement I must make is to Carli Coetzee, not only for introducing me to many of the debates and ideas that form part of this dissertation, but also for her support of my academic work over the past two years. I would also like to thank her for reading some of the early draft chapters and providing me with her insightful commentary which has shaped the framework of this thesis in many ways.
The second acknowledgement that I would like to make is to my supervisor, Patrick Harries. I am extremely grateful for his enthusiasm and support of my work, and am indebted to the expertise and critical commentary that he has brought to my dissertation. It has been a most rewarding learning experience to work under his guidance.

My research and thinking for this dissertation has been facilitated by a number of people along the way. The staff of the Historical and Literary Papers Department at the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the staff of the Department of Manuscripts and Archives at the University of Cape Town offered valuable assistance. I would like to thank Zweli Vena of the Cory Library for Historical Research at Rhodes University in particular, for his tireless efforts to access all the documents I needed in four short days.

I would like to thank Ntombi Tisani for her friendship, for making me think, and for a place to stay when I am in Grahamstown. It was during one of these visits that I was able to enter into many conversations with her mother, Nomathamsanqa Tisani, and I would like to thank her for challenging and extending my ideas about how to write history in South Africa. Professor Sizwe Satyo made the time to meet with me, and helped clarify my thinking. Matthew Dalby generously offered to assist with proofreading. Finally, I would like to thank Colin, Jill and Halvar Mathiesen, as well as Andrew Scott, for the support they have provided in varying ways towards the completion of this dissertation.

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BFBS</td>
<td>British and Foreign Bible Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Berlin Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMS</td>
<td>Glasgow Missionary Society</td>
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<td>WMMS</td>
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCING THE HISTORY OF A LANGUAGE

PART ONE

Entering the Debate

This dissertation addresses itself to the growing debate on the social history of languages and literacy in Africa taken up by a wide range of scholars across the disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology and linguistics. The debate thus far has centred on three main issues: the role of language in the colonization of Africa, the key role played by missionaries in specifying African languages, and the invention of new forms of ethnicity through the codification of African languages and the imposition of Eurocentric categories. This chapter inserts my work into the ongoing dialogue by reviewing the kinds of questions being asked by various scholars about language in Africa. Through this I shall set up the conceptual framework with which I have engaged as I enter the debate by focusing (although not exclusively) on Xhosa in South Africa; and more specifically the ways in which this language was understood, used, transcribed and constructed into its written form by various travellers, missionaries, converts, indigenous speakers, and academics.

I

Language and colonial power

As Johannes Fabian acknowledges, it was William Samarin who “pioneered inquiries into the social history of language and colonization”¹ by looking at the emergence of new forms of

language in Central Africa under Belgian rule, including pidgins like Sango and Kituba, and a new *lingua franca*, Lingala. In a series of articles written between 1982 and 1989, Samarin explores the links between the codification of languages and colonial power, examining how colonialism brought about new organised systems of communication, which, he demonstrates, "owed their existence to the adaptations made predominantly by black people from outside the area of colonisation, servings as interpreters, guides and bearers to the Belgians".

One important aspect of his work has been to show how the vernacular 'Bangala' emerged as one of four *lingua francas* or "unifier languages" through the efforts and interests of the Belgian government and Protestant and Catholic Missionaries. While he does show the important role of Africans (not necessarily the indigenous speakers) in the specification of these languages, he is predominantly concerned with the ways in which, at the end of the nineteenth century in the Congo basin, language was used by missionaries and colonial administrators as a means to "penetrate the heart of Africa". To this day, he argues, the language current amongst the people, now referred to as the "colloquial or vernacular variety", differs from the official language which has been labelled or re-named 'Lingala', effectively "swallowing up" smaller dialects. In this he highlights the importance of the production of written grammars, translations and printed material in Bangala/Lingala, and of schools and education for the spread of the language specified in the Belgian government's language policy. It is worthwhile noting that the emergence of a written "unifier language" in the eastern Cape, standard Xhosa, was influenced by many of the same processes that Samarin examines in his work on Lingala in Central Africa. A significant difference,

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5 Samarin, William. 'Protestant Missions and the History of Lingala.' p 138.

6 Samarin, William. 'Language and Colonisation in Central Africa.' p 239.
however, between the Congo and South Africa was that government language policy in the latter only became a significant factor some years after the missionaries had established the Ngqika variety of Xhosa as the unifier language.

Johannes Fabian’s work on the social history of Shaba Swahili is also based in the former Belgian Congo. In his exploration of the “deep connections between language, linguistics and politics” Fabian makes a forceful argument for how “communication with the colonized” was a “precondition for the exercise of colonial power”. This line of enquiry provides insight into the more “subtle uses of power”, which Fabian uncovers through his study of “an emerging praxis of colonial controls as they were imposed in specific ways on a specific means of communication—the variety of Swahili spoken in the south-eastern part of the Belgian Congo”. His central questions in this study probe how and why a few varieties of Swahili grew from having a very limited local usage to acquire several million speakers as the “principal...African medium of verbal communication.” His answers to these questions lie in the history of the language’s “descriptive appropriation” and in the “efforts to control the form and spread of a language” through politically motivated choices about linguistic description and language policy. He analyses how the development of Shaba Swahili by missionaries was closely tied to colonial labour policies, why this particular language was so attractive in the eyes of the colonial policy-makers, how it was eventually adopted as the colonial lingua franca, and what changes it underwent in this role. And by revealing how Shaba Swahili has “in its development been deeply influenced by colonial administrative choices and by expert, linguistic decrees,” Fabian highlights “the role of power in the social

7 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power. p 2.
8 Ibid. p 3.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. p 12.
12 Ibid. p 9.
13 Ibid. p 6.
14 Ibid. p 8.
history of a language -- power to impose and promote, and to control and restrict”. I draw on these ideas in Chapter Four where I examine the power of academic institutions and bodies, funded by the colonial government, “to impose and promote” their own regulations and ideas on the development of standard Xhosa.

As Samarin finds in terms of Lingala, and as I shall show for the Xhosa language, Shaba Swahili too is the “product of processes which are by no means completed”. The protagonists that Fabian assigns to these processes are similar to those in my own account: colonial administrators, missionaries, scholars and travellers. A glaring omission from our perspective almost twenty years after Fabian’s book was published is any significant attempt to understand the role of African interpreters and converts in these processes, or to show how the new forms of communication were appropriated by the speakers themselves in ways that did not always conform with the intentions of missionaries and colonial administrators. The acknowledgement of indigenous agency, however, does not discount Fabian’s arguments about the very influential roles of the European protagonists. In a similar vein to John and Jean Comaroff in their more recent work, Fabian illustrates how the descriptive narratives and word-lists of travellers, and then (more powerfully) the linguistic work of the missions helped the colony “enter the world system”, by setting up those “economic, social and political conditions which prepared the colony for profitable utilization”.

Fabian argues that in their urgent need to communicate, the various Catholic and Protestant mission societies made a set of crucial decisions about what varieties of the language to privilege, what orthography to employ, and what vocabulary to regard as ‘pure’. As the missionaries’ language work progressed, the “element of power over, and control of,

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15 Ibid. In making this statement, Fabian warns that control, or the “shape of power” must not always be “taken for the shape of reality”, since “the constructs of power are frequently parasitic on the creative labours of the people, and they never fully explain what happens with and to a language.”
16 Ibid. p 9.
18 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power. p 72.
19 Ibid. pp 76 - 78.
languages" became "a matter of policy and a subject of regulations (and sanctions) in the hierarchy of organisations, religious as well as secular, which carried out colonization".20 But more than this, Fabian goes on to show that missionaries often actively collaborated with the colonial administration -- from being paid by the colony for producing manuscript grammars and vocabularies of the "indigenous dialects", to training colonial agents in the relevant African languages.21 Understanding the importance of language as a precondition for power, the colonial government drew on and influenced the linguistic work being carried out by missionaries. The role of education and missions in colonizing African languages, then, is a central concern of Fabian's. In addition to this, Fabian uncovers how the "colonized language" was used to further colonial interests, particularly with respect to labour.22

A major theme in my own work, particularly Chapters Three and Four, is to examine how control and power over a language became a matter of policy and subject to the regulations of groups other than indigenous speakers. Like Fabian, I stress the utility-value of learning an African language, which prompted its transcription into writing and its construction into a standard; and which guided its passage from travel account, to mission station and into the academic institution. I also scrutinise the uses to which the indigenous speakers put the language. Of course, the contexts of colonial Belgian Congo and the Cape Colony in South Africa were quite different, and the collaboration between missionaries and government in terms of language policy occurred in very different ways, and at different times. Indeed, in the early years of missionary work in Kaffraria, there was a serious conflict of interest between the missionaries' aims of conversion and the methods of British colonial expansion.

Where Fabian's approach is particularly useful for the kinds of questions I ask throughout this dissertation is in the links he draws between the "descriptive appropriation" of language

20 Ibid. p 14.
21 Ibid. p 75, p 81.
and the power this bestows. For Fabian, control of a language is seen mostly in terms of the leverage it allows the colonial government. I take a broader view by attempting to understand power as it relates to the kinds of decisions that could be made about language, and the kinds of uses to which language could be put by those who controlled and could use it in its written form. Power is seen in terms of the implications of creating and having control of a powerful "new" version of the language for both Europeans and Africans; the significance of control over a language for competing missionary interests; and the relationship between power and knowledge as Xhosa becomes part of the academic institution. And like Fabian I examine politically motivated decisions in the development of standard Xhosa which were made in the interests of perpetuating or allowing certain forms of power.

In his work on the development of a vernacular literature for Igbo, Nicholas Omenka also surveys politically motivated decisions by missionaries and government, but ventures an entirely different assessment: he argues that the colonial Government and the Christian Missions "were largely responsible for the retarded development of the vernacular in Eastern Nigeria." (my emphasis). He attributes the fact that "the development of Igbo literature has not yet come out of the foundation stage" to the "existence of a baffling great number of Igbo dialects" and "a lack of uniformity in the orthography used in reducing them to a written form." Unlike standard Xhosa, then, which had been constructed into a uniform vehicular language by the 1890's, and was used for literacy by people speaking a variety of closely-related language forms, a standard literate version of Igbo had still not emerged when Omenka wrote his article in 1986. Omenka points to the effects of two main factors which have distinguished the history of vernacular literacy in Nigeria from that of most other parts of Africa: the government's active promotion of English over indigenous languages, and

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22 Ibid. p 71.
23 See Ranger, Terence. 'The Invention of Tradition Re-Visited: The Case of Colonial Africa'. p 75. Ranger describes how the languages codified and appropriated by missionaries were, in many ways "new" -- in terms of their "new descriptive power", their expansion and adoption by people who had spoken other language forms, and "new" in the ways that these languages became associated with the identity of their speakers.
24 Omenka, Nicholas. 'The Role of the Catholic Mission in the Development of Vernacular Literature in Eastern Nigeria.' p 121-122.
acrimonious divisions between the Protestant and the Catholic missions based on their differing views on the role of indigenous languages in the evangelising mission.

According to Omenka, behind the British colonial government's disregard of indigenous languages lay the reasoning that English should be the "only medium for the teaching of secular subjects", and the vernacular should be confined to the areas of "theological or sectarian dogma". In contrast to South Africa, where the government provided funding for the establishment of departments of African languages and literature as I describe in Chapter 5, the Governor of Nigeria agreed with the sentiment that instruction in the native languages should be left to "the stimulus of self interest", and that Government grants were "not required for its encouragement". The "stimulus of self interest" was often in fact the self interest of the colonial government, as officials were required to pass an exam testing vernacular proficiency on "nakedly pragmatic" subjects such as roads, markets, and land disputes. The government, then, provided no "stimulus for the development of a viable literature in the native languages".

But what of the missionaries, who were responsible for providing that stimulus in many other parts of Africa, including South Africa? The competing denominational interests of the Protestant and Catholic Missions was the most important factor hindering the missionaries' progress in this regard. The safeguarding of their own positions meant that a common orthography was never agreed upon. The Protestant Anglican Mission were unwilling to abandon enormous amount of work in Igbo, which they developed the Union Igbo, a

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25 Ibid. p 121.
26 Ibid.
27 Nonetheless, as I describe in Chapter 5, these departments constantly struggled to justify their existence independently of the practical need of "governing the natives". The departments also struggled to justify their existence in the face of the strong body of opinion that Bantu languages would become extinct in the face of English - a similar view to that prevailing in Nigeria at the end of nineteenth century.
29 Ibid.
“concoction of five different Igbo dialects” had a number of weaknesses, it was not because of its impracticality as a lingua franca that the Catholic authorities rejected it in favour of the ‘new’ orthography in 1929. That decision was based more on the fear that the growing popularity of ‘Union Igbo’ “might adversely dilute the extraordinary concentration of native interest in Catholic schools, where English was given a place of prominence”. In other words the only effort to overcome the problems (in terms of literacy) of a multiplicity of Igbo language forms was rejected because it would hinder “the propagation of Catholic Faith and Teaching”. With similar reasoning, the Scottish missionaries in the eastern Cape insisted that standard Xhosa be based on the Ngqika variety taught at their education centre, Lovedale, and printed at their Lovedale Press.

Omenka examines the equally strong divides within the Catholic order, between the French-speaking sector of the mission who made a number of important contributions to the development of a vernacular literature, and the Irish Catholic missionaries, who came to Nigeria primarily as schoolmasters, and could see no future for a Catholic Mission without schools, and no future for schools without English. Thus Omenka’s history of language in eastern Nigeria highlights a very clear example of the far-reaching effects of missionary politics, both internal and external, and of decisions made to safeguard denominational interests. In Nigeria the result of this was that no standard literary form of Igbo emerged. In the eastern Cape, the result was the emergence of a literary form of the vernacular based on the Xhosa dialect predominant amongst the Scottish mission. I explain the reasons for this very different outcome in Chapters Three and Four.

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30 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 cited in Ibid.
34 Ibid. p 125.
35 Ibid. p 133.
II

Language and 'translation'

Samarin, Fabian and Omenka initiated the conversation about the social history of languages in Africa. Of course, many new questions have subsequently been asked, particularly in histories of the mission. One of the most influential of these is the question of "the extent to which the missionaries' message was one that could be performed authentically to an audience so different from themselves linguistically and culturally." Attempts to answer this question have been made by understanding the mission itself as a form of translation. And so in his keynote paper to the "People, Power and Culture: The History of Christianity in South Africa" Conference in 1992, Richard Elphick argues for the usefulness of studying "Christianization as translation", since between the missionary translator, the indigenous interpreter, the preacher and the hearer "there is an immense terrain where mutual incomprehension, selective hearing and struggle over meaning can take place." The model of translation, then, has been "expanded to embrace aspects of culture other than language", allowing historians of the mission "to focus on the fact that two systems of thought do not 'collide'; rather real people negotiate their way through life, grasping, combining, and opposing different elements." Translation in the metaphorical sense is applied much the same sense as Mary-Louise Pratt's concept of 'transculturation', which she uses to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from the materials presented to them, showing how there was control of how and what from the dominant culture was absorbed. These ideas are highly relevant for the ways in which I understand the early indigenous converts, interpreters and the literate elite in Chapter Three, as I explore the negotiation of new forms of identity through the acceptance of Christianity and the written word.

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36 Coetzee, Carli. 'Gone Native: The South African Career of Johannes van der Kemp.' p 2.
38 Ibid.
This model of translation is most systematically laid out by Lamin Sanneh in his 1989 study *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, and explored further in *Encountering the West*, published in 1993. In the exposition of his central thesis, that "Christianity, from its origins, identified itself with the need to translate out of Aramaic and Hebrew, and from that position came to exert a dual force in it historical development"⁴⁰, Sanneh employs the concept of translation in order to highlight indigenous agency in the process of Christianization, "celebrat[ing] African responses to, rather than passive acceptance of, the Christian message".⁴¹ As Sanneh explains, taking translation beyond the "narrow, technical bounds of textual work", and looking at the missionary adoption of the vernacular as "tantamount to adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message" allows one to understand the missionary impact as "a piece of radical indigenization far greater than the standard portrayal of mission as Western cultural imperialism".⁴²

The metaphor of translation allows for a theoretical shift of focus -- off the missionaries, and onto those who received the message, hearing, transforming and deepening it in often surprising ways. At this level the value of the metaphor for my work on language is clear: it allows for the "assertion of ownership and power over the 'Word'" and insists that "the translated Word's truth is equivalent, that it is not simply a text impersonating another text", thus displacing images of "African Christians as imitations or imperfect copies of their missionary benefactors".⁴³ The approach allows one to understand 'translation' as more than a mechanical process of finding the 'correct' word, and to rather acknowledge it as a two/three/four-way process between different, interacting world systems. Using this approach, my dual focus in Chapter Three looks at the missionaries and indigenous speakers together to try and understand their interaction as they heard, used and transformed the written word in their own ways.

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⁴¹ Coetzee, Carli. 'Gone Native: The South African Career of Johannes van der Kemp.' p 4.
⁴³ Coetzee, Carli. 'Gone Native: The South African Career of Johannes van der Kemp.' p 5.
Sanneh's use of the metaphor, however, goes deeper than this. Underlying his entire argument is a counter-attack against the historiographic trend (to which Fabian, amongst many others, conforms) casting missionaries as agents of colonialism. Instead Sanneh analyses the missionary impact in terms of cultural invigoration, cultural renewal, and inter-cultural dialogue.\textsuperscript{44} For Sanneh, translation “stripped language of its inert fixed power and invested it with a potentiality for mutuality”,\textsuperscript{45} since “vernacular agency became the preponderant medium for the assimilation of Christianity”. Thus, according to Sanneh, missionaries were cast in a secondary role.\textsuperscript{46} In other words, the root conviction held by the missionaries – that the Gospel is capable of being conveyed in other languages – opened the way for “local idiom to gain ascendancy over assertions of foreign superiority”\textsuperscript{47} since the “indigenous framework” was used as the “basis for assimilation”, and not the other way around.\textsuperscript{48}

Using these ideas to inform his line of enquiry, Sanneh argues that “scriptural translation helped Africans to preserve their name for God and the religious and social worlds that depended on that.”\textsuperscript{49} And it is by analysing this statement, just one of many such arguments, that the weaknesses in Sanneh’s position begin to appear. I will show in Chapter Three that far from “preserving” the name for ‘God’ as it existed prior to missionary influence, the missionaries working in the eastern Cape appropriated an indigenous term (‘Utixo’), and affixed to it new meanings which could now be rendered into a Christian translation. With these new meanings, the “religious and social worlds” that depended on them also had to change. Sanneh’s approach is valuable to the extent that it shows how Christianity had to be assimilated into the vernacular. The way that ‘God’ was conceived through the word ‘Utixo’ necessarily had to take into account indigenous culture. However, his un-nuanced approach

\textsuperscript{44} Sanneh, Lamin. Translating the Message. p 2,4.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. p 205.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. pp 161-162.
\textsuperscript{47} Sanneh, Lamin. Encountering the West. p 19.
does not acknowledge the extent to which European forms of knowledge were imposed. In other words, the vernacular was also crafted to be assimilable into Christianity.

Sinfree Makoni counters the assumptions of Sanneh’s approach very clearly, arguing that it does not adequately examine “what was happening to Africans in the process of entering into an alliance with the missionaries”; it does not “emphasize strongly enough how the discourse missionaries were creating limited what could be said ‘about’, ‘to’, and discussed ‘with’ Africans”. Indeed, for Makoni, “the major objective of missionaries was to comprehend African cosmology on their own terms, and only those terms that could facilitate that process were included in the vernacular language.” As I show in Chapters Three and Four, though, the ‘missionaries’ cosmology’ equally became a public resource that could also be appropriated by some indigenous Christians, and used, like language, as a means of social differentiation and power.

The problem with Sanneh’s approach, then, is that he sets up a strict dichotomy: either missionary evangelism was cultural imperialism or it was “God’s favourite design”. In doing so he makes no provision for the differences between intention and effect, between the more subtle, but equally significant, wielding of power (such as the descriptive appropriation of a language in its written form), and the more obvious forms imposed by colonial administrators. And so Sanneh only sees missionary translation as enabling “peoples to acquire pride and dignity about themselves in the modern world, thus opening the whole social system to equal access”, or as “instrumental in the emergence of indigenous resistance to colonialism”, since the “vernacular instrument” fashioned by the missionaries

49 Ibid. p 181.
50 Makoni is talking specifically about Isabel Hofmeyr’s work here, but the analysis applies equally to Sanneh.
53 Ibid. p 172.
54 Ibid. p 123
came to be used by Africans "to wield against their colonial overlords". While this may be true in some instances, Sanneh fails to bring into his analysis the crucial questions that concern me in this dissertation: whose language was used?, how was that language defined?, what decisions had to be made before it appeared in its written form?, who was marginalized in the process? how did colonial administrators influence that language for their own ends? By failing to ask these questions, Sanneh does not take into account the political decisions that missionaries had to make, which, as I shall show, indicate that the vernacular did not slip so easily into Christianity – it had to be manipulated and moulded. Indeed, while Sanneh views the documentation of African languages into dictionaries and grammars as "a meticulous inventory of local cultures produced by the most exacting standards of scientific inquiry," Harries argues convincingly that the work carried out by the Swiss missionaries in south eastern Africa was far from politically or scientifically neutral (see below). Similarly, while Sanneh argues that by "tracking down correspondences, similarities" between language forms, and unifying them into one standard language, missionaries were "helping to establish important links between members of the wider African family, and thus contributing to the reducing of ancient antagonisms and suspicions," Ranger and others document the ethnic conflict that resulted when the differences between language forms were magnified through the missionaries' specification of the languages (see below).

What is clear is that while Sanneh claims that his interest is not in choosing between these two positions ("cultural imperialism"/ "God's favourite design"), and rather that his concern is with "the unintentional and unpremeditated consequences of practice and conduct," in his actual analysis, the "practice and conduct" of the missionaries is cast almost predominantly in

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55 Ibid. p 5.
56 In the time frame covered in this dissertation, writing in the vernacular was used as a weapon against colonialism (as I show in Chapter Four). But by the 1950's it was in fact English that was most often used as the medium for resistance – since it countered Afrikaans, and it allowed for a unified African front.
57 Ibid. p 167.
58 Harries, Patrick. 'Discovering Languages: the historical origins of standard Tsonga in southern Africa.' p 154.
60 Ranger, Terence. 'Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika: The Invention of Ethnicity in Zimbabwe.' pp 118 – 121. cf. Harries, Patrick. 'Discovering Languages: the historical origins of standard Tsonga in southern Africa.'
a positive light, and as something that was “easily and comprehensively domesticated”\textsuperscript{62} by Africans. What Sanneh in effect does, as the Comaroffs observe, is to reduce “the story of African Christianity to one of ‘native’ appropriation alone”\textsuperscript{63}, whereby “far from being colonized by Protestantism or Catholicism, Africans seized these faiths and made them their own.”\textsuperscript{64} This approach, which comes very close to denying that Africans were ever victims of colonialism, “denudes history of its dialectics”; just like the approach that “reads the story as a tale of unremitting domination.”\textsuperscript{65}

III

Language and the colonization of consciousness

John and Jean Comaroff’s own work views the encounter between Africans and missionaries in very different terms, presenting a radical challenge to Sanneh’s approach.\textsuperscript{66} For them, the Non-conformist Christian missionaries working in what is now the North-West Province of South Africa, were among “the earliest footsoldiers of British colonialism”, changing “the hearts and minds, the signs and practices, of the Southern Tswana”.\textsuperscript{67} Underlying this study of the “colonization of consciousness”\textsuperscript{68} is the idea that colonization was “as much a cultural as a political or economic encounter”;\textsuperscript{69} as much as anything else about “inscribing in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means of manufacturing the real”.\textsuperscript{70} As the “most ambitious ideological and cultural agents of

\textsuperscript{61} Sanneh, Lamin. Encountering the West. p 18.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid. p 49.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid. p 48.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. p 49.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. Vol. 1. p xi.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid. Vol. 2. p 16
\textsuperscript{70} Mitchell. cited in Ibid. pp 16 – 17.
Empire"71, the Comaroffs argue that it was the missionaries who “made the most thoroughgoing efforts to revolutionise African being-in-the-world”.72

And so the mission, as I too demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four, had a dual purpose: Christianization and civilization, or remaking the “person and his context”.73 Accordingly, the Comaroffs argue, this “colonization of consciousness” was taking place on two levels. The first of these was conversion, which sought to convince the African “heathens” of Christianity’s ideological content (in this project, the written word in the vernacular was considered central); the second level, reformation, implied the “inculcation of hegemonic forms, the taken for granted signs and practices of the colonizing culture”74 (the codification and systematisation of the written word in European terms was one aspect of this). But the Comaroffs’ intention is not to view the colonial encounter from one side, they also aim to show how the symbols of Empire were “seized” and “reconstructed” by local peoples, accounting for the colonial encounter as a “spiralling, many-layered conversation”: an “exchange of signs and objects”, rather than a straightforward process.75

For the purposes of this dissertation, I am particularly interested in the Comaroffs’ study as it relates to language. Their understanding of colonization as not only “an exercise in material coercion,” but, equally as importantly, as “an attempt to seize the signs and practices of everyday life”76 is central to their analysis of the missionaries’ linguistic work. As they contend, among the many exchanges that took place during the colonial encounter, there was “an often quiet, occasionally strident struggle between the Europeans and the Africans to gain mastery over the terms of the encounter”.77 One of these contests was “over the media

72 Ibid. Vol. 2. p 17. The differences between this, and Sanneh’s underlying argument that conversion did not mean a psychological migration out of the African world, since the gospel was encountered the vernacular, are apparent. (Sanneh, Translating the Message, p 184.)
73 Comaroff, John and Jean. 'The Colonization of Consciousness in South Africa.’ p 268.
75 Ibid. Vol. 2. p xvi.
76 Comaroff, John and Jean. 'The Colonization of Consciousness in South Africa.' p 267.
through which the conversation itself was proceeding, over the nature of language and representation".78 In this context, the Comaroffs argue, the churchmen sought to impose the linguistic forms (orthography, rule-bound grammars, dictionaries) through which the conversation, and the conversion and reformation, should proceed. But although the churchmen may have sought to impose the linguistic forms, what the Comaroffs do not take adequate account of is the role of indigenous interpreters and converts, not only in the construction of a standard version of the language, but also in how the written form of the language was used as a resource from which they could benefit. In my reading, then, the Comaroffs do not make a clear enough distinction between the intentions of the missionaries, and the way that things played themselves out in the encounter.

Nonetheless, the Comaroffs do make the important point that the media in which the message was relayed were as important as the content of that message, since it was “those media that bore the essential forms of colonial culture” – even if, following Sanneh, the media were simultaneously assimilated through local idiom. In short, the media, the linguistic forms, were one of the particularly powerful “modes of induction...by which the vital signs and practices of a new hegemony were instilled into Tswana consciousness”.79

One of these “modes of induction” was the subversion of indigenous terms, or, as the Comaroffs argue, the (mis)translation and appropriation of indigenous words to convey the meanings of Christianity and western civilization.80 In making this kind of argument, as I also do in Chapter Three, one must bear in mind the ambiguous and mutable nature of language, especially oral languages. Talking about “(mis)translations” might imply that words have one essential meaning; I contend rather that there were struggles over the meanings of words, both from within local usage, and from outside.

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid. p 224.
Despite the fact that the Comaroffs imply that indigenous words had an essential meaning, they do make a strong argument about the intentions of the missionaries, who did not doubt the ability of Setswana to “yield to their meticulous efforts to translate literally the English message they bore”\textsuperscript{81}, believing translation to be free of cultural barriers. Moffat’s translation of the Bible into Setswana was, of course, far from a “matter of managing signs and correspondences in a world of verifiable realities”.\textsuperscript{82} And so the Comaroffs describe the translation as a “cultural register”, true to neither Europe or Africa, “a hybrid creation born of the colonial encounter itself”.\textsuperscript{83} Through the translation of Setswana words to convey Christian concepts (e.g. badimo, ‘ancestors’, to signify ‘demons’); and other subtler acts of appropriation (e.g. modumedi, ‘one of who agrees’, to imply a ‘Christian believer’), the Comaroffs argue that “Setswana was to carry the lasting imprint of Christian Europe in it lexicon.” I raise similar issues when I look at how Heinrich Lichtenstein and Johannes van der Kemp translated in their Xhosa wordlists. The issues become even more significant when I talk about Bible translation in the 1870’s, where the contest over the meaning of words was played out between indigenous speakers and different missionary groups.

On a deeper level, the Comaroffs contend that using the grammatical tools of Indo-European languages to represent Setswana was another means of instilling the “vital signs and practices” of a new hegemony. In their attempts to bring the language under some form of organisation, the missionaries used European categories which “did not always correspond nicely to their apparent Bantu equivalents”.\textsuperscript{84} Another of the European tools was an orthography using the Roman alphabet. Through these processes the missionaries were involved in making difference into similarity, “reducing the lower order diversities of the non-European world into the universalistic categories of the West”.\textsuperscript{85} Grammatical

\textsuperscript{80} Comaroff, John and Jean. ‘The Colonization of Consciousness.’ pp 283 – 284.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. p 283.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. p 218.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. p 221.
A new orthodox version of Setswana was thus created under the auspices of the European missionaries. By constructing the Setswana vernacular into a written language, and "expanding [its] forms of communication and representation", the mission "interpolated itself into the politics of African systems of knowledge". It was also this language which, the Comaroffs argue, "provided the fixed categories through which an amorphous cultural landscape became subject to European control". I make a similar argument about the socio-political consequences of the linguistic work of the European travellers, missionaries and academics, who attempted to control the "amorphous cultural landscape" of the eastern Cape by codifying and trying to control the indigenous language(s). But in my study I go on to detail, as the Comaroffs do not, the processes by which the standard form of the language came to be constructed in its written form.

Although highly influential and important as a case-study of the cultural impact of the mission, the Comaroffs's study is not unproblematic in its interpretation, concept and method. The central criticism of their work is that although they make large claims about their acknowledgement of indigenous agency, this is sometimes not borne out by the terms in which they frame their argument. As Henry Bredekamp writes:

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\text{[t]o say that the consciousness of South Africans was colonised is akin to saying that it was false. It can only be an insult, a polemical device, a demeaning of the real choice and the real dignity of those who came to accept, in part and in their own ways, the message of the missionaries.} \]

Bredekamp insists that it is essential to acknowledge the "naturalization of Christianity". This argument about the "naturalization of Christianity", of course, resembles that of Lamin

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86 Ibid.
87 Comaroff, John and Jean. 'The Colonization of Consciousness in South Africa.' p 285.
88 Ibid.
Sanneh, who also criticises the Comaroffs for robbing Africans of their "agency" through their implication (in their first volume, at least) that the evangelical mission determined the way that the encounter played itself out. In a similar vein, Paul Landau accuses the Comaroffs of failing to allow the Tswana to "generate their own conflicts, and so their own history", of failing to give voice to the Tswana themselves and demonstrate how they made Christianity their own.

This is also the problem with their analysis of language in the colonial encounter, since they do not take strongly enough into account the significant part played by interpreters and early converts in the creation of an orthodox version of Setswana, nor do they demonstrate how indigenous speakers made the written form of the language their own. The Comaroffs place too much emphasis on how linguistic classification, naming and labelling served to colonize consciousness, and in so doing do not acknowledge strongly enough the role of indigenous speakers in this process, and how they often used the work of the missionaries in different ways to those originally intended. Like Elizabeth Elbourne, however, I find it difficult to come to a certain assessment these criticisms, since the authors make strong theoretical statements, which they then seem to undercut in the process of their analysis. Elbourne perhaps gets to the root of the concern when she says that a

reading which focuses too exclusively on Christianity as a language of cultural domination, rather than a language with a multiplicity of possible meanings pays too much attention to the western roots of Christianity and not enough to the multiple uses to which Africans very quickly put it.

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But, as Ranger argues, the language in which the mission elite came to have such a vested interest was new and innovative in another very significant way: it “created rather than merely reflected one specific dialect of Shona – Manyika”, since in “pre-colonial Zimbabwe there did not exist bounded dialect zones within the overall Shona-speaking territory”. Rather, there was “gradual idiomatic and lexical change” so that from one end of the spectrum to the other significant differences did occur. Through their codification of certain forms of the language which “centred upon scattered bases”, missionary linguists actually “created discrete dialect zones”.

And so the American Methodists and the Anglicans together created ‘Manyika’, the Jesuits produced ‘Zezeru’, and the Dutch Reformed Church constructed ‘Karanga’. The differences between these languages “were exaggerated, obscuring the actual gradualism and homogeneity of the real situation”. Of course, once these new forms had been codified “they then expanded out from these missionary centres by means of the mission out-school networks until specific dialect zones had been defined.” The importance of Lovedale as an educational centre in the eastern Cape had a similar effect on the definition of Ngqika Xhosa as standard. C.M. Doke himself acknowledged that the differences between these Zimbabwean dialects, now separate languages, had been grossly exaggerated by the artificial means of mission societies working independently of one another, as each mission society sought to protect its own interests.

An important aspect of Ranger’s study is to show how new forms of ethnicity were created through the “ideological input” of younger indigenous men”, the “unofficial agents” such as

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98 Ibid. p 127.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 cited in Ibid.
105 Ibid. p 135. A similar debate occurred between members of the Swiss mission amongst the Tsonga, as Harries (below) explores.
the first teacher-catechists of the Christian mission in eastern Zimbabwe, who were the real creators and users of the written 'chi-manyika', and the ethnographers of an imagined Manyika identity.103 These ideas were then "developed by young migrant workers from eastern Zimbabwe, who spread out into the cities of Rhodesia and South Africa and there adumbrated radical 'Ethiopian' definitions of Manyika-ness".106 Thus, Ranger argues, the expansion of 'missionary Manyika' into other areas went "a long way to build a common sense of Manyika identity"107, until dialect zones and ethnic differences had been defined in subjective reality.

The notion of 'invention', which Ranger uses explicitly in this case-study and which has implicitly informed the work on language of Fabian, Samarin, Omenka and the Comaroffs, has not been unchallenged. It is worthwhile at this point to examine its usefulness, since it is a concept which I adopt in this dissertation, albeit in a modified form, and apply to language itself rather than ethnicity. Since the early 1980's the term has, as Werner Sollors commented, "become a rather popular category in intellectual discourse"108, with Ranger himself one of the first scholars to take up the term in his co-edited book with Eric Hobsbawm The Invention of Tradition. Its usefulness as a theoretical concept lies in the fact that it provides a "counter to the dangers of ahistoricity"109 by focusing not only on the fact of invention of essentialist categories, but also "on the process and agency by which such invention is accomplished"110. In other words, it emphasises the "conscious construction and composition"111 of subjective realities such as tradition, ethnicity, and even language. An equally valuable line of enquiry has been to look at how such 'inventions' establish or symbolise social cohesion, acquiring a legitimising status.112 And, as Ranger puts it, 'invention' can be a particularly useful term in the context of Africa, for it highlights the

103 Ranger, Terrence. 'The Invention of Tradition Re-Visited.' p 96.
104 Ibid.
105 Ranger, Terrence. 'Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika.' p 137.
106 Sollors, Werner. The Invention of Ethnicity. p 3.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid. P 137.
109 Ranger, Terrence 'The Invention of Tradition Revisited.' p 62.
110 Ibid. p 79.
111 Ibid. p 9.
"contrast between precolonial fluidity and the reification of colonial classification". Thus a number of scholars have found 'invention' to be a useful concept, "foregrounding, as it does, the artificiality of ethnicity" and, as importantly for my own research, the "vagaries of current South African discourses of multilingualism".

The concept of 'invention' is currently under stress, with Ranger himself spearheading an attempt to modify its use. One of the criticisms that has been levelled against it is that in its emphasis on colonial invention, it could be read to imply that "once these alien representations had been stripped away...the authentic and other [Africa] would emerge." As Ranger articulates it, the use of the term might allow essentialism to "slip in by the back door". This is particularly important for the ways I understand the invention of language, since a common misconception is to assume that beneath the language 'invented' by missionaries lies the 'true' language. This assumption, of course, discounts the ambiguity and mutability of languages, especially in their oral form. Another form of essentialism that might "slip in", unwittingly, through the use of the term, is an "over-simplified concept of the essential character of colonialism", which does not acknowledge the "contested nature of colonial knowledge". I agree with Ranger when he writes that even when one takes these concerns, and others, into consideration, "nevertheless, a real change took place in Africa", but that the emphasis in that discussion can often be misplaced.

One of these misplaced emphases is that the term 'invention' "implies too one-sided a happening", presupposing "inventors" (who mostly turn out to be colonial administrators or missionaries), while Africans are relegated to the roles of "laboratory assistants rather than of

112 Ibid. p 81.
113 Ibid. p 81.
114 Makoni, Sinfree. 'African languages as European scripts: the shaping of communal memory.' p 242.
115 Ranger, Terrence. 'The Invention of Tradition Revisited.'
117 Ibid. p 64.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid. p 65.
Power, then, can easily be shown to flow in only one direction, thereby masking the creative initiative of Africans under colonialism. And so while many analyses of the colonial encounter show how ‘inventions’ were conceived and applied, they seldom acknowledge how locals made their own uses of newly constructed traditions, ethnicities or languages. To remedy this misplaced emphasis I have attempted in this dissertation to understand the social history of the Xhosa language in terms of the power and choices it allowed not only the travellers, missionaries and academics, but also the indigenous speakers, interpreters and converts. Moreover, “invention is too once-and-for-all an event”, making little allowance for ongoing processes and the re-working of identities. One needs to make allowance for re-definition, looking at how “widely shared, though debated, collective fictions” are “continually reinvented”. A fully historical approach, then, requires one to study the subsequent development of these inventions, and indeed, the conflicts over its meanings.

The weaknesses of the term, then, occur in how it is applied. ‘Invention’ must be acknowledged as just one stage of a broader explanation, thus making it not so much incorrect, as incomplete. One cannot discount the important, often powerful, part played by European missionaries, colonial administrators, and others, in their classifications of race, tribe or language. These first stages of inventing, Ranger now argues, “in effect created a series of empty boxes, with bounded walls but without contents”. Giving meaning to the identities encapsulated in these “boxes” was, according to Ranger, a “much more complex and contested business”. This is the transition from ‘invention’ to ‘imagination’, a term

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120 Ibid. p 79. Sinfree Makoni makes it very clear that he believes that Africans did play the role of “laboratory assistants” in the invention of written versions of the language, and that the missionaries were the “scientists”. See Makoni, Sinfree. ‘In the was the missionaries’ word.’ p 164.
121 Ranger, Terrence. ‘The Invention of Tradition Re-Visited.’ p 80.
122 Of course, as I have illustrated above, Ranger cannot be accused of ignoring African initiative in his ‘Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika’, for he shows very clearly how newly constructed languages were used by indigenous speakers to forge new types of identity for themselves.
123 Ibid. p 81.
124 Ibid. p 84.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
which Ranger has come to prefer, because it allows for multiple contested 'imaginings' in reaction to the forces of colonialism. To take the analysis one step further, then, is to consider how state or missionary "invention is surpassed, transformed and often thwarted by the imagination of those in what Moore calls 'the domain of local autonomy'." Using this understanding of 'invention', I stress the important role of missionaries in the creation of standard Xhosa, as well as the pivotal role played by indigenous speakers who determined which form of the language came to be elevated as standard. But more than this, I consider how language was re-invented in the hands of the new generation of the literate African elite, who imagined multiple, contested new uses and meanings for the written word in the vernacular.

In his recent book The Construction of Nationhood, Adrian Hastings levels strong criticism against the idea that "tribes" could be "invented" by missionaries, colonial officials and early anthropologists. He summarises the prevailing argument as follows:

The very effort to put oral vernaculars into writing, to provide an administrative network or to dissect African society for the purposes of study, created identities which did not until then exist. Ethnic identity is something essentially modern.

He singles out white South African academics in particular for being guilty of this "shallow and anti-African" view, which "den[i]es any significant identity to pre-colonial Africa" since "every identity must be found to have somehow been given by Europeans, even ethnic identity." He claims that Ranger, having come to his senses, has now "largely repudiated the claim" (referred to by Hastings as "an odd mix of Marxism and white racism") "that African ethnicities were a colonial 'invention'."
It is not surprising that he has misconstrued Ranger’s position, because he seems to have misconstrued many of the arguments made using the concept of ‘invention’, highlighted in his summation of the arguments, quoted above. To argue that new forms of identity were created which did not until then exist is not the same as arguing that no identities existed prior to colonial intervention. Hastings does acknowledge that is “unquestionable” that “the introduction of writing” could “significantly alter and extend identities, even occasionally...create new ones.” Moreover, he finds it equally “unquestionable” that “the impact of missionaries and colonial officials” affected “identities quite quickly and considerably, both through administrative labelling and by privileging and stabilising certain forms of speech characteristic of one place while disregarding other varieties.”

His problem seems to be with those scholars whom, he believes, have taken this “way of interpreting things...a great deal too far” by claiming that prior to European intervention, African communities had no inherent sense of identity. Of course, it would be absurd to disagree with Hastings on this. The quarrel I have with Hastings is over his interpretation of the work of scholars whom he believes to have actually made this claim.

Hastings relates Patrick Harries137 case study on the historical origins of standard Tsonga, both to augment the argument throughout his book about the “social impact of the introduction of writing and the translation of biblical texts into a range of vernaculars”138, and also to make his point about the denial of pre-colonial African identity by white South African academics. Like Fabian, the Comaroffs and Ranger, Harries explores the correspondences between cultural and political processes in the colonial encounter; and considers the important social consequences of developing literacy in the vernacular for group identity. His study takes as its subject the group of Swiss missionaries from the

134 As I have shown above, Ranger does not believe the concept to be incorrect, but rather incomplete. He has hardly “repudiated” the idea that missionaries and colonial officials played a powerful role in the invention in new forms of identification (ethnicities) in the nineteenth century. Rather he sees this as one stage of a broader process of contested ‘imaginings’.

135 Ibid. pp 148 – 149.

136 Ibid. p 148.

137 Harries, Patrick. ‘Discovering languages: the historical origins of standard Tsonga in southern Africa.’
Cantons of Vaud and Neuchâtel based in the Spelonken and working in the northern and eastern Transvaal and southern Mozambique during the late nineteenth century; and examines the decisions they made, social and political rather than scientific, about what should constitute 'the' Tsonga language. Through these decisions, Harries argues, a constructed standard Tsonga emerged which became a cultural marker of a new ethnic identity, rooted in the linguistic work of the early Swiss missionaries.

It is to this issue of the “roots” of ethnic identity that Hastings objects, arguing that “the roots were [already] there in genuine linguistic and cultural differences” which were “inevitable when people lived some way apart.” Not only does Hastings not provide any evidence or research of his own for his claim with respect to the communities of the northern and eastern Transvaal and southern Mozambique, but he again seems to misconstrue the argument. Harries’ point is that, as a result of the decisions that missionaries made about language, new (whether altered, extended or created) means of identification emerged. And these new means were very much rooted in the linguistic work of the Swiss missionaries.

As Harries explains, the Swiss mission decided to adopt the ‘Djonga’ dialect for its own purposes as the language of the Swiss mission, and, by extension, for the confusing potpourri of refugees united by outsiders under the name ‘Gwamba’, but who shared no common language or sense of communal identity. This decision, Harries argues, “had nothing to do with linguistic science; the new importance given to Djonga was the result of a purely pragmatic, political decision.” Moreover, the distinctions and borders drawn between this language form and others, “like those of the Gwamba language itself, were a social construct”

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139 Harries, Patrick. 'Discovering languages: the historical origins of standard Tsonga in southern Africa.' p 154.
140 Ibid. p 155.
142 Harries has looked at pre-colonial forms of identity in the area in his book Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860 - 1910.
143 Ibid.
indicating a “false degree of separation and cohesion” and deriving “more from the [the missionaries’] own epistemology than from any local perception of reality.” The next task was “systematisation”, which was informed by their conviction that “the various dialects of the Gwamba could be reduced to a single, written form based on an older, prestige Thonga variety.” This codification and standardisation essentially raised a missionary lingua franca to the position of ‘tribal’ language, as was the case with standard Xhosa.

Harries argues, along a similar line to the Comaroffs, that the development of writing was “a part of the colonising process” for it “encouraged Africans to think in a manner, and work in a medium, dominated by Europeans.” Indeed, like the Nonconformist missionaries working amongst the southern Tswana, the Swiss mission also viewed writing as “both a means of communication and an agent of civilization”. They believed that the logic of writing and the analytical skills of grammar would bring about a cognitive revolution. And as linguistic correctness was divorced from the speakers of the language, coming to rely on “written rules rather than on negotiated practice”, so the missionaries came to believe that they owned the Thonga language, talking about ‘our’ language and ‘our’ orthography. Similar processes occurred in the eastern Cape, as Xhosa became a tightly rule-bound language through the grammatical works of Bennie, Boyce and Appleyard. However, to say that Europeans “dominated” the language does not take sufficient account of how the new written version of the language was taken up by the indigenous speakers to generate their own power and for their own ends. Indeed, more recently, Harries has shown how the missionaries did not hold a monopoly over the consequences of literacy. Far from domest icating the savage mind, he argues, literacy was re-imagined by the locals, especially migrant workers, and harnessed

144 Ibid.
145 Ibid. p 161.
146 Ibid. p 164.
147 Ibid. p 164.
148 Ibid. p 165.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Third year history lectures in 1998 at the University of Cape Town for the course ‘Culture and Identity in History and Anthropology.’
for their own purposes. In other words, literacy was frequently put to uses not imagined by missionaries.

These locals were giving meaning to the "empty boxes" (a la Ranger) invented by the Swiss missionaries. The first stage of invention is still significant, and in this study Harries shows that the control which missionaries had over printing of languages led to the development of distinct Ronga and Thonga ethnicities. Henri Junod from the coastal branch of the Swiss mission was concerned by the competing interests of the Wesleyan Missionaries, who used a language form ('Ronga') closer to the one spoken by the people on the east coast, and were thus more successful in attracting converts than the Swiss who used the northern ('Thonga') language form. He claimed that the Swiss mission had misunderstood the extent of the differences between the languages. Henri Berthoud, on the other hand, argued from an entirely pragmatic perspective, believing that there were sufficient similarities between Thonga and the other dialects for it "to be accepted, through its role as the medium of schooling and literacy, as a language unifying the church." What Harries highlights through his exposition of the debate between Junod and Berthoud is the predominance of social, political and pragmatic factors in the decisions that were made regarding language by the Swiss mission. The parallels between this, and what happened in the eastern Cape are described in Chapter Four, where I analyse the process of Bible translation and how inter-denominational interests and rivalry resulted in standard Xhosa based on one of many language forms.

The debate between the two Swiss missionaries ended when Berthoud died, and within a few years distinct Ronga and Thonga languages, under the banner of the Thonga language group, "had been established on the basis of separate grammars and orthographies." Ronga and

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152 Ibid. p 168.
153 Ibid. p 168.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid. p 171.
Thonga (now 'Tsonga') emerged as fundamental markers of cultural difference. Harries does not argue, as Hastings suggests, that the Ronga had no means of identification prior to missionary intervention, but rather that these forms of identification, based on membership of the chiefdom, kin group and the oral community, were very fluid. The introduction of vernacular scripts provided these people with a fixed, unchanging resource on which to build a new ethnic identity.

Sinfree Makoni focuses the debate squarely in the present by exploring "the impact of the invention and use of standardised African languages on the form and substance of African communal memory." He is interested to show how "current constitutional provisions about language can be seen as a retrospective legitimisation of a particular view about the past" – a linguistic past which, he submits, "had its genesis in concepts in colonial thinking". In fact, he argues, "proponents of multilingualism...become ideological captives of the system they are seeking to challenge".

My own application of the term 'invention' in this dissertation is similar to Makoni's: as descriptive of how new written versions of African languages were actively created by missionaries (amongst others). While we both focus on how missionaries drew up linguistic boundaries, thereby determining what was to be regarded as constituting a specific language, I go on to examine how orthographic systems, dictionaries and rule-bound grammars also served to specify new written versions of the language. Makoni's argument is that the labelling process resulted in the "construction of idealised languages". He gives the example of how "Hlubi and Bhaca speakers from the Eastern Cape may experience problems when writing standard Xhosa" which is based predominantly on the Ngqika variety.

156 Binford, Martha. cited in Ibid.
158 Makoni, Sinfree. 'African languages as European scripts.' p 242.
159 Ibid. p 244. See also Makoni, Sinfree. 'In the beginning was the missionaries' word.'
160 Ibid. p 245.
161 Ibid. p 242.
an issue which I take up and explain in this dissertation. Following Gupta, Makoni calls these “idealised” languages “steptongues”, as opposed to mothertongues, because of the “disconcerting differences between the codes used as medium of instruction in the classroom and those used by students outside the class”. Makoni, then, illustrates the effects of the invention of African languages in the past on the uses and discourses of language in the present. My own analysis takes this discussion one step back to understand how the standard written version of Xhosa was invented, and how it was used, not only by missionaries, but also by the interpreters and converts of whom Makoni takes little account. While Makoni’s work does not comprise any new research, his approach is valuable in its analysis of the ongoing ‘imaginings’ of language, after the first-stage ‘invention’. He cites the example of the use of “Pretoria Sotho by people who have migrated to urban areas” which “enables them to conceal or distance themselves from their rural pasts”. In this way he shows how “societies, like individuals” can use language to “reinvent their past, by assuming new ways of speaking, distancing themselves from one past and creating a new one”.

V

Language contact

Another South African scholar to contribute to the debate more recently is Rajend Mesthrie, whose sociolinguistic perspective is particularly valuable. Very little work has been done on the social history of the Xhosa language in particular. Indeed, in his own recent addition to the debate, Rajend Mesthrie points out that “cross-disciplinary work in language and history
is still rare in scholarship dealing with the Nguni and Sotho languages of South Africa. Mesthrie begins to remedy this deficiency by examining the eastern Cape in the period of colonisation – "the period of the beginnings of literacy in African languages, and the codification of what was to become standard Xhosa in grammars and dictionaries." In this study he looks at the various "actors" occupying the "linguistic stage" in the eastern Cape between 1800 and 1850, and examines the outcomes of the contact between these various language forms. The missionaries obviously occupied a prominent position on that stage, since they made learning, reading and writing the indigenous languages of the region an important aspect of their life's work. By analysing the materials produced by missionaries, he finds that their linguistic proficiency, often documented in glowing terms by later mission historiographers, was sometimes fairly doubtful. Mesthrie also makes space on the linguistic stage for consultants, assistants and interpreters – the local people whose contribution has often been underplayed, and whose role as translators of "words between worlds" was not straightforward. In Chapter Three I discuss interpreters and Mesthrie's analysis of their role, in more detail.

The questions in Mesthrie's study focus on how the missionaries communicated with the people they wished to convert, and how long it took them to learn to communicate in Xhosa; and he finds that several "diffuse interlanguage and pidgin-like varieties were in use in the period under scrutiny". By examining the "number of diffuse strategies of communication" that were in use (such as sign language, simplified versions of Xhosa, Dutch/ Afrikaans and English, and mixtures of all three languages), Mesthrie highlights a question that is central to my own work: what kind of Xhosa was being written down and codified by the missionaries? Much of what was documented, especially by the early nineteenth century

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166 Mesthrie, Rajend. 'Words Across Worlds.' p 4.
167 Ibid. p 6.
168 Ibid. p 7.
169 Ibid. p 8.
missionaries, was mediated through the minds of people still learning the language. Rather than treating their language accounts as "earlier forms of Xhosa", then, we should read them as "early examples of 'learner language' and pidginization". What Mesthrie illustrates is the "appreciation" we should have "of the fragility of communication on the frontier".

In part one of this chapter I have highlighted some of the key ideas that have been put forward about the social history of African languages in the nineteenth century. The scholars cited highlight the crucial role of missionaries and colonial agents in the colonization of language and consciousness, the specification of languages in their written form, and the invention of languages and ethnicities. This dissertation takes up all of these ideas to varying degrees, as I show in Part Two by explicating the framework and context in which my study occurs.

170 Ibid. p 22.
172 Ibid. p 10.
173 Ibid.
PART TWO

Methodology, themes, framework

I

Learning South African languages: an introduction

Comments have often been made by critical onlookers about former President Nelson Mandela’s use of “incorrect” versions of Xhosa words. This is because as a member of the Thembu polity, aspects of Mandela’s spoken Xhosa are at variance with the prescribed rules of standard Xhosa as written and taught in schools and universities. This highlights the incongruities surrounding the naming of eleven languages in South Africa as ‘official’, and raises questions about the versions of language and indeed the kinds of ‘past’ to which our present language policy refers. My objective in this dissertation is to answer these questions by examining the processes through which the Xhosa language came to be codified in its written form, processes which led to the elevation of one dialect as the ‘standard’ to represent an amalgam of closely-related language forms spoken in the eastern Cape. I focus on the ways in which the indigenous languages were understood and transcribed by European travellers, missionaries and academics; and on how the written form of the language was used by these people, as well as by indigenous speakers, interpreters, converts and the newly literate, educated African elite. This line of enquiry emphasises the social construction of ‘realities’, such as a language, over time, and shows how standard Xhosa emerged out of a specific set of (often contested) practices, which resulted in the invention of new - or the codification of existing - markers of difference: between language forms (written standard/

174 Conversation with Professor Sizwe Satyo.
oral dialect; ‘correct’ Ngqika dialect, ‘poor’ Thembu dialect), communities (Xhosa nation/ Abatembu nation/ Zulu nation, etc.), and individuals (literate/ illiterate).

This study of how a specific version of the Xhosa language emerged out of what John and Jean Comaroff call “the paradoxes and contradictions of the past”176 is far from an isolated occurrence on the south eastern tip of Africa. It is located across two continents, with the intellectual and political history of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe influencing the ways in which languages were understood and transcribed in southern Africa. It is a history of the impact of the Enlightenment, the expansion of the evangelical movement, and the formalization and systematisation of knowledge. Simultaneously it is the history of how a new means of communication was harnessed by both Europeans and Africans in specific ways and for specific reasons, and it is a history of the political implications of decisions regarding language in terms of nation and identity. The processes by which the foundations of vernacular linguistics and literature in Xhosa were laid occurred in a broad context, and had far-reaching effects, as did the uses to which the language was put.

In many ways, Rajend Mesthrie anticipates my research when he writes that the “trials (and errors) of the missionaries as they battled to understand Xhosa grammar (especially concord), compile and refine word lists and dictionaries and translate the Gospels is a fascinating story that has yet to be fully explored. The process of creating not just signifiers but signifieds too for the whole range of Christian theology in a language that one was still learning is worthy of our attention.”177 Although some attention has been paid to these issues by historians of the mission (notably Donovan Williams178, Hildegarde Fast179 and Elizabeth Elbourne180) and from a different perspective by historians of Xhosa literature (A.S. Gerard181, A.C. Jordan182, and

178 Williams, Donovan. The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799 – 1853.
180 Elbourne, Elizabeth. To Colonize the Mind: Evangelical Missionaries in Britain and the eastern Cape, 1790 - 1837.
Jeffrey Opland\textsuperscript{183}, the investigation of the Xhosa language from a socio-historical perspective has not yet been fully explored. This thesis begins this line of enquiry. The scope of this dissertation also goes beyond any previous studies: while other scholars focus exclusively (if briefly) on the missionaries' role in the development and use of the Xhosa language, I also examine the role of early travellers, interpreters, converts, indigenous speakers and professional philologists.

II

My conceptual framework: terms, terrain, actors

The terms I employ in my account emulate those used by prominent scholars who have written on the social history of African languages.\textsuperscript{184} I draw on the formulations of power and knowledge, systematically laid out by Michel Foucault\textsuperscript{185}, and taken up in the context of African languages by Johannes Fabian\textsuperscript{186}. I apply the theoretical concepts of 'invention' and 'imagination', as used by Terrence Ranger\textsuperscript{187} and Benedict Anderson\textsuperscript{188}. I also make use of 'translation'\textsuperscript{189}, both in its literal and metaphorical senses, and Mary-Louise Pratt's\textsuperscript{190} similarly conceived 'transculturation'.

Following Pratt further, I describe the terrain of my study as the "contact zone", which refers to "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations."\textsuperscript{191}

The term is useful for my study, borrowing as it does from linguistics the term 'contact

\textsuperscript{182} Jordan, A.C. Towards an African literature: the emergence of literary forms in Xhosa.
\textsuperscript{183} Opland, Jeffrey. 'The Transition from Oral to Written Literature in Xhosa'.
\textsuperscript{184} I explore these scholars and their work more fully in Part One of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{185} See Foucault, Michel. Power/Knowledge, and Foucault, Michel. The Archaeology of Knowledge.
\textsuperscript{186} Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power.
\textsuperscript{187} See Ranger, Terrence. 'The invention of tradition in Colonial Africa.' Ranger, Terrence. 'Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika: The Invention of Ethnicity in Zimbabwe'. Ranger, Terrence. 'The invention of tradition revisited: The case of Colonial Africa.'
\textsuperscript{188} Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities.
\textsuperscript{189} See, for example, Sanneh, Lamin. Translating the Message, and Elphick, Richard. 'Writing about Christianity and History: Some Issues of Theory and Method.'
\textsuperscript{190} Pratt, Mary-Louise. Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.
languages', referring to "improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other."\(^{192}\) The use of 'zone' instead of 'frontier' (which is grounded in a European expansionist perspective) invokes "the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographical and historical disjunctures...whose trajectories now intersect", thereby treating relations not in terms of "separateness", but in terms of "interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power".\(^{193}\) This "contact zone" was the area which today falls within the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Geographically we can frame the "contact zone" of this dissertation as falling between the Sundays River just east of Port Elizabeth, stretching along the south eastern coast of South Africa for approximately 240 miles until the Umtamvuma River on the border between what was then the colony of Natal and East Pondoland, and bounded to the north by the Amatola mountain range.

The nature of the contact zone changed considerably during the timeframe with which I am concerned. Although the period from the end of the eighteenth century to the 1820s was politically fragile, Janet Hodgson calls it the "open frontier" - a period when "several polities occupied the zone without one clearly dominating."\(^{194}\) The arrival of the British settlers, and the gradual missionary advance from the 1820s coincided with a period of increasing British Imperial power in the zone. The frontier between the Cape Nguni people and the Cape Colony moved steadily eastwards, and by the 1880s, after one hundred years of war, the indigenous people in the area had been incorporated under British sovereignty. Within this changing zone there was contact between numerous groups of people, whose interaction eventually resulted in, amongst other things, the production of a standard written version of the Xhosa language.

\(^{191}\) Ibid. p 6.
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
\(^{193}\) Ibid. p 7.
\(^{194}\) Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Scared Power.' p 68.
There are problems of terminology in trying to understand the groupings of indigenous people who occupied the contact zone. The word 'Xhosa' is today a linguistic and ethnic cover term for all the inhabitants of the Eastern Cape, but during the nineteenth century it referred to a fairly cohesive entity ostensibly comprising those groups recognising the royal Tshawe lineage: the amaGcaleka, and the amaRharabe, who were split into the amaNgqika and amaNdlambe.195 Indigenous polities in the area were more complex than this suggests, however. Re-grouping and segmentation over a long period meant that a number of subgroups and semi-independent polities also occupied the contact zone, and the extended migration and interaction between Xhosa, Khoikhoi and some San had led to a number of mixed communities, such as the Gqunukhwebe under Kama in the early nineteenth century.

The use of the grouping 'Xhosa' in the nineteenth century excluded neighbours such as the Thembu, Mpondo, Mpondomise, Bomvana, Xesibe, Hlubi, Bhaca and the more recently arrived Mfengu, all of whom also fall within the scope of this study since today they use the standard version of Xhosa for literacy. 'Mfengu' is a generic term applied to the fragmented peoples who settled amongst the Xhosa in the wake of the Mfecane.196 How these communities represented themselves at the time, what affiliations they held under the labels articulated above, and how strong their sense of identity as 'the Xhosa', or 'the Thembu' was, is a complex issue. On this account we should use these labels with caution since, as Hildegarde Fast points out, this was a period of tremendous flux and intermixture (which many of the contemporary European commentators did not take account of in their classifications)197. In just this way, I will point out that the linguistic situation in the nineteenth century was much more fluid than the term 'Xhosa' implies. When we talk about

195 Xhosa polities usually identified themselves according to the name of their leader. Phalo, the son of the paramount Tshiwo, had two sons, Gcaleka and Rharabe. Rharabe broke away from the polity, and settled between the Keiskamma and Buffalo Rivers in the late eighteenth century. Gcaleka carried on as the paramount, followed by Khawuta, Hintsa, and Krel. When Rharabe died, his grandson Ngqika was too young to take over. And so Rharabe's second eldest son, Ndlambe became the leader of this group until Ngqika came of age. Once Ngqika was old enough, Ndlambe did not want to relinquish the leadership, and the amaRharabe split into the amaNgqika and the amaNdlambe. Peires, Jeffrey. The House of Phalo.
196 Peires, Jeffrey. 'The Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited.' p 162.
Xhosa-speaking people today, then, this is taken to mean a large and diversified group of people, some of whom had no affiliation to the Xhosa 'nation'. It is necessary for my purpose that I distinguish between the various indigenous people living in the eastern Cape during the nineteenth century, and so 'Xhosa' as an ethnic marker is used to denote just those people who were subject to the royal Tshawe clan. The fact that the travellers and missionaries sometimes used the word 'Kaffer' to refer to the Xhosa as a distinct polity, and at other times to signify all the indigenous polities from the eastern Cape and up the coast as far as Mozambique, creates further terminological problems. I use the term 'Cape Nguni' to refer collectively to the indigenous people in the contact zone who were affected by the language work of the travellers, missionaries and academics.

The early indigenous residents of the mission stations were predominantly marginal people drawn from the local communities, such as outcasts, political refugees and those fleeing violence, a ruler's wrath or accusations of witchcraft. This often meant that the early mission stations were made up of a wide variety of people with different affiliations. Indeed, Donovan Williams writes that prior to 1850, the missions had a polyglot composition, in which Xhosa people were often the minority. This is an important point to bear in mind as I examine how the missionaries constructed a standard version of the Xhosa language: a task which relied on the input of these early residents. In this dissertation I highlight certain individuals from the various local polities, notably Ntsikana kaGhaba, Dymie Tsatsu, Robert Balfour Noyi, Tiyo Soga and J.T. Jabavu who, as converts, interpreters, 'Native assistants', and members of the first educated and literate generation, interacted significantly with the other groups of the contact zone, selecting and inventing from Christianity and the

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198 Jeff Peires argues that although many "Xhosa people today think of themselves as being the common descendants of a great hero named Xhosa who lived many hundreds of years ago...there [however] is every reason to believe that the word 'Xhosa' is derived from the Khoi 'I/kosa', meaning 'angry men'. It is not unusual for a people to adopt names invented by outsiders. Therefore the Xhosa should not be seen as "as the descendants of a single eponymous ancestor named Xhosa, but as the subjects of the royal Tshawe clan "heterogeneous in origin, rather than a genetically defined 'tribe' clearly distinct from its neighbours." Peires, Jeffrey. The House of Phalo. pp 13 - 19.

199 Ibid.

200 Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Sacred Power.' p 76.
concomitant written word, and often absorbing it into their own cosmology to serve purposes not anticipated by Europeans.

Various traveller-explorers also occupied the contact zone for intermittent periods. I have chosen to focus on three in particular – Anders Sparrman, John Barrow and Heinrich Lichtenstein, because while they all travelled in the name of scientific exploration, they each had distinct reasons for including collections of Xhosa words in their travel accounts. Their accounts had significant implications for the ways in which languages and their speakers were perceived and classified, and opened the landscape for the various groups of missionaries who entered the region from 1799 onwards in the wake of the great eighteenth-century evangelical movements.

Of these groups, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (WMMS), the Presbyterian Glasgow Mission Society (GMS) and the predominantly Congregationalist, later Anglican, London Mission Society (LMS) occupy the central focus for my specific interest in the development of a written vernacular. The Berlin Mission Society’s (BMS) prominence in terms of language development came to the fore towards the end of the century. As a result I do not study their contribution to the Xhosa language extensively. I look at the language work of individuals from within these societies, such as Johannes van der Kemp, John Bennie, William Boyce, John Appleyard, and Tiyo Soga and to lesser extents J.L. Dohne, Albert Kropf, E.J. Barrett and Bryce Ross. By examining the thought and work of these individuals, I aim to document, analyse and explain the processes leading to the construction of one standard Xhosa.

Two factors are crucial to an understanding of how standard Xhosa was conceived and constructed: what languages were spoken in the contact zone, and amongst whom did the various missionary societies build stations? To answer the first question: spoken Xhosa today

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201 Williams, Donovan. The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799 - 1853. p 258.
is a heterogeneous language, comprising many dialects, some of which are not directly related to the standard Ngqika Xhosa on which the written form is based; while other speech communities which use standard Xhosa for literacy have no affiliation to Ngqika Xhosa at all, as explained above.  

The missionaries, however, generally conceived of the language as homogenous, with J.L. Döhne writing that "the circumstance that one dialect is prevalent and spoken there makes the study of language comparatively easy." This kind of thinking became fixed in missionary and colonial discourse, as Darlow and Moule demonstrated in 1903 when they wrote that Xhosa was the "main language of Kaffraria, spoken by Tembus, Pondos, Fingoes, Gaikas, etc." Explaining how this thinking became fixed, and how the various language forms spoken by a range of people in the eastern Cape became known collectively as 'Xhosa' is, one of the main objectives of this dissertation.

The second issue is to clarify amongst which indigenous peoples the various mission societies evangelised. The first group of people that missionaries came into contact with were the Ngqika Xhosa. There had been some co-operation between the Boers and both Ngqika's grandfather, Rharabe, and Ngqika's uncle, Ndlambe, towards the end of the eighteenth century. As a result of this early exposure, the amaNgqika, who also occupied the land closest to the edge of the colonial frontier, were the first indigenous people in the area to be exposed to Christianity. Johannes van der Kemp brought the Gospel to this area at the turn of the nineteenth century; and he was followed by another LMS missionary, Joseph Williams, who had established himself at the Kat River near Fort Beaufort between 1816 and 1818. An important outcome of this was that the amaNgqika were among the first interpreters, and were some of the first literates in the vernacular. Moreover, it was also amongst the amaNgqika that the first GMS mission stations, one of which housed the prominent educational centre Lovedale, were situated. The first of these was established in 1820 by

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204 Darlow, T.H. and Moule, H.F. Historical catalogue of the printed editions of Holy Scripture in the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society. p 1694.
John Brownlee on the Gwali Stream in the Tyumie Valley. Thereafter Gwali was established by John Bennie and John Ross in 1824, and re-named Lovedale in 1826. In 1839 the New Lovedale station was built near Alice, and it was here that the Lovedale Seminary was initiated. The GMS, then, were based exclusively in Ngqika's territory. This is important to bear in mind as I explain why standard Xhosa today is based on the Ngqika dialect. What will become evident is that the language form which came to be stabilised and then elevated as the standard was not chosen because it was somehow more important than others, but because it was spoken by those people amongst whom it was initially most expedient for the GMS to evangelise.

The other prominent missionary society in the eastern Cape, the WMMS, decided not to enter Ngqika's territory, since there were already three missions on the area. Instead the head of the Wesleyans in the eastern Cape, William Shaw, planned a chain of mission stations from Salem to Port Natal — a plan which had practically reached fruition by 1830. First they established Wesleyville in 1823, further east than the GMS stations, amongst the Gqunukhwebe, who were of mixed Khoi and Xhosa ancestry. Mount Coke, a settlement amongst the amaNdlambe, was built east of the Keiskamma River in 1825. Two years later the Wesleyans crossed the Kei River and established Butterworth amongst the amaGcaleka under Hintsa. Mount Coke and Butterworth were the only two Wesleyan stations situated amongst the Xhosa. Morley was then established amongst the Bomvana in what was known as western Pondoland. Buntingville was built amongst the Mpondo under Faku, 9 miles from what is now Umtata. Clarkebury, founded amongst the Thembu, and finally Shawbury amongst the Mpondomise, were established much further east and inland. While the Scottish missionaries had a number of missions based exclusively amongst the amaNgqika (even though their stations were initially occupied by a very mixed group of people), the Wesleyans were exposed to a far wider group of indigenous people. This was an extremely

205 See map.
important factor in the two churches' very different views on what should comprise standard Xhosa. The GMS view triumphed, and I will argue that this was largely due to the importance of Lovedale and its printing press.

In Chapter Five I move my analysis out of this contact zone, and document how the Xhosa language in particular, and African languages in general, acquired a new value for a different set of people in a different space: academic language scholars within the university. In this my work differs from most other historians writing about African languages, since they have generally centred their research on the missionaries. A number of individuals emerge within this context, including Wilhelm Bleek and Carl Meinhof who played major roles in bringing about the recognition of the academic value of African languages; and W.A. Norton, C.M. Doke, G.P. Lestrade, and J.D. Rheinallt-Jones, amongst others, who undertook to firmly establish the study of African languages within university walls – thereby making Xhosa, in its written form at least, the property of academics and universities.

The various actors who give this dissertation momentum have thus been assigned distinct roles: the indigenous speaker/interpreter; the convert and literate elite; the traveller/classifier; the missionary/translator and the academic/pragmatic studier. These roles should not be read in opposition to one another but rather as versions of the same, using overlapping and mixing modes in the ways they transcribed, used, understood and eventually constructed the Xhosa language into a standard.208

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208 Thank you to Carli Coetzee for this idea.
III

The scope of the thesis

My examination of the construction of standard Xhosa, and the uses to which the written form of the language was put, begins in Chapter Two with an analysis of the first attempts by Europeans to transcribe the language. I document the ways in which the European traveller-explorers Anders Sparrman, John Barrow and Heinrich Lichtenstein described the unknown land and its unknown languages, and how they drew on the epistemological framework which had been developed in the continent from which they had come. Indeed, when Lichtenstein said of Barrow that he “saw with the eyes of others, heard with the ears of others”, \(^{209}\) he could well have been speaking of himself, and the other travellers and explorers who arrived in Africa from Europe, bringing with them the questions, ideas and ways of thinking that had emerged with the expansion of scientific enquirey associated with the Enlightenment. Two processes from this period are extremely important for the purposes of this dissertation in general, and its second chapter in particular: the growth and interest in the natural sciences during the eighteenth century, \(^{210}\) and the rapid advance of linguistic science throughout the nineteenth century. These developments gave rise to a number of ideas about the relationship between a language and those who spoke it, and probed the question of the origins of language. One aspect of this chapter is to understand what motivated these ‘pioneers’ of the transcription of Xhosa, and for this an examination of the epistemological traditions shaping the ways they understood and used the languages they were recording is essential – or the traditions which made their eyes “other”.

It was not just ways of ‘seeing’ that were so different, but also ways of ‘hearing’. A further aspect of Chapter Two is an attempt to understand what lay between the ear and the mark on the page, by focusing on the foreign ear’s attempts to transcribe the sounds of an unfamiliar


\(^{210}\) Pratt, Mary-Louise. *Imperial Eyes*. p 5.
language. This task, of course, was undertaken in order to give readable shape to the language, and in order to do this, the tools of classification and orthography brought over from Europe had to be employed. This highlights the constructedness of orthographic systems for languages, a major theme running throughout this dissertation.

I analyse these “other” ways of seeing and hearing in terms of the knowledge/power dialectic, as used by Michel Foucault, among others. I argue that there are many more forms of power other than those arising out of control of the means of production; that European domination in Africa was not only an exercise in material coercion. By understanding that power is a product of knowledge, we can see how the ability of these traveller-explorers to name, know, map, transcribe and classify, using European systems of knowledge, were attempts to control an unknown landscape and its unknown peoples. And as I shall show, the power to create knowledge about the language and its speakers was to have important political implications.

This knowledge/power dialectic applies equally to the missionaries as they developed an orthographic system, prescribed rule-bound grammars, made decisions about the meanings of words in Bible translations and dictionaries, and delineated language groups according to their own understandings. This knowledge production about a language served to impose an “authorised”, or “official”, standardised meaning. And so in Chapters Three and Four I turn to the missionaries, the necessity of creating a written form of the language for their evangelical drive and the important implications of this work for the development of a written version of Xhosa. Power, however, must be acknowledged to flow both ways, as I examine how local people could influence decisions around language, how knowledge of two languages placed interpreters in a position of power and how the powerful written language was taken up and used by indigenous speakers.

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The missionaries’ first task was to learn the indigenous language forms. Mesthrie points out that in traditional missionary historiography, the linguistic proficiency of individual missionaries who were struggling to understand the new African languages has often been “romanticised”. They have been attributed an unnecessarily “glowing role...in the development of African languages,” lauded as the ‘fathers of African literature’ while indigenous contributors are made to assume a subsidiary role. Nonetheless, in Chapters Three and Four it will become evident that the missionaries working in Kaffraria did undertake a monumental labour in their transcription of an oral medium, a labour which rendered a number of significant outcomes, such as the creation of an orthographic system, the codification of the grammar into a rule-bound order, the assemblage of words and their translated meanings into dictionaries and lexicons, and the production of the entire Bible in the vernacular. I trace these outcomes by following the linguistic paths of five of the most influential missionaries in terms of the codification and systematisation of the Xhosa language.

Another important aspect of the missionaries’ linguistic work which I highlight in Chapter Three is their delineation of languages and their seemingly concomitant speech communities. I show that, presented with a vast linguistic field, the missionaries had to make crucial decisions about what constituted subsidiary dialects, and what constituted a language spoken by a ‘nation’. Throughout Africa, the codification of languages by missionaries has either resulted in the merger of a variety of dialects into one written form, or it has separated closely related dialects into autonomous languages – thereby magnifying differences between language forms which, some argue, should constitute one language. As Sinfree Makoni points out, precolonial African speech forms generally existed on a continuum, whereby one dialect was understandable to another dialect, which was understandable in turn to a third,

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212 Mesthrie, Rajend. 'Words Across Worlds.' pp 6 - 7.
213 See the collection of articles in Prah, Kwesi (ed.) Between Extinction and Distinction: the harmonisation and standardisation of African languages. As I shall show in Chapter Four, academics from the newly formed Departments of African Studies in South African universities also called for the unification of related languages.
while the first and the third dialects might have had significant linguistic differences.\textsuperscript{214} The idea of mutually exclusive linguistic categories was bound up in European perceptions of language which the missionaries brought with them.

Thus I will demonstrate the active role of missionaries in the invention of a language: not only by creating orthographic systems and prescribing authorised meanings to its words, but as importantly by specifying its boundaries. While these representatives of post-Enlightenment Europe believed in the scientific and political neutrality of their work on the local languages, "their decisions about the boundaries of different languages and about what counted as a 'dialect' of a particular 'language' were frequently dictated by missionary politics\textsuperscript{215}, social expedience, and European-based expectations concerning language, ethnicity and nationhood.\textsuperscript{216} These decisions resulted in the creation of hierarchies between the spoken and written forms, which, Patrick Harries points out, necessarily generate a political order.\textsuperscript{217}

The most significant effect of the missionaries' linguistic work was the creation of a standard form of the language. This involved the processes described above: creating a standard orthography, producing an authorised grammar, compiling a dictionary with accepted translations, and deciding which language forms were to be elevated to represent a range of related forms as standard. All of these processes were highly contested, not just between missionaries and locals, but significantly between the various mission societies working in the eastern Cape contact zone. The case of John Appleyard's translation of the Bible, which I examine in Chapter Four, highlights inter-denominational conflict over what should constitute the standard version of the language, and illustrates in one case study many of the themes touched on in the dissertation.

\textsuperscript{214} Makoni, Sinfree. 'African languages as European scripts.' p 244.
\textsuperscript{215} Standard Xhosa and standard Zulu were separated towards the end of the nineteenth century as a result of the competing interests of the missionaries working in Kaffiraria, and those working in the Natal colony. Makoni, Sinfree. 'African languages as European Scripts.' p 244.
Chapters Three and Four also emphasise the importance of locating the meaning of the mission and its work "not only on one side of the encounter, but in the relationship between the 'in', the 'inter'." The missionaries did impose their own terms on the encounter (their classification of languages, their appropriation of words to bear the meanings of Christianity, their orthographic systems), the historical impact of which finds voice in our current language policy. But we must also understand how the locals of the contact zone not only "succumbed" to, but also "resisted", and "recast" these "intrusive forms in their own image." I take up Mary-Louise Pratt's useful term "autoethnographic expression" which shows how "colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms." Another aspect of Chapters Three and Four, then, is to examine the ways in which the new written version of the language was used by its indigenous speakers "in response to or in dialogue with" missionary representations and impositions: partially collaborating with and partially appropriating from. I explore how the first Xhosa-speaking converts and interpreters shaped, reacted to and used both the evangelical 'Word', and the written word in the vernacular. I go on to examine the emergence of the first Xhosa literate elite in the late 1850s, explaining the ways in which they appropriated the written word in Xhosa for their own ends: as a weapon of resistance against colonial encroachment, as a new vehicle for the expression of aspects of indigenous culture and as a means of differentiation from other indigenous speakers. I demonstrate how this appropriation of the written word by the new generation of educated and literate locals contributed to the establishment, or elevation, of the language form of the amaNgqika (used at the major educational centre for Africans, Lovedale) as the written Xhosa language.

216 Mesthrie, Rajend. 'Words Across Worlds.' p 5.
217 Harries, Patrick. 'Discovering Languages: the historical origins of standard Tsonga.' p 166.
218 Coetzee, Carli. 'Gone Native: The South African Career of Johannes van der Kemp.' p 2.
219 Ezekiel made a strong case for the pervasive influence of the missionaries' and their language, arguing that even in their resistance to oppression, Africans "spoke out...in the medium taught by the missionary". This despite the fact that it was the missionaries, he argues, who were responsible for the "conquest of the black mind." cited in Comaroff, John and Jean. Of Revelation and Revolution. Vol. 1. p 4.
221 Pratt, Mary-Louise. Imperial Eyes. p 7
The missionaries' reason for learning Xhosa was to facilitate their primary aim of conversion. Indigenous speakers had their own distinct uses for learning their language in its written form. In Chapter Five I move away from a focus on Xhosa, and document how Bantu languages in general acquired a new kind of value for academic language scholars. I argue that there was always a collaborative outlook between the missionaries and the philologists, since the latter would use the "raw materials" provided by the former, and transform them into a product of science which would, it was argued, make the missionaries' labours more efficient. Scientific advancement and missionary conversion, through the use of African languages, was thus a dual project. One aspect of this chapter is to examine the efforts of early scholars to open up the field of African languages, and promote the importance of studying African languages for both practical and theoretical reasons. This, I demonstrate, formed the backdrop to the establishment of the first Department of Bantu Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1921, where learning South African languages took on a new significance.

This notion of undertaking work on the languages of southern Africa for the dual use of both practitioners and academics, and the tensions between these two separate goals, is what, I argue, characterised the movement of language study within the walls of the academic institution. An examination of the struggle which the School of African Life and Languages at the University of Cape Town underwent in order to justify its place in the academic sphere highlights how the practical use of studying indigenous South African languages took on a new meaning as it came to be applied as an instrument for the effective governance of the 'natives'. From the outset the practical reasons put forward to the government in order to obtain funding - that is the use of learning South African languages in the formulation of native policy and training native administrators - conflicted with the notion that the languages should be studied for purely scientific and academic value. At the University of the

222 Ibid.
Witwatersrand, the funding obtained from the Chamber of Mines to set up a Department of African Studies created similar tensions.

In this final chapter, then, I trace the (not always smooth) movement of indigenous languages from their place in the mission station, to a new space: the Bantu Studies department in the academic institution. Here issues of funding, and the problems of justifying the legitimacy of the study of African languages in the university sphere come to the fore. What also becomes evident in this chapter is that once accepted as a legitimate academic discipline, South African languages became the property of academics, universities, and powerful bodies such as the journal *Bantu Studies*, the Institute of Race Relations, and the Inter-University Committee for African Studies – which now held the power to complete the process of the standardisation of Xhosa.

IV

Use of Sources

This dissertation draws on a range of contemporary sources, including travel accounts, missionary letters, diaries and reports, published grammatical works, and the notes and papers of early professional philologists. I have attempted to read these sources critically, to understand the motivations, meanings and social conditions which informed the writing of the texts. Following Pratt, I have read travel writings in terms of their connections with particular historical junctures, and attempted to establish “connections from travel writing to forms of knowledge and expression that interact with it.”223 I have also drawn on Fabian’s methodological strategy of reading word-lists, vocabularies, grammars and language manuals as “historical accounts, not just as sources of historical information.”224 In other words, reading these sources as texts means that the same characteristics which make them “almost

223 Pratt, Mary-Louise. *Imperial Eyes*. p i.
worthless as technical descriptions of a language” provide “valuable indicators of a communicative praxis” and the processes which produced the documents. By the same token, in reading the missionaries’ narratives I have followed the Comaroff’s idea that the “telling” is as “significant as the tale itself”.

Faced with a proliferation of missionary documents (they were “especially diligent providers of stories about their own intentions, projects and achievements”), I have had to read “against the grain” to understand the “complex social forces” of which the missionaries themselves were products.

There is not a proliferation of documents relating to the actions, thoughts and motivations of the indigenous speakers. Voices have not articulated themselves equally in written documents. Like all researchers working in this field, I have had “no alternative but to work with a highly distorted, disproportionate documentary record”. Bringing indigenous voices into the history of the Xhosa language has necessitated finding their names in missionary accounts and then reading their actions with an eye critical of the context. Written documents in the vernacular are an important element of this thesis, and they too are an important source, although as I argue in the body of the dissertation, one has to be aware that this writing was usually subjected to some form of missionary or publisher’s censorship. Because of my own limited ability to read Xhosa, I have had to rely on the secondary sources of historians of Xhosa literature to try to bring the voices of indigenous speakers into the history of their own language.

225 Ibid. p 11.
227 Ibid. p 35.
228 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
A note on terminology

Throughout the dissertation I use the term as employed by Europeans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'Kaffir' (and its varying forms), to refer to both the language as it emerged in its written form, and to what was considered a 'national' identity or a race of people comprising the various Xhosa groups. The term has acquired extremely derogatory connotations in the twentieth century but did not have the same connotations in the period under study. Although some historians have chosen to replace it with the term '[Xhosa]' in square brackets, I have decided to retain the word when used in its historical context. This is because much of my argument centres around how this word was used, and which language forms it included and excluded. Moreover, as Jeffrey Peires writes, explaining his own use of the term, "no historian can alter a written document, no matter how he might want to do so." Like Peires, then, I use the word "Kaffir" whenever a historical document does. It is not my intention to offend any of my readers.

Furthermore, one of the processes which this dissertation highlights is the standardisation of Xhosa orthography, a process which was only completed in the 1960's. I adhere to the changing spelling of the words 'Kaffer' and 'Xhosa' over time, and thus use a number of different orthographies throughout the dissertation.

231 Peires, Jeffrey. The House of Phalo. p ix.
Chapter 2

TRAVELLERS

"...[he] saw with the eyes of others, heard with the ears of others."

I

Collecting words, Ordering the Chaos

The first recording of what we today term as Xhosa is widely believed to be the sixty-six
word 'Specimen of the Caffre Language', which appears in the appendix of the Swedish
physician Anders Sparrman’s travel account, written between the years 1772 and 1776. He
certainly was not the first European explorer to cast his gaze upon southern Africa, and yet
this was the first time that any serious attention had been paid to the language of the land’s
inhabitants. The difference is that whereas much of the earlier travel literature had drawn on
the author’s preconceived imaginings of Africa, with troglodytes, half-men half-animals,
monsters, unicorns, mermaids and dragons filling the vast landscape, men of Sparrman’s
generation were drawing on a different system of signification. It was a system of
signification that had emerged with the Enlightenment, an age characterised by the
disenchantment of the European mind, eager to displace the fantasies and fictions which had
shaped visions of the world up until then. Concomitant with this crusade against irrationality
was the development of modern science as a means of ‘seeing’ and ordering the world,
whereby the mysteries of nature were open to investigation by means of direct observation,
experimentation and mathematical analysis.¹ Enlightenment thinking, then, precipitated a
shift “from mythical/superstitious frameworks...to the rationalized lifeworld of modernity”²

² Walsh, K. The Representation of the Past. p 2.
Most historians writing about the Enlightenment are quick to point out that this period is not a neatly defined and easily pinned-down entity.¹ Without talking about a smooth progression of neatly defined themes, then, there was a characteristic “bundle of ideas” that held primacy during the eighteenth century. ² Along with the idea that science and scientific knowledge (based on direct observation), the experimental method and comparison were the keys to expanding all human understanding, this “bundle of ideas” included reason and rationality as ways of organising the world; empiricism; universalism, whereby the same principles of reason and science can be applied in every situation; and the idea of progress, whereby the natural and social condition of human beings can be improved by applying reason and science. ⁵ K. Walsh reiterates the importance of this notion of progress, writing that “a fundamental of Enlightenment thinking was a conception of a society which was advancing, a society that potentially knew no bounds.”⁶ This was, Michel Foucault argues, the “emergence, or rather the invention, of a new mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques, completely novel instruments, quite different apparatuses.” And so instead of power just being exercised in terms of the relationship between sovereign and subject, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a new mechanism of power was created which was exercised “over the Earth and its products, much more than over human bodies and their operations.”⁷ ⁸

It was in the context of these ideas that Carl Linnaeus’ Systema Natura appeared in 1735, changing the way people would make sense of their place on the planet. The publication laid out a classificatory system designed to categorise all plant forms (known and unknown) according to the characteristics of their reproductive parts, thereby constructing a ‘system for nature’ through the descriptive apparatuses of natural science. Linnaeus extended his classificatory system through two definitive works, Philosophia Botanica and Species

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³ Hamilton, P. 'The Enlightenment and the birth of social science.' pp 25-26
⁵ Ibid, p 21.
⁶ Walsh, K. The Representation of the Past. p 3.
*Plantarum*, published in 1751 and 1753 respectively, which set out the standard botanical nomenclature still in use today which assigns plants the name of their genus and species, with a parallel system for animals.⁹ These scientific tools, one of a number of mechanisms of power produced in the eighteenth century should be seen, according to Foucault, as “effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge -- methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses for control.” What this means, according to Foucault, is that “power, when it is exercised through these subtle mechanisms, cannot but evolve, organise and put into circulation a knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge” which could serve the “techniques and tactics of domination”.¹⁰

Linnaeus’s taxonomic system is only one instance of the all-encompassing classificatory systems that “coalesced in the mid-eighteenth century into the discipline of natural history”¹¹. But this system has had a deep and lasting impact on Europe and subsequently the rest of the world, due largely to its simplicity and the fact that Linnaeus revived Latin, seen as a universal language, for his terminology – thereby ensuring his system’s penetration beyond the boundaries of Sweden. As this system took hold of Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century, his many self-named “disciples” spread across the globe: everywhere “collecting plants and insects, measuring, annotating, preserving, making drawings”, ¹² and making comparisons between all the new information that was gathered. Importantly, through these mechanisms of power, these men exerted subtle forms of control (through apparatuses of knowledge, rather than weapons) over the unknown land, the unknown people, and the unknown languages. One of these many “disciples” was Anders Sparrman, who set sail for the Cape of Good Hope in 1771.

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⁸ Pratt, M-L. *Imperial Eyes*. p 23.  
⁹ Ibid. p 25.  
This way of 'seeing' the world was a crucial tool for those travelling through unknown continents, for it allowed them to reorganise the unknown and unfamiliar land in a way that was comprehensible to their world view. Essentially, the tools produced in Europe during the Enlightenment were designed to effect a semblance of order out of chaos. An important manifestation of these tools in use was the publication of the first *Encyclopédie* in France between 1751 and 1772. Under its own entry, it is described as a design which would order knowledge and information as a "grand and noble avenue, stretching into the distance, and along the way it would find other avenues, arranged in an orderly manner and leading off to isolated and remote objects by the easiest and quickest route". 13 This example of Enlightenment thinking articulates the quest to render the world a neat and well-ordered place. Linnaeus himself wrote: "The Ariadne thread in botany is classification, without which there is chaos."14 The fact that Sparrman studied under Linnaeus himself, and was one of his most valued pupils, goes a long way to explaining the ways in which he saw Africa. Indeed, we are told by the unnamed author of the preface to Sparrman's *Voyage*, that he "applied to the study of physic, but his attention was principally engrossed by the science of botany, which he pursued with the greatest ardour under its celebrated restorer, and became one of his favourite disciples".15

Linnaeus, then, is a "celebrated restorer", echoing Alexander Pope's couplet:

> Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid from Sight;  
> God said, 'Let Newton Be', and all was Light.

The suggestion is that the order brought to nature by God's hand is waiting to be discovered or restored by men of science. And so instead of being a "mere collection of phenomena, a hotch-potch of occult influences"16, Nature was seen as the product of a system of intelligible

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12 Ibid. p 25.
13 Hamilton, P. 'The Enlightenment and the Birth of Social Science.' p 27.
15 Sparrman, A. *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*. p vii. The author to the Preface to Sparrman's account is unnamed. However, it is evident that he was a contemporary of Sparrman's (or perhaps even Sparrman himself talking in the third person!).
forces. In other words, “God was a mathematician whose calculations, although infinite, were accessible to man’s intelligence.”17 The key to the purpose of God, nature and man, was science,18 with people like Linnaeus and his followers making faithful representations of Nature’s plan.

Collecting the materials to make these faithful representations meant that scientific explorations had to be undertaken, which as Mary-Louise Pratt argues, saw the emergence of a new version of Europe’s “planetary consciousness”. This was “marked by an orientation toward interior exploration and the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history.”19 And so in the preface to his Voyage we are told that Sparrman was searching “for the works of the Creator in a part of the world hitherto hardly known to naturalists”,20 setting “out for the desert wilds of Africa”, “fired with the love of science and truth.”21 This is an important statement in light of Foucault’s argument that

there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association.22

And so we are told that one of the attributes of the age in which they lived was a “disposition to enquire into facts”, going on to place the weight of ’truth’ within the ambit of Sparrman’s writing by comparing him to previous travellers:23

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid. p 96.
19 Pratt, M-L. Imperial Eyes. p 21.
20 Sparrman, A. A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope. p viii.
21 Ibid. p v.
22 Foucault, Michel. Power/ Knowledge. p 93.
23 Sparrman here is being compared to previous travel writers who recorded seeing monsters and other such imaginative inventions. Indeed, in the introduction, Sparrman himself writes that “men with one foot,...Cyclops, Syrceus, Troglodytes and such like imaginary beings” are “not to be found in my journal” (Ibid. pxx) -- and yet in his account, Sparrman briefly digresses from his own scientific mandate, and devotes a couple of pages to the unicorn!
Few, indeed, are the travellers, whose writings may be relied on as the pure force of truth, unadulterated with error, or undisguised by wilful misrepresentation...the major part of these collectors greatly distorted and misrepresented the facts they have laid before the public, in consequence of a previous attachment to favourite systems.²⁴

There is a clear belief here in the infallibility of the “system” of science within which Sparrman was operating. This system, this discourse of ‘truth’, apparently, allowed Sparrman to “know perfectly well (which is never the case with the ignorant traveller) both how to see and what to look for”.²⁵ (my emphasis). For Foucault, this is not power “at the level of a conscious intention or decision”. Rather it is power “at the point where its intention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices...where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there...where it installs itself and produces real effects.”²⁶ By looking at power in this way we can “discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc.”²⁶

Men like Sparrman, then, were trained how to constitute subjects, or “how to see”: with a natural scientist’s eye. Just as early explorers had designed maps to make sense of the external shape of the land, so these naturalists were mapping out the unfamiliar contents of the land through the “labelled grids” of natural science into which foreign entities could be placed.²⁷ One of the things that Sparrman looked for was the language of the native inhabitants. His intellectual filing system was not exclusive to the land and its flora and fauna, for the human inhabitants of the land also needed to be categorised, delineated and made sense of. Thus he calls his collection of words a ‘Specimen of the Language of the Caffres’, as if he could well be talking about a specimen of some genera of plant.

²⁴ Sparrman, A. A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope. p vi.
²⁵ Ibid.
²⁷ Pratt, M-L. Imperial Eyes. p 30.
These sixty-words were probably collected during his journey through the Cape, from Cape Town, passing through the Warm Bath, crossing the Great Brak River beyond Mossel Bay and down the Langkloof to Leeuwenbosch near present-day Humansdorp. From there he passed the area where Port Elizabeth stands today, turning north-east across the sites that are today Sandflats, Sidbury, Aiedale, Kommadagga and Somerset East beyond the Little Fish River. His farthest point from there was the Great Fish River near Kookhuis. Thus Sparrman travelled into the western area of the present-day eastern Cape, and would have encountered a number of different language forms, and number of different people, including many who would have been of mixed Khoi and Xhosa descent. Of course, possessing the "ears of others", he was unable to distinguish between either, and thus recognised all the people he saw as 'Caffres', speaking a common 'Caffre' language. The process of classifying all language forms under one name, which was to become even more pronounced when the missionaries' began using the language for their purposes, was thus initiated.

Not only was Sparrman's "other ear" unable to distinguish between different dialects, it was also untrained in the recognition of foreign speech sounds. Despite this, his word list represents the first attempt at both lexicography and orthography in the Xhosa language. For the first time, letters were affixed to a language whose speech had previously not been represented in a systematised and fixed system, at least not in such a codified form as the Roman alphabet. Equipped only with the terminology of his own language and alphabet, Sparrman (and those after him), made the foreign language fit his linguistic frame. Indeed, he could not avoid describing the wholly new other than in terms of what he already knew.

29 I show in Chapters Three and Four that eventually the term 'Xhosa', which referred to all the different language forms spoken in the eastern Cape, was based on only one dialect.
30 There were, of course, certain means of representing speech and thought, such as beads and notches on sticks, but nothing as codified as the system of the Roman alphabet.
The task of making the list required careful listening and the help of an interpreter, a three-way process which could not guarantee perfect communication. Thereafter he would have to attempt finding a means of representing these sounds through the symbols of his own alphabet. Obviously Sparrman’s twenty-six letter alphabet could not possibly accommodate the distinct requirements of this African language, but with no better alternative, he had to make do with the tools at his disposal. An interesting example of this is the word he provided for ‘Yes!’ - ‘Aøë’. The same word is now represented in writing as ‘Ewë’, which shows that different tools, and different ways of hearing foreign sounds render a very different word. Another tool that Sparrman used was his method of ordering. He was not a trained lexicographer, and so did not arrange the words in alphabetical order; but he was a trained natural scientist, and so ordered the words in sections by subject: numbers, kinship terminology, anatomy, natural phenomena, animals, and so on. By using the tools of his conceptual background, Sparrman could attempt to make sense of the languages he encountered.

As one of the first European travellers to try and order what was conceived as the confusion of people occupying the land, Sparrman was only able to distinguish between this group, and another, the “Hottentots”, for whom he also supplied a language “specimen”. Humble though it may be, these are the beginnings of comparative philology, a branch of linguistics that was to flourish in the twenty years following Sparrman’s account. More than this, Johannes Fabian argues, using a paleontological comparison in the context of the Congo, that the first traveller to record Swahili words in a polyglot guide offered “to the ‘archeology of Swahili’ a kind of leitfossil.” This is because, and I believe it applies equally to Sparrman’s humble word-list, it “marks a base-line or first stratum in the history of modern colonial encounters

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31 See my discussion of the interpretation process in Chapter Three.
32 Some twentieth century philologists, notably C.M. Doke, imply that some of these early orthographies are more correct than others. I would argue that there can be no measure of correctness: they are all merely representations and versions of the language, with their own particular ways of constructing an orthography for a language without letters.
with African languages as media of communication." And since Sparrman could 'see' and 'hear' only two of the indigenous communities and languages in the eastern Cape, more tools besides mere word collecting were required to make sense of the unfamiliar land.

II

Language as the key to unlocking the history of mankind

Just under two decades after Sparrman had left the Cape of Good Hope, the British agent John Barrow included a thirty-four word list of the "Kaffer language" in his Account of Travels into the interior of southern Africa, in the years 1797 to 1798. When Lichtenstein applied the phrase "saw with the eyes of others, heard with the ears of others" to John Barrow, he was referring to Barrow's disparaging remarks about the Dutch settlers in the Cape Colony. According to Lichtenstein, Barrow did not understand the local inhabitants of European descent because he could not speak Dutch, was totally unacquainted with the general habits and modes of life of the colonists, and had only been in the Colony for a few months. But this reasoning could equally be applied to the ways in which Barrow (and indeed, Lichtenstein himself) saw, or did not 'see', the local inhabitants of African descent, since the organisation of his word list exposes the influence of the epistemological traditions that he carried out of eighteenth century Britain.

Nigel Penn describes Barrow as, in many ways, "the personification of the Second British Empire". Having ended his formal schooling at the age of thirteen, Barrow was a largely self-educated man, making it "his business to become proficient in mathematics, surveying and navigation skills". Barrow went on to become a founder member of the Royal Geographical Society in 1830, and was elected as a fellow of the Linnaen Society soon after

33 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power. p 16.
35 Penn, N. 'Mapping the Cape: John Barrow.' p 24.
36 Ibid.
his return from the Cape.\(^{37}\) And so while being part of the movement of scientific enquiry that marks the Enlightenment, Barrow was different from the earlier eighteenth century travellers who had all, to varying degrees, been "disciples" of Carl Linnaeus. These earlier footsoldiers of the Enlightenment believed that they were capturing and classifying reality in a neutral and objective manner. Their discourse of natural science and 'truth' was, for those using it at least, seemingly innocent. Of course, effects are not always the same as intentions. The "ostensibly objective process of representation masked the fact that the narratives of naturalists were ideological systems of great power\(^{38}\) -- power exercised through the subtle means of naming, describing and classifying. But while the effects of the various travel-writers may have been similar, in John Barrow we can discern a very different intent, one that was more overtly imperial. For Barrow used the tools of science, but travelled in the name of colonialism.\(^{39}\)

As the personal secretary to the new governor of the Cape Colony, Macartney, Barrow's work in southern Africa was undertaken as a servant of the British state. In the context of a revolt by the burghers of Graaf-Reinet, and without any reliable maps,\(^{40}\) John Barrow was appointed to undertake a journey of multiple intent into the interior. The Colony needed someone proficient at surveying and gathering reliable information, someone who could at the same time impress upon the turbulent inhabitants of the colonial frontier the dominance of the British colonial government, and also undertake a number of other colonial tasks such as reporting on the availability of timber and the mineral wealth of the interior, as well as discerning the suitability of a harbour.\(^{41}\) Importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, Barrow was also instructed to establish what "Commerce or Intercourse might be carried on with the Hottentots, Caffres, or other savage nations on our Boundary with safety, propriety

\(^{38}\) Penn, N. 'Mapping the Cape: John Barrow.' p 28.  
\(^{39}\) Ibid. 
\(^{40}\) The Dutch had hidden their maps after British occupation, and early accounts by travellers were inadequate for the purposes of the new colony. 
\(^{41}\) Penn, N. 'Mapping the Cape: John Barrow.' p 26.
and advantage". It must have been on this count that he provided word-lists of both “Kaffer” and “Hottentot”. Thus on one level these word lists were part of the colonial project, since they facilitated commerce and ultimately “advantage”. But more than this, following Fabian who writes about the Belgian traveller Jerome Becker in the Congo, “colonial expeditions were not just a form of invasion; nor was their purpose just inspection. There were determined efforts at in-scriptio. By putting regions on a map and native words on a list, explorers laid the first, and deepest, foundations for colonial power.”

Barrow’s trips into the interior, then, were designed to exert some kind of dominance over the unknown landscape. One of his primary tasks was to draw up a map, a process which enabled the cartographer to “control through surveillance; to conquer through classification; to organise space within a total system”. I would argue that it is partly this desire to control the landscape for colonial means that makes Barrow’s gaze so “other”. Indeed, despite a six month journey through Graaff-Reinet, Algoa Bay and on to Ngqika’s kraal beyond the Keiskamma River, Barrow still could not “see” the South African landscape, since it did not conform to “nicely demarcated vistas of private ownership”:

As none of the [extensive lands] are enclosed there is a general appearance of nakedness in the country...which...if divided by fences, would become sufficiently beautiful, as nature drawing the outline has performed her part.

This is precisely what Barrow’s comprehensive map of the Cape Colony did. It is assembled from the bearings and distances that he recorded on his journeys, and in so doing he replaced the “nakedness” of the country with his own scientific and geographical “fences”. Again following Fabian, who refers to Becker’s expedition as a “mobile colony”, Barrow’s journeys did not occur “outside an existing, if constantly changing, context of local and international political power.”

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42 Macartney to Barrow, 30 June 1797. cited in Penn, N. ‘Mapping the Cape: John Barrow.’ p 26.
44 Penn, N. ‘Mapping the Cape: John Barrow.’ p 27.
47 Barrow, J. An account of travels into the interior of South Africa. p 57.
48 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power. p 27.
In precisely the same way that Barrow could not ‘see’ the landscape without imposing his own “fences”, he could not see the land’s inhabitant’s without drawing lines around them. One of the “fences” that he erected was around language. Beyond the ‘practical’ necessities of orientation and communication, this amateurish and linguistically light weight attempt at language description had significant effects.⁴⁹ Although he supplied an even smaller word list than Sparrman, his account is important because instead of just placing the words in an appendix at the back of the book, Barrow’s “brief specimen of the Kaffer language”⁵⁰ is situated within a chapter of the book describing the habits and customs of the ‘Kaffer’ people. While Sparrman was drawing predominantly on the natural science traditions of his century, and thus his collection of words merits only a brief “specimen” at the back of his book, Barrow incorporated his wordlist into the heart of the book.

The difference is that Barrow was working within a rapidly growing philological tradition. It was during the eighteenth century that a comprehensive programme for linguistic science was outlined for the first time; and the great labour of word collection begun in earnest.⁵¹ Discovery and conquest of previously unknown places had revolutionised European ideas about language,⁵² widening the linguistic horizon and initiating a period of real linguistic research.⁵³ Collecting words, then, had become an intrinsic part of scientific inquiry, because it was by this means that the great linguistic questions of the ‘primitive’ or original language and the relationships between languages could be answered. With these questions in his conceptual framework, Barrow linked making sense of a language to making sense of an unknown land or people.

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⁵⁰ Barrow, J. An account of travels into the interior of South Africa. p 219.
⁵¹ Pedersen, H. The Discovery of Language. p 11.
⁵² Anderson, B. Imagined Communities. p 70.
⁵³ Pedersen, H. The Discovery of Language. p 9.
Prior to his journey into the Cape, he had embarked on a two year expedition to China where he travelled for hundreds of miles through the country picking up elements of the language. He further developed this experience of using language to try and understand the unknown land during his journey into the interior of the Cape Colony. Thus we find a description of both the “Kaffer” and the “Hottentot” languages slotted in between the “Kaffer’s” eating habits and their manner of disposing of the dead. Language was being used as another means of ‘knowing’ a people. It is important to note that Barrow showed no ostensible awareness of the philological trends, particularly in Germany (which I shall elaborate on later in this chapter), whereby language was understood as the “soul” of a “nation”. His use of the language was different: by placing it amongst other customs and habits, he was using it as just another way of ‘mapping’ out the land’s inhabitants, for it was understood as an important part of their history and culture.

By placing “Kaffer” and “Hottentot” words side by side, Barrow’s lists also represent the humble beginnings of comparative philology in southern Africa. However, his was not a coincidental or arbitrary comparison, as Sparrman’s may have been, as this remark preceding the lists reveals: “the following brief specimen of the Kaffer language, with the synonymous words in that of the Hottentots’, may serve to shew how little resemblance they bear to each other.” In light of this comment, it is important to consider that the time-frame in which Barrow wrote was about ten years after the spark to the linguistic flurry that took hold in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century and continued practically throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. This ‘spark’ was Europe’s ‘discovery’ of the ancient language of India, Sanskrit.

55 Barrow, J. An account of travels into the interior. p 219.
This discovery initiated one of the principle enterprises of European science in the nineteenth century: the historical and comparative study of Indo-European languages. Knowledge of Sanskrit was a genuine revelation because it presented to European eyes for the first time a complete and accurate description of a language which was soon to become part of the equipment of all European linguistic scholars. But more importantly, the 'discovery' of Sanskrit by European scholars confirmed the concept of related languages, with Sir William Jones’s pronouncement in 1786 that Greek, Latin and Sanskrit “have sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists”. This opening up of the languages of the East does seem to have had an effect on the way in which Barrow understood the “Kaffer” language, for he wrote:

I know not if the Kaffer language bears any analogy to the Arabic; but their word eliang for the sun has an oriental sound for expressing the same idea.

This questioning of relationships between languages, in Barrow’s case between the possibility of a connection between “Kaffer” and Arabic, was the direct result of the serious inquiries into the origins of languages that the ‘discovery’ of Sanskrit precipitated.

In the same year that Sanskrit was discovered, a great survey initiated by Catherine the Great of Russia of more than two hundred languages of Europe and Asia appeared under the title Linguarum Orbis vocabularia comparativa, edited by the famous German traveller and natural scientist, Peter Simon Pallas. The second edition, published between 1790 and 1791, contained comparative lists in two hundred and eighty languages, including some from Africa. The magnitude of this task gives an indication of the ever-expanding tradition of collecting and comparing words. When the similarly renowned Georges Cuvier delivered Pallas’s eulogy, he drew attention to the main reason behind this collecting:

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56 Bloomfield, L. Language, p 12.
57 Ibid. p 11.
58 cited in Ibid.
59 Barrow, J. An account of travels into the interior. p 219.
60 Pederson, H. The Discovery of Languages, p 10. Pallas is best known for his exploration into Siberia where he gained fame for his discovery of the remains of mammoths preserved in the ice.
An essential part of the history of peoples, one which takes us back further even than their written documents, is the knowledge of their languages.\[61\]

By this, he brings to mind the search for the 'primitive' language, the discovery of which would supposedly unlock the secrets of humankind. The importance of language in learning a peoples' history was well expressed by the German linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt:

Languages, when compared together, and considered as objects of the natural history of the mind, and when separated into families according to the analogies existing in their internal structure, have become a rich source of historical knowledge; and this is probably one of the most brilliant results of modern study. The comparative study of languages shows us that races now separated by vast tracts of land are allied together, and have migrated from one common primitive seat.\[62\]

Barrow articulated his own interest in the connection between the "Kaffer" language and the history of those who spoke it, writing that:

Not the smallest vestige of a written character is to be traced among them; but their language appears to be the remains of something far beyond that of any savage nation. In the enunciation it is soft, fluent and harmonious.\[63\]

By these "remains", it might be conjectured that Barrow was referring to the much sought-after 'primitive' language: the "common source" for Sanskrit, Hebrew and Latin, which, according to Sir William Jones, probably "no longer exists". But the way in which Barrow wrote this suggests that he was hinting at something different. When Jones said that the "common source" no longer exists, he effectively denied the pre-Enlightenment philological tradition of a biblical basis in which Hebrew was held to be the primitive language. In Barrow's speculation, on the other hand, lay the implication that the "Kaffer" language originated from a fully developed language, since it is the "remains of something far beyond that of any savage nation". It seems that while Barrow was influenced by some of the philological ideas that abounded at the turn of the eighteenth century, he simultaneously drew on an older philological tradition,\[64\] by which the original language was held to be Adam's language in the Garden of Eden (Hebrew), which was bestowed by God fully evolved.\[65\]

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63 Barrow, J. An account of travels into the interior. p 219.
64 By taking from the new philological traditions what he wants, and retaining what he chooses from older traditions, Barrow exemplifies the notion that Enlightenment ideas were not smoothly and evenly disseminated. Rather it was an uneven process, with those coming into contact with the ideas using them for varying purposes.
using the word "remains", Barrow seems to be following this tradition, making an allusion to the scattering of language after the Tower of Babel. The effect of these ideas found in Barrow's attempts to make sense of the languages he found in southern Africa was that, by contrast to other earlier travellers who depicted the languages they heard as barbarous animal-like noises, Barrow heard the language through far more positive tones, remarking on the "soft, fluent and harmonious" enunciation.

After his Account had been published, Barrow hazarded the opinion that the origins of the Xhosa people could be traced to an Arab race (an opinion anticipated in his comparison of their language to Arabic), speculating that "it might not perhaps be far from the mark to suppose them to have sprung from some of the tribes of those wandering Arabs known by the name of Bedouins". This would connect the Xhosa with the Semitic nations of mankind since, he noted, the Arabs are generally acknowledged as the descendants of Abraham through the line of Ishmael. This ties in with Barrow's earlier supposition that "Kaffer" is the "remains" of the original biblical language. And thus, I would argue, these "language specimens" were included in Barrow's Account as a means of understanding the history of the people who occupy the landscape of which he was attempting to make sense.

And so more than just putting letters to sounds, Barrow was trying to use the words he had collected in order to say something about the people who spoke the language. It is important, here, to discern exactly who, according to Barrow, these speakers of the "Kaffer" language were, since the labelling of the language and its speakers was an important part of the process leading to one standard Xhosa. In doing so we must bear in mind that like Sparrman, Barrow only came into contact with those indigenous people closest to the colonial border, including the Ngqika Xhosa, and other groups which had assimilated Khoi and Xhosa language and culture. As far as I can tell, he would not have encountered those indigenous people further

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66 cited in Smith, Thornley. South Africa Delineated, p 75.
67 Ibid.
east, who were delineated as, for example, the Mpondo and the Thembu -- but who today fall under the broad category 'Xhosa-speaking'. On one level, by commenting that the "Kaffers call themselves Kouissie"68, Barrow reveals an awareness that the naming of this group and its language as "Kaffer" is an imposed socio-linguistic label:

it is singular enough that the Kaffers...should have obtained a name that never belonged to them. The word Kaffer could not even be pronounced by that nation. They have no found of the letter R in their language.69

And on another deeper level, with perhaps less awareness, he has ascribed to a whole range of different indigenous communities one name. He does this by conflating "Kaffer" (which could apply to any number of African polities in south eastern Africa) with "Kouissie", a particular polity whom Lichtenstein would go on to call 'Koossa' and whom Bennie, amongst other missionaries, would delineate as 'Xosa'.

In this regard, it is interesting to compare Sparrman and Barrow's wordlists, where we find that their words differed quite significantly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English word</th>
<th>Sparrman's transcription</th>
<th>Barrow's transcription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>Lelanga</td>
<td>Eliang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The moon</td>
<td>Inyango</td>
<td>Janga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain</td>
<td>Evula</td>
<td>Imphoolsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ox</td>
<td>Gomo</td>
<td>Incabai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>Sefiuja</td>
<td>Eenja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Lilo</td>
<td>Leaw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One possible reason for the discrepancies is that the way in which these two men heard these words and then transcribed them differed -- the result of speaking different home languages as well as, no doubt, a fair measure of individual improvisation. What is also very probable is that although they both call the language that they are collecting 'Caffre/Kaffer', the words

68 Barrow, J. An account of travels into the interior, p 219.
have been taken from two different, albeit closely-related, language forms. It is probable that while Sparrman derived his word-list from a mixed Xhosa-Khoi community, Barrow’s were collected from the Nqika Xhosa, the furthest point of his journey. The effect of them both using the word ‘Caffer/ Kaffer’ was that broad groups of people were defined by one language which they did not necessarily share. Barrow, then, was playing his part in the language-labelling process. Just as his cartography mapped out the contents of the land and placed things in labelled grids, so too did he need to label the inhabitants of the land and their language (even though, as he acknowledged, it was an imposed label), in order to incorporate them into his system. The effects of this labelling, and the subsequent dialect subordination became much more marked when the missionaries become involved in the hierarchical ranking of language forms, whereby choices had to be made about which dialect(s) and language forms would carry the weight of the all the literature.

III

Language as the soul of a nation

As the editor of the Linguarum Orbis vocabularia comparativa, P.S. Pallas was a naturalist and a traveller, who also happened to collate the words from over two hundred and eighty languages. Before the missionaries undertook the task of transcribing the indigenous languages of south eastern Africa as their own, the last person to add significantly to this process was the German-born Heinrich Lichtenstein. He too was a (hastily trained) naturalist and a traveller, who happened to add a significant appendix of both the language of the “Koossa’s” and the language of the “Bechuanas” to his account, highlighting the lack of intellectual boundaries between disciplinary domains that was a feature of this period. Indeed, although the Enlightenment heralded the compartmentalisation of knowledge, the

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69 Ibid. p 218.
70 We know that both Sparrman and Barrow travelled into different areas of the present-day Eastern Cape, but unfortunately neither men mention at which point along their journeys they collected their words, and so we do not know which language forms are represented in their lists.
actual thinkers of the time did not always make the same rigid distinctions. And so the theoretical possibility of a link between linguistic science and the natural sciences became apparent, as the French linguist, Cournot, explained:

As a result of the coincidence of investigations, at the present time no science partakes more of the physiognomy of a natural science such as botany than linguistics does, because indeed nothing bears a greater resemblance to the organic structure, to the growth and development of a plant, than the organic structure and development of a language. And so the theoretical possibility of a link between linguistic science and the natural sciences became apparent, as the French linguist, Cournot, explained:

And it is in this light that Lichtenstein’s appendix of “Koossa” words must be examined, for the man who collected them was both a (self-styled) naturalist and linguist.

Having qualified as a medical doctor in Helmstedt in 1802, Lichtenstein applied for the job of tutor to the son of the Cape Governor, J.S. Janssens. With no background in the natural sciences, Lichtenstein spent a few days in Braunschweig just prior to his trip in order to receive a rather hasty training in botany and entomology, from, amongst others, the naturalist collector Count von Hoffmannsegg. The value of scientific knowledge and association with men of science to Lichtenstein is reflected in the fact that he did not dedicate his book to the patron of his South African travels (Janssens), but instead to von Hoffmannsegg, who was presented with Lichtenstein’s drawings and collection of plants and insects on his return to Europe. Soon thereafter, Lichtenstein was appointed Professor of Natural Sciences by Wilhelm von Humboldt at the newly-formed University of Berlin. Thus it is evident that Lichtenstein was another footsoldier of the Enlightenment, with the accompanying mindset that would influence the ways in which he saw Africa. As we shall see, though, it was a

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73 Coetzee, C. ‘Two Versions of a Journey into the Interior.’ p 78.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid. p 79.
76 Based on the only German biography of Lichtenstein, Carli Coetzee notes that it seems that Wilhelm von Humboldt could find no one else suitable for the position, and thus appointed Lichtenstein, even though he had not published anything in the field and had no zoological training. His lack of scientific training, however, was evident to his students, and also led to a number of injudicious decisions regarding the collections. When von Hoffmannsegg donated his collection to the Prussian state in 1818, he did so on condition that Lichtenstein would not administer it. Thirty years after the publication of his Travels, Lichtenstein himself acknowledges his inability, writing in a letter to von Humboldt that “I was neither prepared for the journey to Africa, nor for the professorship at Berlin when I received the call.” (Ibid. pp 79 - 80.)
mindset that constructed a word list which, far from rendering an infallible scientific 'truth',
says more about "hearing with other ears, and seeing with other eyes".

After his arrival in southern Africa, Lichtenstein wrote that "it seemed to me that one could
scarcely explore this country without almost involuntarily becoming a naturalist." And so, I
would argue, just as he collected plant specimens, so he collected word specimens --
arranging and ordering them in similar ways. In order to gather the approximately seven
hundred words in his lists, Lichtenstein presumably picked up words through conversations
with the help of interpreters, as well as acquiring many from missionaries (notably J.T. van
der Kemp), and possibly traders. Most of these words would have been collected in a random
order, leaving Lichtenstein the task of selecting and ordering them under the headings of his
choice. What is immediately evident is that Lichtenstein's classification of the "Koossa"
language into neat categories conforms to his European norms of knowledge production, such
as "Names of Beasts", "Names of Birds", "Names of Reptiles, Fish, Insects", "Names of
Trees and Plants", all of which reveal Lichtenstein's particular interest as a natural scientist.
In these lists we also see the extent to which Lichtenstein is influenced by Linnaean
classificatory systems, with his attempts to accompany common animal and plant names with
their Latinised scientific classificatory names, for example "Eland. (Antelope oreas)...Umpoo" and "Hassagai Tree. (Curtisia foginae)...Inslakusjane".

It is clear, then, that the way in which Lichtenstein used language was heavily influenced by
the scientific traditions of the preceding century. It is also important at the outset to
understand the philological traditions on which he was drawing, and to understand how these
influenced the way he used language. Besides a number of works on natural history and a
small collection of literary works, Lichtenstein's small travelling library included "the most

78 Twelve "Hottentots" accompanied them on their journey (Travels, p 12), and they would no doubt have
facilitated the imperfect three-way interpretation process.
famous travel descriptions of my predecessors Kolbe, Sparman, Thunberg, Le Vaillant and Barrow". According to Lichtenstein, though, these previous travellers had barely noticed the language of the land’s inhabitants -- and for this reason they had ignored the most important means of understanding the structure of society. Indeed, for Lichtenstein, language is one of the most important indexes of a group’s culture:

There is no doubt but that the situation of a savage nation, the degree of civilisation which exists in it, and above all, the relationship which it bears with other nations, can never be accurately understood without a competent knowledge of its language...The number of wants and ideas among a people...can never be so efficiently determined as by procuring a collection of their words, the mediums whereby those wants and desires are expressed, and those relations defined.

This extract from Lichtenstein’s Travels reveals, in a number of ways, his ideas about language. It is evident that he was influenced by the explosion of language comparison that occurred after the discovery of Sanskrit in 1787. And since P.S. Pallas was also German, it is also likely that Lichtenstein would have had knowledge of his Linguarum Orbis vocabularia comparativa. As has been noted, one of the most important outcomes of the discovery of Sanskrit was that it confirmed the concept of related languages, and it was with these ideas at his disposal that Lichtenstein remarked that, above all, language is imperative to an understanding of the “relationship” a “nation...bears with other nations”. And for Lichtenstein, this was because he believed that language was the way in which a speech community expresses and reproduces its culture, values, beliefs and practices.

It is important to consider Lichtenstein’s use of the word “nation” if we are to understand his view of language. The early eighteenth century German philosopher and linguist, Leibniz, stated in his early work on the improvement of the German language that “it is well known that language is the mirror of the intellect.” In the work of Leibniz, Raymond Schwab

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80 cited in Coetzee, C. Writing the South African Landscape. p 110.
writes, we find for the first time, but not the last, the “sprouts of the nationalistic vindication that was to infest linguistics”.\(^{83}\) To continue the metaphor, this “vindication” grew until the end of the eighteenth century, when nationalism as a concept, especially in Germany, blossomed.\(^{84}\) In this environment, language was conceived not so much as a particularisation of a universal structure, as had been the trend up until then, but as moulded primarily to the specific thought patterns of the speakers, and reflecting their particular ways of thinking.\(^{85}\)

One of the chief proponents of this nationalistic doctrine with regards to language was the well-known and influential eighteenth century German linguist, J.G. Herder. In his prize-winning essay submitted to the Royal Academy of Berlin in 1771, entitled ‘On the Origin of Language’, Herder asserts that a volk or nation is comprised of those people sharing a particular historical tradition grounded in language,\(^{86}\) going on to argue that:

> We Germans still do not understand the importance of a national language. The bulk of people still think of it as something that only concerns the grammarian...[but it should be considered] as the organ of social activity and co-operation.\(^{87}\)

In Herder’s thinking, then, we find that language, culture and community are inextricably interwoven.\(^{88}\) His idea that ‘national character’ and ‘national spirit’\(^{89}\) were linked to language was echoed by a fellow German travelling in southern Africa, Ludwig Alberti, who wrote in his *Account of the Tribal Life of the Xhosa in 1807* that:

> ...one requires to learn to know the *spirit* of the language, in order to judge it in the light of the principal degree of the cultural genius of the nation, whose mother-tongue it is.\(^{90}\)

It is this “spirit of a language” that Lichtenstein was articulating when he argued that words are the “mediums” whereby a group’s “wants and desires are expressed”, and their “structure” can be determined. And so we must understand Lichtenstein’s conception of

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86 Barnard, F.M. *Herder’s social and political thought*. p 57.
87 cited in Ibid. p 58.
88 Barnard, F.M. *J.G. Herder on social and political culture*. p 17.
89 Ibid. p 29.
90 Alberti, L. *Account of the Tribal Life of the Xhosa in 1807*. p 44.
language in terms of Herder’s, "as a kind of grid structuring thought and moulding national character", the "mirror reflecting the soul of a people".  

Lichtenstein’s view of language, however, is unwittingly inverted through his very own ordering, recording and translating of the ‘Koossa’ words in his appendix. Far from being a ‘true’ and objective collection (by an adherence to the scientific method), whereby words can serve as the “ mediums” for the “wants and desires” of the speakers of “Koossa”, an examination of the words in Lichtenstein’s list reveals how they also reflect the “wants and desires” of their European collector.

Lichtenstein began his lists with those words distinguishing human beings - man, husband, child and so forth. In all of this, there is no Xhosa word provided for ‘woman’ or ‘girl’. Although Lichtenstein included the word “Toombi”, which in standard Xhosa today signifies a ‘growing girl’, he ascribed it with the meaning “a virgin”. Bearing in mind that in day-to-day usage words do not have one inherent, fixed meaning, and if we accept that the word’s meaning has not shifted too dramatically in the past two hundred years, then it becomes necessary to examine why Lichtenstein would use this word as a manner of referring to a girl’s sexual status. Indeed, in the same way he listed words for ‘pregnant woman’ and ‘barren woman’, but still no word for a simple distinction of the feminine sex, neither young nor old. This might be explained by the fact that there are some fascinating sexualised descriptions in Lichtenstein’s account, edited out of the English version by the (female) translator, in which it is evident that Lichtenstein found Xhosa women extremely attractive. We are alerted at the outset, then, to problems which may reveal that Lichtenstein’s lists of words serve as an inadequate mirror of the “Koossa” psyche, contrary to his own expressed beliefs.

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92 Thank you to Dr. Carli Coetzee for pointing this out.
Another example of the problems inherent in explaining one language through the mindset of another is found in some of the words listed by Lichtenstein under the heading "Things related to the Earth and Heavens". Here we find translations for various natural phenomena: sand, brass, a river, wind, drought, and so forth. It is interesting that what is probably the most prominent of natural phenomena, the sky, is seemingly omitted from the list. This might be explained by the fact that standard Xhosa today uses the same word 'izulu' to express both heaven and sky. Indeed, this word in Lichtenstein's list ('isuhlu' by his spelling) is ascribed the meaning "The Heavens" -- the capital letters probably denoting that this is the heaven to which a European conception of God belongs. What probably occurred here was that through his Christian-influenced conception of religion, Lichtenstein envisaged heaven as the place 'up there', denoting the sky. And so he imposed this conception of Heaven on the Xhosa language, by calling the sky 'The Heavens'. Thus we are once again alerted to the implications of collecting words and ordering them within the bounds of a European epistemological tradition. What becomes clear is that the transcription and translation processes meant that the written version of Xhosa could not serve the function which Lichtenstein proposed that it could: as the signifier of the culture of a linguistic group. Instead Lichtenstein's word-list reflects his own culture, as much as it does the culture of the speakers of the language.

While assembling this word list, Lichtenstein also had to construct an orthography for an oral language. The major obstacle for any transcriber of an oral language was that there was "no single method of representing the individual sounds that constituted local speech forms in the characters of the Latin alphabet".93 C.M. Doke remarks that although "there are faults of recording to be found, Lichtenstein's is the best traveller's vocabulary of this period".94 Indeed, Lichtenstein disregarded the difficulties of representing a completely foreign

93 Harries, P. 'Discovering the historical origins of standard Tsonga in southern Africa.' p 157.
94 Doke, C.M. Contributions to the History of Bantu Linguistics. p 29. I would argue that measures of correctness are quite arbitrary, rather there are different versions of representation.
language through the sounds employed in the transcription of his own language, by explaining in his commentary that

[Xhosa] has almost the sound of Italian, and it is not difficult to be pronounced by Europeans of any nation, at the very first hearing of it: A German finds no difficulty in writing down with the characters of his own language, so as to preserve exactly in his memory the right pronunciation.\(^{95}\)

Lichtenstein exhibited no awareness of the fact that he heard "with the ears of others". And indeed, despite his confidence, Lichtenstein’s orthography never became the standard. Right up until the mid-twentieth century, philologists were still arguing over what orthography would best convey the "right pronunciation" -- showing that it was not so simple to represent the distinctive sounds of another language as Lichtenstein suggested.

It is very interesting, too, that Lichtenstein chose to compare the sound of Xhosa to that of Italian. George Thompson made a similar comparison in his Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa, published in 1827:

The Caffer language...is very ductile, and capable of innumerable inflections and new combinations - in this respect resembling the classic...tongues.\(^{96}\)

It seems that both of these men made similar suppositions to Barrow’s when he spoke about Xhosa as the “remains of something far beyond that of any savage nation” with “soft, fluent and harmonious” sounds. Like Barrow, they were writing in the wake of the European discovery of Sanskrit, a discovery which confirmed the relation between the languages of Europe and the languages of the East. However, it is not clear that Lichtenstein was working from the same biblical tradition as Barrow; the similarity between the two lies in the link they both drew between Xhosa and an established European language, and the positive light in which this cast the African language.\(^{97}\)


\(^{96}\) Thompson, G. Travels and Adventures in southern Africa. p 212.

\(^{97}\) This positive way in which they described the language is especially interesting in light of what Gobineau would say in the latter half of the century about 'weak' and 'strong' languages, casting African languages in a very negative light. Perhaps it was Gobineau’s influence which led Meinhof to write almost a century later about the “half-bestial” sounds of African languages. (see Chapter Five).
This comparison between Xhosa and Italian, coupled with the inclusion of word lists for both “Koossa” and “Bechuana” showed that Lichtenstein was moving, more than any of the earlier transcribers of Xhosa, in the direction of the discipline of comparative linguistics which was developing rapidly in Europe. It is generally conceded that in his paper ‘Bemerkungen über die Sprachen der Sudafricanischen wilden Volkerstamme’, published in 1808, Lichtenstein was the first to point out explicitly that the “inhabitants of Southern Africa may be divided into two principle races, viz. the Hottentots and the Kaffirs”, delineating the space of the latter as “the East Coast of Africa from 10 degrees to 12 degrees S. to the frontiers of the Dutch colony, as one nation”.\footnote{cited in Doke, C.M. Contributions to the History of Bantu Linguistics. p 55.} Thus not only did Lichtenstein fence a whole clump of language forms off into their own linguistic space, but he also constructed for them a sociolinguistic space when he called the “Kaffirs” one “nation” or “race”, revealing once again the influence of Herder’s ideas about the connection between language, nation and identity.

Furthermore, the accompanying remarks to his list of “Bechuana” words reveal that he conceived of this language and “Koossa” as dialects of the overriding “Kaffir” language.\footnote{Here Lichtenstein is perhaps anticipating Wilhelm Bleek’s delineation of the Bantu language family, of which Xhosa and Setswana were members.} One of his methods for distinguishing between the two is that “the generality of the Caffre dialects differ again from that of the Koossas in the total absence of the rattling r, which makes them particularly soft and smooth.”\footnote{Ibid.} By using the word “Koossa” to signify all those “Caffre dialects” that have a “rattling r”, Lichtenstein was paving the way for one language form from a cluster of closely-related languages to subordinate other language forms by being stabilised as the standard, here by specifying its name. “Koossa/ Xosa” was the name given to the language that the Scottish missionaries around Lovedale would later develop into the standard Xhosa language for their own distinct purposes of conveying the Word of God. It was also the label applied to the different language forms used by the Wesleyan missionaries at their stations further east. As I shall show in the following chapters, this discrepancy over
what language forms were subsumed under the label led to conflict between these two prominent mission societies, a conflict which resulted in Ngqika Xhosa coming to form the basis of standard Xhosa.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that for Sparrman, Barrow and Lichtenstein, there was more than just a detached scholarly interest in word collection and comparative language studies. They all pursued their scientific interests with attention to the use to which their language work could be put, whether as a category in the broader project of scientific classification, a means of obtaining colonial advantage, or a way of understanding (and controlling) a foreign landscape and its foreign people. And, Fabian argues, the wordlists of explorers like Becker and Pallas did more than impose a semblance of order on a bewildering multitude of languages: they were equally instruments of government which "helped create a frame for later language policies". Although I would not argue that the wordlists made by travellers in southern Africa were "instruments of government", there is a case to be made that men like Sparrman, Lichtenstein and Barrow laid down the conceptual framework which opened up the landscape for eventual colonial domination, and informed the ways in which the missionaries understood and used the indigenous languages.

101 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power, p 41.
Chapter 3
MISSIONARIES, INTERPRETERS and CONVERTS
"...reducing to form and rule this language which had hitherto floated in the wind."

I
Conveying 'the Word', Constructing a Language

The groups of missionaries working in the present-day eastern Cape during the nineteenth century formed part of a broader Protestant evangelical movement which had begun in the early eighteenth century, developing steadily through the next century. This missionary movement, it has been argued, was an expression of, amongst other factors, the social emancipation of the under-privileged classes, the Evangelical Revival, the Industrial Revolution, and the social upheaval in France. Central to the movement was the belief that some form of this social emancipation (through the preachings of Christianity) could be extended to unbelievers across the globe. This was the primary distinction between the missionaries who came to southern Africa and the earlier scientific travellers like Sparrman, Lichtentenstein and Barrow. As one Wesleyan Missionary who worked in the eastern Cape, Rev. Thornley Smith, explained:

The mere scientific traveller might come in contact with the Hottentot and the Kaffir, and after inquiring into their customs and observing their physical peculiarities, be satisfied to leave them as he found them; but the disciple of the world's Redeemer could not do this. Recognising them as members of the human race, and therefore as the purchased property of his Lord, he will desire and attempt their rescue from the vassalage of Satan, by the proclamation of the glorious tidings of the cross.2

2 Smith, Thornley. South Africa Delineated. p 94.
The important sentiment here is that missionaries could not leave the "heathen" inhabitants as they found them. And so while the earlier travellers had mentally fenced off the foreign landscape and its people to make them fit into their understandable universal order, the missionaries undertook the further task of converting the savage 'other' into what John and Jean Comaroff call the "currency of the Christian commonwealth."³

This conversion, I will argue, entailed "an attempt to seize control of the signs and practices of everyday life"⁴. My concern is with just one of these "signs and practices of everyday life" which the missionaries working in the eastern Cape contact zone needed to control if they were to carry out their evangelical mission: language. In this we find the beginnings of literacy in the languages spoken in south-eastern Africa, and importantly, the systematisation and codification of what was to become standard Xhosa in terms of orthography, grammar, and lexicography. And so it is to the special role as scribe played by the missionaries that I turn.

It is important to place the linguistic work of the missionaries Johannes van der Kemp, John Bennie, William Boyce and John Appleyard, within the context of the broader missionary movement. As missionaries, their aim while working amongst the people of the eastern Cape was first and foremost that of conversion. According to the Comaroffs, whose work centres on missionary involvement with the Tswana-speaking people of southern Africa, this conversion was taking place on two levels.⁵ The first of these levels was to convert the heathen African inhabitants to Christianity. This was a universal and very tangible missionary goal, whose successful attainment was absolutely dependent on making the native language capable of conveying the Word of God.

⁴ Ibid. p 199.
⁵ Ibid.
Thus the pioneer of the most prolific group of mission stations in the eastern Cape, the Rev. William Shaw from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, argued that "one of the most urgent duties of Missionaries in a heathen country is to acquire the language of the people among whom they are sent to preach the glorious Gospel." The difficulties of this process were described by the Rev. John Ayliff, also a Wesleyan missionary working in 'Kaffraria' who produced a Xhosa dictionary:

Few persons, but those actually engaged in Mission work, can form an idea of the difficulties presenting themselves to a missionary on entering his field of labour; the principal of which is his being unacquainted with the language of the people among whom he dwells. This difficulty is considerably heightened with a people who possess no books, as was the case with the Kafir nation previous to their intercourse with Missionaries.7

But more than just "acquire" the language for their own purposes, the missionary also had to translate the "Holy Scripture" into the language of the people whom they were trying to convert "as soon as practicable", because "the pure word of God is the true and imperishable seed from whence alone can be obtained those fruits of righteousness."8 This very Protestant idea about the power of the "pure word of God" was not unique to the Wesleyan missionaries working in the eastern Cape. The sentiment was reiterated by the Rev. Hughes in a letter to Robert Moffat, who was working amongst the Tswana under the auspices of the LMS:

the simple reading and study of the Bible alone will convert the world. The missionary's work is to gain for it admission and attention, and then let it speak for itself.9

In order to allow God to "speak" through 'His Word', the early missionaries in the eastern Cape had to convert a purely oral language into a written one -- by giving the language an alphabet, followed by an orthography and lexicon, and eventually a systematised grammar.

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7 Ayliff, John. Introduction to A Vocabulary of the Kafir Language. p iii.
8 Ibid. p 291.
The comment made by a Wesleyan Missionary that “Christianity is essentially aggressive”\textsuperscript{10} becomes clearer when one considers how Rev. William Shaw believed that language should be used:

It has always appeared to me, despite the dictum of a celebrated person, that language is not given to us “to conceal our thoughts;” but that when the gift of speech is used, especially for the purpose of imparting religious instruction, it must be designed to reveal them, and enable us thereby to impress more fully upon the minds of the hearers the far more authoritative “thoughts” and “words” of the “Great God our Saviour”.\textsuperscript{11}

Shaw’s words are important, for they betray the force (implicit in his words “designed”, “impress” and “authoritative”) required to make the indigenous speech forms facilitate European and Christian terminology and epistemology.

On one level, then, the conversion entailed using language to make believers out of unbelievers. On another deeper level, though, only partially distinguished from the first, the way this language was used and constructed often also meant the conversion of what the Comaroffs call “consciousness”. There has been a lot of criticism of this idea, as I have shown in Chapter One, since the “conversion” was not always complete, effectual, or uncontested. I use their concept for its usefulness in understanding the intentions of the missionaries, even if these were not always the same as their effects. This part of the conversion process was understood by the Director of the London Missionary Society, John Philip, after his visit to what was then Kaffraria in 1828, as “smoothing the way for the triumph of science, increasing the produce of the earth, multiplying the hands employed in its cultivation...and elevating savages and barbarians to a state of civilisation”. “Our missionaries,” he wrote, “are scattering the seeds of civilisation, social order and happiness.”\textsuperscript{12} This metaphor persisted well into the nineteenth century, with Rev. Thornley Smith remarking that missionaries are “scattering precious seed on the ground which had

\textsuperscript{10} Smith, Thornley. South Africa Delineated. p 94.
\textsuperscript{11} Shaw, William. The Story of my mission among the Native tribes of South Eastern Africa. p 17.
\textsuperscript{12} Philip, John. Researches in South Africa, illustrating the civil, moral, and religious conditions of the native tribes, including a journal of travels. Vol. 1. pp x-xii.
hitherto produced nothing but thorns and briers, and diffusing light where the densest darkness had prevailed". 

It is clear that the evangelists working in south east African contact zone were profoundly influenced by the conviction that their civilisation was superior and that it was inseparable from Christianity. This was articulated by the Wesleyan Stephen Kay when he wrote that "our grand object...is to civilise as well as to evangelise the tribes." Making sense of the language and imposing what were believed to be universal grammatical forms following European models was an important key, then, to both the evangelical and the civilising missions.

It is necessary both to understand why the missionaries placed so much importance on language in the evangelising and civilising missions, and, simultaneously, to understand what the missionaries needed to do with the language, or how they "designed" (to use William Shaw's word) the language, so that it had the capability to convey the Word. The first step was to find letters to represent the foreign speech sounds as words. Part of this process meant devising an orthography for a previously unwritten language. While the early missionaries were working in the eastern Cape, phonetics was still in its infancy, and so they generally represented the sounds of the African languages by the nearest symbols for sounds of their own. Since the missionaries varied in terms of their own mother-tongue, cultural background, and intellectual training amongst other things, different methods of representing the same sounds arose. The process of standardizing orthography was a long one (as the ensuing chapters illustrate), although attempts were made from as early as 1830. More than just supply letters, the missionaries had to affix to the words a translation from their own language. It is evident that in many of the missionaries' lexicons, this translation entailed making the 'Xhosa' language bear the meanings of western and Christian epistemology. Finally, the missionaries needed to 'understand' the language, and bring it under some form of organisation. To do this, the known categories of Indo-European languages, (such as

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nouns, verbs, declensions, cases, moods, etc.) had to be applied to the languages with which
the missionaries were working in the eastern Cape contact zone. In all of this, I will argue, the
missionaries were involved in the discourse of discovery: instead of seeing the transcribed
language that they produced as their own construction, they believed that they were
excavating and unlocking its structure, for the use of both themselves and the indigenous
users of the language. This bears resemblance to the natural science project described in
Chapter Two, where Linnaeus was believed to have discovered the God-given system of
nature, rather than to have constructed a system of classification.

An important question arises out of this process: how did the missionaries acquire the
languages they constructed? For the most part they arrived in southern Africa unable to utter
a sentence in the languages in which they were required to evangelise, and so were utterly
dependent on interpreters. What Mesthrie calls the "romanticised versions" of traditional
linguistic historiography in South Africa have often meant that the role of these interpreters,
and the interpretation process itself, has been underplayed. Although very little evidence of
the work of interpreters is actually written into the journals and grammars of the time, it was
a crucial part of the transcription process. In the eastern Cape, the early missionaries
generally relied on the Khoi to act as their guides and interpreters initially.\(^{16}\) However, these
interpreters knew little or no English, and so the missionaries would have to, for their part,
learn Dutch. Hildegarde Fast illustrates what Samarin has called "the chain of interpretation"
that the message would necessarily have to pass through before it was received and
responded to:

the information recorded had passed through various filters and media and had been
responded to, with these responses running the same gamut in reverse. Before the
message left the lips of the evangelists, it had passed through the first filter of British
culture, [and then the second filter of Khoi culture, finally being received by the
speaker of Xhosa]...Cultural differences were further compounded by the language
barrier...The ideas conveyed usually passed through two translations until the
missionary had mastered Xhosa himself - if indeed he ever did. First the missionary
had to translate the message into Dutch, either by drawing on his own knowledge of

\(^{15}\) Kay journal extract, 21 June 1830. cited in Ibid.
\(^{16}\) Mesthrie, Rajend. 'Words Across Worlds.' p 17.
Dutch as a second language or by the use of an interpreter, and then the Dutch was translated by an African into Xhosa.\textsuperscript{17}

And so while interpreters are conventionally portrayed in the colonial sources as "useful but passive intermediaries"\textsuperscript{18}, it is clear that they played a much more profound role in the ways the missionaries constructed the indigenous languages. As F. Karttunnen's recent book \textit{Between Worlds} reveals, "an interpreter was not simply a vehicle for translating the surface structures of one language into those of another."\textsuperscript{19} Instead, he or she was concerned as much with negotiating these filters as with facilitating communication.

Of course, any number of external and internal influences could effect the kind of interpretation and translation that took place. William Shaw recounted the following story about one of his Wesleyan missionaries:

A Missionary had on one occasion kept his native interpreter so long at this tedious and irksome employment, - while often repeating some inquiry \textit{why} a sentence should not appear in a particular form, which he deemed more accordant with his notions of the proper grammatical structure, - that the man's patience became exhausted, and he said "\textit{Maar Mynheer kan het schreven alyo, als Mynheer wil; want myn rug is al te danig zeer.}" "But Sir can write it so, if Sir likes it better; for my back is very painful!"\textsuperscript{20}

The fact that the missionary was trying to make the interpreter corroborate his own "notions of the proper grammatical structure" is enough to make us wary of the missionary-prescribed standard grammars; and then add to this all kinds of external factors (like tiredness, a sore back), and it becomes clear that language acquisition was not made through easy one-to-one translations.

\textsuperscript{17} Fast, Hildegarde. \textit{African Perceptions of the Missionaries and their Message}. pp 8 - 10.
\textsuperscript{18} cited in Mesthrie, Rajend. 'Words Across World'. p 16.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Shaw, William. \textit{The story of my mission among the Native tribes of South Eastern Africa}. p 285.
II

Language as the copy of universal nature

The first missionary to live and work amongst the Xhosa was the Dutch-born physician, Johannes van der Kemp, who arrived in Cape Town at the end of March 1799 under the auspices of the LMS. In May of the same year he left Cape Town, making his way across the eastern frontier and the Fish River, settling in the Tyumie Valley amongst the Xhosa people under Ngqika.21 Although Ngqika was suspicious of van der Kemp and his motives, suspecting him of being a spy for the British colonists, he nonetheless recognised the prestige associated with the missionary's presence, as well as the "possibility of gaining access to a new source of power."22 In the missionary accounts van der Kemp's settlement is described as a "bold and difficult undertaking; for at that time the Kaffirs were but little known, except for their cruelty, barbarism and superstition."23 Once he had arrived at Ngqika's kraal, he found there several farmers and soldiers considered by the Colony as renegades, one of whom was Coenraad de Buys, who had gained a position of influence with Ngqika himself.24 In Buys he found himself an interpreter, the intermediary through whom he could tell Ngqika the object of his mission, and subsequently gain permission to settle there.

Before examining the ways in which van der Kemp transcribed words and ascribed meanings, it is useful to explore, as Carli Coetzee does, the meaning of the message that he bore, the extent to which it was "one that could be performed authentically to an audience so different from" himself "linguistically and culturally."25 In answering these questions, Janet Hodgson looks to van der Kemp's "language barrier" as the most critical factor determining his failure as a missionary amongst the Ngqika. His misunderstandings and mistranslations of the

21 He remained there for less than a year, returning to Graaf-Reinet (the most distant town of the Colony) having made just one convert. (Smith, Thornley. South Africa Delineated. p 94.)
22 Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Sacred Power.' p 70.
language meant that he was never able to get "under the skin of their world view". Using these ideas, Coetzee looks at van der Kemp's orthography, translation and grammar as not only "an attempt to give readable shape to Xhosa", but also as an "example of the double-voiced (or multi-voiced) nature of missionary interaction" whereby attempts are made to hear and then represent using a system (of thought, ideas, alphabetical letters) developed in another language.

Van der Kemp's academic background gives many clues to the ideas about language that he brought with him from Europe. The Director of the LMS, Dr. John Philip, wrote about van der Kemp's high "reputation for literary attainments", since he could apparently "read and write in sixteen different languages, and the Latin was as familiar to him as his own vernacular tongue". In Chapter Two the French linguist Cournot was quoted commenting on the "coincidence of investigations" between natural science and linguistics, and indeed Philip went on to say that van der Kemp's "attainments in science appear to be equal to his attainments in literature", having "knowledge of chemistry, natural history, comparative anatomy and botany". And it is with this background in mind, with the tools of both linguistic and natural science at his disposal, that we should examine the first missionary attempt at recording the Xhosa language, van der Kemp's "Specimen of ye Kaffra Language" published in the first volume of the Transactions of the Missionary Society.

The "romanticisation" of the ease of language acquisition by missionaries, which Rajend Mesthrie reviews, was well demonstrated by John Philip when he wrote that van der Kemp's talents for acquiring languages enabled him to master the first principles of a language, to which he applied his mind in the course of three or four months. During the few months he

26 cited in Ibid. p 2.
27 Coetzee, Carli. 'Gone Native: The South African career of Johannes van der Kemp.' p 7.
31 Ibid. p 134.
was in Cafferland, he drew up a rough sketch of a grammar of the Caffer language, and formed a vocabulary of about eight hundred words.  

The reality was very different. Mesthrie quotes from a passage in a letter written by van der Kemp, published in the Missionary magazine in Edinburgh in 1801, concerning a request from Ngqika for van der Kemp to act as a rainmaker. Van der Kemp wrote:

I then returned to the Caffers, and said Jesus Christus intakha Tiko Inkoessi eal izoulou. Dia khou theta aule. Lo Khounika invoula: mina kosslieve. [his emphasis] ‘Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is King of Heaven, I’ll speak to him; it is he who shall give rain: I cannot.’

Mesthrie describes this sentence as a reflection of van der Kemp’s “interlanguage forms, rather than words actually found in the target language, Xhosa”. Amongst other problems, the first sentence is based on English and Dutch syntax, there is no copulative prefix, and in the third sentence he employs a familiar interlanguage strategy by “replacing a grammatical element (an auxiliary verb equivalent to ‘can’) by a more salient lexical item”. In other words, van der Kemp’s system for representing Xhosa in a readable form “differed radically from Xhosa syntax”. And so, bearing in mind the problems of representing a language with a system developed in another language and the fact that van der Kemp was still in the process of using an interlanguage as he tried to get to grips with Xhosa, we turn now to an examination of his “Specimen of ye Kaffra Language”.

This “rough sketch” forms part of van der Kemp’s ‘Account of the religion, customs, population, government, language, history and natural productions of Caffaria.’ Thus like Barrow, who placed his specimen in the midst of descriptions of Xhosa customs, language is seen as a core component in the understanding of the indigenous people amongst whom van der Kemp was interacting. It is being used as much as a marker of identity as were their

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32 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
“customs”, “history” and “natural productions”. Van der Kemp was not the only LMS missionary to hold this view of language. John Philip stated that in order to know the “true character of a people”, one must be acquainted “intimately with their language, their customs, their manner”. Both of these churchmen in Africa were acting on the view, which had developed in Europe at the turn of the eighteenth century and was expressed by linguists such as Leibniz, Herder and von Humboldt, that people who spoke the same language shared a common mode of thought, a common ethos or soul, which bound them together as a tribe or nation. Thus language was being used by van der Kemp not merely for the purposes of conversion, but also to try to fix the boundaries of what the Comaroffs call an “amorphous cultural landscape”.

Van der Kemp also drew on the western philological tradition whereby language was understood to consist, fundamentally, of words whose “referents were self-evident properties of the world”. This epistemological principle was well expressed by Bayly in his *Introduction to Languages*, published in 1758:

> Language is a Kind of Painting, as it were, the Copy of universal nature; Picture-like it supplieth the Place of Originals, and bringeth them into an ideal existence to every Spectator: Or in short and plain, Words are the substituts of Things.

This principle was also exemplified in van der Kemp’s attempts to determine how the local people of the contact zone conceived of a Supreme Being. Using Coenraad de Buys and a Hottentot informant, he asked the question “What do you say about the creation of all things?” The answer he reportedly received was “We call him who made all things uTikxo.” “Very well,” van der Kemp replied, “I bring that very one...to you of this country.”

40 Ibid.
42 Janet Hodgson describes how, for the Xhosa, there was no distinction between natural and supernatural -- everything was imbued with divinity. There were two principle concepts of deity, one relating to origin and the other connected with the sky and natural elements. The background God in Xhosa cosmology was impersonal and approached only in times of national disaster. (Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Sacred Power'. p 69.) In other words, there was “no clearly defined system of belief or cult of the supreme being”. (Hodgson, Janet. *Niiskana's Great Hymn*. p 27.) Unaware of this, van der Kemp conflated this belief system with the belief system of Christianity.
incident reveals the mutual interaction between missionary, Afrikaans translator, Khoi interpreter, and Nqgika listener; as well as the conflation, by van der Kemp, of two very different systems of belief.

Significantly, though, the result of this interaction and conflation was that an indigenous word was made the substitute for the Christian conception of God. Thus van der Kemp writes of the religion of the inhabitants of “Caffraria” that they:

have no word in their language to express the Deity...calling him Thiko, which is a corruption of Thuike, the name by which God is called in the language of the Hottentots, literally signifying one who induces pain.44

Here, the Christian conception of God fits a word that existed before the Khoikhoi had even heard of Christianity, taking it as axiomatic that indigenous terms should be synonymous with their English counterparts.45

This notion becomes particularly interesting in light of the Rev. J.W. Appleyard’s “verbal specimen” of different ‘Hottentot’ dialects in his landmark work which will be discussed in Chapter Three. In this “verbal specimen”, Appleyard affixed the following footnote to the word ‘Tshoiekoap’, taken to mean God:

This is the word from which the Kafirs have probably derived their uTixo, a term which they have universally applied, like the Hottentots, to designate the Divine Being, since the introduction of Christianity. Its derivation is curious. It consists of two words, which together mean “the wounded knee”. It is said to have been originally applied to a doctor or sorcerer of considerable notoriety and skill amongst the Hottentots or Namaquas, some generations back, in consequence of his having received some injury to his knee. Having been held in high repute for extraordinary powers during life, he continued to be invoked, even after death, as one who could still relieve and protect; and hence, in process of time, he became the nearest in idea to their first conceptions of God.46

The fact that a Hottentot word, with a history as the one Appleyard described above, was adopted47 by the Xhosa to designate some kind of divine being, and then had its meaning

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44 Van der Kemp, J.T. in Transactions of the Missionary Society, p 432.
47 It is interesting to note that, just as the gods of the Khoikhoi and San, regarded primarily as rain-givers, had been appropriated into the Xhosa worldview during their migrations to fill a world extended in scale and social interaction, so the “biblical God of the missionaries” would later be similarly borrowed “to fill an even bigger
altered by those who were converted to Christianity, brings to light a flaw in the "growing conviction that language, a human creation, could be made into a global medium of communication". This conviction resides on the fundamental epistemological principle that naming and knowing the truth was a "matter of managing signs and correspondences in a world of verifiable realities", whereby all human beings had the potential to know things by their correct name. What Appleyard's etymology shows us is that there is no correct name, no universal naming system, words (the signifiers) do not merely substitute for things (the signified). Rather, words take on and adapt meanings to suit their speakers' needs. And what we find in southern Africa is that these words often took on meanings that suited the missionary's needs.

In effect, by his use of the term 'Thixo', van der Kemp appropriated an indigenous term, and set about filling it with Christian content. As Janet Hodgson explains, Van der Kemp, like most missionaries treated African people as blank slates, failing to understand that, far from inserting Christianity into a religious vacuum, they were competing for sacred power with indigenous world-views, which appeared to serve immediate pragmatic concerns such as rainmaking and survival.

A brief examination of van der Kemp's list of eight hundred words reveals how this 'blank slate' approach, and the idea that "Language is a Kind of Painting, as it were, the Copy of universal nature" (no doubt inherited from his classic language training), was so obviously influencing the way van der Kemp translated and understood the foreign language. For example, he listed a Xhosa word for "the devil", translating it as "Thokoloze". The tokoloshe is a malignant creature from African folklore. It is clear, then, why van der Kemp has appropriated this word to express a concept that fits into his own religious epistemology. However, by taking an indigenous term with its own history and attaching to it a meaning that

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world with an ever more complex web of social relations." (Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Sacred Power'. p 69.) Van der Kemp had provided the word for this purpose.

49 Ibid. p 216.
50 Hodgson, J. 'A Battle for Sacred Power: Christian Beginnings among the Xhosa.' p 70.
51 Ibid. p 71.
suited his own needs, it is evident that the belief in a universal naming system by which words have some kind of inherent "correct" meaning was flawed. As Janet Hodgson articulates it, van der Kemp's method was the typical missionary method of "grafting foreign concepts onto the Xhosa tradition without establishing meaningful links."53.

Furthermore, like Lichtenstein (who acquired many of his words from van der Kemp's lists), the Xhosa word that today means 'sky', "Isoulou" by van der Kemp's orthography, was translated as "the heaven";54 and the word "Umloungo" was given the meaning "a Christian or colonist".55 Obviously, prior to the arrival of missionaries, the Xhosa would have had no need for a word to refer to a 'Christian' in their language. By making the indigenous terms fit his own meanings, van der Kemp has very interestingly entrenched in his 'Caffre' vocabulary the link between Christianity, colonialism and language.

"When the Missionaries entered Kaffraria", William Shaw wrote, "the language of its people had never been written: there were no hieroglyphical or alphabetical signs in use whereby the words of their musical and copious language could be represented."56 And so before van der Kemp could even attempt his word-list, it was required of him, during his "brief sojourn in the country" to make "some remarks on the subject" and attempt to "devise a scheme for writing it."57 The first part of his "Specimen of the Caffra Language" is devoted to his "scheme", as well as some commentary on the subject. He explained that the "Caffra

52 van der Kemp, Johannes. in Transactions of the Missionary Society. p 450.
54 Ibid. Janet Hodgson argues that "in traditional thinking there was little conception of a spatial dimension for heaven". (Hodgson, Janet. Ntsikana's Great Hymn. p 27.) Van der Kemp's translation brought these connotations to the word.
55 Ibid. p 452.
56 Shaw, William. The story of my mission among the Native tribes of South Eastern Africa. p 281. Like Barrow describing Xhosa as "soft, fluent and harmonious" and Lichtenstein comparing it to Italian, van der Kemp also made a very positive judgement about the language by referring to it as "musical and copious". Casting Xhosa in this positive light must stem partly from the fact that Xhosa was believed to be linked to the Semitic languages through biblical links. Another reason that a missionary like van der Kemp might have judged the language favourably was as a means to justify the time and expense involved in his transcription of the language.
57 Ibid.
Language...may be expressed in Writing by making use of the following Alphabets"\(^{58}\), listing twenty-four letters that can be found in the Roman alphabet. It is difficult to understand just how he has ordered the sounds and letters, since he listed them seemingly haphazardly: "A, B, P, G, Q, X, K...", not following the Roman alphabet's manner of ordering. He did, however, compare all the sounds to what he considers their English counterparts: "The B of this alphabet sounds as the English b in beer"\(^{59}\). What is interesting about this is that he saw the language in inverted terms, writing that "The Caffra language is destitute of the sound by which we express the r."\(^{60}\) The word "destitute", far from being neutral, is a term loaded with connotations of a language being less rich, as it were, than a European language which has the sound 'r'. In this we begin to see the resonance of Carli Coetzee's argument that "orthographies provide artefacts that speak of the contradictions involved in missionaries interactions with Africans", and that looking at orthography critically renders an understanding of the "in-between: in between texts, in between languages, between the ear and the mark on the page."\(^{61}\).

With the tools of this alphabet at his disposal, van der Kemp attempted to represent the words and sounds of the spoken language in writing. As H.W. Pahl argues, "strong French and Dutch influence"\(^{62}\) lay between van der Kemp's hearing of the sounds and the ways he transcribed them, as the following examples reveal (with the current orthography given in brackets):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Xhosa</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Current Orthography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pounzi</td>
<td>a duiker</td>
<td>(impunzi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injati</td>
<td>a buffalo</td>
<td>(inyathi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imvoubou</td>
<td>a hippopotamus</td>
<td>(imvubu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injossi</td>
<td>a bee</td>
<td>(inyosi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itsèlé</td>
<td>a frog</td>
<td>(isele)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oumtotè</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>(umntu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itzjoba</td>
<td>plume of a tail</td>
<td>(itshoba)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{58}\) van der Kemp, Johannes. in *Transactions of the Missionary Society*. p 442.

\(^{59}\) Ibid. p 443.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) Coetzee, Carli. 'Gone Native: The South African Career of Johannes van der Kemp.' p 8.

The alphabet was followed by commentary on how to pronounce the language. Van der Kemp ordered this commentary in the form of "rules", no doubt the result of the formal language training he had received in the Netherlands. Moreover, there are links here to the natural science project of placing the disorder of the unknown into a grid determined by the "rules" constituted by, for example, a plant's reproductive parts. In this project meant finding a commonality between an array of different phenomena in order to classify and group them. And so under the first rule in van der Kemp's commentary we are told that "all these vowels have their short sounds whenever a consonant follows immediately after them in the same syllable; in all other cases they are to be pronounced long." This prescriptive approach is the beginning of attempts to divorce pronunciation from the negotiated practice of the speakers of the language, and instead re-locate it to a rule-bound order. What the later missionaries would do was to divorce not only the rules for pronunciation from the speakers, but also grammatical rules.

III

Seeing the possibilities of the word and the 'Word'

In her historical novel The Burning Man, Sarah Gertrude Millin positions van der Kemp's interpreter, Bruintjies, as a powerful character. For Millin, Bruintjies' knowledge of the landscape and its languages superseded even the wealth of knowledge which van der Kemp had at his disposal, writing:

And Johannes might be a man of birth, of wealth, of standing, of learning, a minister, moreover of God; he might know the ways of society, soldiering and science; he might be a student of philosophy and theology and the master of sixteen languages -- but he did not know what Bruintjies knew, and that was this bit of Africa; its earth, its beasts, its people and its tongues; and he might speak of the guidance of God, but without the guidance of Bruintjies he could not traverse Caffreland.

63 van der Kemp, Johannes. in Transactions of the Missionary Society, p 447 - 458.
64 Ibid, p 444.
65 Even though indigenous speakers of the languages to this day negotiate the pronunciation of the language amongst themselves, as is evidenced by the many varieties of Xhosa spoken today, a missionary like van der Kemp had the power to make decisions about which form of the language was to gain the hierarchical distinction of being 'correct'.
Millin’s novel offers an interesting insight into how we might understand the position of local people as they interacted with the Europeans on the contact zone. On the one level, white people’s literacy had a “seemingly magical power” (no doubt augmented by their efficient technology and military power), which “endowed van der Kemp’s teaching of the ‘Word of God’” with “powerful mystical associations among the Xhosa.” On another level, the indigenous speakers possessed their own powerful tools, and some of those who came into contact with van der Kemp no doubt realised the advantage that could be gained from being associated with and learning this new type of ‘word.’ I turn, now, to the first group of indigenous people in the eastern Cape to interact meaningfully with the missionaries, the early converts and interpreters, who paved the way for literacy in the vernacular amongst indigenous speakers.

Interpreters were indispensable to the early evangelical project — both for translating the missionary’s message during sermons and preaching, as well for the missionary efforts to learn the local language and transcribe it into a written form. John Bennie expressed this in a letter to the Directors of the GMS shortly after his arrival in the eastern Cape, writing

I scarcely know what to say about the language. The attainment of it will certainly be a most difficult task; but to the poor people it is of great importance. We are much in want of proper assistants.

The Wesleyan missionary William Davis made a similar report in 1834 from his Clarkesbury mission, writing that the “station has been in great difficulties, arising from the want of an interpreter.”

Nicholas Omenka makes the important point that, without underestimating the missionary effort to develop the written version of the language, their success was largely dependent on

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68 It is important to note that interpreters were not always converts, obviously augmenting the problems of the translation process.
69 Report of the GMS, 1822.
the efforts of indigenous speakers -- yet they are never credited as co-authors of the dictionaries, grammars and translations which the missionaries produced.\(^{71}\) Indeed the names of interpreters and translators, on whom, as we have seen, the early missionaries were utterly reliant, are difficult to trace in missionary accounts, let alone the extent of their contribution in the development of the written language. Despite this omission it is important to understand the position of interpreters, and how their knowledge of both a European language (initially Dutch, later English) and an indigenous one, could make them "powerful brokers" between the missionaries and their own people, as Kartunnen argues in his book *Between Worlds*. Importantly, the early converts played a determining role in the development of a written vernacular, for it was their form of the language which was the first to be codified into writing. But more than this, these early interpreters and converts were the first indigenous speakers of Xhosa to realise the advantages and usefulness of both the Biblical 'Word' and the written word.

Yet the role of these interpreters and converts simultaneously "located them on the periphery of their home communities" as they entered into a relationship with the new arrivals to the contact zone.\(^{72}\) As Janet Hodgson argues, "the missionary vanguard caused much dissension among the Xhosa", since being associated with the missionaries was "invariably linked with" some form of "cultural conversion" -- resulting in their alienation to varying degrees from their countrymen.\(^{73}\) Two missionary accounts give evidence of how this division played itself out on the contact zone. Rev. Young of Wesleyville related the following incident:

A short time ago some hundreds of Caffres assembled at Pato's great place, with a view to dance, in consequence of the marriage of his brother. William Kama (a Chief), and our interpreter, went to prevail upon them not to dance; however all our entreaties were unavailing.\(^{74}\)

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\(^{71}\) Omenka, Nicholas. 'The Role of the Catholic Mission in the development of vernacular literature in Eastern Nigeria.' p 127.

\(^{72}\) Kartunnen, F. *Between Worlds*. p 79.


It is clear that the missionary interpreter negotiated an uneasy position, in which the advantages gained from being affiliated to the missionaries were weighed up against cultural alienation from other indigenous inhabitants. The extent of the potential alienation comes across in William Shepstone’s account of how an interpreter was mistaken for a missionary:

in October 1828, when we were driven from the station by the Ficani, the interpreter remained behind, as near to the Station as personal safety would allow, and visited it nearly everyday. On one of these journeys he was met by a man in a state of starvation, who, seeing the interpreter, thus accosted him, 'O white man, I have been seeking you...' The interpreter replied, 'Although I am a light-coloured man, and in clothes, I am not a missionary, but his interpreter.' 75

One of the earliest Xhosa interpreters to hold this uneasy position was Dyani Tsatsu 76 (c. 1791 - 1868) who was affiliated to Joseph Williams and later John Brownlee of the LMS’s Gwali station. As the son of a chief of the AmaTinde, a sub-group of the amaNgqika, Tsatsu had been specially left at the Bethelsdorp mission station (where van der Kemp had been stationed) to receive a Christian education. He returned to his father’s polity in 1827, where Brownlee was the missionary. 77 Williams expressed Tsatsu’s value to him as an interpreter, saying when Tsatsu was unavailable to accompany him on one occasion that “this is a great loss as there is not an individual to whom I could speak with any satisfaction besides him nor have I now any such able interpreter.” 78

In a similar vein to Sarah Gertrude Millin, Rev. Kayser described the value of Tsatsu’s knowledge of the local people in a letter to the LMS, writing that

As a preacher Jan Tzatzoë possesses considerable talent, his addresses are pointed and powerful and always command the attention of his hearers. His perfect knowledge of the Caffre character, his acquaintance with their habits, and customs give him an advantage which few Europeans attain in preaching. 79

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76 His name was also written as Jan Tzatzoë.
77 Maclean, C. A Compendium of Kafir Laws and customs. p 14.
His importance as an interpreter and convert brought with it certain opportunities for material gain and power in the context of a changing landscape. For example, he was taken to London by the Director of the LMS, Dr. J. Philip, to give evidence before the Aborigines committee. However, his was an ambiguous position, expressed in letters to the LMS (written on his behalf by Brownlee) in which he described the antagonism of some of his family members towards his conversion, and the difficulties in family relationships which this caused. The ambiguity of his position was also seen in his reaction to the wars taking place in the contact zone throughout the nineteenth century. It seems that he was able to differentiate between Christian interests on the one hand, and colonial interests on the other, aligning himself with the colony in the 1846-1847 war, but urging his people to remain neutral in 1850-1853. Tsasu’s position emphasises Elizabeth Elbourne’s argument that we should recognise that “mission Christianity was used constructively by many individuals seeking positively to reconstruct a broken world”.

It is important to emphasise that Tsasu was a member of the Ngqika polity, and as one of the first Nguni interpreters, his form of the language was highly influential for it conformed or constituted what the missionaries viewed as ‘correct’ Xhosa. Another member of the amaNgqika, and a contemporary of Tsasu’s was Ntsikana kaGaba — although he expressed his reaction to Christianity in very different ways. He was not an interpreter, but he is important for my purposes in this dissertation because of his position as a “connecting link”, pioneering the “indigenization of Christianity in Africa”. Rather than “grafting” Christianity on without establishing meaningful links, he appropriated it into his indigenous culture. His Great Hymn, the first hymn composed in the Xhosa language, exemplifies this indigenization. An important consequence of Ntsikanas adoption of Christianity into his

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81 Ibid.
world system was that his followers became the first literates in the vernacular, and they contributed to the stabilisation of Ngqika Xhosa as the literary language.

Ntsikana was living in the Tyumie Valley when he first came into contact with the evangelical message. Ntsikana’s biographer, the Xhosa intellectual John Bokwe, wrote that “Ntsikana was at the cattle-herding age, when one day a strange elderly, white man arrived in Gaikaland...the name given to this new arrival was Nyengana, meaning one who appeared sneakingly, as if by accident.”86 This was Johannes van der Kemp on the first attempt at a mission in the eastern Cape. According to Bokwe, the result of this encounter was that fifteen years later Ntsikana received a number of visions, and subsequently declared to the people in his kraal that “The thing that has entered within me directs that all should pray; no one understands it in this country as yet, except perhaps Ngcongolo” (referring to Rev. James Read).87 The exact date of Ntsikana’s ‘conversion’ is not known, but Bokwe places it at around 1815. Ntsikana was soon raised to a position of influence with Ngqika, based on his gifts as a ‘prophet’. It was through this role that he came into conflict with Nxele (also known as Makhanda), who held a similar position with Ngqika’s rival uncle, Ndlambe.88

The dynastic conflict between Ngqika and Ndlambe was also manifest in the division between Ntsikana and Nxele, which was based on their different reactions to the Christian message, their “diverse strategies for survival” adopted “in response to the white impact”.89 Janet Hodgson views Ntsikana’s response as “accommodation and growth” involving “an acceptance of the white man’s coming and the adoption of his faith on the Xhosa’s own terms”.90 Nxele was also exposed to Christianity, but instead of accommodating it within his

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90 Ibid.
world system, he rejected its teachings, while still drawing many of its signs and symbols into
the creed he had framed for himself. 91

Ntsikana’s reaction to Christianity is mirrored in his Great Hymn, which can be seen, like
him, as a “transitional phenomena”, written in the form an intsomi (praise poem), but
“inspired by the newly introduced ideals of Christianity.”92 It was also the “first literary
composition” in Xhosa “ever to be assigned to individual formulation”.93 And so like
Ntsikana himself, the Great Hymn drew on aspects of the new European culture, and
incorporated them into aspects of indigenous culture, making it (and him), in Janet
Hodgson’s estimation, “an authentic African expression of Christianity”.94 By drawing on
“the words, concepts, symbols, music, myths, legends and ritual of the African tradition”95,
but then filling these with Christian content, Ntsikana shows how two opposed systems of
belief could meaningfully interact. The appeal of this type of Christianity is evidenced by the
number of followers he attracted, including Nqika himself.96 One of the first to embrace the
new teaching was Old Soga, leading councillor to Nqika and father of Tiyo Soga. The
younger Soga was to become the first ordained Xhosa minister, and an influential figure in
the development of literacy in the vernacular and the construction of a standard version of the
language, as I describe later. It is clear that while Ntsikana never learned to read or write in
the vernacular himself, he is an important figure, for it was through his influence that the first
literate class of Xhosa people emerged. Moreover, there are interesting parallels between his
response to Christianity and the ways in which the educated Africans in the
eastern Cape embraced literacy on their own terms, as I shall show below.

91 Bokwe, John. Ntsikana: The Story of an African Convert. p 12. For example, in addition to “teaching orthodox
Biblical themes such as the Fall, the Flood, Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, and the concept of salvation
versus eternal punishment” he also spoke of “Mdalilephu, creator of the deep, and his son Tayi, and claimed to
have the same mother as Christ.” (Hodgson, Janet. “A Battle for Sacred Power.” p 71.)
95 Ibid. p 3.
96 Although Nqika’s refusal to give up aspects of indigenous culture which conflicted with Christianity meant that
his conversion was never entirely tenable.
Ntsikana’s “disciples” were not only among the first indigenous speakers to learn the written version of the vernacular language, but they also acted as some of the first Xhosa (as opposed to Khoikhoi) interpreters to the LMS and GMS mission stations that had resumed work in the Tyumie valley amongst the Ngqika after 1820. Moreover, it was largely their children and grandchildren who, as a result of their access to mission education, emerged as the intellectual elite in the second half of the nineteenth century. Of these early interpreters and “native teachers”, Robert Balfour Noyi, John Muir Vimbe and Charles Henry Matshaya stand out in the missionary accounts. What is immediately prominent about these men are their names. Samuel Krune Mqhayi, the son of one of the early converts, and one of the prominent literary figures of the next generation, explained the thinking behind naming and re-naming:

In those days English and Dutch names were much admired. Although one had a Xhosa name, a child would receive another name the day he went to school, or was admitted to the Church. Xhosa names were associated with heathenism. Therefore the privilege of a Xhosa name could not come my way, my father being the child of ministers, and one who was expected to be an example to other people. As a reader of the Holy Scriptures, he gave me the name Samuel, where he could have said Sicelo (petition) or Mcelwa (one petitioned for).  

Robert Balfour Noyi’s son, Makhapela Balfour, explaining his father’s name, wrote that

a person was given a new name by which he would be known as a Christian. So it was that Noyi was re-named ‘Balfour’. This became the practice for us who had chosen this new road. Nonetheless it was strange, because we had never seen anything wrong with our names.

Thus for the missionaries, these new names signified new identities, and an acceptance of European norms. The Comaroffs see this “mode of induction” as another manifestation of linguistic colonialism on Tswana identity. Those entering the church were conferred with new names, which, they argue, “was an evangelical refraction of the general tendency of imperialisms of all stripes to impose themselves by redesignating people and places,” thereby defining Christian subjects and setting them apart. But this construction of contrast

between the two cultures could simultaneously be used as a “vehicle by means of which persons could make, and remake, their subjective identities on a changing social stage.”

With these ideas in mind, I turn to Robert Balfour Noyi.

Noyi was Ntsikana's closest companion, and after Ntsikana’s death around 1820 he followed the instruction to join Brownlee’s mission station at Gwali. The minutes of a GMS meeting held in 1826 state that “Robert Balfour has entered on his work as a Reader or Native Teacher, in which he has been employed three days a week, in conducting Morning and Evening worship at Chumie.” He also conducted a school of about eighty people on the Kat River. In Noyi the GMS had found what they called a “native agent”, having received the backing of the Directors of the GMS in Scotland to employ locals in this position, as well as the financial support of charities such as the Dumfermline Ladies’ Association, who “had charged themselves with the maintenance of Robert Balfour as the first Native Teacher in Caffraria”.

Although, according to the missionary sources, he could neither read nor write by 1831, he nonetheless played the important role of assistant to Rev. John Bennie at Lovedale, who, as we shall see below, came to be lauded in missionary accounts as the 'Father of Kaffir Literature.' Noyi’s was an influential role, because it was his Ngqika Xhosa which was taken as the standard form of the language; and his involvement with Bennie in the translation of the Bible meant that he helped determine how Christian concepts were expressed through the medium of the vernacular language. Despite his important position within the mission, the praise for Robert Balfour Noyi was not unanimous. In later missionary accounts he was

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 I shall refer to Robert Balfour Noyi in this dissertation by his Xhosa name, Noyi.
104 GMS monthly minutes of meetings between those working in Kaffraria, 12 April 1826, p 22.
105 Ibid. p 28.
106 GMS monthly minutes of meetings between those working in Kaffraria, 9 March 1826, p 21.
107 Williams, D. The Missionaries on the Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799 - 1853, p 208.
108 Thirty-Sixth Year’s Report of the GMS, 14 April 1831.
described as fractious and uncooperative, refusing the directive of the Presbytery to move from Tyumie to Balfour in 1829. Moreover, when the 1834 war broke out, he even took up arms against the Colony. ¹⁰⁹ Noyi, it could be argued, was using the contrasting cultures to which he now had access to “make and re-make” his subjective identity on a “changing social stage”. Mesthrie views Noyi’s actions as possible “acts of resistance, struggling not to be absorbed into the mission sphere of influence, while still gaining some material advantage from his position”.¹¹⁰ This uneasy position in which converts and interpreters found themselves was well expressed by another contemporary of Ntsikana’s and Noyi’s, who also became a school teacher and native evangelist, Charles Henry Matshaya. He wrote that “by listening to the Word a struggle commenced within me, and I felt as if I had two hearts, the one loving the Word, and the other hating it”¹¹¹.

The ‘Word’ could thus be a divisive force, as could the written word. There were those who realised the importance of embracing this new form of communication. John Muir Vimbe, one of the first products of Lovedale who went on to teach with John Bennie, was one these people, writing: “I am thankful that the Maker-of-all-things has preserved me until I even saw His word written in our tongue.”¹¹² In Vimbe, who later became a contributor to the new publications in the vernacular which I discuss later, we see how the “makings of a literary elite were starting hesitantly to emerge”¹¹³. It is clear that interaction with missionaries was not an easy position for the new converts and interpreters to occupy. Concomitant with the forms of power, influence, protection and material advantage that came from being associated with the missionaries and their written word, was the struggle against being absorbed into the mission sphere of influence. Equally, although literacy in the vernacular was a powerful tool for those who could use it, it simultaneously created a new class of people: illiterates. Literacy, then, became a marker of social differentiation.

IV

"Collecting the stones": laying the foundations of standard Xhosa

When van der Kemp left his mission station amongst the amaNgqika, the area was closed by the colonial government for almost twenty years due to the unrest. Only in the 1820’s did the work of various missionary societies in the eastern Cape commence once again in earnest, with the assistance of the converts and interpreters described above. Amongst these missionaries was the Rev. John Bennie of the Glasgow Missionary Society, whose labours on the Xhosa language earned him the title amongst other missionaries of "The Father of Kafir Literature". Indeed, the Rev. Robert Godfrey was moved to remark a century later that “no worker on Kafir who wishes to understand how our knowledge of the language has grown can afford to neglect the scholarly work of John Bennie.”

Bennie earned this reputation because even though he did not make any major breakthrough in terms of understanding the structure of the language, he was certainly the earliest serious student of the Xhosa language – described by D. Cragg as the “earliest Xhosa linguist”. And so it is to Bennie that I turn in order to trace the path towards a rule-bound grammar, that would eventually constitute standard Xhosa.

Bennie arrived in southern Africa in 1821, joining Mr. John Brownlee who had settled on the Gwali Stream in the Tyumie Valley (where Ntsikana’s followers had found refuge after his death). Four years later, Bennie and Rev. John Ross laid the foundations for a new station 12 miles south east of ‘Chumie’ on the River Incehra, renaming it Lovedale, in honour of the

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113 Opland, Jeffrey. ‘Literature in Xhosa Newspapers.’ p 6.
114 The title was coined by the Hon. Charles Brownlee in July 1887 at a Missionary Conference in King William’s Town. (Godfrey, Robert. ‘Rev. John Bennie, The Father of Kafir Literature’. p 123.)
115 Ibid. p 133.
secretary of their society. From the outset Bennie was dedicated to learning the indigenous language. In a letter to the Directors of the GMS, Bennie wrote that

There is not another country in the globe where I could wish to spend my days. Even in my native land, I think I could not enjoy the happiness which I derive from the study of a language as yet unwritten, and in ranging among people sunk in ignorance and wickedness, but who are capable of the highest improvement...this...is the bright side of the picture.

One of his first tasks once settled at Chumie was to devise an orthography for Xhosa, and then to begin his work on translation and grammar. He wrote in the GMS. Report of 1822 that

We will...lay the foundations as well as we can, on which future Missionaries may build; and we have a few stones already collected. For we have got a little way with our Vocabulary. I have got the children in the school to repeat, in their native tongue, the Lord’s prayer, a morning prayer, thirty short questions, a part of the Creed, a doxology, and part of the twenty-third Psalm.

Bennie complained of the difficulties of laying these foundations, writing that “the chief defect in the attainment of it, besides the various clacks, is the ignorance of the Caffres concerning hundreds of objects, and by consequence of their names, with which the civilized world is familiar.” It is clear from this statement that one of the aims in “collecting the stones”, one of the foundations that he would lay, was to familiarise the speakers with the objects of “the civilized world” – showing the intent of using language for the “conversion of consciousness”.

In the production and dissemination of these “language foundations”, Bennie was greatly assisted by a small Ruthven printing press, with a quantity of type, ink and paper, which another Glasgow missionary had brought out from Scotland in 1823. Bennie called this a new era in the history of the Bantu people, and his reading sheet which appeared in 1824 is

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120 GMS. Report. p 30, cited in Ibid.
121 cited in Ibid.
probably the first printed text in Xhosa.\textsuperscript{124} The press was used first to publish an orthography, then a wordlist, an elementary grammar, and eventually for printing translations of the sections of the Bible and other scriptural material. Setting up the printing press, then, allowed Bennie to become actively engaged in what he called "reducing to form and rule this language which hitherto floated in the wind"\textsuperscript{125}.

In 1826 the earliest contribution to the construction of a standard Xhosa orthography and grammar was printed at Lovedale, entitled \textit{A Systematic Vocabulary of the Kaffrarian language in two parts: to which is prefixed an introduction to Kaffrarian Grammar.}\textsuperscript{126} W.H.I. Bleek noted that later Kafir grammarians were in no small way indebted to this publication, both in terms of the arrangement of the alphabet and the definition of the pronunciation,\textsuperscript{127} for it was Bennie's phonetic system that was accepted in 1830 at the Missionary Conference held at Buffalo (near present-day East London) in order to fix the rules of orthography. This was an important step in the process towards standardising a single Xhosa language. With missionaries working in isolation and often at great distance, and bringing to their work the ideas of their varying cultural and national backgrounds, the orthographies in use differed -- sometimes extensively. According to the GMS Report of 1831, Bennie's "progress during the year has been considerably retarded by a circumstance which has rendered, for the present, some of his labour useless, but which ultimately will facilitate the acquisition of the language, and cause all the Missionaries in Cafferland to speak with one tongue."\textsuperscript{128}

This "circumstance" was the lack of a common orthographic system. Attempts were made to solve the problem in 1830 when all missionaries extended their collaboration with other societies, with Shaw and Young of the WMMS, Thomson, Ross and Bennie of the GMS and

\textsuperscript{124} Clegg, D. \textit{Dictionary of South Africa Biography}. Vol. 1. p 68.
\textsuperscript{125} GMS. Report, 1825. p 11, cited in Shepherd, R. \textit{Lovedale and Literature for the Bantu}. p 11.
\textsuperscript{126} A copy of this book is housed in the Grey Collection in the South African Public Library in Cape Town.
\textsuperscript{127} cited in Godfrey, R. in \textit{Bantu Studies}, Vol. 8, 1934. p 124.
\textsuperscript{128} GMS Report, 1831.
Brownlee and Kayser of the LMS, meeting "for the purpose of fixing the rules for writing the language"\(^{129}\). William Shaw recorded the decisions made at the conference:

we all concurred in the adoption of the Roman character, as being on the whole the most convenient and suitable form in which to write and print it. The power or sound given to the vowels was in accordance with the practice of most of the languages of Southern Europe. The consonants represented the same powers as in English, with the exception that \(g\) was always to be pronounced hard, as in "give;" and \(c, q\) and \(x\) were taken to represent that great peculiarity of the South African dialects which is called "clicks;" while \(r\), not being required to denote its usual power in most languages, was used to represent a guttural sound of occasional occurrence and equivalent to the letter \(g\), as pronounced in the Dutch language... The alphabet having been decided upon, there remained no great difficulty in fixing the general principles of orthography to be employed in writing the words.\(^{130}\)

The deliberate decisions made in order to represent an oral language in terms of known symbols are very clear in this description, and the foundations of modern Xhosa orthography (with \(c, q\) and \(x\) given over to accommodate the clicks) easily recognisable. If Shaw had had his way, the clicks would have been removed from the language completely, since he went on to argue that if all translators of the scriptures, and other writers of Kaffir books, would "carefully and invariably reject every click word for which a proper equivalent can be found, many of these words would gradually fall into desuetude"\(^{131}\). This, notwithstanding the recommendations actually accepted, shows the kind decisions that the missionaries could make in their codification of the Xhosa language, since they were the ones who, at first, wielded the power of literacy.

In addition to his Introduction to Kaffir Grammar, Bennie worked on a much more elaborate unpublished manuscript Grammar, dated 1832, which was in the keeping of his grandson, W.G. Bennie, and given to the Rev. Robert Godfrey for his perusal in the 1930’s.\(^{132}\) In it, Bennie gives a treatise on the Kafir alphabet and syllables, as well as a detailed discussion of the noun, adjective, numerals, pronoun and verb. Despite his progress, Godfrey commented that

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\(^{130}\) Shaw, William. The story of my mission among the native tribes of South Eastern Africa. p 282.

\(^{131}\) Ibid. p 283.

over and over again Bennie seems to be on the point of discovering the Euphonic Concord, but he never actually strikes it; and without this key to unlock the secret of the Kafir tongue, he labours at unnecessary length in his rules and exceptions. But in spite of all this, he anticipates much that is embodied in later grammars, and notes also some things that are not to be found there.\footnote{133}

This comment is interesting because it reveals the idea that the 'Kafir' language is some kind of mysterious treasure box, unknown to its indigenous users, and needing the Europeans to find the key to open it.

Godfrey proceeded to quote parts of the manuscript in order “to indicate the scholarly nature of this first attempt to deal with Kafir grammar”\footnote{134}. Written some thirty years after van der Kemp’s “Specimen the Caffra Language”, it is evident that Bennie indeed taken great strides in constructing a written grammar for an oral language. Included in Godfrey’s article are excerpts from Bennie’s systematisation of pronunciation, which includes a section on “Accent”:

The accent is placed on the penultimate...and when a word receives an increase, it draws the accent forward...An exception to this rule places the accent on the final syllable of a few words...\footnote{135}

As with van der Kemp, placing rules for accent in a grammar book effectively means the removal of the flexible nature of oral negotiated practice regarding accent, and fixing it in writing.

In addition to the systematisation of pronunciation were rules on plurals, diminutives and augmentatives, prefixes, and forming the locative and articles. In a similar vein to van der Kemp, the 'Kafir' language was understood by Bennie in terms of what it does not have. For example he viewed as a “deficiency” the fact that “the Kaffer Language does not possess the articles”\footnote{136}. Despite this apparent “deficiency”, Bennie went on to devote an entire section to “Articles”. Thus he was affixing Indo-European means of understanding the structure of a

\footnote{133} Ibid.  
\footnote{134} Ibid.  
\footnote{135} Ibid. p 125.  
\footnote{136} Ibid. p 131.
language to Xhosa, when the language he was trying to understand did not even possess these aspects of grammar. In all of this it is evident that Bennie had “collected” a number of “stones” which laid the foundation for the construction of standard Xhosa -- a task which was now formally underway.

Bennie, then, was an integral figure in the laying of the foundations of a written version of the vernacular and of standard Xhosa. But before turning to the next missionary linguist, it is important to understand the role of Bennie’s mission society, the GMS, in the development of indigenous readers and writers in this standard version of Xhosa. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that all early literary developments in the vernacular are bound up with the GMS, and the history of its schools and its printing press. There were, of course, initiatives from the WMMS and the LMS, such as schools and periodicals in the vernacular (to which I return later), but “it was the Scottish mission that really became the focus of native Xhosa writing.”137 Lovedale in particular was the “focal point of the literate Christian culture which emerged” in the eastern Cape, a primacy which was “reinforced in 1915 when the South African Native College (now Fort Hare) was established nearby under the chairmanship of the Principal of Lovedale”.138 But this is to anticipate: I return to the missionaries themselves, and to the Wesleyan missionary William Boyce, and his contribution to the construction of a standard Xhosa language.

V

Unlocking the mystery of the ‘Kafir’ language

When Boyce was appointed to the Albany district in the present-day eastern Cape in 1829, he was surprised to learn that “no one, as yet, critically understands [the language]”139, and that the Wesleyans had not published a grammar of the language during the ten years in which it

138 Peries, Jeffrey. 'The Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited.' p 159.
had been operating in the area. In fact, he had been sent by the WMMS to southern Africa in the hope that his previous linguistic studies would help enable him to master Xhosa grammar. He met all expectations, being widely renowned in missionary literature as having "discovered" the "key" to unlocking the mystery of the "Kafir" language.

By the time Boyce arrived in 'Kaffraria', William Shaw had already initiated his "chain of mission stations", and Boyce was sent to Buntingville, seventy miles north of the Umtata River, amongst the Mpondoland under Faku. We are told by Shaw that almost immediately he applied "himself with great zeal and ability to the careful study of the language". It was a study of language based entirely on practical necessity. This was shown when Boyce wrote in the introduction to his Grammar of the Kaffir Language that "excepting the hope of being useful, there is nothing in South Africa to stimulate philological inquiry. The Aboriginal tribes offer no literary treasures for the amusement or edification of the student."

With this practical task in mind, Boyce, who at first was merely "collecting materials to assist Mr. Shaw in his Caffer Grammar", set about trying to understand what it was about Xhosa grammar that had eluded a scholar like Bennie. We are told, again by William Shaw, that

[he] commenced on a most careful examination on all points that appeared likely to explain the problem which he was determined to solve. Adopting the inductive method, he collected a very large number of words and sentences...The next step was to classify his collection, until gradually the whole reduced to a certain degree of order...

This is what Boyce himself calls the "labour of systematizing", making him a true representative of post-Enlightenment Europe, with his scientific, analytical and rational method of approaching the task. Indeed, upon his so-called "discovery" of the "key" to Xhosa

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140 Shaw, William. The Story of my mission among the Native tribes of South Eastern Africa. p 286.
141 Introduction to Boyce, William. Notes on South African Affairs.
142 Shaw, William. The Story of my mission among the Native tribes of South Eastern Africa. p 288.
143 Boyce, William. Grammar of the Kaffir Language. p iii.
grammar, Boyce apparently rushed into the house, exclaiming with the almost literal Eureka of Archimedes, "I’ve got it, I’ve got it!".147

As we can see, Boyce’s linguistic achievement of identifying what he termed the Euphonic Concord, was treated as some kind of great discovery (lost, waiting to be found), since prior to Boyce, "the key that would fit all the intricate words of this mysterious lock was wanting."148 Earlier grammarians noticed that inflectional changes came at the beginning of the word, not the end, but it was Boyce who showed that the noun is the governing element. More than anything, though, the term Boyce used to describe how the prefix of the noun determines the prefixes of related adjectives and verbs was an invented linguistic label for something that had, of course, always existed for the speakers of the language. But, having identified what he felt to be the characteristic of the ‘Kafir’ language, Shaw recounted that Boyce then “speedily made great practical use of his discovery”, publishing the first full grammar of the ‘Kafir’ language during 1834 at the Wesleyan Mission Society printing press in London.149

Boyce’s identification of what the Rev. Davis called the key to the “etymological structure”150 of the language would have required a very patient interpreter. Interestingly, we are told that Boyce relied predominantly on the eldest son of the resident Wesleyan missionary at the Morley station -- Theophilus Shepstone. Having grown up on the stations, the children of missionaries could often speak the language of the converts virtually as their mother-tongue,151 and so it was decided that the young Shepstone should reside at Buntingville and pursue his reading and general studies under the care of Boyce, while the latter derived all the assistance he could in the pursuit of his enquiries into language.152 The "assistance of Theophilus Shepstone" was "such an advantage", wrote Boyce, that “might

147 Introduction to Boyce, William. Notes on South African Affairs.
149 Ibid. p 290.
150 Davis, William. A Grammar of the Kaffir Language. p iii.
never again occur to me or any other missionaries" that he felt it his "duty to use every effort
to the full extent of what my health and strength would bear, in order to accomplish as much
as I possibly could this year."\textsuperscript{153} Shaw also remarked that in Shepstone, "Boyce had the
benefit of the assistance of an interpreter who was already more or less acquainted with the
general principles of grammar."\textsuperscript{154} Working with someone already acquainted with the kinds
of grammatical principles for which Boyce was looking reinforces the fact that what we today
know as standard Xhosa grammar has, in many ways, been constructed to fit the European
grammatical models with which Boyce and others were familiar.

In light of the prevailing belief in Boyce's great "discovery", it is interesting to consider
Sizwe Satyo's problem with Boyce's proposition that the entire 'Kafir' language is
characterised by the euphonic concord. A closer examination of the many language forms
used in the eastern Cape, he argues, reveals that "this rule of concordial agreement is not
always adhered to in the way grammarians would have us believe". In other words, noun
class membership is not always relevant in the selection of an appropriate concord.\textsuperscript{155} This
does not have a negative impact on effective communication, but it does show that Boyce's
system characterises only certain varieties of the languages spoken in the eastern Cape. It is
important in this regard to note that Boyce was working in Buntingville amongst the Mpondo,
and his assistant, Theophilus Shepstone, had grown up in what was then known as western
Pondoland, at the Morley mission station amongst the Bomvana. Thus the forms of language
with which they had contact were not spoken by the amaXhosa, which, however, did not
matter to Boyce since he believed that a single "Caffer language, with slight dialectic
varieties, is spoken by the Caffers, Tambookies, Amapondas, Zulus under Dingane, and by
those under Matzilikatzi, and by many tribes inland, north-west of Delagoa-Bay, as yet

\textsuperscript{151} cited Mesthrie, Rajend. 'Words Across Worlds.' p 21.
\textsuperscript{152} Shaw, William. The Story of my mission among the Native tribes of South Eastern Africa. p 289.
\textsuperscript{153} Boyce, William. in Missionary Notices. No. 213, September 1833. p 334.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Satyo, Sizwe. 'Soft Harmonisation and cross-fertilising vocabularies: the case of Nguni languages.' p 224.
unknown to Europeans.” There were, of course, variations between Boyce’s form of Xhosa (the WMMS had only two mission stations amongst the Xhosa, and none amongst the amaNgqika) and the kind of literacy that was being developed at the GMS missions, and Lovedale in particular, where Ngqika Xhosa predominated. The implications of these differences, and which form of the language eventually came to be regarded as the standard, shall be discussed later as I look at the controversy sparked by Bible translation, and the emergence of an indigenous literary elite who had all been educated at Lovedale.

Nonetheless, the importance of Boyce’s identification and labelling of the Euphonic Concord can hardly be too highly estimated, for it opened up a whole field of philological enquiry. Not only was it seen as the unifying principle that runs “through and regulates the entire grammatical structure of the Kaffir language”157, but it also became evident that it “exerts the same extensive influence over a whole family of languages and dialects spoken along the eastern side of the African continent, from British Kaffraria in the south to Mombasa in the north, and also far into the interior districts.”158 It was this Euphonic concord, then, that gave Boyce and many philologists after him the basis for dividing up the language families of Africa.

In the introduction to his Grammar, Boyce speculated that “all the languages of South Africa may be classed under two divisions or families.”159 The first, and what Boyce called the “most ancient” is that spoken by the Namacquas, Bushmen, Koranas, and Hottentots. Boyce created a hierarchical order of languages when he said of this family that

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these dialects are entirely different in grammatical construction from the Kaffir and Sechuana language: they abound in those peculiar and barbarous sounds called “clicks”; and, from their harshness, and the limited nature of their vocabularies, appears to be barriers in the way of religious and intellectual culture, and, as such, doomed to extinction by the gradual progress of Christianity and civilisation.160
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156 Boyce, William. in Missionary Notices. No. 213, September 1833. p 335.
158 Ibid. p 290.
159 Boyce, W. A Grammar of the Kafir Language. p viii.
160 Ibid. pp ix - x.
The questions which began to be asked after the 'discovery' of Sanskrit provide a key to this kind of thinking, for Boyce certainly seemed mindful of the much-sought after original language, from whence the more sophisticated languages evolved. His conception of a "more ancient" language suggests that he held a pre-Darwinian idea of degeneration (rather than evolution), whereby this "ancient" language found in southern Africa had been separated from its stem (as a missionary, he no doubt assumed this to be the language from the Garden of Eden: Hebrew). This idea of degeneration is echoed in his description of the language as "barbarous" and "limited", and therefore being "doomed to extinction".

The second division, according to Boyce's classification, is the family comprising the "sister dialects spoken by the Kaffir and Bechuana tribes, to the east and north of the colony". Just as Lichtenstein did when he first differentiated between the two main language families in southern Africa, Boyce also marks out the space of this socio-linguistic group. Furthermore, Boyce notes the common descent of Kaffir and Sechuana, based on many common words and "an almost perfect identity in the leading principles of grammatical construction". He considers each dialect to have sufficient peculiarities "to oblige the learner to consider it, for all practical purposes of speech and composition, as a distinct language". And what distinguishes both languages from others is Boyce's own invention, the euphonic or Alliteral concord.

It is also significant that for the first time, a 'Kafir' linguist distinguishes explicitly between what were perceived to be the different language-groups within 'Kafir' itself, although Boyce still did not tell us which one he used to write into the books:

Of the two sister languages, the Sechuana appears to prevail in the interior, while the Kaffir is principally confined to the Amaxosa, Abatembu, Amapondo, and Amazulu tribes, extending from the Great-Fish-River as far as Delagoa Bay...Kaffir and

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161 Ibid. p x.
162 Ibid. p xi.
163 Ibid.
Sechuana, comprising a variety of dialects, only slightly differing from each other, appear to be branches of an extensive language spoken through all Africa.\(^{164}\) This "extensive language" is what W.H.I. Bleek would term "Bantu" twenty years later in 1857. It is evident from this passage that when Boyce allocates the 'Kafir' tribes the space from the Great Fish River to Delagoa Bay, he is making decisions about boundaries and about what should constitute a specific language that are based on existing colonial borders. This raises questions about why the 'Kafir' language should stop right at Delagoa Bay; and why it shouldn't stretch into what is today Mozambique. One possible explanation is that Boyce was a member of the British empire, and his work appeared twenty years after the British had first claimed the southern shore of Delagoa Bay, while the people, language and land further north were under the nominal control of the Portuguese. Of course the term 'Kafir', only used by Europeans, could have covered the speech communities in these areas as well, just as today Zulu and Xhosa could be considered forms of the same language, rather than separate ethno-linguistic classificatory terms. While the missionaries had to make choices about how to label languages, it is important to bear in mind their often arbitrary, or expedient (in the case of American missionaries working with Zulu) application.

Finally, Boyce's linguistic work was important because his book became the classic, being used and studied by all Wesleyan missionaries prior to their journey into 'Kaffraria'. It's influence cannot be underestimated. Indeed, it was Boyce's Grammar that another very influential Xhosa linguist, Rev. John Appleyard, studied before commencing on his own grammar of the language.

\(^{164}\) Ibid. p xii.
VI

The making of a standard Xhosa grammar

Appleyard arrived in Kaffraria in 1840. In him, Shaw ventured, the Wesleyan Missionary Society had found “the right man to place in charge of our translating and printing department”. Shaw's belief was no doubt based on Appleyard’s background and training prior to his journey to southern Africa. The son of a respected Wesleyan minister, he had received a good schooling at Kingswood in Britain that, according Rev. Thornley Smith “no doubt laid the foundation for those habits of study which served him well in future years, and probably but for the Kingswood training he never would have become the author of a Kafir Grammar.” After leaving Kingswood, he was apprenticed to a bookseller and printer. Of this Smith wrote:

This was another field of preparation for his future work. Neither he nor his parents knew it, but God knew it. He was, in future life, to be the manager of a mission press in South Africa. What apprenticeship could have fitted him better for such a post?

It was only in 1834, though, that Appleyard gave his life to God. From the beginning of his missionary career, his conscientiousness and interest in language and language acquisition was evident. At the beginning of 1835, he recorded the following entry in his journal:

I must endeavour to rise every morning about five o'clock, and devote about half-an-hour to private prayer and the reading of the word of God in course - three chapters a day, two in the Old, and one in the New Testament. The remaining time I will spend in learning languages - Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings Hebrew; Tuesday and Thursday mornings Greek; Saturday, Latin.

He continued his studies after being selected in 1837 to receive training at the Theological Institution in London. Here he progressed in his learning of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, with "diligence and close attention to the subjects of inquiry", being placed "among the first of

167 Ibid.
168 Ibid. pp 6-7.
169 Ibid. p 12.
the students in his year. While at the Institution, he also began learning Syrian and Chaldee of his own accord, writing in his journal: "I trust that in these as well as my other studies, I am laying a foundation for much future usefulness in the church of Christ." With his aptitude and willingness to learn languages, as well as his training as a printer, it is evident why Shaw should have picked him out to be in charge of the imperative missionary tasks of translation and printing.

Before his arrival in South Africa, Appleyard knew nothing of the Xhosa language, but he soon noted in his journal: "This morning I began [Boyce’s] Kafir Grammar in earnest; and having got into Kafirland, I shall have every facility as well as every inducement to learn it. I shall be able to give most of my time and attention to it." And it was through the time and attention that he gave to Boyce’s grammar that his book, The Kafir Language: Comprising a Sketch of it History began to take shape, as some of his journal entries show:

*November 7: *Finished this evening my first study of the Kafir Grammar and exercises. I have endeavoured to do this so as to gain an insight into the nature of the language, and to see on what principles it is based.

*November 9th: *Tonight I began the Kafir Grammar a second time. I shall reduce all that I possibly can into a tabular form, adopting the plan of the declensions of nouns, and singular and plural euphonic letters.

*December 10th: *Finished this evening the second study of the Kafir Grammar. In fact, I have written out almost a new one, having made several alterations, both in matter and arrangement.

Ten years passed before this work was printed, being issued in 1850 from the newly established Mission Press at King William’s Town of which he was in charge. Appleyard’s work is widely believed to be the ‘ultimate’ ‘Kafir’ grammar, having been hardly advanced upon since its publication in 1850, when it was resolved at the Wesleyan Missionary Society annual District Meeting.

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170 Ibid.
171 cited in Ibid. p 18.
172 Ibid. p 33.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid. p 50.
That we have seen with great satisfaction the completion and issue of Mr. Appleyard's New Grammar of the Kafir language; a publication highly creditable to the learning and research of the Author, and which must become the standard Grammar of the language. (my emphasis)

As the Rev. William Davis put it, Appleyard's work was an "elaborate and exhaustive work on the Kaffir language", with its value being more for the "advanced student of African Philology", since it is "somewhat too erudite in its character to facilitate the ready requirement of the elementary principles of the language by one who is commencing its study." Appleyard wrote that his Grammar was compiled for the "successful and satisfactory prosecution of the important work in which [we] are engaged," with its usefulness being less in the simple acquirement of the language, and more in the sophisticated task of translation. Translation was a task which Appleyard was to devote much of his time and energy to. As his biographer, Rev. Thomley Smith noted, his object was not so much the edification of other missionaries, but more:

the glory of God and the progress of the Kafir tribes in civilization and Christianity. A man who gives a grammar to a barbarous people, even if he does nothing else, does not live in vain and cannot be well forgotten.

Here a tacit link between the civilising and the evangelical missions is again made, with language being used as the tool for both. The word "gives" is important in this regard, for it reflects the missionary understanding that, having "discovered" the grammar principles of the 'Kafir' language, it was now theirs to hand over to the speakers of the language -- in order to save them from both heathenism and barbarism.

In his biography of Appleyard, Smith also noted the missionary conviction by which "civilization without the gospel" was believed to be "no boon to a barbarous people." And

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179 Ibid. p 73.
so a person who makes "a blade of grass grow where no blade grew before" is a "benefactor to mankind", for giving the Word of God to a people who never had it previously is like the "blades of grass which spring into wheat for the support of their moral and spiritual nature". For the missionaries "civilization" had to take place "in the wake of the Gospel". Appleyard's influence, then, was seen to extend beyond providing the standard grammar, for he also used his work on the grammar to set about translating both the Old and the New Testaments -- a task which supposedly provided the conditions for civilisation, and at the same time reinforced the standardisation of the missionaries' version of the language, by spreading the use of their grammar and orthography.

The title of Appleyard's book reveals that this is more than just a grammar of 'Kafir' -- it includes a "sketch of its history" too. As practical knowledge of the grammar and structure of the language grew, the attention of missionary-scholars must have been drawn increasingly to the broader trends of comparative philology in Europe. A contemporary of Appleyard's from the Berlin Missionary Society, Jakob Döhne, exemplified this trend in his own Zulu-Kafir Dictionary: Etymologically explained with copious illustrations and examples, preceded by an introduction of the Zulu-Kafir language, published seven years after Appleyard's grammar in 1857. He wrote about the need for "rigid analysis" in order to find "fixed principles", and expressed the role of the missionary in terms of the "spread of scientific investigation" as follows:

I believe that in the divine plan of the redemption of a fallen world, one link of the chain of instrumentalties which tends to the great end, is the spread of scientific investigation of every kind; and that while the Christian Missionary always devotes the first place in his zeal and labours to the Gospel, he should, in as far as in him lies, likewise endeavour to enlarge the sphere of human knowledge by such additions as it may be peculiarly in his power to give. The interest at present taken in philological studies is very great; the enquiry which embraces all the languages of the earth is perhaps the most important of scientific investigations; and it is right that the Missionary, with his opportunities, should

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180 Ibid. p 85.
181 Ibid. p 72.
182 Döhne's fellow missionary from the BMS, Albert Kropf, also exemplified the new scientific approach to language in his comprehensive Kaffir-English Dictionary, first published in 1899. Just as Appleyard's grammar came to be regarded as the standard, so Kropf's dictionary became the standard upon which all subsequent versions have been based.
furnish all the aid in his power in order to render this investigation as complete as possible.\footnote{184}

Influenced by this kind of thinking, Döhne saw two objects in the study of "barbarian languages in particular": a "philosophical and a practical."\footnote{185} By the "philosophical object" he meant, following the same line of thinking as his fellow-German, Heinrich Lichtenstein, "the attainment of an insight into the character of a people, by means of an accurate acquaintance with the form into which its thoughts are moulded, and which is invariably the true expression of the national spirit."\footnote{186} Appleyard, more of a scholar, by his own admission, than a practical hands-on missionary, also believed in the "philosophical object" of learning language. And so added to the importance of his book in terms of what it did to entrench the standard missionary version of "Kafir" grammar, his book is also important for the way in which it classifies "Kafir" in relation to other languages.

Drawing on the growing base of knowledge being produced by the discipline of comparative philology, Appleyard wrote that

\begin{quote}
The Kafir language, although at present spoken by a race of people only just emerging from a state of complete barbarism, bears strong internal evidence of having been used, at one time, by those who must have constituted a much more cultivated order of society. Time has probably effected a deterioration in some of its parts, considering in whose possession we now find it; yet even now it does not seem to be the legitimate property of an uncivilized people.\footnote{187}
\end{quote}

There are echoes here of Barrow when he wrote that the "Kafir" language "appears to be the remains of something far beyond that of any savage nation." Appleyard, however, showed evidence of being influenced by a more recent philological trend in his argument that all the languages distinguished by the Euphonic concord "descend from one common original"\footnote{188}, an original which he traces to the Semitic family of languages:

\begin{quote}
Some resemblance may be traced between the Kafir and the Semitic families. The different forms of the verb in general, and the peculiar usages of some verbs in particular, together with many of the constructions of the relative and other pronouns,
\end{quote}

\footnote{184} Ibid. p ii.  
\footnote{185} Ibid.  
\footnote{186} Ibid.  
\footnote{187} Appleyard, John. The Kafir Language: Comprising a Sketch of its History. p 2.  
\footnote{188} Ibid, p 3.
sufficiently indicate this. Possibly, therefore, the Kafir may be a Semitic tongue, with 
the Euphonic concord engrafted on it.\footnote{189}{Ibid, p 7.}

And so instead of 'Kafir' descending, along with all other languages, from one original 
language (the seventeenth and eighteenth century mono-genesis view), Appleyard suggested 
that there were a number of original languages from which the different language families 
have evolved (poly-genesis).\footnote{190}{As a missionary and man of God, Appleyard could make this view accommodate his Christian training as the Rev. Thornley Smith does: “The origin of languages and dialects is another question; and again the Bible answers it in part, when it tells us of the Confusion of Tongues at Babel...We are not to suppose, however, that this event gave rise to many languages. The probability is that there were but few; for comparative philology has proved that all existing languages and dialects may be grouped into a few families, chiefly three - the Semitic, the Aryan and the Turanian.” (Smith, Memoir of Appleyard, p 48).} Appleyard went on to speculate that if there was a “parent 
tongue” still in existence, it would probably be found “amongst the tribes which occupy the 
interior regions to the south of Abyssinia”, with “good grounds for supposing that they are of 
Ishmaelitish descent, and consequently of the same origin as many of the tribes of Arabia.”\footnote{191}{Appleyard, John. The Kafir Language: Comprising a Sketch of its History, p 7.}

The implications of this kind of thinking are immense, for effectively he was divorcing the 
language from the people who spoke it, and then inserting a history which excluded the 
present speakers (“it does not seem to be the legitimate property of an uncivilized people”) -- 
all the while confirming his own western and Christian ideas about the “deterioration” of the 
'original' language.

What does distinguish Appleyard’s classification from other missionary accounts is that he 
showed an explicit awareness that the term 'Kafir' had a broad range of applications, 
including being a cover term for a whole range of dialects and language varieties:

In most parts of the Colony...the term Kafir is frequently restricted to one of the 
tribes, namely the Amakosa; the remaining tribes, so far as they are known, being 
distinguished by their own national names...the Abatembu...the Amampondo...the 
Amazulu...and the Amafengu. In relation to language, the word Kafir may be used as a 
general term, whereby to designate the different dialects spoken by these and their 
sister tribes...as applied to the various dialects which are spoken by the Bechuanas.\footnote{192}{Ibid. p 2.}

It is interesting that later in the book Appleyard included the following footnote which tells 
us in what sense he used the term, and yet he did not see the problems related to this usage,
writing that "the following grammar, though applicable to the Kafir branch in general, and in all its leading principles and usages, to the whole of the Kafir family, is written, strictly speaking, in the dialect of the Amasosa, or Kafirs proper."[193]

It is evident that Appleyard saw the Amampondo, Amafengu and Abatembu as separate polities.[194] And yet we know that today there is no 'standard Thembu' as there is a standard Zulu and Xhosa. Instead these speech communities rely on what has been codified as standard Xhosa for literacy. Appleyard explained this by saying that the "variation" between Xhosa, Mpondo and Thembu is "so slight, that natives of either of the tribes find very little difficulty in conversing with each other", and so the missionaries must "link together the several branches of this particular family" (i.e. 'Kafir'). This obviously served the needs of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, because they only had to translate everything into one language. However, problems arose as the various mission societies working in the contact zone attempted to produce a Bible translation that could be used throughout the eastern Cape, as I explain later. Although Appleyard showed more awareness of the terminological problems than did his predecessors, it is clear that through use of 'Kafir', soon adopted by the rest of the Wesleyan missionaries, one standard was now emerging which was expected to serve the needs of all the distinct speech communities in WMMS stations -- and, they hoped, beyond. Of course, the Scottish missionaries at Lovedale and surrounding stations were basing their grammars, dictionaries, orthography and importantly translations on a different form of the language. It was the controversy surrounding Appleyard's translation of the Bible, a manifestation of an underlying denominational rivalry, which eventually fixed which form of the language was to be regarded as the standard.

[193] Ibid. P 73.
[194] Of course, more difficulties arise when one considers that the way the missionaries defined these groups was often based on their preconceived expectations of nationhood and ethnicity.
Chapter 4

TRANSLATION, LITERACY and the EDUCATED BLACK ELITE

"we feel that our mother-tongue is served out to us by foreigners"

I

One Bible, many language forms

I turn now to an analysis of the process of Bible translation, a process which exemplifies many of the themes running throughout this chapter, such as: the implications of the missionaries’ language work in terms of the development of a standard written version of Xhosa; the power which mission societies had to declare an “official” or “authorised” version of the language; the effects of the decisions which missionaries had the power to make about what constituted a subsidiary dialect, and what was the language of the “nation”; and the kinds of decisions that missionaries could make about the meanings of words, some of which they needed to appropriate or manipulate to bear the meanings of Christianity. But this case-study also highlights two new themes: inter-denominational rivalry, and the effects of this competition on the construction of standard Xhosa; and the first explicit challenges to missionary authority on language from an indigenous speaker.

To the different missionary societies evangelising to the Nguni in the eastern Cape, it became apparent early on that collaboration in the matter of Bible translation was essential to the success of their mission. R.H.W. Shepherd, Principal of Lovedale in the 1930s, wrote that since the task of translating the whole Bible was deemed too great a labour for one society to hope to achieve in a short space of time, representatives from the LMS, WMMS and GMS met at the Buffalo River (now King William’s Town) as early as 1831 in order “to consider
co-operative effort. Here they agreed to collect the various translated Books, and write a joint letter to the British and Foreign Bible Society requesting assistance with the printing of a New Testament in Xhosa. It was also at this meeting that recommendations were made about the use of a uniform orthography, discussed earlier. A further agreement was reached in 1832 whereby the Wesleyans would concentrate on the Old Testament (with important contributions from Kropf and Döhne of the BMS), while the rest of the mission societies would work on the New Testament. The mutual co-operation between these societies was again demonstrated in 1835, when the GMS printing press at Tyumie was destroyed in the war, and the WMMS offered the use of their press at Mount Coke. Even in their own translation work, it was not unusual for missionaries to send copies of their work to other missionaries with "the request", as the Wesleyan John Appleyard wrote to Bryce Ross of the GMS in June 1850, "that you make such recommendations and corrections as you may deem desirable for the improvement of the recent edition." Appleyard went on to ask Ross to lend copies of the translation to other Scottish missionaries for their comments too. However, Williams asserts that in 1845, at a meeting which took place with a view to uniting in "the translation and printing of one common version of the Scriptures," the Wesleyans exhibited obstructionist tendencies and were not perceived by the other mission societies to be entirely co-operative.

Indeed, although some later missionary accounts talk about the "happy association" between "brethren" of different churches, what was initially described by William Boyce as "the keen eye of that criticism which the friendly rivalry of separate Societies excites" erupted into divisive conflict. The Wesleyans had clashed with both the LMS and the GMS prior to the controversy over Appleyard's Bible translation. In 1838 William Shaw had published a pamphlet entitled A Defence of the Wesleyan Missionaries in Southern Africa, which

1 Shepherd, R.H.W. MS 14749. Cory Library for Historical Research.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Appleyard, John. MS 10665. Cory Library for Historical Research.
comprised a collection of his letters to the Director of the LMS, Dr. John Philip, in which they voiced opposing approaches to the concept of evangelising in Africa.\textsuperscript{8}

More explicit division appeared with the circulation of a “Statement of certain Missionaries respecting the reported speech of the Rev. W.B. Boyce, and the Rev. W. Shaw’s defence of that speech”. This document was signed by eleven missionaries associated with the GMS, including Brownlee, Bennie, Ross and Govan.\textsuperscript{9} The statement referred to an incident in a LMS meeting in Grahamstown, during which Boyce, it is alleged, claimed that the “great bulk” of the “Kaffirs” were under the influence of the Gospel. The Scottish missionaries regarded this “liberty of speech” as “most dangerous.” They were equally as unhappy about Boyce’s report that the Wesleyans had “translated the whole of the Word of God into the Kafir language”. They questioned the “motives” of Boyce for making the remarks, and Shaw for defending them, and although the signatories claimed that their own motive was to uphold the “sacredness of truth”, reading behind the lines makes it clear that the GMS did not want the WMMS to appear “ahead of them”. And so for all the surface attempts at co-operation when it came to Bible translation, each society was lobbying for its own interests, as the following excerpt from a GMS Report of 1825 demonstrates:

> when the translation comes forth it will be stamped in the eyes of the natives, and of the world, with the name and authority of the whole institution.\textsuperscript{10}

Shaw made a similar appeal to the Wesleyan’s authority in terms of translation, albeit in a far more subtle manner, when, describing the WMMS’ publication of the whole Scriptures in 1864, he downplayed the assistance received from other societies by remarking that “some Missionaries of other denominations have occasionally offered valuable suggestions.”\textsuperscript{11} By contrast, the prominent Scottish missionary and first Principal of Lovedale William Govan

\textsuperscript{7} Boyce, William. in Missionary Notices. September 1833. p 335.
\textsuperscript{8} Philip believed that an important aspect of the evangelical mission was to “defend the rights of the primitive natives in the face of an advancing sophisticated West”, and thus advocated the condemnation of the actions of the colonists. Shaw, on the other hand, believed that the most important task of the missionary was to take the Gospel to people who did not believe in Christ, and anything else was secondary to this task.
\textsuperscript{9} Govan et al. ‘Statement.’ in Grahamstown Journal. 13th November 1846.
\textsuperscript{10} Report of the GMS, 1825. p 18.
\textsuperscript{11} Shaw, William. The story of my mission among the native tribes of South Eastern Africa. p 297.
unsurprisingly emphasised the role of the GMS, writing that the Scottish missionaries may "be said to have chiefly taken the lead in the difficult and important work of reducing the language to a written form, and were...among the first to print and publish a portion of the scriptures, of any considerable extent, in the Kafir language."12 Bearing in mind these incidences of rivalry and conflict, Shaw's hope that Appleyard's translation would "not be disfigured by sectarian leanings"13 seems highly optimistic.

Appleyard was undoubtedly one of the foremost translators working in the eastern Cape contact zone during the nineteenth century. In addition to his compilation of a "standard" grammar, he had been intensely involved in what he described in his journal as a "complete and uniform edition" of the Old Testament, which was published in 1859.14 The bulk of this had been completed by Appleyard himself, but he had received assistance from J.C. Warner, H.H. Dugmore, W.H. Garner and J.S. Thomas from his own society, and A. Kropf of the BMS.15 It was a result of this work, as well as his "profound acquaintance with the Greek and Hebrew languages", that the British and Foreign Bible Society made a proposal to the WMMS to bear the expense of a full edition of the scriptures, and Appleyard was "specially called to London by the Bible Society in 1860" in order to produce a revised version of the entire Bible in Xhosa, as well as supervise its printing.16

In a Report of a Sub-Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, published just prior to Appleyard's appointment, a "prominent question discussed" was "whether or not it would be practicable and desirable to have one translation for the Kafirs of Kaffraria and the Zulus at Natal". The reasoning behind this proposal was that "besides affording great facilities of communication between all who use these languages" it would also afford "much mutual

12 Govan, William. MS 10635, Cory Library for Historical Research. Govan did go on to say that "some of the German missionaries also took a leading part in this work of translation", singling out Dehne in particular, and then acknowledged that the Wesleyans did "eventually" take "the leading part" -- but attributes this success to their "printing press at their station of Mount Coke."
13 Ibid.
15 Smit, A.P. God made it grow. p 205.
16 Ibid. p 206.
convenience”. To this end, the Sub-Committee called for “the co-operation of the various bodies of Missionaries”. The outcome of this discussion was that although “very desirable”, it was not considered “practicable at present”, while the hope prevailed that “it may ultimately be attained.” This committee discussion reveals the extent of the powers exerted by outsiders, not the indigenous speakers of the language, when making decisions about the development of the written language. But it also highlights a common missionary conception: that the assimilation of “dialects” was a desirable outcome of Bible translation. This, of course, was easier said than done, which is no doubt why it was never attempted with Xhosa and Zulu. But assimilation of dialects also did not occur with the different language forms spoken by the Nguni in the eastern Cape. There are indeed some significant differences between these languages forms. The editor-in-chief of The Greater Dictionary of Xhosa published in 1989, H.W. Pahl describes the Rharabe (Nqikika and Ndlambe) and Gcaleka dialects as high-toned, and forms of Pondo and Thembu as low-toned; and he makes a distinction between the prenasalized voice clicks (ngc, ngg, ngx) and the nasalized clicks (nch, nqh, nxh) that only occur amongst the Rharabe and Gcaleka; and he mentions that the connotations of many words do not necessarily apply in all the dialects. Despite these differences, Nqkika Xhosa, the language used by the GMS, their schools and printing press, emerged as the standard literary language, as opposed to the forms of language spoken further east, where Wesleyans like Appleyard were based. It is important to explain how this occurred, instead of some attempt at assimilation to try and accommodate all the Nguni languages in the areas of missionary influence.

To return to Appleyard and his translation of the entire Bible, this was published in 1864 after he had spent four years in London, painstakingly revising and re-translating the New and Old Testaments from the Hebrew and Greek. His self-stated aim was “to make the translation

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18 Although, as I will show in Chapter Five, the subject was raised and discussed at length from within academic circles in the first half of the twentieth century.
uniform as a representation of the original".20 This was an aim which, he acknowledged, meant that he might have to sacrifice "something on the side of the Kafir for something on the side of the original" and that also meant that in some cases he had to adopt "an unusual form of the word in order to add to its meaning, or to give expression to something that could not be otherwise indicated."21 Although Appleyard considered this "perfectly legitimate,"22 we shall see that this attitude occasioned some of the harshest criticism from the Xhosa-speaking minister, Tiyo Soga. Appleyard's version was, however, widely acknowledged to be very popular, especially amongst the Mfengu and Pondo, amongst whom the Wesleyans (and not the GMS) had a number of missions.23 This, of course, was a result of the fact that Appleyard's Xhosa was much closer to the language forms which they spoke.

TheScottish missionaries affiliated to the GMS, from the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland in particular (although there were also comments and criticisms from missionaries of other churches, such as Dohne and Kropf of the BMS) were extremely unhappy with what became known as 'Appleyard's version' -- not least of all because they felt it could not be accepted as the 'authorised' version.24 Appleyard received a letter from the Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, informing him that the matter had been brought to their notice by the Secretary of the National Bible Society of Scotland, who had stated that Appleyard's translation had been pronounced "ridiculously defective"25, and Appleyard subsequently found out that the Reverends Govan, Soga, Birt and Ross had asked the National Bible Society of Scotland to assist in their own preparation of a new translation.26 This highlights a central issue about funding, and what effects the sponsor of the Bible would have on the translation. This issue was to become more important later when the British and Foreign Bible Society lay down certain principles of translation that had to be followed.

21 Ibid. p 28.
22 Ibid.
23 Smit, A.P. God made it grow. p 207.
25 Ibid. p 31.
These developments occurred after criticism for Appleyard’s version was first voiced at the annual Conference of Missionaries of Different Denominations, held at Lovedale in January 1864. Appleyard questioned the legitimacy of this forum, remarking that it was simply a meeting of Scotch churches, “to which they invite a few belonging to two or three other churches, partly for friendly counsel, partly to secure the weight of their name and influence for such measures as they wish to forward.”\textsuperscript{27} Appleyard had other reasons for questioning the legitimacy of this forum, for the first meeting in which his translation was discussed, was held before the printing had been completed in London, and as a result judgement was being cast “before they had even made accurate inquiries about the nature and object of the work.”\textsuperscript{28} For Appleyard, this proved that “the ground of opposition was not so much the version itself, for this was not yet published, as something else.”\textsuperscript{29} Without even examining the text, the Scottish missionaries criticised the fact that Appleyard had worked on the Bible alone in London, which meant, as Bryce Ross wrote, that he was “cut off from personal communication with all Caffre speakers”, preventing Ross from having any hope “that his work would be satisfactory.”\textsuperscript{30} Left unwritten was the fact that Appleyard working on his own in London also meant that the WMMS were completing this revision on their own -- and would also, therefore, be receiving the commendation for this task. As Shepherd wrote, much if the criticism was the Scottish missionaries’ expression of their desire to take up the prominent position in Bible translation which they had occupied in the 1820s and 1830s. Sectarian rivalry, then, no doubt played a part in the criticism lodged against Appleyard’s version. I will show what effect this had on the construction of a standard Xhosa once a Board of Revisers was appointed in 1868. But even more serious criticism was raised regarding Appleyard’s means of translation, and (although this was not voiced in these terms) the form of the language which Appleyard called ‘Xhosa’.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. p 33.  
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. p 30.  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid. p 29.  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
When the annual inter-denominational meeting reconvened in 1866, Tiyo Soga read a paper voicing his criticisms of Appleyard's translation, and it was resolved unanimously that this version was "yet not to be accepted as satisfactory; and that it is imperative, therefore, that measures be adopted, without any necessary delay, to have a correct, idiomatic translation." Shortly thereafter a pamphlet was published, in which "with very few exceptions" according to Govan, "all missionaries of Protestant denominations engaged in missionary work amongst the Kafir-speaking tribes on the frontier of the Cape Colony" stated their agreement with the findings of the conference. This pamphlet, entitled *Rev. J.W. Appleyard's version judged by missionaries of various denominations and others*, was introduced by William Govan, who argued that Appleyard's translation "is, to a very great extent, unintelligible, and, in some instances, even offensive, to the people for whose use the Version is intended" (my emphasis). This statement raises the very important question: for whose use was the Bible in Xhosa intended? Govan revealed here that he, like most other missionaries of his time, did not deem the differences between the languages spoken in the eastern Cape significant, and so his description of the Bible as "unintelligible" more than likely meant that it differed from the Ngqika Xhosa used in Lovedale.

But this was only one part of the problem found with Appleyard’s version of the Bible. Another problem was inherent to the practice of Scriptural translation itself. In his *Apology for the Kafir Bible*, Appleyard went to great lengths to explain the difficulties of translation, and particularly of translating into Xhosa. He argued that because Xhosa "has never had any literature of its own" and "contains no words that have any special or long sanctioned relation to the service and the Christian life" there were bound to be "different opinions...as to the appropriateness or that mode of expression to represent certain Christian terms and phrases". This "poverty of suitable verbiage" (a description which reveals his perception of the Xhosa language as 'less rich' than a language such as English) meant, Appleyard

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30 Ross, Bryce. MS 8828. Cory Library for Historical Research, Grahamstown.
31 Appleyard, J.W. *An Apology for the Kafir Bible*. p 29.
32 Govan, William. MS 10635. Cory Library for Historical Research.
maintained, that for concepts like "life and death, good and evil, sin and repentance, heaven and hell" words would "have to be employed which have little, if anything, of solemn or sacred, or august about them."

Put another way, words which have sometimes almost to be picked out of the mire, in the hope that they may be cleansed, may little by little be filled with a higher sense, a holier meaning, than any which before their adoption into this sacred service they knew. 

Thus, according to Appleyard, "the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven could not possibly be made known to man, without the introduction of new words, or an accession of meaning to words which were already in use." (my emphasis).

This philosophy of translation inevitably resulted in difficulties with finding suitable, and commonly agreed upon words, to convey elements of Christian doctrine and notions of western thinking. Van der Kemp, as we saw earlier, encountered similar difficulties, although his mistranslations and appropriations of words do not bear the same kind of intentionality found in the work of later translators. Appleyard was very aware that he was taking Xhosa words approximating (van der Kemp, by contrast, believed that words were the "copy of universal nature") terms like forgiveness, salvation and purity, and, as Janet Hodgson puts it, purging them "of their base contents and allusions" and filling them "with a new and spiritual meaning". Common thinking amongst missionaries at the time was that this exercise entailed clearing words "from lower associations to express Christian doctrines" -- revealing the attitude that their translation work was somehow making the language 'higher', or more pure. However, at least one missionary, writing in 1886, realised the problems of this attitude and this process, writing that "the more I think of it the more I am disgusted with trying to

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34 Ibid, p 3. 
35 Ibid. 
37 Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Sacred Power.' p 79.  
adapt English words to Kafir words -- either the tone or the language gets horribly mutilated.\textsuperscript{39}

Donovan Williams views this "accession of meaning" as "an attempt by attrition to attach a new meaning to a word, and also to inculcate a new concept into the [Cape Nguni] culture, for the Christian meaning [of these words were] far removed from that of the Bantu."\textsuperscript{40} And like the Comaroffs, Janet Hodgson argues that on one level, "the missionary incursion into translation was bound to be significant, even integral, to colonising African consciousness by co-opting Xhosa words to express European concepts of Christianity."\textsuperscript{41} But, following Sanneh's understanding of translation, she goes on to say that on another level, missionary use of the vernacular to convey Christian concepts was also a "radical step forward in the inculturation of the gospel", because at the beginning, at least, it was people like Ntiskana's disciples who provided the "appropriate and idiomatic expressions for biblical translations," through the lens of their own world-views.\textsuperscript{42} Thus the "dialogue between faith and culture"\textsuperscript{43} was mediated by indigenous speakers, even if the final say still fell to the missionaries.

II

A challenge to missionary authority

What is clear is that neither the process nor the implications of Bible translation were clear-cut and unproblematic. These issues become more evident as I analyse the main criticisms lodged against Appleyard's Xhosa Bible, which serve to highlight just how contested the process of translation was. The predominant critic, as I have said, was the Rev. Tiyo Soga. Soga was born into the amaNqika at Gwali in 1829, and was sent by his Christian mother to the GMS mission school in the area. The missionary there, William Chalmers, sent him to

\textsuperscript{39} Barker, G. Letter to Rev. E.J. Barrett. 3 November 1886. MS 15709. Cory Library for Historical Research. Barker's solution was to write "original composition and hope they will take".

\textsuperscript{40} Williams, Donovan. The Missionaries on the Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799 - 1853. p 201.

\textsuperscript{41} Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Sacred Power.' p 77.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
Lovedale for further education. At Lovedale he was taken under the wing of William Govan, and in 1846 Govan took him to Scotland where he attended the Glasgow Free Church National Seminary. He went on to study towards an arts degree at the University of Glasgow, and, after receiving his clerical training in Glasgow, he returned to the eastern Cape as the first ordained African minister in the region. As a translator and Bible reviser he was to have a strong influence on the development of written Xhosa. Moreover, he was the first convert to use the written word as the medium to challenge missionary authority over the Xhosa language.

A central criticism of Appleyard's version was that he used words without understanding "their precise significations". In his two papers, Soga cited many examples of this, one being a discrepancy over the expression 'ukuti waca', which, according to Soga, should only be used "to convey the idea of total annihilation, or death, or sleep, of a great number." In answering this kind of criticism, Appleyard made the important point that

Many Natives know very little beyond the words which are in common use in their own particular tribe or locality. There may be words in other tribes and other localities which are not familiar to them. As with words, so with the meanings and usages of words. The same word may be used in two or more tribes, and yet not always with the same sense. One tribe may have kept the primary meaning, another may have discarded the primary and adopted the secondary, and another may have preserved both meanings.

Appleyard went on to argue that "the Kafir Bible is intended for all the tribes which speak the Kafir language", and as a result "it would be folly to attempt to keep its language closely confined within the limits of one small tribe, and thus make it a dialectic version instead of a general one". After all, he argued, "however manifold these [differences] might be, their language is essentially one." And so, taking Soga's example of "imprecise signification" cited above, Appleyard maintained that the "radical signification is falling down in a mass, or in great numbers." But while "the word is used by some tribes to denote the falling down of a number of people in a battle, implying their death", other "tribes, however, do not carry the

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original idea of falling down so far as this, but confine it to falling down or reclining of a number of people in a journey for the purpose of rest.”

The Wesleyan minister whose son had been so instrumental in helping Boyce, Rev. William Shepstone, emphasised this point about the differences between language forms, writing to Appleyard that “when I have thought there has been a mistake [in your translation], the best Kafir or rather Fingo readers have assured me it was perfect.” (my emphasis). He went on to add that “although I am inclined to the opinion that the Kafir is the purer language, that does not prove that a translation must be stiffly unmixed Kafir in order to be perfect, nor can that, in my opinion, constitute a standard of perfection by which to try your translation.”48 The commonly held view amongst Wesleyan ministers, who worked with a far more diverse group of people in their chain of mission stations than any other mission society, was that the language used in the Bible would have to accommodate a broad section of people. The GMS, under the influence of Tiyo Soga, pushed for Nqoiqa Xhosa to be written into the Bible, and, as we shall see when we turn to the Board of Revisers, their view predominated.

Soga’s problems with Appleyard’s incorrect signification of words were not confined to dialectical differences, however. Soga perhaps summed it up when he wrote that when reading Appleyard’s Xhosa Bible, he and other indigenous speakers felt “that their mother-tongue” was “served out to them by foreigners.”49 One reason for this was Appleyard’s tendency to employ Xhosa words metaphorically following the English or Greek usages. For example, using the word pantsi, meaning under or beneath, Appleyard then “invents”, in Soga’s estimation, the word Ebupantsini, to signify being in a state of humiliation. His defence was that the only change he has made is to use the word in its “tropical”, or figurative, sense.50 Similarly, Appleyard used the word amalingo to denote trials or

47 Ibid.
48 Shepstone, William. cited in Ibid. p 186.
49 Soga, Tiyo. cited in Ibid. p 48.
50 Appleyard, John. An Apology for the Kafir Bible. p 61.
temptations’, while Soga argued that the word can only mean ‘to fall upon’. A particularly interesting example this is to found in Appleyard’s phrase “Babe betyebile elukolweni,” which he intended to mean ‘Having been rich in faith.’ Soga is adamant that ukutyeba can only mean ‘to be fat’. Appleyard tried to justify his use of the word as being merely another example of dialectical difference by arguing that the word ukutyeba is used metaphorically to signify ‘richness’, as the word isityebi, meaning ‘a rich man’ shows. However, in the phrase quoted above he meant ‘to be rich in faith’, not wealth, and thus he has made a Xhosa word perform a metaphorical function from the English language.

Another cause of Appleyard’s “imprecise signification” seems to be related to his use of the Greek and Hebrew texts as the basis for his translation. In reply to Soga’s questioning about his use of the word pezu, he argued that “If the Hebrew expresses, ‘Come down upon Mount Sinai,’ is the Kafir to say ‘Come down Mount Sinai?’ Is the idiom of the latter so poor, that it cannot make a distinction between descending upon a particular mountain and descending that mountain itself.” Appleyard’s assumption is that if a word from Xhosa cannot be used in the same way as it is in Hebrew, then the idiom of Xhosa is “poor”. Furthermore, when Soga questioned his phrase pezu kwami where the English has ‘for me?’, Appleyard replies that it “is a translation of the Greek EPI”, and pezu is “the most literal equivalent of EPI, and its meaning, even though it should be a little enlarged, cannot be misunderstood”. The assumption here is that where the Hebrew or the Greek says one thing, then a word must be used to convey this exactly -- even if it is not entirely idiomatically correct. Döhne, “in speaking of the internal value or character” of the translation made this same point, writing to Appleyard that “in many instances you read the Kafir quite after the Greek text; in others you meet objectionable paraphrases, in which the original could have been better rendered by some idiomatic term.”

51 Soga, Tiyo. cited in Ibid. p 59. Incidentally, standard Xhosa today uses the same word isilingo for temptation.
52 Appleyard, John. An Apology for the Kafir Bible. p 51.
53 Ibid.
54 Döhne, Jacob. cited in Appleyard, John. An Apology for the Kafir Bible. p 117.
Bryce Ross raised another example of what Soga called "imprecise signification" in Appleyard's use of words to convey certain colours. In particular, he objected to the word bomvu (used in Xhosa to signify any bright red) being used to denote the colours crimson and scarlet, arguing that the word mfusa would be far better suited. This is not an issue of dialectical differences or of a word being used figuratively. Instead it is, as Appleyard wrote a "matter...of preference". This is a very important statement, because it raises a myriad of questions about whose preference?, who had the power to make their preference standard?, what input did the indigenous speakers have in this "matter of preference"? Thinking about these questions highlights the crucial point that the missionary translators wielded much power to influence what became the standard written form of the language. Bible translation was an important vehicle to this end. Appleyard worked under the misconception that a "translator is not a commentator", but his choices and preferences made him an influential commentator on Xhosa through the lens of his own perceptions of how languages should work.

The criticism of the ways that Appleyard coined of words raises similar issues. There were, of course, many words and concepts in the Bible which did not have Xhosa equivalents, or even approximations. One of Appleyard's solutions to this problem was to coin new words, which, he maintained, always followed the rules and regulations of the Xhosa language. For example, he coined the word inkosikulu, a contraction of inkosi yekulu ('captain of a hundred'), to denote a 'centurion'. Appleyard argued that "its composition is in strict accordance with the usual laws of contraction existing in the language." He made a similar justification for the criticism of his word umti wokukapa, intended to signify the rudder of a ship. He argued that its composition followed the "Native plan of designating certain articles by the material of which they were made, and the object or purpose of their use. A ladder, for instance, is called

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56 Appleyard, John. An Apology for the Kafir Bible. p 135.
57 Ibid. p 71.
58 Ibid. p 53.
unto wokukwela, a piece of wood for climbing." And because 'a fig', amakiwane, is derived from umkiwane, 'fig tree'; Appleyard sees fit, "by analogy," to coin a word amaquma for olive, from umnquma, 'olive tree'. Appleyard obviously believed that his application of grammatical rules legitimised what he was doing, but of course for all rules there are exceptions, and grammatical rules do not always apply as neatly as we might wish. Indeed, the rule of analogy (above) actually caused much confusion because, as Soga pointed out, amaquma are "the ornaments of birds' skins, and of small game skins, which Kafir boys make and wear".

Bryce Ross also criticised Appleyard for using "constructions at variance with the genius of the language". One of his examples is the word Appleyard used for 'mule', which, according to Ross, "he has formed by taking the word igwara, zebra, and adding the termination 'ra', which means ish, so that the word formed must mean 'zebraish'". Again, Appleyard called this a "mere matter of preference". Appleyard demonstrated his own preference by arguing that:

The ass is not so well known to the Kafirs as the mule, but some of those living immediately on the borders of the Colony have adopted the Dutch name ezel, which makes an awkward Kafir word iesile. As I do not believe that either indlebende or iesile will be finally adopted by the people at large, when they become better acquainted with natural history. I preferred, in translation, to adopt one of their own words, and to adapt it by well known modifications to describe the animals in question.

Appleyard's own preferences come out strongly here: he finds iesile "awkward", he does not think certain words will be adopted by the indigenous speakers, he has chosen a word which follows the "etymology of the words and the analogies of the language". These are not, however, necessarily the preferences of the indigenous speakers, as Soga articulated when he said that "Mr. Appleyard is not the person to introduce such changes into a foreign language,"

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59 Ibid. p 68.
60 Soga, Tiyo. cited in Ibid. p 70.
61 Ross, Bryce. cited in Ibid. p 133.
62 Ibid. p 134.
63 This was Ross' suggestion, since it was the nickname already in use to signify an ass or a mule, meaning 'long-ears'.
64 Appleyard, John. An Apology for the Kafir Bible. p 134.
65 Ibid. p 53. Incidentally, the word for 'mule' in a current Xhosa dictionary is imeyile, an adaptation from English, which Appleyard thought would prove "awkward".
and he should rather "confine himself to what he strictly knows of the language." Soga's attitude was that for Appleyard, a word sanctioned by "native" usage was "not so good as one preferred by himself", and that such changes were "sure always to be a kind of violence done to the Kafir language". Soga's views are especially important, because in them we see for the first time an indigenous speaker who has the means to access to the debate around his own language. Although Soga is only one Xhosa minister amongst many more Europeans, he nonetheless exemplified a new generation of Xhosa intellectuals, who had embraced literacy, and could now use this knowledge to generate certain forms of power for themselves.

Appleyard, on the other hand, realised that he could not claim to have a better knowledge of Xhosa than someone like Soga. Instead he used another kind of knowledge to establish his authority in the matter of translation: his knowledge of grammatical principles, structures and terminology. Throughout his response to the criticisms, he drew attention to Soga's inferior English, to what Appleyard called his "defective...grammatical knowledge" and to his "want of lexicographical acumen". Finally, he wrote, after an examination of Soga's criticisms, all of which Appleyard has justified on grammatical grounds, we should be "appalled" that any person "with any pretension to scholarship, and especially with pretensions to a critical knowledge of the Kafir language as Mr. Soga constantly assumes, should have been found so imperfectly qualified for the work which he has taken in hand". Soga, then, is "unqualified" to comment on his own language, while someone like Jakob Döhne's criticisms are greeted far more kindly because they are "opinions of an old Kafir scholar and translator."

Appleyard, however, soon lost his influence as a translator. The outcome of the conflict over Appleyard's version was the appointment, at the suggestion of the South African auxiliary of

66 Soga, Tiyo. cited in Ibid. As shown before, Appleyard's response to this kind of criticism was that a "better knowledge of the subject [of translation] would have shown Mr. Soga, that any one who translates into such a language as the Kafir cannot do otherwise than coin or adapt words in certain cases, unless he wishes to leave a blank in his translation." Of course, a far greater degree of input and assistance from indigenous speakers in this process would have given his translation more legitimacy in the eyes of someone like Soga.
67 Soga, Tiyo. cited in Ibid. p 54.
68 Ibid. p 59.
69 Ibid. p 67.
70 Ibid. p 116.
the British and Foreign Bible Society, of a Board of Revisers in 1868. The Board, consisting
of six missionaries and a layman, was deemed to represent "the best Kafir scholarship the
Colony affords."\(^7\) The Board was represented by all missionary groups working in the
eastern Cape: H.R. Woodroffe (Church of England), John Appleyard (WMMS), Charles
Brownlee (LMS), Bryce Ross (Free Church of Scotland), Tiyo Soga (United Presbyterian
Church of Scotland Mission), Albert Kropf (BMS) and H. Meyer (Moravian Church). Work
officially commenced in 1869, and by 1877 the New Testament was complete, with a
translation of the whole Bible ready ten years later in 1887. Soga, having contributed
significantly in the beginning phases of the new translation, passed away, along with
Appleyard, in 1871. In the end, the major contributors were Albert Kropf and Bryce Ross.

III

A standard Xhosa Bible

The Bible which resulted from the work of this Board of Revisers was referred to by a later
Wesleyan minister, E.R. Hurcombe, as the "so-called Scotch version", which did not use
Appleyard's version as the basis for their endeavours, but instead started anew, and the result,
according to Hurcombe, was a Bible "representing the Lovedale point of view".\(^7\) It was
considered "a more scholarly production" than Appleyard's, and was "increasingly favoured
by educated natives."\(^7\) Indeed, Soga wrote that he was "determined to allow nothing but what
is pure and idiomatic into our future Kafir version," going on to remark tongue-in-cheek that
this was "Saxon Kafir".\(^7\)

Of course, being of preference to "educated natives" and representing the "Lovedale point of
view" meant that Ngqika Xhosa was the predominant form of the Cape Nguni languages
written into the translation. One of the revisers, H.R. Woodroffe, confirmed this when he

\(^7\) Smit, A.P. God Made it Grow. p 207.
\(^7\) Hurcombe, Rev. E.H. 'Wesleyan Missions Centenary: John W. Appleyard.' in The East London Daily Dispatch.
25 November 1922.
\(^7\) Ibid.
wrote that “the revisers agreed ad initio that the Gaika Kafir should be adopted.” Like Appleyard, Woodroffe did not agree with this, arguing that “the Gaikas are not the only people to be considered. The Bible is for others also - Fingos, Tembus, etc. Words occur which are not well known to these peoples. I wish to see them changed.”75 Indeed, in 1883 the WMMS requested that the British and Foreign Bible Society re-print Appleyard’s version, since the new version, being a representation of Ngqika Xhosa, was not acceptable to people in the east such as the Mfengu, Thembu and Pondo who found certain words and phrases “distasteful”.76 But although Appleyard’s version remained in print for some years, a standard Pondo/Thembu/Mfengu never emerged, and this Ngqika Xhosa version of the Bible had a “far-reaching influence to the standardisation of the language.”77

Although the new Bible met with general approval, it was not without problems. A number of articles appearing in the Christian Express between 1877 and 1883 levelled a number of objections against it. The language used in the Bible was criticised for not being that of the “common people,” with many unusual and outlandish words, such as hlonipha and obsolete Ngqika words given a place.78 Moreover, it was criticised for ignoring the Mfengu dialect; for using the occasional “infelicitous” or “erroneous” word when trying to designate botany, zoology, ornithology, mineralogy and entomology; for making unintelligible literal renderings of idiomatic expressions; and for using “unnecessarily indecent expressions.”79

The Wesleyan minister, E.J. Barrett was particularly concerned about some aspects of the translation, and initiated correspondence with a number of other missionaries to gauge their opinions. In a letter to Albert Kropf (who, as I have mentioned, was one of the main revisers) dated 8th March 1886, Barrett wrote that he was “disturbed that the Old Testament ha[d] been

76 Smit, A.P. God Made it Grow. p 207.
77 Shepherd, R.H.W. MS 14749. Cory Library for Historical Research.
78 cited in Ibid.
79 cited in Ibid. To cite some examples of this, the Wesleyan minister Rev. E.J. Barrett wrote that in the new translation a word for “lips” in the Psalms, which has a secondary meaning in some part of the country, is “positively objectionable and indecent.” (MS 15709. Cory Library for Historical Research.)
completed” because he had hoped “to secure certain alterations,” and that he was certain that “there are more people who will express their strong opinions about certain things that need to be changed.”80 His main concern was that Kropf would “see [his] way to giving up these scarcely known words, or words known in only one country, and make the Bible such that all may be able to understand it”.81 But, in letter to Barrett dated 30th April 1886, another Wesleyan, Rev. J.C. Warner wrote that although he admired him for “sticking to it...those brethren of the new Translation are so obstinate and stuck in their own ideas that I for one have not any inclination to go into the matter of the new Translation -- if they were inclined to listen to what other people say I might be inclined to do something in the way of suggestions. But as it is I would rather be visiting a heathen Kraal and speaking to the people about Christ than spend...days in making alterations about which word be heeded.”82

The Board of Revisers were, however, under their own constraints, which again highlights issues of funding and who held the power to make decisions about how the Bible was translated. As Barrett wrote to the Rev. Lamplough in February 1886: “the exact scholarship and intimate knowledge of idiomatic Kafir possessed by the Board would make it comparatively easy for them to produce a translation suitable to the wants of the people, were it not that they are hampered by a theory of interpretation said to be imposed upon them by the Bible Society, which constrains them to strive to represent each separate word in the original by a corresponding word in the Kafir, and this, however desirable it may appear, places the translators under grave difficulties.” The result of this theory of translation, according to William Davis, who had published his own Grammar of the Kaffir Language in 1872, was that words had to be inserted which were “seldom used and unknown by far the greatest portion of the Natives for whom the translation is being prepared”83. As Barrett articulated it, it was impossible to apply the Bible Society principle when dealing with the “present phase of the language of an almost barbarous people from which to select words”.

80 Barrett, E.J.B. MS 15709. Cory Library for Historical Research.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
"Doubtless", he continued, "it is this difficulty which has led the Board to seek for a great variety of words, some of which appear curious and nearly obsolete, or of doubtful signification, and to incorporate them in the written language, the usual effect of which is to puzzle the ordinary reader and make him give up the book in desperation, but occasionally the results are more decidedly hurtful." As an indigenous speaker apparently put it to Barrett: "If you try to peg out the skin of a kid so as to make it as large as that of a full grown goat, you will certainly tear the smaller skin."84

But there was another force at play which reinforced the language form spoken by the amaNgqika as standard Xhosa. While the predominantly European missionaries were arguing about what should constitute standard Xhosa, a group of Africans, of whom Tiyo Soga was one, came to the fore. They would not only determine which form of Xhosa came to be used for literacy, but they also began seeing new possibilities for the use of the written word.

IV

Literacy and the mission

The history of writing in Xhosa "participates in a broader history of social and political developments such as the growth of mission education and the emergence of a literate Xhosa elite, the migration to urban centres, the failure of the military option as a means of resistance to colonial encroachment and the adoption of alternative political strategies."85 Leon de Kock examines this history in detail in his book Civilising Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth Century South Africa. While we are both interested in literacy in the eastern Cape during the nineteenth century, de Kock’s focus is on literacy in English, and my focus is on literacy in Xhosa. He looks as how "Lovedale, like many similar institutions, would isolate its pupils and seek to remake their discursive identity. In this, language - more particularly English, and the forms it encodes - would be their main

84 Ibid.
instrument." De Kock argues that books were part of a civilizing colonialism which "sought to inscribe in 'barbarous' Africans the precepts of a largely Protestant, Western modernity." My own analysis centres on how literacy was used, not by Europeans, but by Africans, as a new source of power to be harnessed for particular ends. And like De Kock, I seek to understand the role of literacy (in my case, literacy in Xhosa) in "the negotiations of identity in the many narrative forms by which African subjectivity was...reformulated under conditions of tremendous upheaval in the nineteenth century." As I argued earlier, literacy was inseparably bound up with the missionary enterprise, both in terms of the development of a written form of the vernacular, and the creation of schools where converts could learn to read and write in the vernacular. But the only way for local people to have access to the written word in the vernacular was acceptance of 'the Word', since no one besides the missionaries undertook to educate Africans. Indeed, developing literacy amongst the locals was so important, especially to the GMS, that in 1837 they submitted to the Directors that it was impossible to make progress amongst the Xhosa unless they could read, and something must be done to teach them. The result was that "literacy became the exclusive privilege of a few Christian converts and their progeny." Another factor linking literacy to conversion was the establishment of the Lovedale Seminary in 1841, the dominant impulse behind which was "the realisation that it was essential to provide willing but wanting [Xhosas] with the elements of an education in order that they might assist in the promotion of Christianity". As Rev. Thomson from the GMS Kat River mission station wrote in 1831 regarding their interpreters:

something might be done towards their improvement by which they might be better fitted for their work. Some of them are perhaps too old to receive much benefit, but of others, particularly John Love's son, much might be expected. [If] still more of our youths...were

85 Opland, Jeff. 'Literature in Xhosa Newspapers.' p 2.
87 Ibid. p 2.
88 Ibid.
89 Williams, Donovan. The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony. 1799 - 1853. p 207.
91 Williams, Donovan. The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony. 1799 - 1853. p 207.
to receive a course of instruction particularly in a grammatical knowledge of the Dutch or English languages, it is reasonable to suppose they would be more accurate interpreters and what is perhaps of greater importance, valuable assistants in the work of translating the Scriptures by being able to give the true meaning of idiom.\textsuperscript{92}

Lovedale, then, was initiated as a training centre for the 'native agents' who were seen as essential to the success of the mission. But as Abner Saule points out, education became a “double-edged weapon”.\textsuperscript{93} On the one hand the locals were being taught to read and write, which allowed them certain powers to negotiate their position on the changing social stage of the contact zone. On the other hand they were inevitably drawn into the missionary and European sphere of influence, and were expected to use this literacy to pass on the missionaries' 'Word'. De Kock argues that Africans “readily assimilated missionary education in the hope of joining the millenarian society implicit in the promise of civilisation and Christianity, and who looked eagerly to the fulfilment of grand humanitarian ideals”.\textsuperscript{94} Mission education was certainly “an important bridge between the Xhosa world and the European economy”\textsuperscript{95}, but as I show in this chapter, the assimilation was not always made readily or easily, and nor was it always made in the terms preferred by the European educators.

The result of the work of local missionary schools, and especially Lovedale Seminary, was that by the 1860's a truly literate generation of Xhosa speakers had emerged -- a group who, as a result of their affiliation to Lovedale, used predominantly Ngqika Xhosa as their literary medium, even if they belonged to other sections of the Cape Nguni.\textsuperscript{96} The predominance of Ngqika Xhosa as the literary medium was augmented by the Lovedale Printing Press, which flourished along with its host institution, and printed the overwhelming majority of books produced in Xhosa.\textsuperscript{97} My interest in this dissertation is to explore how this new group of

\textsuperscript{92} Thomson, Rev. 'Report by the Rev. Thomson, Kat River, 30th July 1831.' MS 17137. Cory Library for Historical Research.
\textsuperscript{93} Saule, Abner. Missionaries and the Xhosas. p 3.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid. p 61
\textsuperscript{97} Peires, Jeff. 'The Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited.' p 159.
literate Africans chose to express themselves in writing, and to what uses they put this powerful new tool.

Sizwe Satyo highlights a group of writers who chose not to use literacy merely to translate scriptural matter, but rather to “transpose Christian doctrines in accents that had far greater immediacy to and familiarity with the way of life of the Xhosas.” This was a unique expression and use of the written word. This group of writers in the 1860’s, which included H.M. Ndawo, G.B. Sinxo and E.F. Gwashu, thus “used Xhosa social, political, legal and religious nomenclature to communicate the essentials of the new civilisation and the new religion.” In other words, they used writing in the vernacular as a means to re-define and re-negotiate their subjective identities in a changing social environment. This “localisation” of the Gospel “naturally resulted in some friction between the missionary sponsor and his converts,” a conflict which was to play itself out over and over again as Africans undertook to use literacy for their own purposes.

Using literacy for means other than what the missionaries envisaged was not always easy. Being literate and having access to the Lovedale Press did not automatically mean that local people could express themselves as they wished to a broader public through the written word and print. Both mission and commercial publishers exerted their own forms of censorship. Commercial publishers generally only accepted books that could be prescribed in schools, as this was where the profits lay; and mission presses “were reluctant to publish anything that conflicted with their own ideology.” As a consequence of the politics and economics of publishing Jeff Opland argues that “Xhosa books, with very few exceptions, avoid sensitive political issues, are in conformity with a Christian ethic, reflect western sensibilities, and are suitable for reading by children.”

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98 Satyo, Sizwe. ‘Xhosa literature.’ p 70.
99 Ibid.
100 Opland, Jeff. ‘The transition from written to oral literature in Xhosa, 1823 - 1909.’ p 136.
101 Ibid.
Opland goes on to argue that the real story behind the transition from oral to written Xhosa lies in Xhosa periodicals of the nineteenth century, where "we can witness Xhosa authors writing for the first time, confronting the stranglehold exerted by the mission presses on publication and winning their independence."102 Journalism in the vernacular was initiated by the Wesleyans, when in July 1837 they published the first issue of Umshumayeli Indaba (The Preacher’s News), which was printed at irregular intervals until April 1841.103 Of this periodical, William Shaw reported that

> It is not a vehicle of any kind of politics...but contains accounts of occurrences which happen either in Kaffraria or elsewhere, likely to be interesting to the natives, and which at the same time affords opportunities of conveying important truths to their minds in a manner at once intelligible and interesting to them. You will of course perceive that this publication is designed to afford useful reading for those who have been taught, and thus to increase the taste for reading, and to spread more generally a desire to learn the art. The articles inserted in its columns, all have a direct tendency to promote religion, to increase knowledge, to dispel superstition, and to advance civilization in the country; you will therefore rejoice to hear that this periodical is a favourite with our Kaffer readers.104

Thus it is evident that this periodical, written predominantly by European missionaries, explicitly intended to serve missionary ends.

There were some contributions from indigenous speakers, and Umshumayeli Indaba contained some of the earliest prose composed by the newly literate, such as an account of the Mfecane by Jivashe (which drew on the traditional Xhosa historical narrative style), and the responses of four Morley school pupils to a letter questioning the benefits of a mission education.105 Another interesting contribution to Umshumayeli Indaba, in the seventh edition of January 1839, was a dialogue between 'Student' and 'Lazy', also written by Rev. Samuel Palmer's school pupils at Morley, Xelo and Joje. Although we cannot tell how influential Palmer's editorial pen was, this piece of writing is a fascinating "exposition of writing from the perspective of the newly literate,"106 as these excerpts from the English translation reveal:

Lazy: What are you going to study?

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102 Ibid. p 137.
105 Opland, Jeff. 'Literature in Xhosa newspapers.' pp 2 - 3.
106 Ibid. p 3.
I’m going to learn how to read and write. I can count already, though I’ve never been to school. But reading I can’t do. What is it?

Reading is talking to books: they tell stories (imbali) about things, which are put in books...

How can they be put in books? Aren’t stories things spoken with the mouth?

Little marks are made, and these marks are words telling what’s being said...

Is a book like a person? What is it?

Here, it’s what I’ve got in my hand. Can it talk?

It does talk to people who can read it. Can you see these lines in this book?

Yes, I can see them.

Well, these lines are the marks which I said are words. This is the news.¹⁰⁷

As interesting as this piece of writing is, it is important to understand that it, like most contributions from indigenous speakers in the early periodicals, would have been mediated by European missionaries. And in the later editions of the periodical, the editorial policy “retrogressed[d] from initially encouraging its readers to write, to inducing them merely to read passively.”¹⁰⁸ It was the same with Umshumayeli’s successor, Isibuto Samavo (A Collection of Stories), as well as Lovedale’s first journal, Ikwezi, which appeared in four issues between 1844 and 1845, and whose articles were written predominantly by missionaries with explicitly didactic material.¹⁰⁹ There were some exceptions in Ikwezi, with contributions from some of Ntsikana’s followers, the first converts, who had learnt to read and write in their old age, such as Ntsikana’s son William Kobe Ntsikana, Noyi’s son Makhapela Noyi Balfour, and Zaze Soga, Tiyo’s older brother. Apart from these exceptions, as Opland argues, the first three Xhosa periodicals made no attempt to engage in a dialogue with their readers, and were certainly not intended as a forum for indigenous speakers to write for themselves. Indeed, the “didactic philosophy that informed this use of periodical publication by the missionaries for one-way communication is reflected in the fact that many of the articles that appeared in Umshumayeli, Isibuto, and Ikwezi reappeared in a school reader published by the Wesleyan

¹⁰⁷ cited in Opland, Jeff. ’The transition from oral to written literature in Xhosa, 1823 - 1909.’ pp 141 - 142.
¹⁰⁸ Opland, Jeff. ’Literature in Xhosa newspapers.’ p 3.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p 4.
Mission Press in 1850. And so these early periodicals effectively saw their task as encouraging indigenous reading, and not writing.

After 1850, missionary periodicals increasingly sought and published the writing of indigenous people, however the content was still aimed at keeping readers under mission influence. *Isitunywa senyanga* (The Monthly Messenger) appeared between August and December 1850 under the editorship of John Appleyard who actively encouraged contributions from its readers. The Lovedale publication *Indaba*, which appeared between 1862 and 1865, had a strict editorial policy which stated that articles should “above all” have bearing on the “Spiritual Enlightenment of those for whom it is specially designed. In every department, local and party politics will, as far as possible, be avoided.” Despite this tight control of content, the missionaries in charge of this publication actively sought contributions from local writers, including William Kobe Ntsikana, John Muir Vimbe (one of the earliest Xhosa interpreters), and Tiyo Soga, writing under the pseudonym ‘Unonjiba wasluhlangeni’ (The dove of the nation). Although unable to write anything explicitly political, in his article in the first edition of *Indaba*, Soga articulated his wish that the publication’s pages would be used for recording oral art, fables, legends, proverbs, praise songs, and genealogies. But although Soga tried through his own writing to “revive and bring to light all this great wealth of information” about “our ancestral forbears who bequeathed to us a rich heritage”, *Indaba* “did not become the vehicle for the publication of Xhosa genres of literature.” Indeed, James Stewart, principal of Lovedale who edited *Indaba’s* successor, *Isigidimi samaXhosa* (The Xhosa Express), actively opposed the use of missionary publications to “preserve traditional literature”, writing in 1871 that:

> It is very plain, that there are two parties even among the natives - the one progressive, and the other conservative of the old customs and non-progressive, to whom the times gone by are the brave days of old - far better than the present. Our sympathies are entirely with the party of progress. There is very little in old Kaffirdom worth preserving - and we think it will be wisdom of the natives as soon as

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110 Ibid.
113 Opland, Jeff. "Literature in Xhosa newspapers." p 5.
possible to move forward into day - and secure the blessings which the present time brings them. We make this statement even while we intend if possible to publish from time to time notices of Kaffir Laws and Customs. These possess a value as enabling us to understand the native people better - and have an interest as belonging to a certain state of society. But this is a very different thing from holding up that state as worthy of imitation or preservation. There is a portion of every nation’s history which must be forgotten...[we need not try] to bring the sentiments and the rude inspiration of barbarous times and a savage state.\textsuperscript{14} (my emphasis)

The message here is that missionary publications (the only publications at that point) were not prepared to print anything that did not serve their own purposes. The Scottish missionaries were, in effect, using writing in Xhosa to try and forge a world which suited the ends of Christianity, and, indeed, ‘civilisation’ as they saw it.

V

Re-defining the uses of the written word

The political climate in the eastern Cape, however, was changing, and this was manifest in how indigenous people chose to express themselves in, and use, the written word through the medium of periodicals. This was the “struggle for selfhood, which their forefathers had initially fought on battlefields”.\textsuperscript{15} Ten years later Stewart’s prescriptive approach regarding what could be written and read in the vernacular and his control over the “freedom of readers to express themselves openly in the political genre of their choice was contested and won.”\textsuperscript{16} A key player in this contest was John Tengo Jabavu, who took over as editor of Isigidimi samaXhosa. This had become a Xhosa newspaper in 1876 when it parted ways with its English section. (The English section subsequently became known as The Christian Express, and later The South African Outlook in 1881.) Jabavu’s three-year contract was not re-newed at the end of 1884, no doubt because of his strong political views, which he was not afraid to voice. We return to Jabavu later, when he founds the first African-managed periodical in written in Xhosa. After Jabavu’s departure, the editorship of Isigidimi samaXhosa was taken

\textsuperscript{14} Stewart, James. ‘Editorial’ in Isigidimi samaXhosa. 4th February 1871. p 3. cited in Opland, J. ‘The transition from oral to written literature in Xhosa, 1823 - 1909,’ p 139.

\textsuperscript{15} De Kock, Leon. Civilising Barbarians p 63.

\textsuperscript{16} Opland, Jeff. ‘Literature in Xhosa newspapers.’ p 5.
over by William Wellington Gqoba. Under Jabavu and Gqoba, this periodical was a “forum where the young Xhosa intellectuals could discuss events and their implications with a certain amount of freedom”. It is important not note that there was only a certain amount of freedom, but nonetheless we must recognise the fact that the written word was becoming more and more significant as a form of communication across boundaries. A central theme communicated by the contributors was a growing disillusionment about the “discrepancy between Christian doctrine and the white man’s actual purposes and practices”, as evidenced by the incorporation of British Kaffraria into the Cape Province, and the wars in Zululand (1879) and Lesotho (1880-1884). Writing in the vernacular, then, had taken on a new purpose and significance.

As editor during this period, Gqoba’s interpretation of the events around him were often criticised as being too tolerant. Born into the amaNgqika near Gaga in 1840, Gqoba attended an elementary mission school at Tyumie before being sent to Lovedale in 1853. Although he learnt the trade of wagon-making there, he soon realised the opportunities available to him as a result of his fluency and literacy in two languages, English and Xhosa. He taught with Tiyo Soga at Emgwali, became a pastor of the Native Church of Rabula, and was also employed for some time as a translator in the Native Registry Office in Kimberley. Before taking up the editorship of Isigidi mi samaXhosa, he had been employed as an assistant in the translation classes at Lovedale. His varied careers show how advantageous a knowledge of the written and spoken versions of Xhosa could be.

Gqoba’s work as a writer gives an insight into how he viewed the political situation in the eastern Cape in the late nineteenth century. Like a number of Africans, including Ntsikana, who had been under mission influence through their education, he attempted to reconcile his ‘traditional’ way of life with the new faith. Following Tiyo Soga, he undertook to record

118 Ibid.
proverbial sayings in plain prose. Importantly, though, he also expressed his "Christian inspiration" through two poems, the 'Discussion between the Christian and the Pagan', and the 'Great Discussion on Education'. Both of these poems are interesting articulations of one man's reactions to the changing social relations in the eastern Cape, with Gqoba discussing how "the growing impact of European power" was "being felt, criticised and resisted, not only in terms of material interests and physical fighting for survival but also in terms of its ethical relevance or otherwise." But although the characters who stand in opposition to the new way of life make a convincing case, Gqoba's poems are essentially a vindication of Christianity in the midst of colonial encroachment. Gqoba paints a well-textured scene, describing the hypocrisy of the Christian converts who advocate virtue while being addicted to alcohol, and observing how conversion does not bring the material rewards that were expected as the colonial authorities subject all black people, Christian or not, to the same unjust laws. These are the thoughts of Gqoba's character Present-World, who argues:

Deserting your Chiefs, you came to the White Man;  
Destroying our rule, you side with the enemy;  
But now your faith is lean shrivell’d  
Even like a chameleon whose mouth is smear’d  
With nicotine on a sultry summer's day.

Gqoba's 'Discussion on Education' centres its criticism on two aspects of educational policy at the time: the deliberate attempts to deny Africans access to the same knowledge as their European counterparts in the mission schools; and the appearance of its collusion with the colonial administration which wanted to keep wages, even for educated Africans, low. One of the characters in Gqoba's poem argues that the white man had been welcomed in the hope that they would bring a better life, but their arrival had only resulted in the devastation of their land and the imposition of heavy taxes. The character Ungrateful is eventually won over,
and he advises Africans to “go seek learning” and to “love the white people.” Thus, using the written form of the vernacular as his medium, Gqoba expressed his views on how the changed situation in which Africans in the eastern Cape now found themselves should be understood and reacted to.

This conciliatory view, which came out in his editorial policy at Isigidimi samaXhosa by rejecting contributions which he considered “too hostile to British rule”, did not stick well with a new breed of Xhosa readers who demanded independent political content. A particularly outspoken critic voicing his discontent about the effects of white men was Jonas Ntsiko, who wrote as ‘Uhadi Wase-luhlangeni’ (The harp of the nation). He demanded that Gqoba give the African point of view as much space as the official positions of the government and the church. In one of Ntsiko’s last contributions on the 1st February 1884, before Gqoba began rejected his writing, he expressed his disillusionment, even with Christianity (he was a catechist at the St. John’s Mission in Umtata) which seemed powerless in the face of the colonial onslaught:

I turn my back on the many shames
That I see from day to day;
It seems we march to our very grave
Encircled by a smiling Gospel.

For what is the Gospel?
And what salvation?
The shade of a fabulous ghost
That we try to embrace in vain.

This attitude towards the Church meant that by 1900 Ntsiko’s licence as a catechist had been withdrawn, but he continued to use the written word to his advantage, going on to become an interpreter for the magistrate in Tsolo.
Gqoba’s editorial and political approach resulted in a number of young African intellectuals feeling alienated by *Isigidi mi samaXhosa*. In a letter addressed to the editor, Thomas Mqanda wrote in October 1884:

Let me say to you:-

You who lean on the white woman’s mountain,  
The one called Cape Town:  
Go, black snake,  
Which cleaves pools,  
Return home where we’re being killed.  
Study the white man’s paths,  
And you’re studied by a breechloaders;  
You hawk with powerful wings.\(^{130}\)

This poem expressed a general feeling of exasperation in Gqoba’s approach of “lean[ing] on the white woman’s mountain”. Mqanda’s poem is also interesting because it was the only poem published in *Isigidi mi samaXhosa* that was not written in the western form of “rhyming verses of a regular number of syllables and stanzas of regular length”\(^{131}\). Instead it was written in the style of izibongo, and it also performs the same function as oral poetry in Xhosa society -- it is a political message urging his readers (as opposed to listeners to maintain indigenous codes of behaviour.\(^{132}\) In the face of such opposition, *Isigidi mi samaXhosa* died when Gqoba did in 1888, but a new forum for the use of written Xhosa as a medium for expression and resistance had already been initiated.

The close of *Isigidi mi samaXhosa* coincided closely with the end of the ninth frontier war in the eastern Cape, which was fought and won by the British. The various Nguni groups in the eastern Cape now found themselves in a new situation, to which they had to adapt new strategies of resistance. Their powerlessness against British guns proved to many that a new weapon was needed. Isaac William Wauchope, who wrote under the name I.W.W. Citashe appealed to his generation to use the written word as a form of resistance, to express their “militancy through writing”\(^{133}\):

\(^{130}\) cited and translated in Opland, Jeff. ‘The transition from oral to written literature in Xhosa, 1823 - 1909.’ p 146.  
\(^{131}\) Ibid.  
\(^{132}\) Ibid.
Your cattle are plundered, compatriot!
After them! After them!
Lay down the musketry,
Take up the pen.
Seize paper and ink:
That's your shield.

Your rights are plundered!
Grab a pen,
Load, load it with ink;
Sit in your chair,
Don't head for Hoho:
Fire with your pen.

Press on the page,
Engage your mind;
Focus on facts,
And speak loud and clear;
Don't rush into battle:
Anger stutters.

This poem echoes with the words of the Zulu king, Cetshwayo, who said, while in exile after his kingdom had been invaded by the British in 1879, that the stream of petitions and letters he wrote declaring his innocence were "now his only assegais". Cetshwayo had realised that literacy was a technology of power that had to be embraced in this new environment. A number of Africans from the eastern Cape also realised this, and took up Citashe's advice.

They were the first generation of European-trained African intellectuals, most of whom had been educated at Lovedale, and who "reached their zenith politically and economically at the end of the nineteenth century." They were in the difficult position of wanting to "acquire all the benefits of whites while preserving their cultural and territorial integrity." They nonetheless epitomised a "new political assertiveness, part of the wider process of African mobilization from the 1880's on" which was "apparent in the emergence of new political organisations, in a rise in electoral interest, and in an increasing criticism of the role of the church and education." John Tengo Jabavu was at the forefront of his generation, "perhaps

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133 Opland, Jeff. 'Literature in Xhosa newspapers.' p 9.
134 cited in translation in Ibid.
135 Guy, Jeff. 'Making Words Visible.' p 12.
136 Hodgson, Janet. 'A Battle for Sacred Power.' p 80.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
the most pivotal black political figure of his day”\(^\text{139}\) and someone who made great use of the
time the power of the written word in Xhosa. Born of Christian Mfengu\(^\text{140}\) parents at Healdtown in
1859, he attended the Wesleyan mission school there, qualifying as a teacher in 1876. After
working as a teacher and a printer’s apprentice in Somerset East, he went to Lovedale in 1881
for higher education. It was at this time that he was appointed editor of *Isigidi\(\text{mi samaXhosa}\).\(^\text{141}\) Soon, however, feeling the restrictions of Lovedale’s editorial policy under
James Stewart in particular, Jabavu left this periodical to establish *Imvo zabantsundu*, a forum
for the opinions of black people which afforded a far greater degree of political freedom than
any vernacular publication had done to that date.\(^\text{142}\)

*Imvo*, supported by the financial backing provided by Jabavu’s connections to white liberals
such as Richard Rose-Innes and James Weir, was the first independent newspaper under black
teditorship and management. The publication was explicitly political, with Jabavu writing in an
editorial\(^\text{143}\) during 1884 that he intended for the newspaper to “serve as a medium of
communication between the black population of South Africa and the ruling power in Britain,
that it would be a regular organ of native opinion allowing whites to see blacks ‘as we see
ourselves’, and that it would provide a rallying ground for the educated black elite.”\(^\text{144}\) His
appeal to the educated elite in particular demonstrates the point, made earlier, that literacy
disempowers as it empowers, for the acquisition of it meant that there was now a large mass
of people who were illiterate, and who did not have access to the written word as a tool of
political expression and resistance. Literacy in the vernacular became a means of social
differentiation.

\(^\text{139}\) Opland, Jeff. ‘The transition from oral to written literature in Xhosa, 1823 - 1909.’ P 146.
\(^\text{140}\) I use this term with caution, knowing that there was no homogenous Mfengu polity, but that rather it was a
name applied to this heterogeneous group of various refugees from the upheavals of the Mfecane in the early
1820’s. The history of their affiliation as a distinct group to both the WMMS and the colonial government has had
the effect of binding them together in the popular mind.
\(^\text{141}\) Opland, Jeff. A.S. Four African Literatures, p 42.
\(^\text{142}\) Opland, Jeff. ‘The transition from oral to written literature in Xhosa, 1823 - 1909.’ P 145.
\(^\text{143}\) Most editorials were actually written in English, because much of what was written in the publication was
intended to persuade and influence British politicians, as much as Nguni readers.
\(^\text{144}\) cited in Opland, Jeff. ‘The transition from oral to written literature in Xhosa, 1823 - 1909.’ P 147.
And this was what Imvo was: a medium for political expression and resistance in the vernacular by the black educated elite. The paper “campaigned openly for politicians, and freely voiced black complaints about the pass laws, laws governing urban locations and the sale of liquor, unfair legal decisions and discriminating legislation in parliament.”¹⁴⁵ The newspaper’s political stance supported the South African Party, and later the Afrikaaner Bond, when sympathetic white politicians like J.W. Sauer and John X. Merriman joined forces with J.H. Hofmeyr against Cecil John Rhodes’ Progressive Party. This move alienated sections of Imvo’s readership, emphasising the already unstable rift between the Mfengu on the side, and Xhosa and Thembu readers on the other. It also resulted in the launch of a rival black newspaper, Izwi labantu in 1897 under the editorship of Nathaniel Cyril Mhala, supported by the financial backing of Rhodes himself.

One Xhosa writer who rose to public prominence in the pages of Izwi was Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi, lauded as one of the greatest literary figures to write in the Xhosa language.¹⁴⁶ His contributions were predominantly political. The following poem ‘Namhla’ (Today), printed in the July 1901 edition, is one example of Mqhayi using his pen as a political weapon and outlet for the expression of his resistance:

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It’s a heavy arm
oppressing us;
colour bars flourish
among rich and poor;
our taxation’s heavy,
our wages are low;
education’s insufficient
as we scramble to eat.¹⁴⁷
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Those people who had access to education, and thus literacy, had embraced Xhosa in its written form for purposes which, as we have seen, did not meet with the approval of the missionaries. These missionaries had not only played such an important role in the development of literary Xhosa, but had also played an important role in the development of a new class of people in the eastern Cape: the educated and literate elite. Literacy had become a

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¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

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means of social differentiation. This new group of people realised that they would have to adapt to the changed social and political climate in the eastern Cape by using the written word to express discontent, alienation and resistance. And of course, because many of them had been educated at Lovedale, they used Ngqika Xhosa, which would be accepted as the standard form of the language, especially once the language moved into another space, and was used by a different set of people: academics within the university.

146 Ibid.
147 cited and translated in Opland, Jeff. 'Literature in Xhosa newspapers.' p 10.
Chapter 5

ACADEMICS

"the action which the Government and our University are jointly taking"

I

Practitioners and academics

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, almost all the work on the languages of southern Africa was undertaken by mission societies, predominantly in isolation from one another, and in order to serve their distinct needs. In the missionaries' hands, language had primarily a practical value: as an instrument to convey the word of God through the bible and sermons. Eventually, however, the historical and comparative study of Indo-European languages which had become one of the principle enterprises of science in Europe during the nineteenth century did begin to influence the ways in which language was used and understood in southern Africa, with an additional scientific value attached to its already practical value. In this chapter, then, I diverge from the examination of how one southern African language, Xhosa, was utilised, and trace the (not always smooth) movement of indigenous languages in general from their place in the mission station, to a new space: the Bantu Studies Department in the academic institution.

In the early stages of academic work on African languages there was, as Carl Lepsius articulated it, an "intimate relationship between linguistic science and missionary labours". The relationship was a mutual one, for the work of linguistic science also lent "its aid to the

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1 Of course, many of the missionaries approached their task scientifically, and as we have seen in the accounts of early travellers to South Africa, their word lists were not without a scientific value. What was different from the mid-nineteenth century onwards was the specialisation in linguistic science and comparative philology that began to emerge in southern Africa, and study of African languages in academic institutions.

Christian zeal of the missionaries\textsuperscript{3}. One example of this was the work of Lepsius himself, who attempted to solve the main problem facing any comparative philologist who wished to go beyond the bounds of the Classical -- the lack of a common system of orthography for representing the plethora of new speech sounds encountered.\textsuperscript{4} His \textit{scientific} aim, then, in “establishing a uniform orthography for writing foreign languages in European characters” was to render the “raw material” provided by isolated missionary societies intelligible to scholars -- a task imbued with the post-Enlightenment idea that a universal system could be capable of systematically representing an external reality.

According to Lepsius, there was a further element to his work than just “to bring these languages with their literature more completely within our reach, and to increase our knowledge of the nations to which they belong”\textsuperscript{5}. A more \textit{practical} aim was “to facilitate the propagation of the Christian faith and the introduction of Christian civilisation among heathen nations, especially such as have no written language, by furnishing them with a suitable alphabet”.\textsuperscript{6} In other words, it was the “obligation” of “high-minded Christian men” to “furnish destitute nations, first of all, with that most important, most indispensable means of intellectual, moral and religious culture, \textit{a written language}”.\textsuperscript{7} Lepsius’ argument was that the products of science would make the labours of missionaries more efficient, and thus help them to accomplish their civilizing and evangelical missions.\textsuperscript{8} John Appleyard and J.L. Döhne, two of the most prominent missionary linguists working in the eastern Cape, concurred. Döhne expressed his wish to “introduce the principles of the linguistic alphabet so thoroughly explained and arranged by the eminent philologist, Prof. Lepsius, at Berlin” in his \textit{Zulu-Kafir Dictionary} published in 1857, although he was prevented from doing this at this point.

\textsuperscript{3} Advertisement in Ibid. p v.
\textsuperscript{5} Lepsius, C. \textit{Standard Alphabet}, p 23.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid. p 26.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
had not yet been adopted by the mission societies in the area.\(^9\) Appleyard was one of the first missionaries to motivate that Lepsius' system be adopted in Xhosa orthography. In a letter to Bryce Ross dated 20 January 1866, Appleyard said of his 'Circular on Kafir Orthography' that

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\text{Lepsius' system is viewed favourably...both by scientific and missionary bodies. In the Circular, I have brought the Kafir orthography as near to this system as I thought could be done with propriety, as I have said for it perhaps as much as can be said in the way of supporting it.}\(^10\)
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He went on to suggest that a meeting for those interested be called, with the intention of forming a Committee "for carrying out the object in view, namely, a uniform orthography at each of our Mission Presses".\(^11\) A uniform orthography was only agreed upon in the 1950's, but what is clear is that missionaries were increasingly drawing on the work of professional philologists to enhance their evangelical work.

The dual project of scientific advancement and missionary endeavour was also made explicit in two of the most important early comparative philological works to come out of Africa. The first of these was that of S.W. Koelle, whose Polyglotta Africana comprised a comparative vocabulary of nearly three hundred words and phrases in more than one hundred distinct African languages. In the Preface he acknowledged that the book

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\text{owes its origin to the laudable endeavour of the Church Missionary Society to bring the light of the divine truth to the still benighted continent of Africa. Language, being as it were, the lamp by which that light must be communicated and spread, they have long been anxious to put themselves in possession of this lamp.}\(^12\)
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Koelle's book, published in 1854, was one of the first comparative works on African languages to be undertaken independently of a missionary-written grammar, but the link between the missionary and the academic projects is still evident. More importantly for the focus of this dissertation on Xhosa, a southern African language, J. Torrend wrote in his

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\(^10\) Appleyard, John. MS 10665. Cory Library for Historical Research.
\(^11\) Ibid.
\(^12\) Koelle, S.W. Polyglotta Africana. p iii.
Comparative Grammar of the South African Bantu Languages that "there is no need to call
the attention of anyone to the importance of the study of Bantu. Independently of its scientific
interest, it is a key for opening one half of an immense continent to Christian civilisation."\textsuperscript{13}
He went on to plead: "God grant that this little work be not useless to the evangelization and
civilization of Africa!".\textsuperscript{14} And so while there was much greater specialisation as the
nineteenth drew to a close, with grammarians dealing almost exclusively with the acquisition
of language, and comparative philologists focused on drawing links between the vocabulary
and grammar of different languages, there was much common ground between the tasks of
practitioners and intellectuals.

Despite this common ground, it is important to understand that a new kind of knowledge
about African languages was produced in the hands of linguistic scholars. A.H. Sayce (who
studied under the great nineteenth century linguist F. Max Müller) explained what this new
knowledge was in his book The Principles of Comparative Philology:

\[\text{[Comparative Philology], by comparing the linguistic relics of social change and}
\text{thought, by classifying sounds and words and sentences, by tracing out the history of}
\text{forms and syntax, and determining the laws which govern speech, will work back to}
\text{the progressive intelligence that produced them, and will tell us with the certainty of}
\text{scientific knowledge, better than all the flints of Abbeville and the skulls of}
\text{Bruniquel, how man first raised himself from the level of the brute, how society}
\text{progressed...and how the philosophic systems of East and West, have grown out of}
\text{the manifold imaginings of the mind as it struggled to express itself in language.}\textsuperscript{15}

The key to the past, then, was scientific philology. More than this, attaining "an accurate
knowledge of all languages of the earth" was considered by Carl Lepsius as the "surest guide
to a more intimate acquaintance with the nations themselves".\textsuperscript{16} Naturalists, travellers,
colonists and part-time linguists, such as Sparrman, Barrow, and Lichtenstein, were all acting
on this kind of thinking when they included word lists in their travel accounts. However, the
work on southern African languages being produced by language specialists such as Wilhelm

\textsuperscript{13} Torrend, J. \textit{Comparative Grammar of the South African Bantu Languages}. p viii.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p viii.
\textsuperscript{15} Sayce, A.H. \textit{The Principles of Comparative Philology}. pp xxxii - xxxiii.
\textsuperscript{16} Lepsius, C. \textit{Standard Alphabet}. p 23.
Bleek and Carl Meinhof just under a hundred years later was more conscious of its role in the progression of academic knowledge about language.

II

The value of studying “living languages”

In this section I turn briefly to the work of two pioneers of African language-study, Wilhelm Bleek and Carl Meinhof, who played major roles in the recognition of the academic value of African languages. Rather than being important in their own right for the purposes of this thesis, I examine the main ideas informing their work on African languages as a prelude to the establishment of South Africa’s first Department of Bantu Philology at the University of Cape Town in 1921.

One might assume that the growth of linguistic science that took hold in Europe during the early nineteenth century would have spread quickly to those areas of the globe where new languages were being ‘discovered’ by Europeans for the first time. However, at first very little interest was shown by academia in the vast amounts of raw language material being provided by the missionaries. Rather than devote linguistic effort to a non-European language, the emphasis was still very much on the languages of Classical Antiquity, the Orient and modern Europe -- especially in their written forms.\footnote{Thornton, Robert. Capture by description: writing ethnography in southern Africa, 1845 - 1900. p 169.} This exclusive study of languages with a written history was increasingly challenged in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a challenge first taken up in southern Africa by Wilhelm Bleek, earning him the reputation amongst later South African scholars of the “Father of the Comparative Grammar of Bantu Languages”.\footnote{Norton, W.A. Bantu Philology. p 4.}
A friend and colleague of Bleek's, the President of the Philological Society Alexander Ellis, argued in his First Annual Presidential Address that the advancement of the whole field of linguistics was dependent on "linguistic studies based on actual experience with living communities of speakers"\(^{19}\). He told his audience of eminent Classicists and Orientalists that:

> the affect of the discovery of Sanskrit has been to raise into existence a set of ingenious and laborious men who have determined to unearth the secret of language, who have toiled night and day with an industry and a disinterestedness beyond anticipation...Yet for the pure Science of language to begin with Sanskrit was as much beginning at the wrong end as it would have been to commence zoology with palaeontology -- the relations of the living with the bones of the dead. And I am afraid that one of the consequences will be an extreme unwillingness to undertake that long and troublesome living examination of living speech wherein alone, it seems to me, we can hope to find the key to the mystery.\(^{26}\)

Ellis had not underestimated the "extreme unwillingness" to undertake the study of living speech. Ten years before the end of that century, the philologist J. Torrend still found reason to write that "notwithstanding the existence of a considerable amount of literature [primarily from missionaries], the study of the Bantu languages in general must still be said to be in its infancy"\(^{21}\). Indeed, it was not until 1921 that a university in South Africa made courses available for the study of African languages -- and even then, there was much doubt cast as to its suitability as an academic discipline. Thus the publication of Bleek's *Comparative Grammar of South African languages* in 1862 (the first comparative study of a number of southern African languages) shows him to be a pioneer in the academic study of southern African languages.

And as the first academic student of southern African languages, Bleek's achievements as a linguist are far-reaching. Not only did he coin the word "Bantu" (still in use today) as a descriptive term for a large family of related languages, of which Xhosa forms part, but he also inaugurated the systematic classification and grammatical study of this family of languages.\(^{22}\) For although it was the Wesleyan missionary W.B. Boyce who, through his work

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\(^{20}\) Ellis, 1872. cited in Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Torrend, J. *Comparative Grammar of the South African Bantu Languages*. p xviii.

on the Xhosa language, first described the grammatical system of class concords that makes the Bantu family of languages unique, it was Bleek who first understood its significance for grammatical, semantic and classificatory studies. In many ways, he prefigured the issues which have concerned the field of African linguistics since that time.

Bleek's work, then, anticipated Alexander Ellis's pleas for the study of non-European "living" languages. Robert Thornton writes that "as a philologist trained at two of the best universities of that time", Bleek "was alone when he undertook the rigorous studies of Zulu, Xhosa, Nama and later, the Bushman languages". Why did Bleek, against the trends of the European intellectual establishment, make southern African language his life's work? After studying theology in his father's department at the University of Bonn, Bleek enrolled at the University of Berlin to study Semitic philology under Carl Lepsius, who had formulated the first standard alphabet for the "reduction" of unwritten languages into European letters. It was Lepsius who first directed Bleek's attention to the "living" languages of Africa, with the belief that they would shed light on classical philology. Bleek stated the belief in his *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages* that "Hottentot" and "Kafir" should be taken as the basis of comparative researches, "as exhibiting in general the most primitive state...in speech". With this belief that the indigenous languages of southern Africa were some of the most primitive on earth, he hoped that the study of these languages would yield insight into the earliest formations of language, in the same way that "the naturalist's study of simple life forms had led to the formulation of productive hypotheses about the origin of all life."
He expressed this while deploring the resistance of traditional philology to studying African languages:

It is to be regretted that the great number of comparative philologists appear to be in a sort of rudimentary stage, corresponding to that in which zoologists would be if they refused to study any animals excepting those directly useful to man. In fact, the so-called Indo-European Comparative Philology now occupies the same place that Classical Philology did fifty or sixty years ago. It will not go beyond itself, and, as it were, shuts its eyes to the possibility that other circles of languages can be akin to Aryan. Yet it is clear that the complex phenomenon which characterises the Aryan circle of languages cannot be rightly understood without a careful comparative examination of other languages of simpler organisation, which shew more of the ancient structure. 30

Bleek so adamantly believed in the importance of studying “living languages” that he went so far as to compare the expected results of a comparative study of indigenous southern African languages to those yielded by the discovery of Sanskrit:

It is perhaps not too much to say that similar results may be expected from a deeper study of such primitive forms of language as the Kafir and Hottentots exhibit, as followed at the beginning of this century the discovery of Sanskrit and the comparative researchers of Oriental scholars. 31

Indeed, for Bleek, the “questions of the highest interest to the philologist” would “find their true solution in southern Africa” 32, where the key to the whole of Indo-European and Semitic Philology would be found. 33

It is clear, then, that Bleek believed the study of African languages to be of great importance in the larger philological project. In Bleek’s work, including his Doctoral thesis which focused on “Kafir” 34, Herero, Sechuana and Hottentot” in order to develop a universal theory of gender-type grammatical classification, 35 and his two-volume Comparative Grammar of South African Languages, we find what Robert Thornton calls the “first theoretically

32 Ibid.
33 In 1874, shortly before his death, and after twenty-five years of contact with the “primitive” languages of southern Africa, both through his own work and the publications and manuscripts coming into the Grey Library over which he presided, Bleek became convinced that there was in fact no such thing as “a primitive language”. In this conviction he was again, ahead of his time. (Thornton, R. Capture by description: writing ethnography in southern Africa, 1845 - 1900. p 169.)
34 Bleek examined Xhosa in particular detail using J.W. Appleyard’s grammar discussed in the previous chapter. (Thornton, R. W.H.J, Bleek’s Discovery of Southern African literatures, 1854 - 1900. p 13.)
informed, perceptive analysis of southern African languages. This laid the foundations for their future study in academic institutions.

If Bleek opened up the field for the academic study of African languages, then another German philologist, Carl Meinhof was, in the words of G.P. Lestrade the “greatest protagonist for the recognition of the importance of the study of African languages”37. His achievements included his role as a leading figure in turning “the world’s inchoate body of knowledge concerning African speech into science”, and once African language and linguistics was acknowledged as an academic discipline, Meinhof “fought for a realisation of the value of African language-study”.38 More than this, Lestrade went so far as to say that Meinhof “laid the best...foundation for comparative phonetic and phonological studies”,39 a claim which W.A. Norton corroborated, calling Meinhof’s Comparative Grammar “the phonetic groundwork of the science” in terms of African languages.40 Meinhof, then, is a central figure in the movement of the study of African languages into the academic field of philology. Indeed, Meinhof himself noted “unwritten languages...left to the missionaries and ethnologists”, who are both “more or less amateurs as regards this branch of scholarship”41 is “clinging to antiquity”. Instead, he argued, the field of African linguistics needs to be professionalised, with those undertaking the work “trained in the school of historic research”.42

Meinhof’s fight for the recognition of the study of African languages had two aspects, practical and theoretical. Practically, he wrote that “no long explanation is needed to make clear why a scientific traveller, an official, a business man or a missionary should seek to

33 Thornton, R. Capture by description: writing ethnography in southern Africa, 1845 - 1900. p 166.
35 Lestrade, G.P. Meinhof’s Contribution to our Knowledge of African Languages. p 2. For more on Lestrade, see part VI of this chapter.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid. p 3.
38 W.A. Bantu Philology. p 5. Norton was the first Professor of Bantu Philology in a South African university. See part III of this chapter.
 acquire the languages of primitive peoples in our colonies overseas." From this practical angle, then, African language-study was considered important partly because of the "part it can and must play in the government and administration of Africa":

Knowledge [of African languages] gives us the key to their laws and institutions — a matter of the highest importance to colonial officials.

In this respect, Norton noted that Meinhof's own philological work "will be very valuable in dealing practically with Bantu natives of South Africa and elsewhere.

Just as important for Meinhof as the practical utility of the study of African languages was the theoretical contribution that it could and should make to the world's understanding of the nature of human speech in general. This contribution was made, according to Meinhof, on a number of levels. Firstly, he argued, theoretical knowledge is required for the production of practical results:

The practical man of business needs a vast amount of theoretical knowledge, if he is to avoid serious loss in the purchase, transport and housing of his goods. Can we expect it to be otherwise with the learning of languages?

In order to ascertain the actual meaning intended by the speaker of an indigenous African language, the theoretical philologist was needed to "compare and sift the material gathered from the natives on the spot, so as to find the required rules". Here Meinhof has made the distinction between the learned men in universities, and the practitioners "on the spot", revealing the trend towards academic departments which produced a different kind of knowledge about African languages.

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42 Ibid. p 21.
43 Ibid. p 1.
46 Norton, W.A. Bantu Philology. p 3.
49 Ibid.
On another level, purely theoretical philology "cares nothing for practical values, but seeks to discover laws and connections". And it was in this regard that Meinhof found African languages to be of particular value to philological science. He answers his own question about why we should busy ourselves studying a language which contains "half-bestial sounds" and is qualified by a "primitive barbarism", by stating that such "aesthetic considerations" simply "do not exist for the philologist, however harsh the language under investigation may sound -- it is the object of his inquiry, and, as such, worthy of study". To illustrate his point Meinhof constructed the following argument using an analogy from another scientific field:

[the botanist] cannot confine his studies to plants which have some practical utility...Nor can he content himself with examining those which are conspicuous by their size or beauty...it is his duty to acquaint himself with everything pertaining to the nature of plants...He must, to the best of his ability, identify every specimen which comes into his hands, regardless and attractiveness. Only so can he hope to ascertain the fundamental laws of science and gain command of his subject. Just so with regard to philology.

The languages of Africa had to be studied, then, because in them the philologist could find "the phenomena in their simplest forms: when these are fully understood we can pass on to more complex and richer developments" : to do otherwise would be akin to a botanist beginning his studies on garden plants, or a zoologist on the domestic animals. Meinhof, then, considered African languages to be in a primitive stage, and thus he expressed his desire for them to be penetrated by European knowledge, filled with the spirit of Europe and become the vehicle of European thought, so that our energy and intelligence can duly cooperate in the raising and opening of distant worlds.

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50 Ibid. p 3.
51 Compare this with the positive view of the language that Barrow and Lichtenstein expressed. The difference is that Meinhof is writing after Gobineau, whose ideas about 'strong' and 'weak' languages must have influenced the way Europeans 'heard' these languages. The positive light in which Xhosa was cast by many of the missionaries probably had more to do with justifying their linguistic work.
52 Ibid. p 5.
53 Ibid. p 4.
54 Ibid. p 5.
55 Ibid. p 6.
56 Ibid. p 21.
His use of the word “penetrate” is telling, for it betrays the force behind the appropriation of African languages by Europeans into European thought systems. The result of African languages being brought into Meinhof’s own discourses of science and classification was that increasingly these languages became the property of academic institutions and bodies, who as I will show, now had the power to make important decisions about the long-term development of a language like Xhosa.

It is clear then why Lestrade called Meinhof the “greatest protagonist for the recognition of the study of African languages”. And, I shall point out in the next section, Meinhof’s ideas of conjoining the practical and theoretical uses of African language-study informed much of the discussion around the formation of the School of African Life and Languages at the University of Cape Town in 1921. But more than this, he set up the framework for the development of the written form of Bantu languages to be owned by (mostly European) academics, rather than by the negotiated practice amongst its speakers.

III

Learning African languages with a practical utility

An important aspect of the expansion of linguistic science in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century, initiated by the ‘discovery’ of Sanskrit, was the founding of new departments of comparative grammar at universities around that continent, most notably as the College de France through the initiative of Franz Bopp. Soon Germany (under the direction of Wilhelm von Humboldt) and gradually the rest of Europe followed suit. The ‘discovery’ of new languages in Africa did not have the same effects, as is evident from the calls of men like Bleek and Meinhof for the academic world to recognise of the value of studying African languages. Indeed, even once the departments of African languages had eventually been instituted in South Africa, it was as much of a struggle in the early years to justify their continued existence. With little chance of receiving funding for undertaking pure
linguistic science such as that being pursued in Europe, the new departments of Bantu languages which sprung up in a number of South African universities in the 1920’s needed to justify their existence by gearing their science towards practical utility.

The Department of Bantu Philology, and the School of African Life and Languages of which it formed part, was established at the University of Cape Town as the result of the initiative of the Anglican cleric Rev. W.A. Norton, who became the school’s first Director. Norton needed to persuade leading men at the South African College (the precursor to UCT), and thereafter the Union Government of the urgency of instituting the scholarly study of African languages in South Africa. It was as a result of the cases made by men like Norton, and anthropologists and ethnologists such as H-A Junod, H.L. Jameson and Dudley Kidd, for the scientific study of the ‘Native Question’, that the Minister of Education appointed the Coleman Committee to consider the applications from universities and colleges for new academic departments of African studies. Their recommendation was that the University of Cape Town establish the first school for ethnological and comparative philological research. The following paragraph from the UCT General Prospectus of 1921 highlights the kind of work that the School was intended to carry out:

With the generous co-operation of the Government, the University has made the first appointments with a view to the development of a School of African Life and Languages which will undertake the investigations of the ethnology, history, folklore, religion, psychology and habits of the Bantu races; the study of the main languages and dialects, with their relation to one another and those of other parts of the continent; and the instruction in native life and languages for those intending to work for or among natives... In addition to providing systematic courses of study in Bantu languages, the School should become the centre for general information in native lore and history.

It is important to understand, as this extract makes clear, that the School was dependent on Government support, financial and otherwise, for its existence. And so I turn to an
examination of the impact this had on the ideas about the use of African languages that informed the School's establishment.

In making his case for both the initial establishment, and thereafter the continued existence of academic departments for the study of African languages, Norton argued that it was incumbent on a new South African university to take up the study of the country's indigenous people. He offered a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the scientific study of the indigenous inhabitants and their languages should form the basis of Native policy. In other words, the "problems" (referred to by the 1919 Government committee of enquiry), "whose solution is necessary for the future safe development of a country in which white and black are to live side by side" needed to be brought under serious scientific scrutiny. Norton made his point in an article printed shortly after the establishment of the School of African Life and Languages, arguing that:

we, with nearly a quarter of the world's population in our empire, are only beginning slowly to awake to the advantage of systematically learning something of the language and customs of the people under our charge, while Germany has for some years had her organised studies, and has prepared her officials and others to go out to her colonies, providing a good grounding in the language and customs of the people to whom they go...Meanwhile I suppose we shall muddle along and congratulate ourselves we can get along without science.

Norton's concern was primarily for the study of Bantu languages. And so, he argued, although the interest in this subject is faint, and the science still in its infancy, the need for undertaking its study is urgent -- since the Government's grant for research into native affairs cannot be done without knowledge of the languages. On a very basic level this was because knowledge of the language would facilitate communication with those people being studied. But on a deeper level, Norton argued, it was only possible to study the "mentality" of the Natives (the real key in the formulation of Native policy) "with the study of their language,

62 cited in Ibid. p 27.
63 Norton, W.A. The South African Outlook. 1 November 1922.
64 Norton, W.A. Bantu Philology. p 3.
more or less scientific\textsuperscript{65}. Norton was drawing on the idea (found in the work of the early travel writer Heinrich Lichtenstein, as well as in that of Bleek and Meinhof), that language is the mirror of the intellect. Not only this, Norton argued that language was the most accurate means of understanding a language-group's history, writing in a letter to the \textit{Cape Times} that “a knowledge of comparative Bantu philology is just what we need in historians in South Africa.”\textsuperscript{66}

Understanding the “mentality” of the natives would bring about the solution to the Native question, because, according to Norton, this knowledge would effect the turning of “the hearts of subjects to their rulers”\textsuperscript{67}. Thus it was stated in the University of Cape Town’s General Prospectus for many years that

South Africa looks to the rising generation for those who are to occupy responsible positions in state departments dealing with native affairs, and the establishment of the school now provides the necessary correlations between University work and preparation for native administration.\textsuperscript{68}

Norton’s argument was that a very real practical utility would be derived from the scientific and theoretical study of, amongst other aspects of the subject, African languages. In this, Norton’s reasoning is reminiscent of Carl Meinhof’s in his essay ‘Why study primitive languages?’ (discussed above) when he wrote that theoretical knowledge is required for the production of practical results. In light of what Johannes Fabian has written about language and colonial power in nineteenth century Congo, it is important to understand the implications of Norton’s arguments. As Fabian writes, one of the preconditions for “establishing regimes of colonial power was, must have been, communication with the colonized.”\textsuperscript{69} On one level it was obviously important to learn a language like Xhosa so as to enable communication between indigenous people and native administrators. But on another level, being able to communicate in the indigenous language would certainly enable the

\textsuperscript{65} Norton, W.A. 'Missionary Training and our Student Class.' p 32.
\textsuperscript{66} Norton, W.A. 'Comparative Bantu Philology.'
\textsuperscript{67} Norton, W.A. 'African Life and Language: Inaugural Address.' p 6.
\textsuperscript{68} University of Cape Town General Prospectus. 1921. p 22.
South African government to consolidate their domination of the territory and its people. And so the “real practical utility” of learning South African languages took on real political implications.

This practical utility was not reserved for government policy makers alone. As a missionary himself, Norton had become convinced of the urgent need for the scholarly study of the native African population to enhance missionary work, which led him to complain in his Inaugural address that “our missions are content to employ missionaries, and even leaders in mission work, without any special training at all, as if ordination necessarily developed the gift of tongues and the other gifts necessary.” Indeed, he went on to argue, “many a commission on Native affairs has testified” that “the only real hope of transmitting the gifts of civilization to barbarian Africa” was to “give the good news a chance” -- a gift that was “not disguised and travestied by undertrained and untrained...evangelists”. Thus the pioneering School of African Life and Languages at UCT and its Department of Bantu Philology, (which served as the model on which other South African universities based their own new departments in the field), was established following the trend towards incorporating all facets of African society into academic research. This process had been initiated by philologists such as Bleek, Lepsius and Meinhof, and anthropologists such as Junod. The intention behind much of this academic research was not just to produce knowledge for knowledge’s sake, but rather to use the information as the basis for native policy, as well as to better equip those men working in the field, such as native administrators and missionaries. And so studying Xhosa in universities took on a new edge, becoming a tool for the civil servants carrying out government policies regarding the “natives”. It is thus evident that the place of indigenous languages in the curriculum of universities was far from innocent, as knowledge of a language was used to facilitate forms of control.

69 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power, p 3.
72 Ibid, p 7.
IV

Addressing "the great problems of life outside their own doors"

The University of Cape Town was not the only academic institution to make an application to the Coleman Committee for a grant in order to establish a Bantu Studies department. By 1933 four out of five of South Africa's universities had initiated the scholarly study of Bantu languages and Social Anthropology. One of these was the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), which officially opened its department in 1923, almost immediately after being accorded university status in 1922.

In his first address as Principal of the university in 1919, Hofmeyr commented that academic institutions in South Africa had so far done little to apply themselves "to the solution of our South African problems".73 Not much had changed a decade later, according to Edgar Brookes, Professor of Native Law and Administration at the Transvaal University College in Pretoria during the 1920's, remarking that there had been "no sign that South African Universities were especially interested in the great problems of life just outside their own doors".74 In many ways the Department of Bantu Studies at Wits was an attempt to correct these perceived deficiencies in the university's research and teaching, by including Bantu languages, ethnology and native law and administration in its curriculum.75

It is important to note that the Smuts government, having funded the School of African Life and Languages at UCT, refused to finance a second department of Bantu Studies in Johannesburg. The establishment of a department at Wits in 1923 was due instead to the financial assistance of the Witwatersrand Council of Education and, significantly, the mining industry through the Native Recruiting Corporation and the Witwatersrand Native Labour

73 cited in Murray, B. Wits: The Early Years, p 126.
74 cited in Ibid.
Association. The School in Cape Town had, to a large extent, motivated its establishment in terms of the practical utility which the scholarly study of Bantu languages and peoples would have for the government in terms of formulating native policy and training native administrators. The new department in Johannesburg, however, emphasised its benefits to the Chamber of Mines. J.D. Rheinallt Jones, at the time representing the Witwatersrand Council of Education, but later appointed the first Director of the Institute of Race relations, argued that “the Industry would benefit by an increased expert knowledge of native questions” -- but he did concede that “there would be little direct material advantage to the mining industry”.77 According to the Bruce Murray “it was with the express aim of assisting whites to ‘know the native’ so that they might deal more successfully with ‘the Native Problem’, and secure the goodwill of blacks through a sympathetic understanding of their culture, that the Department of Bantu Studies was established at Wits.”78 This must have been as uneasy collaboration between a department of expressed liberals, who kept a close watch on the unfolding of Hertzog’s Native Bills after 1924,79 and the capitalist mining industry which exploited cheap black labour. Nonetheless, our attention is once again drawn to the implications of learning and teaching Bantu languages to “secure the goodwill of blacks”, goodwill which was also needed to secure willing labourers on the mines. Fabian shows that in the Congo, Swahili was used by both the colonial administration and industrial-commercial interests, in order to implement certain labour policies.80 In South Africa it was academic institutions which controlled language, and issues of funding (from the government in UCT’s case, and commercial interests, in Wits’) could certainly influence what the focus in learning Bantu languages would be. Knowledge of, and control over, a language, were apparatuses of power which could potentially be harnessed by funders.

73 Hammond-Tooke, W.D. Imperfect Interpreters. p 35.
74 Murray, B. Wits: The Early Years. p 137.
75 cited in Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid. p 127.
78 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power. p 137.
Adopting the same multi-disciplinary approach used by UCT, the first two appointments Wits in the department during 1923 were a lecturer in ethnology (Winifred Hoernle), and a lecturer in Bantu linguistics, Clement Doke. Writing in the *Rand Daily Mail* of November that year, Doke argued that Johannesburg, with its vast and diverse black population, was the obvious centre for the study of the Native, in order to get “at the back of the black man’s mind”. Doke was to play a highly influential role in the field of Bantu languages, as well as in the consolidation of the subject as an academic discipline, founding a distinctive approach to Bantu grammar that dominated the field for decades. Just ten years after his initial appointment, Doke was promoted to Professor of Bantu Languages and head of the Department of Bantu Studies. It is clear, then, that even someone like Doke, who was deeply involved in the pure academic study of languages, saw the close links between his department and the formulation of Native policy.

Indeed, Doke was never simply a prominent linguist in his field. He believed that a knowledge of Bantu languages was an essential means for understanding African customs and traditions. He argued in one of his many linguistic essays that most grammars “did little more than present the obvious material visible upon the surface”. This “mere outcrop of knowledge”, he argued, could only serve to enable “communication with the people”. According to Doke, however, an increasing number of less “superficial” investigators had laboriously delved into the hidden things, and striven to bring to light the real gold of construction and idiom, without which a full understanding of the people’s mind and processes of thought cannot be attained.

In addition to exploring the “real gold of construction and idiom” for its own sake, Doke also saw language as a means to understanding the “people’s mind”. This understanding,

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82 cited in Murray, B. *Wits: The Early Years*, p 137.
83 His contribution to Bantu linguistics included his work on the grammar of the Lamba language, his pioneering analytical and descriptive model for Bantu grammar, his work on the phonetics of the Zulu language, his history of the early “Bantu language pioneers”, and his Zulu-English Dictionary. (Murray, B. *Wits: The Early Years*, p 139.)
84 Hammond-Tooke, W.D. *Imperfect Interpreters*, p 35.
85 Ibid.
86 Murray, B. *Wits: The Early Years*, p 139.
87 Doke, C.M. *Bantu Linguistic Terminology*, p 1.
according to Bruce Murray, was intended for the profitable use of those public servants dealing with "the Native" whom the Department aimed to attract.⁸⁹

V

"I look upon the school as our worst effort"

Although a handful of Bantu philologists, such as Doke, Lestrade and to a lesser extent, Norton, were applying their minds to the scientific study and advancement of the knowledge of Bantu languages, there was still a feeling, primarily amongst other academics, that this discipline could not justify the funding it received or the place it occupied within the walls of the university. Norton expressed this in an article which appeared in the South African Journal of Science in 1922:

> The study of Bantu philology is still so much in its infancy that very few realise its immensely wide scope, its various divisions, its manifold difficulties, its large tracts of uncertainty, and yet its enormous importance to a galaxy of sciences and great practical value in our ever-pressing problem.⁹⁰

Norton had good reason for making this overstated justification of his discipline's importance, for the 1920's was a turbulent time for both him and the Department of Bantu Philology at UCT, with Wits experiencing similar problems.

In 1923, just two years after being appointed Chair of the School of African Life and Languages at UCT, W.A. Norton was forced to tender his resignation, taking effect from April 1925. Once he had left, the University Council took the decision to abolish his department, being "satisfied that there is no demand for a Chair of Bantu philology".⁹¹ His two courses in Bantu languages, including the study of one native language (limited to Xhosa and Sesotho in the early years) through grammar, reading and translations, as well as elements of Bantu phonetics, outlines of Bantu Philology and a section on Native lore and

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⁸⁸ Ibid.
⁸⁹ Murray, B. *Wits: The Early Years*, p 148.
History, consistently failed to attract more than one student per year.\textsuperscript{92} No doubt the fact that Norton believed research and not teaching to be his chief task - understanding the subject of his Chair to be Bantu Comparative Philology - had much to do with this.\textsuperscript{93} This belief highlighted the tension that existed between the practical and academic interests within the School. Although Norton used his subject’s proposed practical utility as a means for gaining the support to establish the School in the first place, his interest lay less in training native administrators, and more in research which could only have a very indirect influence on the formulation of native policy. During his Inaugural lecture, Norton spoke about the “correlation between university work and preparation for Native administration” which had been enabled by “the action which the Government and our University are jointly taking”. In almost the same breath he outlined the most important lines of research which he hoped the School would undertake, including “African philology proper, comparative phonetics, vocabulary and etymology” and the “Relation of Bantu to Hamitic”.\textsuperscript{94} At no point does Norton make it clear just how this kind of knowledge would benefit native administrators and provide the basis for native policy.\textsuperscript{95} It was no doubt as a result of this lack of clarity about its actual usefulness that the Department of Native Affairs never offered its public servants sufficient incentive to take the courses being offered in the School.\textsuperscript{96}

“The fate of Bantu Philology”, according Howard Phillips, “shows what could happen to a department which did not prove its raison d’être to the academic community.”\textsuperscript{97} Indeed, it was from the ranks of Norton’s fellow academics at the university that the fiercest opposition to the department came. The fact that his course was in such small demand, and that Norton

\textsuperscript{91} Phillips, H. UCT: The Formative Years. p 24.
\textsuperscript{92} University of Cape Town General Prospectus. 1921.
\textsuperscript{93} Phillips, H. UCT: The Formative Years. p 22.
\textsuperscript{94} Norton, W.A. ‘African Life and Languages: Inaugural Address’. p 7. This idea of the relation between Bantu and Hamitic was a contemporary philological idea, loaded with racist implications, about the diffusion (and deterioration) of languages as they spread downwards through Africa.
\textsuperscript{95} Similar tensions were experienced in the Department of Social Anthropology under A. Radcliffe-Brown. Much of the initial research, according to Howard Phillips, “was geared to demonstrating the practical utility of the School to policy-makers and administrators.” Radcliffe-Brown made the telling comment that “[W]e have to make a show. Once we have succeeded in that we shall be more free to choose our own work without reference to outside consideration.” (cited in Phillips, H. UCT: The Formative Years. p 24.)
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid. p 27.
insisted on placing the emphasis on his own research meant that "his position at UCT was unique and soon began to excite comment among his colleagues". The grant for the School was precarious, having been halved on account of the poor economic climate, and it was never unanimously supported by government in the first place. Moreover, there was increasing competition for resources from the other Departments of Bantu Studies emerging around South Africa.

In this context of decreasing funding, it was the other Professor in the School, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, who opposed the existence of a Department of Bantu Philology most vehemently. As a Social Anthropologist, Radcliffe-Brown demonstrated extreme contempt towards the academic study of African languages, arguing that it was unnecessary for anthropological fieldwork: "[A] trained anthropologist with no knowledge of the language will do work of infinitely more scientific value than an untrained man with a perfect knowledge of the language." And so, as Howard Phillips relates, "Radcliffe-Brown came to believe that Norton and his antiquarian brand of Bantu Philology stood in the way of a successful School of African Life and Languages, absorbing a large part of its already reduced grant and rendering nothing of value in return." In other words, according to Radcliffe-Brown, the Chair of Bantu Philology had to go. As Norton's early resignation shows, this call was heeded by the rest of the university community.

This skirmish between Norton and Radcliffe-Brown may seem, at face value, to be more of a rivalry over respective disciplines and competition for funding than the manifestation of a broader negative feeling towards the validity of Bantu Philology as a respected academic discipline. However, the fact that it took over ten years for the academic study of Bantu languages to commence again shows that it was much more than this. With almost no

97 Ibid. p 26.
98 Ibid. p 22.
99 Ibid.
100 cited in Ibid. p 23.
specialised courses offered in any African language until 1935, the School was one of African Life and Languages in name only. The decision by the Chair of the School after Norton and Radcliffe-Brown, Tom Barnard, to try and attract students by offering more practical diploma courses in Native Administration is evidence of the direction the School took from the mid-1920’s. These diploma courses were, according to the General Prospectus, “designed to meet the needs of government officials, missionaries, teachers and others whose occupations bring them into intimate daily contact with native peoples”. The curriculum included options in Social Anthropology, South African Native Law and custom, Economic and Social problems of modern native life in Africa, Psychology, and Archaeology. But the study of an indigenous language such as Xhosa, although available, was not an essential part of the course. The response towards the diploma was generally poor, “partly as a result of the Government’s ambivalent attitude towards them” -- for while there was a fifty pound bonus for those officials in the Department of Native Affairs who were in possession of the diploma, the Public Service Commission “refused to recognise the diploma for promotion purposes”. The diploma courses consistently failed to attract students, and the ambivalence of the Government no doubt stemmed from the fact that most politicians felt that the School dealt with the “native problem” in too academic a way.

There was a brief attempt between 1930 and 1932 to offer a first qualifying course in either Sotho, Xhosa or Zulu, a task for which W.G. Bennie (who, as I shall point out later, played an important role in standardising Xhosa orthography) was brought in as a part-time Reader in Bantu Languages. The course itself focused on the acquisition of these languages, with compulsory components dealing with grammatical forms and syntax, the study of a special text, translation, composition and elementary phonetics “as an aid to correct speech”. And so while the course was predominantly conversational, if students proceeded to a second year of

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101 Ibid.
102 University of Cape Town General Prospectus. 1928 - 1935.
103 Ibid.
study in the subject, they would combine a more advanced study of the language and its literature with an examination of, amongst other more purely academic topics, "the place of the language chosen in the Bantu family of languages".105 This course stopped functioning after two years, and the only space in which Bantu languages were consistently studied in an academic manner was the in the Phonetics Department under D.M. Beach. In this department a term-long component of each course focused on Bantu phonetics, including tonetics, orthography, and the problems and methods of research.107 By the 1930’s the School, and especially the Department of Bantu Philology, was in such a bad state of affairs, that the Principal, Beattie, lamented: "I look upon the School as our worst effort."108

VI

Ownership of South African languages, the power of professional knowledge

As the University of Cape Town’s "worst effort", Beattie vowed "to pull this school together or get rid of it".109 His decision, as it turned out, was to attempt the former, persuading the Council in 1934 to reinstate a full-time Chair in Bantu Languages.110 Such a decision was no doubt based on the developments in the field of Bantu studies during the 1930’s. During this time, Bantu studies became increasingly professionalised and organised, giving its claim to a legitimate space in the university significant clout. The first of these developments was the establishment of the journal *Bantu Studies* by J.D. Rheinallt Jones in 1921. The intention behind the journal was to promote "the scientific study of Bantu, Hottentot and Bushman"111, and it soon became an important vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge about, amongst other topics, Bantu languages.112 Another development with Rheinallt Jones113 at the

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105 Ibid. p 27.
106 *University of Cape Town General Prospectus*, 1930.
107 *University of Cape Town General Prospectus*, 1925.
109 cited in Ibid. p 270.
110 Ibid.
foreground was the founding of the Institute of Race Relations at the end of the decade. He summed up the context in which the Institute came into being in the Introduction to the Institute's *Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa*:

> When the Institute of Race Relations was established in 1929, the number of those who took an intelligent interest in the country’s racial problems was small. The Institute has played a vital part in informing the public on these matters and in creating an informed public opinion...Both the universities and the Institute have made available a great deal of new knowledge. 114

For the Institute's first Director, a scientific basis for the disciplines being taught in the various Departments of Bantu Studies around the country would provide the most promising approach to South Africa's race problems.115 Both the *Bantu Studies* journal and the organised and systematised knowledge-production related to the Institute for Race Relations, then, must have enhanced recognition for the scientific and academic value of studying Bantu languages.

An important example of the scientific enquiry being pursued into Bantu languages during this time was C.M. Doke's call for a dialectical survey of the eastern Cape. Journals such as *The Blythswood Review, The South African Outlook* and *Bantu Studies* carried articles asking those who had “a first-hand knowledge of the native tribes of the Eastern Cape Colony” and who were “aware of the existence of a number of dialects” to give “from their own knowledge” some “apt illustrations of the differences existing between two or more dialects”.116 Although as Robert Godfrey acknowledged, the existence of dialects in Xhosa had been known for some time, no scientific survey had ever been undertaken. Godfrey was quick to point that although “natives” would be able to offer “valuable work”, “without special training investigators into this line of research will fail to obtain the best results and that therefore it would be incumbent upon such research workers to avail themselves first of

113 Apart from, or perhaps because of, Rheinallt Jones' involvement in a number of initiatives dealing with the study of the indigenous population, he was also the Advisor on Native Affairs to the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa -- showing once again the uneasy relationship between the self-expressed liberals and the mining houses.
all to the training to be obtained in Dr. Doke's department.\textsuperscript{117} Statements like this reveal the value that was placed on academic knowledge, as opposed to indigenous people's knowledge of their own language. This echoes J.W. Appleyard's arguments against Tiyo Soga about the superiority of "scholarly knowledge", and I will show later in this chapter how W.G. Bennie made similar arguments against Sol Plaatje with regard to how orthography should be determined.

What is particularly important for this dissertation is to examine how discussions such as these served to strengthen the claim of Ngqika Xhosa as the dialect on which to base the standard form of the language. Godfrey argued, when asking which the major dialect of Xhosa was, that the "dialect which finds expression in literary form and which in consequence becomes fixed and which gradually finds itself the medium of an increasingly larger section of the people is, in practice...the major dialect."\textsuperscript{118} And so, he maintained that for Xhosa, "the dialect that first of all found expression in literary form was the Ngqika, the form used in the Pirie area. That form has been the preponderating one in Xosa literature for the last hundred years and has been stabilised...in the Bible translations and in Tiyo Soga's translation of the Pilgrim's Progress."\textsuperscript{119} This confirms my arguments in Chapter Four that Bible translation, and the use of Ngqika Xhosa by the literate African elite who had been educated at Lovedale, were crucial aspects of the elevation of Ngqika Xhosa to standard. It also highlights the fact that ownership over, and the power to influence the written development of a Bantu language like Xhosa was now in the hands of academic institutions and bodies. Indeed, Godfrey contended that the fact that the grammar of Ngqika Xhosa "has long been studied in our schools and has to be professed for the Cape Education Departmental Examinations by those who speak other dialects of isi-Xosa"\textsuperscript{120} was another reason why it should be accepted as the "major dialect".

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
J.H. Soga argued against this "assertion of the principle that now that isi-Xosa is a written language it may be taken to represent the universal language of all South-Eastern tribes", reasoning that "the principle is a false one for it raises an arbitrary condition to the position of an absolute one." He called the fact that the missionaries first came into contact with Ngqika Xhosa and thus developed it into a written form as "fortunate", but "no adequate reason for drawing within its orbit Fingo, Pondo and other languages and making them subsidiary to si-Xosa". Despite Soga's arguments, this is exactly what happened to Xhosa in the first part of the twentieth century. Once part of the academic curriculum, the construction of a standard Xhosa based on the Ngqika dialect was complete. As I will discuss in the Conclusion, however, there have subsequently been efforts to make standard Xhosa more inclusive of a number of language forms. The important point is that in the 1930's new bodies were created which effectively regulated the development of Bantu languages in their written form.

Until the establishment of the Institute of Race Relations, one of the only bodies facilitating collaboration in the field of Bantu studies across South Africa was the Union Advisory Committee on African Studies and Research, which was comprised of a lecturer or professor from each university's department. As I shall discuss later, it was under the auspices of this body that the first moves towards a standard Xhosa orthography were made. When the Union Government discontinued its support for the Committee in 1931, it was left to the Institute of Race Relations to take over its administration. Under a new name, the Inter-University Committee for African Studies, and with an affiliation to the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures in London, the Committee became an important vehicle for the

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122 Ibid. p 100.
promotion of "African Studies". Its role was to lay down guidelines for scholarly study, vet applications for fieldwork funding, determine priorities for research, and generally encourage the development of the disciplines of anthropology, Bantu Languages, and Native Law and Administration. The inaugural meeting took place in January of 1932, with a number of prominent academics in attendance, including G.P. Lestrade, from the University of Pretoria, W.M. Eiselen from Stellenbosch, D.D.T. Jabavu from Fort Hare, C.M. Doke from the University of the Witwatersrand, and I. Schapera from the University of Cape Town. At the next meeting a year later, a number of Native administrators, such as the Government ethnologist N.J. van Warmelo and a representative from the government of Southern Rhodesia, H. Jowitt, joined the Committee. And so although the government had officially cut off funding for this body, its membership indicates the ongoing partnerships between civil servants working in 'native affairs' and academia. The result was that the knowledge produced in bodies such as this was made easily available for governmental use, which, as I have discussed, had important political implications.

An indication of the importance of this Committee for the continued study of Bantu languages is shown by the fact that in just one meeting the adoption of the new standard Xhosa orthography by the Cape Education Department was discussed; it was reported that "steps had been taken to press on the Ministers of Education and Native Affairs the recommendations of the Native Economic Commission favouring the encouragement of studies and research on Native life and languages"; and, after a survey of research in Social Anthropology, it was recommended that "no postgraduate student in Social Anthropology be admitted to an advanced degree who has not a working knowledge of a Bantu language".

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124 Lord Hailey noted that the International African Institute embraced both "sociological and linguistic problems", having "taken the initiative in the inquiries necessary to establish uniform systems of orthography", and having "issued a number of works designed as guides for those engaged in linguistic research in Africa." (Hailey, Lord. An African Survey. p 87.)
125 Hammond-Tooke, W.D. Imperfect Interpreters. p 46.
126 Ibid.
127 Summary of the Proceedings at the Second Meeting of the Inter-University Committee for African Studies.
128 Inter-University Committee for African Studies. Summary of the Proceedings of the Third Meeting Held at the University of Cape Town on Wednesday and Thursday, January 11 and 12, 1933. in Bantu Studies. Vol. 7, 1933.
An incredibly important output of the Inter-University Committee was the report of a specially appointed Native language and literature sub-committee, convened by C.M. Doke, which had undertaken a survey in order to "ascertain what research has been and is being carried out, and to make recommendations for further research and for the development of the literatures"\(^ {129} \). Represented on the sub-committee were W.G. Bennie (Chief Inspector of Native Education, Cape Province) C.M. Doke (Department of Bantu Studies, Wits), J.A. Engelbrecht (Department of Bantu Studies, Stellenbosch) and G.P. Lestrade (Department of Bantu Studies, University of Pretoria). In terms of Xhosa, it was found that there was no up-to-date grammatical treatise, that very little scientific work in phonetics had been attempted, but that its lexicographical development was well advanced.\(^ {130} \) Thus it is evident that the Inter-University Committee for African Studies made a major contribution to the development of the academic study of Bantu languages. But it is also evident that a new body now had the power of knowledge and ownership over the languages in question. And so despite few registered students in the School of African Life and Languages at UCT, and despite the fact that the School's stated purpose of training administrators and missionaries was largely unfulfilled, the field of Bantu studies was becoming increasingly prominent and organised. This development must have given Beattie the confidence to give the School a second chance in 1935 and appoint G.P. Lestrade as Professor of Bantu Languages and head of the re-named School of African Studies.

VII

The future of Bantu languages as "not just abstruse academic discussions"

In the same year of Lestrade's appointment at UCT, C.M. Doke commented that "scholarship today is beginning to accord to Bantu languages a proper recognition of their value in

\(^ {129} \) Doke, C.M. 'A Preliminary Investigation into the State of the Native Languages of South Africa with Suggestions as to the Research and development of Literature.' in *Bantu Studies*. Vol. 7, 1933. p 1.

\(^ {130} \) Ibid. p 11.
grammatical structure." It seems that from 1935 onwards, the tide had turned in favour of this subject, with its place in the university curriculum secured. At UCT, this had much to do with the fact that Lestrade and Schapera filled the two core posts at a revivified School of African Studies. Lestrade is described as a polyglot who, having learnt to speak several languages during his childhood, continued "collecting languages all his life". After completing an MA in Latin and Greek at UCT, and another in Hebrew, Arabic and Chinese at Harvard, Lestrade went to London to study African languages and phonetics. Prior to his appointment at UCT, Lestrade had worked as an ethnologist in the Union Native Affairs Department, before going on to the professorship of Bantu Studies at the University of Pretoria.

That Lestrade was both a highly trained linguist, as well as a civil servant is important for understanding the way in which he instituted the study of Bantu languages at UCT. Lestrade maintained that the "ultimate justification for our science" must be the "sheer curiosity, this primeval fascination, now organised into a systematic hunt for knowledge, a ceaseless striving after more and better information". But although he considered "knowledge for its own sake" to be "the supreme aim"; he was equally adamant that the study of linguistic and human science should not happen in isolation, since in "trained hands" it could be applied "to at least one set of human problems, the government of the less civilised by the more civilised races". As a language specialist, Lestrade believed that the scientific value of studying languages was unquestionable, since, he argued, it is the best means of understanding "man's intellectual heritage". He went on to say that it was imperative that the practical values of his discipline also be acknowledged by Bantu Studies departments in South Africa, because "for good or for ill, the administration of a great number of the so-called child races is entrusted to races which have reached what is generally regarded as being a higher state of

131 Doke, C.M. Bantu Linguistic Terminology, p 1.
132 Lestrade MSS Biographical Note. BC 255. Department of Manuscripts and Archives, UCT.
133 Ibid.
Rather than rule by force, Lestrade argued, a "detailed, accurate and sympathetic understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the people under their control" would provide the right conditions for ruling by "moral law."

How shall a magistrate, set to rule over a district peopled by African blacks, rule that district justly unless he has knowledge of that people's soul? How shall a missionary, attempting to bring Christianity to the heathen, succeed in his task unless he knows the heart and brain of the people he is trying to convert? How shall the statesman, anxious to draw up a practicable political and economic basis for the country whose destinies he is guiding, succeed in his task unless he has first-hand knowledge of the political and economic basis of the primitive people who are also citizens of the country?

The argument made here by Lestrade seems to apply in a much more direct way to the study of Social Anthropology and Ethnology. And so, as was the case with Norton, it is never made clear just how language will provide an answer to the questions posed above -- save for one unsubstantiated sentence in which he argued that "the study of human speech, its structure, vocabulary and idiom, forms perhaps the finest introduction to the study of human psychology, and throws as much light on the evolution of the human mind as does its sister science, social anthropology."

In light of the "maze of problems which the co-existence of white and black in the same country have raised," Lestrade posed the question: what should be the activities of a department of Bantu Studies at a South African University? His answer was that on the purely academic side, the research and teaching of a select number of languages should be undertaken. And on what Lestrade called the "applied side", the "information and opinion gathered by the department" should be "put at the disposal of the various factors which make up the state." This is an explicit reference to how language could be used to help the state

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136 Ibid. p 6.  
137 Ibid.  
138 Ibid. p 7.  
139 Ibid.  
140 Ibid. p 6.  
141 Ibid. p 11.  
142 Ibid. p 13.  
143 Ibid. pp 13-14.
“deal with the natives”, which in effect meant implement and consolidate state rule over those who spoke the indigenous languages.

It was with these ideas in mind that Lestradé instituted the three undergraduate courses in his department. Students could specialise in a Nguni or a Sotho language, dealing with linguistic topics such as phonetics, morphology and syntax, as well as taking more practical courses in pronunciation, translation, conversation and texts. The Department still offered the Administrative Diploma in Bantu Studies, which included, for the first time an introduction to Bantu linguistics, comparative grammar, and the detailed treatment of a specific Bantu language, amongst the other courses in Native law and custom and the economic and social problems of modern life in Africa.

The way that language was studied and taught in this department (and indeed, in all departments around South Africa) was largely what Professor L.F. Maingard from Wits described as “static”. By this he meant that it is a mere description of a given stage, modern or ancient, of a language at a given time. The observer notes down carefully all the phenomena of the particular language he is studying and describes them scientifically. It has also been called the descriptive method.

Most of the work on languages in South Africa, Maingard noted, was of this type -- from Boyce to Doke. He did not downplay the importance of this kind of work, but he called for more scholars to undertake the “dynamic” study of language. This type of study, according to Maingard, is “more interested in, so to speak, language in motion. It is essentially based on the historical development of languages and the comparison of these different historical

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144 University of Cape Town General Prospectus. 1936.
145 Ibid.
147 See, for example, Doke’s essay entitled ‘Language’ in The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa. He spends the first part describing the main characteristics of Bantu languages, and then goes on to discuss in detail the grammatical forms of the various languages. His survey, he noted at the end, was intended to “prove the high inflexion of Bantu languages, and disprove entirely the contention, often put forward, that Bantu is agglutinating rather than inflexional.” It is clear that Doke’s analysis is descriptive or static, rather than dynamic. (pp 309 - 331).
stages and also of related languages." The expansion of linguistic science in Europe during
the nineteenth century was built up in this way, but, as Maingard commented, very little work
of a similar kind had been attempted in South Africa -- with the work of Meinhof the most
notable, but also one of the only, dynamic studies of African languages. This is an
important point, for it shows that although the very basic roots for this kind of study in South
Africa were laid by some of the travellers of the early nineteenth century, and although Bleek
and Meinhof both undertook serious comparative studies of South African languages, the
dynamic study of language was never realised by South African linguists. One could
postulate that the unique conditions in South Africa, where language was understood to have
a range of other applications besides the pure academic, meant that the language specialists
had less scope to undertake comparative philology than they did to undertake the detailed
analysis of a specific language. It was also perhaps issues of funding which meant that
knowledge for its own sake was not the focus, and rather knowledge that could be applied in
the South African context -- for the use of government or mining houses -- took centre stage.

Indeed, Howard Phillips asserts that Lestrade had no time for linguistic theory, and rather
immersed himself "in the peculiarities of individual Bantu languages" -- producing a high
output of original research on the various issues that concerned him. Even when he did write
about the classification and interrelationship between Bantu languages and dialects in South
Africa, he made a point of emphasising that these were not "abstruse discussions" of only
"academic importance", and that many

intensely practical issues such as questions of orthography, the unification and
standardization of dialects into a common literary language, and the development of
Bantu languages as instruments of expression for the new life that faces the Bantu of
today and tomorrow.

148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
necessitated this comparative knowledge. Importantly, Lestrade’s argument gives us clues as to how he viewed the reasons for undertaking the research and learning of African languages. It also highlights Lestrade’s main concerns in terms of Bantu language development.

VIII
Imposing orthography

A large number of the papers in Lestrade’s manuscripts deal with the problem of the classification of Bantu languages, and the unification of the various orthographies. These two issues bear strong relation to one another, and occupied the attention of most Bantu linguists during the 1930’s. They were strongly influenced by the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, which had been founded in 1926 by D. Westermann and his colleagues, and which made proposals for a new and consistent “African” orthography. This “sparked off a new quest for language standardization”. And so in 1928, the Union Government’s Advisory Committee on Bantu Studies (which later became the Inter-University Committee for African Studies) appointed a Central Orthography Committee under the auspices of the Native Affairs Department and the universities of South Africa, and chaired by C.M. Doke. Sectional committees were set up to make recommendations with respect to the orthographies of the different Bantu languages of South Africa. Sol Plaatje, a prominent Setswana author, complained bitterly about, amongst other things, the composition of the “Sechuana committee”. With “ten Europeans and two Natives”, he argued, “most of the former knew nothing about Sechuana”, and the latter, he ventured, appeared to have been chosen by virtue of their never having written a book or pamphlet in Sechuana, and their never having lived “in Bechuanaland or districts where the unadulterated Sechuana is

151 Lestrade, G.P. Bantu Languages and Dialects in South Africa, their Classification and Interrelationship. p 1.
153 Ibid.
spoken".155 But by Plaatje’s own admission, the Xhosa committee “was composed of experienced European and Bantu authors - masters of their language - some of whose books are on my library shelves. They at any rate knew what to adopt and what to reject in the interest of their language.”156 Indeed, the Xhosa sub-committee included R.H.W. Shepherd and W.G. Bennie, as well as eminent Xhosa writers such as D.D.T. Jabavu, S.E.K. Mqhayi and J.H. Soga.157

The recommendations were, of course, in the words of W.G. Bennie, “what the Committee considers the best and clearest way of representing the sounds of the language, as it is spoken by the people”.158 This remark is important, for it reflects the fact that powerful bodies such as the Central Orthography Committee and its various sub-committees now had exclusive rights to the development of written Xhosa, in ways they considered best. In response to Plaatje’s criticism that the Orthography Committee’s process effectively kept “the people in ignorance” so that their protests came too late,159 Bennie replied that the “proposals were naturally not published until they had been considered by the Union Advisory Board”160. For Bennie it was “natural” that the authoritative body should make its recommendations, and then invite suggestions, revealing where the emphasis lay in terms of decision-making about indigenous languages.

There were undoubtedly a number of Xhosa orthographical problems which needed to be addressed. The most important had to do with tone and aspiration, which led to inconsistencies in spelling.161 Having initially agreed to only one change, the committee “succumbed to the blandishments of linguistic perfectionism”.162 In 1930, Bennie, on behalf of the Xhosa sub-committee, printed a memorandum on the proposed changes, which were

155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
adopted by the Cape Education Department a few years later. These included “the introduction of three new letters, the creation of a number of new didacts (two-letter consonants), the use of diacritic marks to indicate tone and stress, the practice of doubling vowels to indicate length, and new rules for the division of words.” As Bennie recounted, their recommendations had been greatly influenced after a meeting with the Zulu subcommittee, where they “agreed to the use of h for aspiration, and to the introduction of two more symbols; and the Zulu section gave up three of the new symbols to which it had agreed”. There were also attempts to forge agreement between the different Bantu languages in South Africa, so that Tswana, for example, “was asked to dispense with the letter ‘c’ in order that the Xhosa group may use it as a click”. This is a clear example of the power which academic bodies wielded to make important long-term decisions about the development of a Bantu language like Xhosa in its written form, highlighting the extent to which the written version of Xhosa was now the property of academics and bodies like the Central Orthography Committee. Fabian notes, talking about the appropriation of Swahili, that we need to understand this as symbolic power, where the stress is “on instrumentality and manipulability, both made possible by a capacity to ignore or repress spontaneous symbolic creations and to impose from above and outside.” Fabian argues that in the context of the Belgian Congo, these “impositions” were made “to serve the aims of colonization”. I would not make such a strong argument for the South African case, but I would emphasise the very real political implications of this capacity which academics had “to impose from above and outside”.

162 Ibid. p 161.
166 Fabian, Johannes. Language and Colonial Power. p 137.
167 Ibid.
For Bennie, bringing the various Bantu languages into "complete agreement"\textsuperscript{168} was a "great step forward", because at last a system had been found "which, if it is adopted, will secure uniformity"\textsuperscript{169}. His argument was that "by bringing Xosa into line with the other Bantu languages in the matter of orthography, we give it the place that is its due, as one of the leading languages of the Family, and prevent its drifting into a backwater of neglect by the scholars of the world."\textsuperscript{170} Indeed, Nicholas Omenka highlights the implications of not implementing a uniform orthography in his case study on the retarded development of Igbo literature in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{171} Not everyone considered these changes to be a "great step forward", however. The Anglican Archbishop, Bishop C.E. Bulwer wrote in a letter to \textit{The South African Outlook} in 1934:

So the ugly interpolated "h" (in place of the neat rough breathing mark), the unnamed and apparently unnameable new symbols, and the unsightly double vowels, have come to stay. Hard lines on all concerned! Hard lines on teachers and children; hard lines on those who have to re-learn how to read and write isi-Xosa (please do not interpolate the "h", Mr. Compositor, it is not 1937 yet!); hard lines on all those who will be called upon to revise all Xosa literature, both religious and secular; hard lines on those who will have to undertake the revision of the existing Xosa Grammars and Kroopf's Xosa Dictionary! Fortunately for the older ones, most of these troubles will fall on the younger generation.\textsuperscript{172}

As Jeff Peires writes, however "satisfactory these new arrangements may have been from a purely linguistic standpoint, their social implications were disastrous".\textsuperscript{173} Particular resentment was raised by the manner in which the regulations were imposed.\textsuperscript{174} J.H. Soga, a member of the orthography committee, wrote that he felt "a certain responsibility in the matter, especially as there is an undoubted and widespread objection on the part of the Natives to any change".\textsuperscript{175} As early as 1932 he stressed that these regulations could not be imposed, arguing that

\textsuperscript{171} Omenka, Nicholas. 'The Role of the Catholic Mission in the development of vernacular literature in Eastern Nigeria.'
\textsuperscript{172} Earle Bulwer, C.E. 'Xosa Orthography.' in \textit{The South African Outlook}. 1 December 1934. p 283.
\textsuperscript{173} Peires, Jeffrey. 'The Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited.' p 161.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Soga, J.H. 'New Xosa Orthography.' in \textit{The South African Outlook}. 1 July 1932. p 138.
anything that would savour of forcing on the people most concerned European theories, especially in matters wherein opinions are in a state of flux, is to be deprecated. At the Transkei Missionary Conference not a single voice was raised in acceptance of the proposed symbols. It is clear, therefore, that it would be inadvisable to force these new symbols through, on the assumption that this would be done for the benefit of the Native people, for such action would merely add another grievance to the many under which they already labour.\footnote{Ibid.}

This is an interesting response, because it shows that while Soga sat on the authoritative committee, he also had to negotiate his position as an indigenous Xhosa-speaking person. It is also clear that although the Xhosa orthography sub-committee was well represented by indigenous speakers, the real power in decision-making still came from the white members. Soga’s concerns were not taken into consideration, and with Bennie’s convictions about the importance of imposing the new orthography, it was pushed through. Along with Bennie, Shepherd was also an “enthusiastic convert and propagandist of the New Orthography”, and as the Publisher at Lovedale Press, he “enforced the provisions of the New Orthography on his authors”.\footnote{Peires, Jeffrey. ‘The Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited.’ p 161.} As the ‘native’ education official for the Cape Education Department, Bennie also ensured that the new orthography was printed into textbooks and readers as soon as possible. It was this manner of imposition that roused much opposition from indigenous speakers.

The lack of consultation, the demographic make-up of the committees making the decisions, and the difficulties of implementation were the primary complaints. At the first Conference on Literature for the South African Bantu, presided over by Shepherd himself, C.M. Doke tried to explain the purpose behind the orthographic reform, stressing the principles of accuracy, simplification and uniformity.\footnote{Ibid.} All of the “main” southern Bantu groups were represented, and while D.D.T. Jabavu was there to represent Xhosa authors, J.J.R. Jolobe, H.M. Ndawo and S.E.K. Mqhayi were conspicuously absent. It may be the case that they were equally as suspicious about this kind of body which aimed “to encourage and assist African writers, and to consult with them regarding the steps which can be taken for the
development of the literature of the Bantu languages in southern Africa"\textsuperscript{179}, as they were about the New Orthography. Nevertheless, at the meeting, black authors voiced their opinion that this New Orthography was designed to help Europeans oust Africans from those forms of employment in which knowledge of the Bantu language is essential.\textsuperscript{180} This reveals the important awareness amongst indigenous speakers and writers that there were significant implications to having control of the language in its written form. They also argued that this orthography was effectively transforming “Bantu languages into 'White man's language'”, that it made the use of Bantu languages more difficult, and that it was an attempt to divide “the old from the young in Bantu life”.\textsuperscript{181} These reactions show that the context of South Africa had changed immensely since the days of the Bible Revision Committee. While Shepherd recorded that this discussion “showed the unhappy effects of the recent political controversy over the Native Bills, and of the efforts of those who wish to confine Africans 'to development along their own lines' ”\textsuperscript{182}, I would argue that the reactions of Xhosa authors and intellectuals was more than this. They were equally opposed to the authority of academics over the development of their own languages.

Sol Plaatje expressed this opposition when he wrote that the “Orthography Committee appears to have degenerated into efforts to dragoon the several provinces to exercise their authority in the direction of coercing” the various indigenous people “to drop their old missionary spelling and accept a new one...in collaboration with university professors”.\textsuperscript{183} He argued that the reasoning behind this “coercion” was typically South African: “i.e. the Natives know not what they need. So, let university professors lay down a scheme, in the light of science; and Native schools will have to adopt it or do without government grants!”\textsuperscript{184} Plaatje’s argument highlights many of the themes running throughout this dissertation: the

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid. p 10.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid. p 15.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid. p 16.
\textsuperscript{183} Plaatje, Sol. 'Suggested new Bantu orthography.' in \textit{The South African Outlook}. 1 May 1931.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
authority of scientific knowledge, the power of those people (in this case, academics) who could use this knowledge, and the importance of funding. Expressing the growing aggressiveness of African resistance, Plaatje went on to say that the “only trouble with the professors is that they don’t know my language and, with all due deference, how could a string of letters behind a man’s name enable him to deal correctly with something that he does not understand?” For Plaatje “simple knowledge is not enough”. This is a powerful statement, for it flies in the face of contemporary thinking, amongst both academics and missionaries. The idea that “knowledge is enough” certainly informed the thinking of J.W. Appleyard when he argued against Tiyo Soga’s criticisms of his Bible Translation. As I explained in Chapter Four, Soga also complained that “that their mother-tongue” was “served out to them by foreigners”, and that an outsider like “Mr. Appleyard is not the person to introduce such changes into a foreign language.” Soga was an especially important case, because he exemplified a new generation of Xhosa intellectuals, who had embraced literacy, and could now use this knowledge to generate certain forms of power for themselves. Sixty years later, Plaatje was following this path, although he voiced his opposition in much stronger terms. And like Appleyard, W.G. Bennie also realised that he could not claim to have a better knowledge of Xhosa than an indigenous speaker, and thus used another kind of knowledge to establish his authority, arguing that

the only basis for a satisfactory system of orthography is, not the idioms of the language, but its phonetics; otherwise the raw Xosa of Willovale and Kentani, who undoubtedly have the best knowledge of Xosa idiom, would be the proper people to consult. And one examiner after another reports annually on the sad misuse of existing Bantu orthographies, by Natives more or less educated...It should be self-evident that only those who understand the present orthography, and can use it properly, are really qualified to decide upon its reform.

Bennie argued that just because a “highly trained phonetician, who knows the language and can use it” is European, this should not disqualify him. He does, of course, make an important argument. But in the course of making it, he ranks his own kind of knowledge of

185 Ibid.
the Xhosa language (trained and learned in a university, with the tools of phonetics at his disposal) more highly than the "raw Xosa" spoken by indigenous people.

With his resources and authority, Bennie was able to push the New Orthography through -- despite the fact that it proved highly impractical, that it turned every literate African into a functional illiterate, and that it was never accepted by Xhosa-speakers.\footnote{Ibid. p 137.} Even Mqhayi and Soga who had sat on the Xhosa sub-committee could not, or "would not", as Peires surmises, write their manuscripts correctly in the New Orthography.\footnote{Peires, Jeffrey. "The Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited." p 161.} The editor-in-chief of The Greater Dictionary of Xhosa published in 1989 points out a further implication of the New Orthography which is important for my interest in which dialect became elevated as standard.

"The distinction between the prenasalized voiced clicks ngc, nqg, ngx and the nasalized clicks with a breathy voice, nch, nqh, nxh in the New Orthography, occurs only in Tshiwo Xhosa" -- comprising the Ngqika, Gcaleka, Ndlambe dialects, or what was regarded at the time as Standard Xhosa.\footnote{Ibid.} This distinction is not made in the other language forms in the Eastern Cape spoken by whom Pahl calls "the majority of Xhosa speakers", although these speakers had to use the New Orthography for literacy. Pahl goes on to say that "this difference presented an insuperable problem in the New Orthography as most Xhosas never knew which letter combination to write."\footnote{Ibid.} Thus the issue of orthography in the 1930's highlighted the problem, encountered in missionary attempts to translate the Bible, of using one dialect to represent a range of language forms. Under the initiative of Pahl himself, a new Standard Orthography was introduced in 1954, which made no distinction in the writing of these clicks,\footnote{Pahl, H.W. The Greater Dictionary of Xhosa. p xxxiv.} and attempted to rationalise and unify the orthographies of Xhosa and Zulu.\footnote{Ibid.}
And so the standardization of Xhosa that began in the 1830's with the collaboration of various mission societies had become a topic for discussion in the academic sphere. It was in this sphere that decisions, with wide implications for the future of all the Bantu languages of South Africa, were made. Although some indigenous people were represented on the committees, these bodies effectively divorced linguistic development from the indigenous speakers.

IX
Submission "to a process of linguistic self-immolation"

To return to G.P. Lestrade, he was one of the main proponents of orthographic standardization, but more than this, he argued for dialect unification. This would involve, for example, Xhosa, Zulu and Swazi (the Nguni cluster) merging into either one language, or alternatively, using only one of these forms as the written standard for all. He gave a series of lectures (undated), in which he discussed in detail the necessity and advantages of unification, and how this would be achieved. The main reason for unification, according to Lestrade, was that Bantu languages were in danger of disappearing. Not only did he think that these languages were being broken down by contact with European languages, but that eventually English would become the lingua franca and the Bantu languages would fall into disuse. He believed that the fact that there were so many different languages spoken in South Africa augmented the seriousness of the situation. The conditions, he argued, for the future survival of Bantu languages in South Africa were efficiency (being capable of full and accurate means of expression); operation in a sufficient area; and possession of a literature. All of these conditions, according to Lestrade, were missing, and absorption and

196 Interestingly, many black authors in the 1930's actually chose to write in English. At the Conference on Literature for the South African Bantu, these authors questioned the motives of Europeans who were urging the use of African languages. Rather, they argued, there should be freedom to use any medium that they desired, and although "it is true...that Africans must write for Africans, English is the medium through which Africans can be reached. It is impossible to produce a national literature through the use of a tribal language; only tribal literature will result." Conference on Literature for the South African Bantu. Johannesburg. October 1936. p 16.
standardization were the only viable solutions.\textsuperscript{197} He was not alone in this kind of thinking. R.H.W. Shepherd argued that "any significant development" in the Bantu languages "demands unified form, especially if a literature is to be built up".\textsuperscript{198} Doke also expressed the view that a million speakers of a language are necessary if literature is to be developed.\textsuperscript{199} And so Lestrade's main contention was that "it might be highly advantageous, and in one group it might prove imperative, for all but one of the existing written forms in each of these groups to submit to a process of linguistic self-immolation for the good of the whole."\textsuperscript{200}

Complete unification, as we know, was never effected, but the idea persisted for a number of years. What is clear is that by 1935 Bantu languages had become the property of academics and universities, who had the power to make these kinds of proposals. Far from being "abstruse academic discussions", the kind of work undertaken on Bantu languages now that they were firmly established within the university walls had, in many instances, serious practical implications. And as I have shown, challenges were mounted from the new generation of black educated elite, such as Plaatje, and less explicitly J.H. Soga. Although these concerns were not heeded at the time, the refusal of Xhosa writers and teachers to use the New Orthography imposed on them by the Central Orthography Committee eventually resulted in its discontinuation.

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} Shepherd, R.H.W. "African Literature". p 606.
\textsuperscript{199} cited in Ibid.
CONCLUSION

The passage of an indigenous South African language such as Xhosa from travel account, to mission station, to academic institution reveals the various ways in which Bantu languages were used between 1770 and 1935. It was as a result of the various uses to which Xhosa was put that the shift from orality to literacy was initiated, and the construction of one standard language to represent a linguistically heterogeneous group of people in the eastern Cape effected.

The rigid boundaries defined in the minds of Europeans, and the subsequent elevation of a standard language did not engage with the very real differences between language forms which now all had to rely on a standard based predominantly on the language form spoken by the amaNgqika. But of course, one standard written form did not change the very real linguistic differences between the various spoken versions of the language. This has resulted in cases of marginalization, with Makoni describing the difficulties experienced by learners speaking the Hlubi and Bhaca language forms in classrooms where standard Xhosa based on the Ngqika language form is used.\(^1\) It has also resulted in the creation of markers of difference, with Ngqika Xhosa widely regarded amongst indigenous speakers as ‘correct’ or ‘proper’, and other language forms considered ‘poor’.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Makoni, Sinfree. 'African Languages as European Scripts.' p 244.

\(^2\) Conversation with Nomathamsanqa Tisani, author of ‘Mama, where did I come from? An exploration into the roots of an Eastern Cape child.’ July 2000.
More recently, beyond the timeframe of this dissertation, attempts have been made to make dictionaries, orthography and grammars more inclusive of all the language forms that fall under the banner of Xhosa. Although distinctions of hierarchy are still made in day-to-day discourse, standard Xhosa today is far less rigid than the form prescribed by missionaries, academics, schools and printing presses in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, according to Professor Sizwe Satyo of the Department of African Languages at UCT, his department views Xhosa as a pool of dialects using different normalizers. In other words, someone using the Mfengu language form would not be marked as 'incorrect' -- as was the case with the Scottish missionaries' reaction to Appleyard's version of the Bible in 1864. Moreover, I showed in Chapter Five how The Greater Dictionary of Xhosa published in 1989 uses an orthography developed in the 1950's which does not distinguish between the prenasalized voiced clicks ngc, ngq, ngx and the nasalized clicks with a breathy voice, nch, nqh, nxh, as this is a distinction which only occurs in Tshiwo Xhosa (incorporating the Ngqika, Gcaleka and Ndlambe dialects).

Indeed, the Xhosa dictionary committee made a conscious decision that The Greater Dictionary of Xhosa should not be confined to Tshiwo Xhosa...until the 1950's regarded as the Standard Literary Xhosa, [and the dialect in which] the earliest academic and literary texts were produced...but that it should include the dialects of the abaMbo (amaMfengu, Fingoes), the abaThembu, the amaBomvane and the amaMpondomise. This involved, according to Pahl, the “extension of the vocabulary and idiom”, as well as “the recording of the different tone patterns of these dialects”. And so the dialectal words ukombatha, ukwemba and the Tshiwo Xhosa ukwambatha, all meaning 'to put on or wear

3 Conversation with Professor Sizwe Satyo, June 2000.
4 An example of this is described by Pahl, who writes that "a development... has become evident lately, one that makes the conservatives shudder." Until the 1960's "the uninflected stem of the qualitative was the only one permitted in standard Xhosa in the negative construction, e.g. ayintle, it is not beautiful." However, "wide usage made it necessary to accommodate dialectical...use of the negative suffix -anga, e.g. ayinlanga" as well. Ibid. pp xlii - xliii.
clothes', have all been entered in the dictionary. Similarly, the differences between the high-toned Tshiwo dialects, and the low-toned dialects such as Mfengu and Mpondomise are accommodated in this dictionary by using tone marks that signify the different pronunciations. Connotations of words also vary between the various language forms, and Pahl's dictionary provides as many of these connotations behind the first denoted entry as the editors could find, acknowledging that "it is possible that regional connotations have been omitted owing to incomplete research". Pahl's dictionary shows the awareness, absent in the work of missionaries and early Bantu languages academics, that "like all living languages Xhosa is not static but is constantly growing and changing". Moreover, he continued, the second half of this century has witnessed the capitulation of what for more than a hundred years was regarded and preserved as literary or standard Xhosa, as exemplified by the writings of the Sogas, Mqhayi, Sinxo and others, and the acceptance of what was regarded as dialectical...Xhosa as is evidenced by the works of the new generation of writers in which 'dialectical' elements such as the use of the participial after the relative conjunctives xa, mhla, etc. are manifest.

In this dissertation I have been interested to show how - through what processes, what ways of thinking and seeing the world, what understandings of language - the Ngqika dialect of Xhosa, the version spoken around Lovedale, came to be "enshrined...as the undisputed ideal of linguistic rectitude". I have done this by examining the transcription and classification of travellers, the linguistic labours of missionaries, the learning of the written form of the language by converts and the educated African elite, and the academic study of languages in universities and academic bodies. This approach has highlighted the uses to which the language was put in its written form. I have shown that language was used and learned for a variety of ends: as a means of classifying

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6 Ibid. p xxxix.
7 Ibid. xl.
8 Ibid. p xli.
9 Ibid. p xlii.
10 Peires, Jeffrey. 'The Lovedale Press: Literature for the Bantu Revisited.' p 160.
and making sense of an unknown land and its unknown people, as an apparatus of knowledge to exert certain forms of power, as a way to communicate with the indigenous people to gain advantage of some kind, as the primary tool in the evangelical mission, as a tool for indigenous people to create their own power as interpreters and 'native assistants', as a weapon of resistance against colonial encroachment, as a means of social differentiation, as a way for government and commercial interests to solve the 'native problem'.

Some of the first learning and using of written Xhosa occurred when men like Sparrman, Barrow and Lichtenstein came to southern Africa in the wake of the Enlightenment, each bringing with them distinctive ideas which led to the inclusion of wordlists of indigenous languages in their accounts. For all of them, there was a correspondence between the disciplines of natural science and linguistics. And so in much the same way that they collected unknown plant specimens for classification in Linnaeus’ 'system of nature' which effectively rendered order out of chaos, they also collected words to try and make sense of, or categorise, the unknown people they encountered. Sparrman was predominantly a natural scientist, and he used language to further the cause of his science. In doing so he made the first known attempt at transcribing Xhosa (or, more accurately, a form of Xhosa spoken on the western edge of the eastern Cape) from its spoken form into the codified system of the Roman alphabet.

Barrow, on the other hand, made good use of the tools of natural science, but his intention was far more practical. He was in South Africa as a colonial agent, and he travelled very much in the name of the British Empire. The Colony’s reason for appointing Barrow to the task of exploring beyond their frontier was primarily to gather reliable information that would be useful in establishing their dominance. Barrow’s inclusion of a wordlist in his Account must be understood in this light. This idea of the practical use of language in the effective governance of
the "native inhabitants" was reiterated over a hundred years later when Bantu languages were fighting for their place in the academic curriculum of universities.

Lichtenstein's reasons for including his lists of words drew on a number of the dominant philological traditions of the time. Following the nationalistic vindication that infused linguistics at the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially in his native Germany, Lichtenstein used language as the most important means of understanding the structure of society. This was because he believed language to be the way in which a speech community expressed and reproduced its culture, values, beliefs and practices. In other words, as Herder expressed it, language was the mirror reflecting the soul of a people. Using these ideas about language and 'nation', Lichtenstein was the first European to divide up the peoples of southern African according to the languages that they spoke. In this he initiated the work on the classification of African languages that took root in universities in the latter half of the nineteenth century. His ideas about language and its usefulness for understanding the people who speak was used later by Bantu language academics fighting for the recognition of their discipline.

The travellers had cleared the way for the task of transcribing Xhosa into a standard orthography and systematising it into a standard grammar. Indeed, Lichtenstein and the first missionary to work amongst the Xhosa, Johannes van der Kemp, included almost identical wordlists. Moreover, both used language as a copy of universal nature, whereby the signifier (word) is understood as a perfect substitute for the signified (thing). The important difference between the two men, however, is that van der Kemp's transcription of the language was done with a very important task in mind. While the travellers could leave the "heathen" as they found them, the missionaries' reasons for learning the language in the eastern Cape was aimed to effect the
conversion to both Christianity and civilization. In the missionaries' hands, then, language acquired an immensely important and influential practical value — to convey the 'Word' of God.

I have demonstrated in Chapter Three that the use to which the missionaries put Xhosa eventuated in the construction of one standard language which represented the written form for a number of language varieties in the eastern Cape. This process was by no means easy or uncontested, and it took over fifty years until Appleyard's Grammar was pronounced the standard. It took many years after that for Ngqika Xhosa to be settled on as the dialect that was to be written into texts. The translation of the Bible in Xhosa was an important process in this regard. Moreover, the establishment of Lovedale and the emergence of a group of an educated and literate African elite also had the effect of cementing Ngqika Xhosa as the language form used for literacy, and consequently as the 'correct' standard version of the language.

Discrepancies over orthography, however, were not fully resolved until late in the twentieth century. In light of these discrepancies, Carl Lepsius embarked upon the project of "establishing a uniform orthography for writing foreign languages". Lepsius' work highlights many of the issues that influenced the trajectory of African languages from mission stations to academic institutions — for while he was a highly trained linguist, his work also aimed to assist the practical needs of missionaries.

In South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century there was much debate about how to "solve the native problem". As Chapter Five illustrates, it was primarily on this basis that Bantu Studies departments were created a UCT and Wits — with funding obtained from the Union Government and Mining industry respectively. Norton's fate was largely the result of being

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unable to prove either his discipline’s academic or practical worth. And when the study of Bantu languages did eventually find its niche within the academic institution during the 1930’s, most of the research was done with practical aims in mind. One of these practical aims was the standardization of the orthographies of all Bantu languages in South Africa, a process which revealed the ownership which academics had over the written form of these languages. There were voices of opposition to this power to impose and control from above. Although these voices were seldom heeded at the time, the case of the rejection of the New Orthography by Xhosa speakers, teachers, learners, journalists and authors shows the ongoing contestation over control of the written language, and the uses to which it could be put.
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