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75 Years of Writing in Shona

G. Fortune

Shona is the name which we use today to cover a great number of related dialects spoken by people in Rhodesia, Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique. The greater number of these dialects, and of the Shona-speaking population, is found in Rhodesia and it will be most convenient to describe the situation there first, beginning with the central dialects and moving afterwards to those on the periphery of the Shona group. There is, first of all, the Zezuru cluster of dialects spoken around Salisbury in the districts of Salisbury, Goromonzi, Marandellas, Mrewa, Wedza, Charter, Buhera, Hartley, and Gatooma. These dialects include Shawasha spoken in the Chinamora Reserve and made the basis for the literary work done from Chishawasha; Mbire, which seems to have been the basis of the work which issued from Waddi-love; Harava, the dialect of Seke and Chihota; Nohwe, the dialect of Mrewa; Hera, spoken in Charter and others. There is great similarity between the Zezuru dialects. The number of speakers of Zezuru dialects was estimated at 188,000 in 1931* and at 1,001,000 in 1964**.

The next cluster of central dialects is over the Nyadzidzi river to the south, in the direction of Fort Victoria. These are referred to under the general term of Karanga and they are spoken in the districts of Selukwe, Shabani, Chibi, Chilimanzi, a form akin to the Zezuru dialects; Duma and Jena, the forms on which the literary work at Morgenster was based; and Mhari and Nyubi of Belingwe and Gwanda. Karanga speakers were estimated at

271,865 in 1931 and at 683,270 in 1964. Karanga speakers were more numerous than Zezuru in 1931 but in 1964 the numerical superiority seems to have passed to Zezuru by over 300,000.

The Manyika dialects centre on Umtali in the districts of Makoni, Inyanga, and Umtali, as well as in the Chimoio Districts of Mozambique. This grouping also shows quite considerable diversity including such forms as Guta, the basis for the literary work done at Penhalonga and Old Umtali; Teve, found in Chimoio; and the Inyanga dialects, including that of the Taangwena who have been in the news recently, which show some affinity with the Sena languages of Barwe, Tonga, and Hwesa, spoken to the north-east of Rhodesia. The Manyika in Rhodesia were estimated at 86,000 in 1931 and at 283,910 in 1964. It is not known how many Manyika speakers are now in Mozambique.

The Korekore dialects can be thought of as centering on Mount Darwin, but they stretch in a broad arc from the Sengwa River in the west to the Lwenya in the east. They are found in the districts of Gokwe, Kariba, Urungwe, Lomagundi, Sipolilo, Darwin, parts of Bindura, Mrewa and Shamva, and in Mtoko. Gova and Tavara, both Korekore dialects, are found respectively in Zambia, between Chirundu and Kariba, and in the Tete district of Mozambique. No centre for literary work ever developed among the Korekore. It is known that there is considerable variety among the Korekore dialects. Some well-known dialects are Tande on the Musengezi River; Budya around Mtoko and Tavara. Korekore speakers in Rhodesia were estimated at 135,291 in 1931 and those in Mozam-

*Doke, C. M., *The Unification of the Shona Dialects*.

**S.R.C.C., *Survey Report on Adult Literacy and Christian Literature in Southern Rhodesia*.

bique at 35,000. In 1964 those in Rhodesia were estimated to be 308,940.

The Ndau cluster of dialects is found in the area between the Pungwe River to the north and the Sabi River to the south; and between the mountains of Melssetter to the west and the sea to the east. The speakers of Ndau are mainly in Mozambique, speaking the extensive dialects of Shanga, along the coast from Beira to the mouth of the Sabi; and Danda, further inland. About a third of the people speaking Ndau dialects are in Rhodesia in the districts of Chipinga and Melssetter. There is considerable variety among these dialects too. The dialect called Ndau was used as the basis for the literary work done at Mount Silinda. In 1931 the Ndau in Rhodesia were estimated at 47,054; those in Mozambique at 98,173. In 1964 the Ndau in Rhodesia numbered 127,300.

The final cluster of Shona dialects lies away to the southwest and may be visualised as centring on Plumtree. The cluster name is Kalanga and the dialects are spoken in Botswana among the Mangwato, and in Rhodesia in the Bulilima-Mangwe, Nyamandlovu, and Wankie districts. In Khama's country, where the dialect is called Lilima, the Shona are more numerous than the Mangwato. Hwange, from whom the name Wankie derives, is the name of a chief whose subjects speak Nambia, a Kalanga dialect. Rozvi, the language of the people of Mambo, once the ruler of a good deal of this country, and still spoken by small scattered groups in this country in places like Bikita and Wedza, is a Kalanga dialect. In 1931 the Kalanga speakers in Rhodesia were estimated at 44,746; those in Bechuanaland, 15,000. In 1964 the numbers of Kalanga speakers stood at 64,330.

The total number of Shona speakers was estimated at 974,996 in 1928, with those in Rhodesia 799,619. In 1964 the total number of Shona speakers in Rhodesia was estimated at 2,468,850 and the number of Shona speakers in all parts, Rhodesia, Botswana, Mozambique, and Zambia, must be in the region of 3,000,000. In Rhodesia they number about six times as many as the Ndebele, which is the next largest language group in the country, and who numbered 132,600 in 1931 and 517,900 in 1964. Ndebele divides the central, northern and eastern dialects of Shona from the western. Both Shona and Ndebele are in contact with other Bantu languages on the borders of the country, some of which have penetrated quite deeply into

the country. In the north-west we have Tonga and Dombe, in the north-east the Sena language called Tonga; in the south-east we have Hlengwe (a Tsonga language) and Venda; and in the south and south-west, the Sotho languages of Birwa and Tswana. In spite of this diversity, there are only two official African languages in the country, Shona and Ndebele, the numbers of speakers of the other languages being relatively small.

The terms I have used to indicate the clusters of dialects are Shona terms, but were given their exact linguistic connotation by Professor C. M. Doke in his two studies published in 1931 entitled "A Report on the Unification of the Shona Dialects", and "A Comparative Study in Shona Phonetics". The terms used for the local dialects are Shona terms used by the people to indicate their different local dialects. As for the term Shona, which was chosen, after considerable discussion, to indicate the group of clusters as a whole, this was imposed from without and there is no certainty how the name arose, though it was probably from an Ndebele source. Its earliest appearance in print, as far as I know, is in Hartmann's "Outline of a Grammar of the Mashona Language", published in 1893. Its imposition bears witness to the fact that the Shona-speaking peoples had no awareness of their underlying linguistic unity, and indeed political units at the time when the country was settled under the British South Africa Company were limited to the tribes whose names are the names of the dialects of today, e.g. the Nohwe under Chief Mangwende and the Mbire under Chief Svosve. There are historical records, however, of a time when some of the Shona tribes, to the north, formed a larger unity under the famous Monomotapa, and traditions of a kingdom under the Rozvi Mambo to the south. Some of the first Shona words to appear in print are the names of Shona tribes and clans in early Portuguese records, e.g. the Kingdom of "Maungo of which Makone is king", which is present-day Hungwe in the Rusape district, and whose chief is still called Makoni, is mentioned as a vassal kingdom to the Monomotapa in the early seventeenth century by Bocarro in his *Decade*. In 1635, the king of the coast of Sofala is called Quiteve by de Rezende in his account "Of the state of India". Of him he says, "He was subject to the Monomotapa, but being under our protection he has almost come to refuse him any obedience." In 1609 the Dominican friar,

dos Santos, wrote a lively account of the Shona at Sofala giving a number of Shona terms for Shona institutions which remain unchanged even today, e.g. *ixé* (*ishe*) for chief. In 1710 da Souza wrote of the famous kingdom of "Munhay" or "Mocrença". The word Nyai is another term for Rozvi. Thus we know that the Shona tribes have been in or near their present habitat for at least four hundred years and in all probability they have been there for a good deal longer.

Swahili was the only Bantu language which was put into writing by the speakers of the language themselves. They have been Muslim in faith since the early Middle Ages and they employed the Arabic alphabet to write their own tongue. The earliest Swahili manuscripts that have been preserved date from the beginning of the eighteenth century. In other Bantu languages we have a number of works published by missionaries which appeared during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mainly in languages of the west coast. Of these the most famous is the grammatical sketch of Kongo written in 1659 by the Italian friar Brusciotto. For our area we have a grammar of the Nyungwe dialect of Sena, spoken at Tete, written in the seventeenth century, but for Shona no regular vocabulary earlier than 1854. In this year, the traveller Charles J. Andersson gave a paper before the Royal Geographical Society of London entitled "Explorations in South Africa, with Route from Walfisch Bay to Lake Ngami, and Ascent of the Tiogé River". The paper contained vocabularies taken from Herero, Yei in the north of Botswana, and a Shona language called Chylimanse. Doke, who published the vocabulary in NADA for 1933, identified Chylimanse as Govera, spoken today in the Chilimanzi district, but inspection of the vocabulary seems to point further north in the direction of the Inyanga dialects.

There is a vocabulary of Ndau words which was published by Dr. W. H. I. Bleek in his *Languages of Mozambique* in 1856, under the name of Sofala. And a vocabulary of Shona is listed by Bleek in the 1858 catalogue of the Grey Collection as a manuscript of 14 pages by Dr. Moffat. It is mentioned by Cust in his *Sketch of the Languages of Africa* published in 1883. Unfortunately, this vocabulary cannot be traced. The 1858 catalogue bears a comment in Bleek's handwriting to the effect that it was promised by Dr. Moffat and Dr.

Lewin Robinson fears that this shows it never reached the South African Public Library.

I have dealt at some length in the introduction to this paper with the distribution of the clusters and dialects of Shona in order to show the extent of the Shona-speaking area and its diversity and also because it explains the beginnings of published work in Shona which sprang up in a number of different centres unrelated to each other. The Shona dialects are no different in their diversity from the other Bantu languages. The three main groups of Bantu languages in south-east Africa, viz. Nguni, Sotho, and Tsonga, show similar diversity. Among the Nguni, literary work started independently among the Zulu and the Xhosa; among the Sotho, three literary forms developed in Southern Sotho, Tswana, and Northern Sotho or Pedi. So it was not strange that there was independent work done in the beginning in Zezuru, Karanga, Ndau, and Manyika by the separate missionary societies that had their centres in each of these clusters.

In 1893 and 1894 two small books exemplifying Zezuru were published in Cape Town by the Rev. Father A. M. Hartmann, S.J., one of the chaplains to the Pioneer Column and after whom Hartmann Hill is named. Though he called the people Mashona (referring to it as a term constantly applied to the people in his day), he called the language Chizwina. His books were *An Outline of a Grammar of the Mashona Language* (1893) and an *English-Mashona Dictionary with an appendix on some phrases*. He states that the language he describes is spoken over a wide area around Salisbury. This area extends in a circle with Salisbury as centre and with a radius of about 130 miles. He notes dialectal differences but calls them verbal, not grammatical, and a number of them are of Tswana or Ndebele origin. His spelling seems strange to us today as he confuses many voiceless and voiced phonemes, confusing /ns/ with /nz/, /nk/ with /ng/, /g/ with /k/, thus betraying the influence of his German background. But his ear in other respects was remarkably acute, for example in his treatment of the penultimate accent in phonological words, e.g. *chimbítsa* (hurry). He notes that the enclitic particles *-ko*, *-ssu* draw the accent forward,

e.g. Uneyiko? (What have you got?)
Wangaúyássu? (Have they come?)

but that *ka!* does not.

e.g. ngómbega! (an ox indeed!)

As a result he used a system of word division remarkably close to our present-day practice which was based upon the principle of penultimate accent in accordance with Doke's recommendations. Doke believed that Bantu languages were provided with a word marker in the form of penultimate stress and that all one had to do to arrive at a correct system of word division was to divide speech into different pieces, each with a stress on the last syllable but one. Hartmann's system of spelling and word division was very different from that followed in works based on Ndaou and Karanga.

Another early work in Shona was W. A. Elliot's *Dictionary of the Tebele and Shona Languages* (London, 1897). Elliot had worked with the London Missionary Society for 14 years before publishing it. He refers to the dialect in which Hartmann's works were written as the Gomo dialect "with its strongly marked gutturals", (indeed the way Fr. Hartmann spelled Shona, e.g. *gudshga* for *kudya* (to eat) must have made it seem very guttural, whatever Elliot may have meant by that). His vocabularies and examples are taken from Kalanga and Karanga which made him more conscious than Father Hartmann of the dialectal variation. Of his own work he writes, "The present reduction to writing of the indigenous speech of Zambesia is an attempt to present a written basis for the Shona language as a whole, from which the peculiarities of the different dialects may be observed." Elliot was the first, it is believed, to attempt an orthography for the Shona group as a whole. He appealed for help from the readers of his book for examples and entries to compile "a really satisfactory dictionary of the language of the Mashona." He appears never to have attempted this but did publish in the early 1900's, *Notes for a Dictionary of the Sindebele Dictionary*.

John White, one of the founders of the Methodist mission in Rhodesia, was also its chief worker in Shona at the beginning. As early as 1898, the British and Foreign Bible Society had published his *Ivangeri ya Marako* (Gospel of Mark) followed in 1901 by his *Ivangeri ya Mateyu* and in 1903 by his *Ivangeri yekanyorwa na Johane*. The whole New Testament was published in 1907 entitled *Testamente Itswa ya She wedu Jesu Kristu no rurimi rwe Chishona*. There was a second edition in 1911 with reprints in 1914 and as late as 1951. Baba John

White also produced a reader, hymn book, and a catechism in these early years in between 1902 and 1910 and the Rev. A. Walton a translation of Genesis in 1906.

John White's spelling was a development of Fr. Hartmann's. There is a better distinction made between voiced and voiceless consonants though the stem indicating "eat" is still spelled *-dshga*. His word division is slightly more disjunctive and analytical, e.g. *usapike no musoro wako*. This tendency was pushed further by the books produced by the mission at Chishawasha, e.g. in the dictionary compiled by Fr. Beihler in 1906 entitled *English/Chiswina Dictionary* of which further editions appeared in 1913, 1927, and 1950. Here the disjunctive and analytical tendency was carried further and the morphemes making up the verb were separated,

e.g. *va no tema mapango e chengo*

Hartmann and White had used the Roman alphabet unchanged, relying on combinations of letters to render Shona phonemes and phoneme clusters. Beihler in an effort to render Shona phonology more adequately, used diacritics in three cases. Hence two systems of writing Zezuru grew up, one from Waddilove and one from Chishawasha, and the differences were evident in all their publications, though the institutions were dealing with the same dialect cluster and were situated in the same area.

The first books in the Karanga cluster were published by Lutheran missionaries published from Middleburg in the then South African Republic and in Berlin. The spelling and word division showed a marked Northern Sotho influence which was carried over into the first publications of the Dutch Reformed Church at Morgenster. Here Messrs. J. T. Helm and A. A. Louw had completed a version of the New Testament by 1900 and the British Foreign Bible Society published in several books almost the entire New Testament between 1904-6. The two Louws, the Rev. A. A. Louw and his wife, wrote most of the early publications in Karanga. Mrs. Louw compiled the two readers *Ngano* and *Shumo* in 1903 and 1906 respectively, readers which are still in use. From 1909 the Sotho influence on the spelling decreased and in Mrs. Louw's *Manual of the Chikaranga Language* in 1915, Karanga phonology received a reasonably adequate treatment. She used the Roman alphabet and added a diacritic mark in the form of a bar,

under the letter in the case of five phonemes and over it in the case of one,

e.g. *vanu* (people)

Beihler had used /v/ to indicate the corresponding phoneme and /v̄/ for the phoneme for which Mrs. Louw used /v/. Hence Mrs. Louw's principle was to use letters of the Roman alphabet unchanged for Karanga phonemes resembling those of English or Afrikaans and with diacritics with the nearest corresponding letter for those that were different.

In Ndaui the first book to appear was a Tshindao Primer published by the South African General Mission at Rusitu, Melsetter, and had been prepared by the Rev. Douglas Wood. Missionaries of the South African General Mission collaborated with those of the American Board at Mount Silinda in the publication of a *Hymn Book* in 1907 and of the four Gospels in 1910. The principal workers were the Rev. D. Wood (Matthew), Dr. G. A. Wilder (Mark and John), and J. E. Hatch (Luke). They were printed at the mission press at Chikore. After a fire had destroyed the press there in 1916, the British and Foreign Bible Society published a revised edition of the Ndaui New Testament in 1919. I am not certain of the orthography used in this version of the New Testament, but it is likely it was similar to the Karanga system being worked out by the Louws and which appears in Wilder's *ChiNdauiEnglish and English/ChiNdaui Vocabulary* published by the American Board Mission in 1915. There was a move in 1908 and probably earlier to print Ndaui using special symbols of the International Phonetic Association by Dr. W. L. Thompson who brought up the proposal at the Rhodesian Missionary Conference of that year. We know from a letter of his written to Dr. Lawrence at Chikore that there was a growing dissatisfaction with the multiplication of orthographies. He writes in a letter of 1910:

"There has been a movement on foot to secure a uniform orthography for the native dialects of Rhodesia and also of all S. Africa. The advantages of such a thing have been generally admitted (but I think not fully appreciated by any means) but the difficulty has been that every man has his own scheme which he is unwilling to relinquish and in my opinion, most of these schemes are based on very meagre knowledge of the subject. The others will doubtless charge me with being one of the rest. But I deny the

charge except with regard to such new sounds as are not found represented in the alphabet of the literary world. I proposed at the Rhodesian Missionary Conference in 1908 that the Conference adopt as a basis for a uniform orthography, the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association. Now I hold to this, not because it is my own proposition but I made the proposition because, in so doing, we would all be waiving our immature, rash conclusions (or our individual conclusions, however good—I do not personally approve of this alphabet in all respects, by any means) for the conclusions of the highest authority on the subject. That some such action as this is the only possible way to arrive at uniformity should be evident to anyone who knows anything of the history of phonetics. The Conference discarded my proposal very courteously . . ." (Letter dated Mt. Silinda, Feb. 26, 1910).

Dr. Thomson was looked on as something of an unbalanced fanatic whose views were quite impractical. He went on campaigning for his views long after they had been rejected by his colleagues and the S.R. Missionary Conference pleading for the use of distinctive symbols for the Shona phonemes. He published an article in NADA in 1927 advocating the numerals 6 and 8 for /s/ and /z/ and 2 and 9 for the affricates /ts/ and /dz/, since those of the IPA were not available. Thompson and perhaps others of the American Board Mission were in touch with the developing world of linguistics and Ndaui was the only Shona dialect which reached the learned world. Thus we have a short paper in 1911 on the *Pronunciation and orthography of the Chindau Language* by Professor Daniel Jones of University College, London, which was the result of a visit from Dr. Thompson and one Simbina Nkomo to the great man who inspired the character of Professor Higgins in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. The American linguist and ethnologist Franz Boas published papers on Ndaui phonetics, kinship and folklore in 1920, 1922, and 1923, using C. Kamba Simango as informant, a Ndaui who had been sent to America by the American Board Mission. Boas' note in Ndaui pronunciation appeared in Natalie Curtis' *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent* recorded from the singing and the sayings of C. Kamba Simango, Ndaui tribe, P.E.A., and Madikane Cele, Zulu tribe, Natal.

In Manyika we have three centres for publications in the early years: Penhalonga, Old Umtali,

and Triashill. The S.P.C.K. were publishing for Penhalonga from as early as 1898, early workers there being the Rev. D. R. Pelly and E. H. Etheridge. Pelly called the language Chino (probably *chinhu*) and Etheridge *Chizwina*. Etheridge had translated the Gospels and Acts into Manyika by 1905 as *Mavengeri ne Mabase e Wapostori*. In 1908 the whole of the New Testament was published as *Testamente Itswa*, the New Testament in Chiswina. Other writers in the Anglican church were E. W. Lloyd and Arthur Shearley Cripps, both members of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

From Old Umtali there was an important publication in 1905 in the form of *A Handbook of Chikaranga or the Language of Mashonaland*, based on the Manyika of Old Umtali by Mrs. H. E. Springer. She preferred not to use the term Chiswina as being offensive. She uses the Roman alphabet without any diacritics or special symbols, and the word division is similar to Hartmann's almost the same as we have today.

This was followed in 1911 by Father Buck's *Dictionary with Notes on the Grammar of the Mashona Language commonly called Chiswina*. His orthography appears to be the same as in Mrs. Springer's earlier work. Doke criticised it for its weakness in orthography but it is not clear why he singled out Fr. Buck's work for criticism, as all the Manyika publications use essentially the same symbols and the same system of word division. If anything, Buck's system is more adequate than Springer's and nearer what we have today.

- cp. munu (person) Springer
- munhu (person) Buck
- munhu (person) Standard Shona

Each of the three centres produced a number of readers and devotional books, Triashill included. One of the best sources of Hungwe forms is an interesting publication in 1928 entitled *Easy English for Natives in Rhodesia* by Fr. F. Mayr of Triashill.

Kalanga deserves just a brief mention. It appeared in the early vocabularies of Weale and Elliot and all subsequent work, not very voluminous, has been the work of the Rev. J. Whiteside of the London Missionary Society.

Thus far my paper has been on the diversity both between the clusters of Shona dialects and the unco-ordinated literary work which sprang up in the different dialects at the headquarters of the different missionary societies: Waddilove and

Chishawasha in the Zezuru cluster; Morgenster in the Karanga cluster; Mount Silinda in the Ndaun cluster; and Penhalonga, Old Umtali, and Triashill in the Manyika cluster. The main institution working for a common orthography at this time was the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference, the first meeting of which took place in 1903, the second in 1905, the third in 1906. Ever since then the Conference has met pretty regularly every two years and its proceedings are a most interesting and valuable record of the issues that have arisen in this country. There was a discussion on the Shona language at the very first meeting in 1903; at the 1905 meeting Rev. A. A. Louw read a paper on the language. In 1906 Dr. Wilder read a paper on a uniform orthography in the Shona language. This Conference passed a resolution that the British and Foreign Bible Society should be approached for financial assistance to enable a committee of competent men to meet at some convenient centre to secure a translation that could be used in all dialects of Mashonaland and thus obviate the expense of preparing the Bible in different dialects. The need for a common version of the Scriptures was often voiced. This required agreement upon a number of things upon which it proved difficult to secure agreement. Choice of Shona terms for Biblical themes upon which there had been theological difference as well as the choice of an alphabet and system of word division. By 1910 there were four versions of the New Testament in being, in Karanga, Manyika, Zezuru, and Ndaun.

In 1913 the Rev. Neville Jones proposed that the Conference should set up committees for the compiling of vernacular readers, one for Mashonaland and the other for Matabeleland, and that Government help should be secured in their preparation and publication. In 1915 the question of the translation of the scriptures in one common version was gone into by a committee consisting of Dr. Wilder, Mr. Louw, and John White, together with a representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Conference recommended all missions working among the Mashonaland tribes to hold a conference, "together with one native from each of the language districts". In 1920 the Rev. Louw reported that having found that the translation in its new form would not be acceptable to any of the missions concerned, "we regret to declare the project impracticable under present

circumstances and that therefore the matter be dropped for the present". The question was too big for the missions at that stage.

Two other factors come upon the scene at this time as we learn from the Conference Report of 1928 and a remarkably able paper by Mrs. C. S. Louw reporting a new interest by Government in the value of the vernacular in education. The two factors were (a) Government—in the persons of the Colonial Secretary, the Hon. Mr. Leggatt, and the Director of Education, Mr. L. M. Foggitt—and (b) science, as represented by the newly formed International Institute for African Languages and Cultures. It appeared that the Government were prepared to sponsor the production of books in the vernacular for the early years in education if the missions could agree on a common language suitable to the needs of the different Mashona tribes. Now they had just attempted to make a common language and that had failed.

"Since ten years ago an attempt was made by some of us at the request of the B.F.B.S. to find a common dialect for a Union translation of the Bible. Certain portions of the Gospels were translated by each of the societies concerned and the common forms and terms used to make a kind of Esperanto for Mashonaland. The result after much pains and trouble was then circulated and found acceptable to none of the societies concerned, being condemned especially by their Native Christian teachers. It became evident that a lingua franca or esperanto could not be manufactured."

So what was to be done? Mrs. Louw thought the Government should recognize the two main clusters, Zezuru and Karanga. Many present insisted there was only one language in Mashonaland though it needed the help of Government and the aid of the International Institute to standardise it. The final motion combined both views. Proposed by Rev. A. A. Louw and seconded by Fr. D. Shropshire, it stated: "This Conference finds itself unable to decide at present between the alternative of standardising two dialects for Mashonaland, viz. Chizezuru and Chikaranga, or of standardising a unified language built on all the four existing dialects. We therefore prefer to reserve our opinion until expert advice has been obtained. We would respectfully request the Government to approach the International Institute of African Languages

and Cultures with a view to obtaining a suitable expert to investigate and advise upon the matter."

The result of this motion was that Professor C. M. Doke, professor of Bantu Languages at the University of the Witwatersrand, was approached to undertake the work. He secured a Travelling Scholarship for Research from the Carnegie Corporation and arrived in Salisbury to begin the work at the end of January, 1929. The purpose of his visit was to make a thorough study of the language position throughout the country with a view to advising the Government upon a uniform orthography and a possible unification of dialects for the standardisation of an official language for that part of Rhodesia inhabited by the Shona-speaking peoples. The Government had appointed a Language Committee to work with Professor Doke consisting of the Rev. B. H. Barnes, C.R., as Chairman, and to represent Manyika, Mrs. C. S. Louw to represent Karanga, and the Rev. A. Burbridge, S.J., to represent Zezuru.

A Conference of Native Commissioners held in Salisbury in 1927 had also dealt with this question but, as Mr. Bazeley put it, it was one of the humbler motions. Mr. Bazeley complained that there was no uniform system of writing Shona, in particular Shona names and that this needlessly complicated the work of registration. The existing grammars were of no help as they were too complicated and moreover were inconsistent. He proposed that the Government should charge a committee of three Native Commissioners to produce a simple system.

Mr. Bullock spoke in favour of the application to the problem of spelling Shona of the system proposed by the International African Institute. He wanted the Minister of Native Affairs to investigate the proposed system of the International Institute and its applicability to Shona. He mentioned that the Africa alphabet, as it was called, had a battery of 12 special symbols, in addition to those of the Roman alphabet, to cover the special needs of African languages. Mr. Neilsen spoke out strongly against the Africa alphabet and special symbols, quoting the example of the missionaries in Zululand who had used the Roman letters /c, q, and x/ to indicate the three clicks in Zulu quite adequately. He pleaded for a simple orthography and recommended that of the Shona Testament. Mr. Bazeley was also against special symbols. In the end the Native Commissioners,

hoping for the best, passed both proposals—Mr. Bazeley's and Mr. Bullock's.

In their work, Doke and the Language Committee based themselves on the Africa alphabet. There is no time to describe all Doke's findings and recommendations. Some of his findings have been outlined in the introduction to this paper and are now common knowledge, though they were not then. After his survey, Doke was able to recommend an alphabet which would cover all the dialects of Shona and which included eight special symbols in addition to the familiar Roman letters, viz. -b, d, s, z, v, r, f, 3/. He also recommended a common system of word division based on the principle of penultimate stress. His two principles can be summed up then as follows:

1. One sound one symbol (this does not quite mean one phoneme one symbol, as Doke was a phonetician and does not seem to have grasped the principle of the phoneme which was coming to be accepted in linguistics and was described in the International Institute's pamphlet).
2. One stress one word. (This principle gives us quite a satisfactory system of division, though it does not reveal the grammatical systems in the way Doke claimed it did.)

To these two principles, Fr. Barnes added another regarding the lexicon:

3. Unify the orthography and pool the vocabularies.

The way towards a common written language should not be to select one of the spoken dialects and make it the basis of the literary language, but to have a common dictionary contributed to by all the dialects. As he wrote in an article in NADA for 1928, "A Campaign against Babel":

"Books for use in school will use the common orthography, and will draw their words from the dictionary, the common pool. Here in Manyika-land we shall, of course, prefer Manyika words, but we shall not be limited to them and we shall find other words in the dictionary. We shall gradually learn some of these other words, and may find it useful to use them as alternatives. We shall take up a book printed for another area and it will not repel us at once by its unfamiliarity, because it will be printed in the common orthography. We shall be able to read it straight off, very likely reading it with a Manyika accent, but

anyway actually reading it. We shall find strange words, but they will not remain strange for we can look them up in our common dictionary and find out what they stand for in our own dialect.

In a generation or two, we shall have advanced perceptibly towards a common language, not by the road of conquest, but by the better road of peaceful interpenetration."

These were the three principles adopted by Doke. With regard to the last, Barnes himself tried to contribute towards unification in his excellent little *Vocabulary of the Dialects of Mashonaland*, published by the Sheldon Press in 1932. His solution tried to be fair to all groups and to enroll all in the task of working out a common literary language, but he probably ascribed too much power to the dictionary which was not compiled anyway until 1959.

With regard to the grammatical constructions to be allowed in the new literary language, Doke asked that a unified grammar be standardised on the basis of Karanga and Zezuru. It is probably that Doke meant this grammar to be prescriptive and that the literature of the future should conform to the constructions allowed by it. Thus, e.g. he recommends that the Korekore forms of the prefix of class 13, viz. [hu-/xu-] be not allowed. By implication he would rule out the use of the Manyika adverbial formative /nge-/, etc. He hoped that the new standardised literary language would be vigorously initiated by a permanent Advisory Committee headed by a language expert to supervise new readers and school text books and guide the development of a Shona literature programme. There was no one who was prepared to compile the Grammar Doke called for until the Rev. J. O'Neil, who had written a manual in Ndebele some years before, was prevailed upon to do so. He produced a manual in Zezuru designed to teach the language to Europeans and based very largely on the categories of Latin grammar. Notes on Karanga and Manyika forms were contributed by Father Barnes and the Rev. A. A. Louw.

The Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference of 1930 gave cautious approval to Doke's proposals but requested that the eight special symbols be cut to four, and that the transition from the old to the new régime be very gradual. A committee consisting of Fr. B. H. Barnes, C.R., Fr. J. Seed, S.J., John White, and F. R. Dixon, together with

the Rev. A. A. Louw, was appointed to prepare for a union translation of the Bible.

In 1931 the Government approved the new orthography but limited the special symbols to six, the enlarged committee to which the question was referred judging that the digraphs sh and zh from the Roman alphabet were quite adequate to represent the Shona phonemes /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. Some strong feelings were roused by Doke's recommendations. Fr. Martindale, who visited the country at this time, wrote in his *African Angelus*, "Outside a small group who professedly cared for nothing save the convenience of the white official, I could find only one out of all those whom I questioned, to speak of this system without blasphemy." This was an unfair comment but representative of the feeling generated. The system was adopted for the Department of Native Development and was backed strongly by its director, Heli Jowitt. He was a convinced believer in the value of teaching through the vernacular in primary education. The Missionary Conference was happy to leave the union translation of the Bible mainly to Rev. Louw. The mission presses too accepted the system loyally and produced a number of readers and other works in the new orthography as it was called. We have an interesting series of memoranda from Fr. H. Buck of Penhalonga to the Anglican Diocesan Translation Committee which give some insight into the adaptations which had to be made in Manyika publications. However, the rest of the country did not seem disposed to accept the new system. In an article contributed by Fr. Barnes to NADA in 1934, entitled "The Progress of the New Orthography", he raised the somewhat delicate topic of the acceptance of the new orthography by the Native Affairs Department. He writes, "I should not dare to suggest to the older officials that they must learn the new tricks and perform them themselves, but I do suggest that they need not be afraid to encourage the younger men who are coming on to study the sounds of the native speech and to endeavour both in speaking and in writing to reproduce them as accurately as can be done." He ends there and this is almost the final contribution of Fr. Barnes, "The facts are given here (viz. the contribution of the Government to the whole work involved in introducing the new orthography) to show that the Government of Southern Rhodesia has committed itself to this orthographic reform,

always, of course, subject to the verdict of the court of final appeal, which in the last resort is the Native population of the next generation or two. If they have no use for the new letters they will undoubtedly disappear. What's the betting?"

The attitude of the Native Affairs Department was expressed in a letter from Dr. G. Martin Huggins, Minister for Native Affairs, to Fr. Barnes on the 22nd February, 1935: "There is no question of introducing the new orthography into the Native Affairs Department. The very numerous young officials in that Department have passed their Native Language Examination already and they have far too much to do to expect them to pass another one. That is the only difficulty I see in the matter; how and when can this new orthography be introduced into the Native Affairs Department."

In 1938 and 1942 we have motions on Ndebele and Shona passed by a body called the Native Missionary Conference, composed of Africans and meeting at the same time as the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference. The Africans show an increased desire to be consulted in the orthography and publications in their own languages.

In 1941 Rev. Louw's translation of the New Testament was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. He had made some efforts towards unification (the title: *Testamente itsa yeShe wedu Jesu Kristu* is evidence of that), but the version was essentially a Karanga one as indeed he had been encouraged to make it. It was received with a certain amount of reserve, particularly in the Manyika area. Fr. Baker considered the claim that it was Union Shona misleading to say the least. Fr. Buck tested the first two pages of Louw's New Testament with a team consisting of a Mukaranga, a Muzezuru, a Mumanyika and Muhungwe and a Mundau and they had judged that some 40 alterations would be necessary in the first two pages alone if it was to be understood by the greatest number of people in each of the areas. An exchange of letters between these two friends, both so anxious to put the word of God clearly before all the people and to develop the language in a literary sense, shows their different attitude. Rev. Louw stated that in all efforts at unification of which he had knowledge, the principle had been to take one dialect as the basis and work the others in where possible and

practicable. This in fact was the principle on which he had worked which he had made clear to the British and Foreign Bible Society and on which they had accepted the manuscript of the New as well as of the Old Testament. He had tried the other way but without success. A translation he had made of the first eight chapters of Mark which attempted to treat the dialects on a par had not been acceptable anywhere. He had discovered then that a common language constructed artificially in the way he had done was a still-born thing and would never succeed. Further, difficulties had come up over religious terminology.

Father Buck sums up his methods in a letter to Rev. Louw of 1946:

"The method which our Diocesan Translation Committee has been following is to try and get a translation which will be understood by the greatest number of people throughout Mashonaland as the people from the different dialectal areas make each other understand now when they meet. To do this we meet round a table with Africans who are natives of the three chief dialectal areas, Karange, Zezuru and Manyika, who can vouch for what would be understood in their own areas, and go through a previously prepared translation."

About 1946 there is the beginning of a turn of opinion against the new orthography. A motion in the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference of that year set up a committee of European and African missionaries to investigate how the new orthographies for Shona and Ndebele could be modified so as to facilitate their use and this committee was to report to the Executive. This motion came as the result of critical papers by Fr. Baker, Fr. Buck's successor on the Diocesan Translation Committee and the Reverends Stanlake Samkange and Tennyson Hlabangana. The Director of the Native Education Department, Mr. J. Farquhar, voiced his criticism in an article in NADA entitled "A Mass Literary Campaign for S. Rhodesia." His first point was that Unified Shona is a creation from above and from outside. It was the work of phoneticians eager to apply the rule of the I.P.A. of one symbol, one sound. It was not the result of an indigenous development. There was a strong desire to introduce the Roman alphabet to simplify printing, reading and writing. Mr. Farquhar was not the champion of the value of the mother tongue in early education that his

predecessor, Mr. Jowitt, had been. English should be the language of education. The African children in Southern Rhodesia would continue to speak their vernacular out of school and learn English in school and gradually English would become the lingua franca and the vernaculars might die out without serious loss to the Africans, as far as their language is concerned, and to their distinct advantage in opening up the whole world of knowledge to them. He was prepared to allow the mother tongue in the first two grades only as the medium of instruction; after that some small provision for vernacular reading and writing.

In spite of this feeling, the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference reacted strongly in 1950 in favour of the Doke system and feeling strongly that one common orthography for schools, Government and the press, was a fundamental prerequisite for the growth and development of Shona as a literary language, requested the Government and the Bantu Press to accept the use of the approved orthography. The reply of African Newspapers came in 1952 and was to the effect that they were prepared to equip one font with the required extra symbols if the Government and everyone concerned would agree to one common orthography. The Secretary of Native Affairs stated that outside educational circles there appeared to be very little support for the new orthography and sympathised with the missions over the position they found themselves in. Since many issues were involved it was proposed to resuscitate the Language Committee or an Advisory Literature Committee in order that future policy might have the careful attention it obviously deserved.

I remember myself feeling at the time that there should be a return to the Roman alphabet if only to ensure a common system of spelling for Shona by all who used it—the missions, Education authorities, Native Affairs, the Post Office and the Press. It was possible to buy typewriters fitted with the six extra symbols and I still have my Smith-Corona which was equipped with them. But the great majority of people who worked in Shona must have had to do without them. More important was the feeling that there was a need to promote a literature of a more general type in Shona and there would never be a cheap and generous flow of this so long as it was hampered by the requirements of a special orthography

which none of the commercial presses cared to obtain. Opinion as canvassed by the Publication Officer, Mr. D. Abraham, was in favour of a change and I was happy to serve on an Orthography Committee called to meet in July 1954 and to urge, as I had urged in 1950 in a Foreword to a reprint of Beihler's Dictionary, "If it is decided to abolish certain of the special symbols of the 'New Orthography', then alternatives to these special symbols—either by means of digraphs or some other more satisfactory method—should be explicitly provided and officially recognised". It seemed necessary to urge this in order to preserve in a more convenient form the essential distinctions which Doke had pointed out should be made. For this I was taken to task by Professor Doke who was tempted to print a damning review of Beihler in *African Studies*. But he generously desisted. In fact most of Doke's work survived the change from the 1931 to the 1955 orthography and we continue to owe him an immense debt and the Shona were no longer, as Fr. Martindale has expressed it in 1931, "sundered from the human race".

Work on the revision of the Bible was begun at once by Mr. Jackson, a labour on which he was to expend himself devotedly until his death. The old version continued being printed, indeed an estimate made in the Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference in 1956 stated that 100,000 copies would be needed up to the end of 1957. I think it is true to say that the changeover to an orthography based on the Roman alphabet released a modest flood of publications of all kinds. The *Shona Dictionary* was published in 1959 after three years intensive work by Fr. Hannan and his assistant, Mr. Gumbo. There were grammars of Zezuru and Karanga published by Mr. Jackson and myself in 1957; the commercial publishers entered the field, a Literature Bureau was started, and most important of all, African writers began to write works of a new kind which had never been seen in Shona before.

The problem that now faced Shona as a written language was the form it should take. In a sense we were no nearer a unified written language in 1955 than we were in 1931, save for the important social changes that had taken place in the country and seem to have given the language of the capital a prestige value over that of the other districts and probably a numerical advantage which apparently it did not have before. A system of spelling and

word division common to all the Shona dialects ensures a potential reading public which is larger than one which is possible if each dialect has its own system. Thus Shona, thanks to people like Barnes, Doke, Jowitt, and many others, escaped the fragmentation which befell the Nguni, Sotho, and Tsonga clusters. But Shona still had to forge its literary language common to all Shona speakers just as German is common to the speakers of the most diverse German dialects from the Dutch border to Switzerland. The school readers published up to date have not set any definite models as they have been compiled as anthologies or collections of extracts from each of the three main clusters, sometimes chosen from earlier readers confined to the area of a cluster. At least they acquaint children with dialects other than their own.

The Literature Bureau which has published quite a creditable number of books at an economical price and which appear to sell reasonably well, has been more instrumental in developing a standard literary form. They have been written by people who have become familiar with the Shona spoken in the developing centre of the country which is acquiring a composite flavour of its own; or that spoken in the large training college institutions, secondary schools, theological colleges which lie predominantly in the centre of the country, and even if they do not, draw students from all over the country. This undoubtedly is a more sophisticated form of Shona than that spoken in the outlying areas and being also in constant interaction with English and Western literature is able to serve as a more adequate instrument for a modern Shona literature which has requirements of its own. I think this is plain if we compare modern Zezuru with, say, Korekore. The Bureau has also been at pains to edit the manuscripts submitted, standardising the grammatical structure with a view to using forms which have the maximum currency in the country or which are unambiguous as written forms.

About 25 to 30 short novels have been published in this country in Shona and Ndebele. Ndebele incidentally has a much longer history than Shona in its written form and found its way into books published by the London Missionary Society once the missionaries found that Zulu would not do entirely for the Ndebele. They are all short works but the writers show decided talent and a desire to

give Shona a new existence. A conference held at Ranche House in 1965 on *Creative Writing* showed the writers to be very aware of their responsible task. Perhaps some comments on one or two of the books will be of interest.

Feso by Solomon Mutsaers is the first to be produced. It is a historical novel using a good deal of ethnography in order to paint a picture of the traditional Zezuru life. To the discerning eye it is a parable at the same time with a good deal of pertinent comment on the political situation.

Nhoroondo dzokuwana is an account of a marriage in which past and present are blended. His intention is to show that new customs should also marry with the old, shapely and valuable social institutions in which marriage is symbolically celebrated and enacted. He shows, for example, what a great contribution the kin, both of the bride and the bridegroom, have to make towards the happiness and stability of the individual couple and the symbols by which their involvement is expressed.

Karikoga gumiremiseve by Patrick Chakaipa is another example of historical fiction in which the hero is also a traditional figure in folklore. His technique in this book is reminiscent of the old film serials with an adventure per chapter more thrilling than credible. His writing is noteworthy for humour and graphic description and he has sustained and improved his performance in another four books since *Karikoga*.

Nzengamutsauro by Bernard Chidzero. We have here the comparison and interaction of three characters—a country wastrel, a townie, and an educated Christian. The book is perhaps a parable on the responsibility of educated leaders towards their fellows. His writing is remarkable for the felicity with which he uses the different registers of speech to portray different situations and relationships.

Kumazivandadzoka by J. Marangwanda is a powerful tale of the devastating effect of town life in Salisbury upon a young boy who has run away from home and the still more devastating effect upon his mother as he disowns her. Salisbury is compared to the hill *Kumazivandadzoka*, infested with wild beasts where she lost her husband. The city, like *Kumazivandadzoka*, robs her of her son.

Other titles and authors could be mentioned but perhaps enough has been said to show the sort of thing which has been written. They are all

interesting, for each writer has his own individual style which is not cramped by the requirements of standardisation; and also for the attempt being made to make the language say something new in a new literary form which draws creatively on the forms common in oral literature, the proverbs, ideophones and metaphors of speech; and for the necessary adaptation of the artist to a new type of medium and audience.

There is a great need at this stage to compile anthologies of the oral literature in order to make available authentic collections of the traditional praises, myths, stories with their songs, proverbs, children's word games and nursery rhymes. These are rapidly disappearing from use and memory, especially in the towns where the radio, television, sports and other forms of entertainment are taking the place and time given to the traditional arts and where the traditional oral "classics" no longer figure in the education of the young in a living, effectual way. All that many young Shona learn today of their early literary heritage is what they find in the readers from which, necessarily, many of the dramatic qualities specific to oral literature are lacking. Most people show very little interest in this indigenous literature but writers are beginning to see that new original and creative work in literature can be done by transforming the old forms and themes and thereby giving them a new existence and a far wider audience.

There is a great need for the new series of school readers which is being contemplated at the moment to acquaint the young both with the forms and registers of spoken art and their purely literary possibilities, in a form of Shona which is modern and intelligible to all and which is alive with the vivid imagery and humour which comes so naturally to Shona when they speak and write.

The Bible has figured largely in this account of writing in Shona and before I finish I should mention two versions of the New Testament which will undoubtedly have a great influence in the spreading of a standard form of Shona. The first is Mr. Jackson's revision of Mr. Louw's translation of 1947 and the second is a new translation published last year by Fr. M. Hannan and a team of assistants drawn from Zezuru, Karanga, and Manyika. To some extent these two versions embody the two methods advocated earlier by the Rev. A. A. Louw, whose principle was to base the version on one speech form, and Fr. Buck, who

sought to use the combined resources of several. The dilemma is still with us. Historically we know it is the single speech form which has developed into the national literary language, but this has taken centuries. Fr. Hannan's success in producing such a clear and animated version from the combined resources of three clusters shows the possibilities of the second method. We cannot afford to wait for centuries. Shona and Ndebele will have an ever increasing part to play in the effort to develop all the resources of the country. In this multilingual country all the languages, and especially all the official languages, have each their important and complementary function. One would think that it is not only English but also the

African languages as well which will have to be used to harness all the energies of the people in the urgent tasks of conservation and developments that face the country as a whole. The leadership will have to become more bilingual than they are in order to transmit the new knowledge, directives and incentives from one segment of society to another, quickly, easily, accurately and effectively. In particular there must be a steady flow of information out of the universities, research centres, government departments and other centres of innovation into every part of society. This need is another force making for standardisation and adaptation, for Shona to play its part in a very rapidly changing world.

