

**A LANGUAGE-STUDY BASED ON BANTU:
OR, AN INQUIRY INTO THE LAWS OF
ROOT-FORMATION, THE ORIGINAL
PLURAL, THE SEXUAL DUAL, AND THE
PRINCIPLES OF WORD-COMPARISON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649441860

A Language-Study Based on Bantu: Or, an Inquiry into the Laws of Root-Formation, the Original Plural, the Sexual Dual, and the Principles of Word-Comparison by F. W. Kolbe

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

F. W. KOLBE

**A LANGUAGE-STUDY BASED ON BANTU:
OR, AN INQUIRY INTO THE LAWS OF
ROOT-FORMATION, THE ORIGINAL
PLURAL, THE SEXUAL DUAL, AND THE
PRINCIPLES OF WORD-COMPARISON**

A

LANGUAGE-STUDY BASED ON BANTU

OR

AN INQUIRY INTO THE LAWS OF ROOT-FORMATION,

*THE ORIGINAL PLURAL, THE SEXUAL DUAL, AND
THE PRINCIPLES OF WORD-COMPARISON;*

WITH

Tables Illustrating the Primitive Pronominal System restored in
the African Bantu Family of Speech.

BY THE

REV. F. W. KOLBE,

OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY, FORMERLY OF THE GERMAN
HERERO MISSION;
AUTHOR OF "AN ENGLISH-HERERO DICTIONARY."



LONDON:

TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.

1888.

[All rights reserved.]

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON



Philosophy
Sotheran
3-22-29
8999

PREFACE.

THE author, who since 1853 has been a missionary of the London Missionary Society, and before that time was connected with the Rhenish Herero Mission in Damaraland, is, as far as philology is concerned, a self-taught worker. When sent to Damaraland in 1848, he could not possibly have dreamt of ever writing a treatise on the Principles of Language. But when, in conjunction with his colleagues, the Rev. Dr. C. H. Hahn and the Rev. J. Rath, he studied Herero, he was from the very first fascinated with its marvellous structural regularity and wealth of pronominal forms. Fortunately, he knew from Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar and Heyse's *Lehrbuch der Deutschen Sprache* that there are only three primitive vowels (*a, i, u*), and was struck to find only these three in the pronominal roots of Herero; and in grouping the formative prefixes of the noun (or roots of pronouns) according to their consonantal sounds, he conjectured that there must be some difference of meaning between such forms as *oka-* (*KA*), *otyi-* (*KI*), *oku-* (*KU*), and that *this difference must be caused by the vowels*. And turning to the verb, he received the same impression, though what that difference might be he had not the remotest conception. So plodding on, he was by degrees led to the discovery of the vowel-laws—laws which are by no means confined to Bantu, but are traceable as well in the roots of

Aryan and other languages. Subsequently, in following up an observation of Mr. Rath's as to the dualistic tendency of the prefix *oma-* (*ama-*), the sexual dual became clear to him. Now, these two fundamental principles, viz., the vowel-laws and the sexual dual, have already, at any rate as regards Bantu, met with the approval of two high philological authorities in England, and it is hoped that the other principles set forth in this little work—the result of over thirty years' patient research—will also commend themselves to the student as truths founded on sufficient evidence, and illustrative of the new and fuller light the study of Bantu is destined to shed on the Aryan family and on the origin of language universally. For whilst, in Aryan and other families of speech, the science of language must be content to "begin with roots as its ultimate facts," we are, in Bantu, where we find language in an earlier stage of development, enabled to *discover the very first laws by which language was formed*, and to restore the original concord between language and nature, words and things.

As to material for the study of Bantu, there is a vast deal of it already accessible, as may be seen from the "Index of the Grey Collection," by Dr. Th. Hahn, and the very opportune "Sketch of African Languages," by R. N. Cust, Esq. (Messrs. Trübner & Co.) But still more should be done. The recent opening up of Central Africa and the Congo Regions—all peopled with Bantu nations—should be taken advantage of to collect, with the aid of missionaries and others, the new philological treasures now placed within our reach. And this should be done without delay; for the steady influx of Europeans as time rolls on must necessarily interfere with the primitive purity of the Bantu languages. Would not the Committee of the Imperial Institute take the matter in hand,

and devote a section of the library to African languages, and initiate, at the same time, the compilation of a Comparative Bantu Dictionary?

"Ever since the publication of the first part of Dr. Bleek's Comparative Grammar," says a leading philologist in a letter to the author, "the importance of the Bantu languages to the scientific study of language has been becoming more and more evident to every comparative philologist." Indeed, strange as it may seem that the sciences of language should have to go to the Dark Continent for more light, it is nevertheless true that "the origin of the grammatical forms of gender and number, the etymology of pronouns, and many other questions of the highest interest to the philologist, find their true solution in Southern Africa" (Bleek). A single glance at the appended comparative table of pronominal forms ought to suffice to convince the most sceptical of the truth of this.

It is earnestly hoped that the present attempt may, in some measure, contribute towards raising the great Bantu family to the prominent place which it deserves to occupy in the science of language.

F. W. K.

CAPETOWN,
September 19, 1887.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
INTRODUCTORY	I
CHAPTER II.	
PRIMITIVE ALPHABET—PRIMEVAL LAWS OF CONSONANTS	11
CHAPTER III.	
PRIMEVAL LAWS OF THE VOWELS	21
CHAPTER IV.	
THE VOWEL-METHOD IN UNIVERSAL ETYMOLOGY	36
CHAPTER V.	
NOTES ON THE PRIMITIVE BANTU PREPOSITIONS AND ADVERBS	41
CHAPTER VI.	
ROOT-FORMATION: ITS BEGINNINGS AND SUCCESSIVE STAGES	45
CHAPTER VII.	
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT IN AFRICAN BANTU	52
CHAPTER VIII.	
ON THE HERERO PRONOUN—ABSOLUTE AND CONDITIONAL FORMS—PRIMEVAL LAW OF THE PLURAL—SEXUAL DUAL	59