

One of the most conspicuous gaps in our knowledge of the Bantu peoples is a detailed classification of ~~all~~ the different tribes based on their cultural characteristics. These tribes show a wide range of differentiation in details of material culture, social life, government and religion; and although certain broad principles of classification are easily observable, there is still much uncertainty in regard to detail. We do not even possess an authoritative list of all the Bantu tribes of Southern Africa; and the compilation of such a list, accompanied if possible by figures and maps showing the strength and distribution of each tribe, should be one of the main tasks of a body such as the Inter-University Committee or of the Government Ethnologist. This list, incidentally, should also help to standardize the spelling and forms of tribal names, about which a great deal of confusion still exists.

Broadly speaking, we may divide the South African peoples first into "provinces". Each province, as the name implies, embraces the inhabitants of a continuous geographical area; but tribes belonging to one province, while possessing certain fundamental characteristics in common, also differ in many important features from tribes belonging to another province. The classification is thus not only geographical but cultural. In the region south of the Zambesi and Kunene rivers we may distinguish three such provinces, which will be referred to here as the South-Western, South-Central and South-Eastern provinces. It is unnecessary to discuss here in detail the cultural differences upon which this classification is based; and indeed, as already noted the full determination of these differences is a task that still remains to be accomplished. It may be said, however, that they manifest themselves in such diverse aspects of culture as forms of territorial settlement, clothing, housing, family and clan organisation, political institutions, religious beliefs and ritual practices. There is a certain amount of overlapping between one

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province and another, while on the other hand local differences are conspicuous when minute analyses are made of the tribal cultures in a given area but all in all the cultures of any one province present a much greater degree of similarity than do the cultures of different provinces.

Within each province are to be found "clusters" of tribes. A cluster is a group of tribes who resemble one another fairly closely in features of culture, and who are also often historically connected through descent from a common stock or through far-reaching influences upon one another. Clusters within the same province are more nearly akin in culture than the clusters of different provinces; but tribes of the same cluster have on the whole much greater homogeneity in material culture, social organisation, ritual and economic life than tribes of different clusters even in the same province. The tribes of the South-Western province fall into two such clusters namely, Ambo and Herero; those of the South-Central province into three, Venda, Shona and Sotho; and those of the South-Eastern province into two, Nguni and Thonga.

In certain instances a further division of tribes is possible into what may be called "complexes" of tribes. Here again the line of demarcation is provided by details of cultural and historical affiliation; but tribes of the same complex themselves feel more nearly related than they do with tribes of other complexes. This division is found most clearly marked in the Sogho and Nguni clusters, which are also the largest of all. It may also exist among the tribes of the Shona cluster, but we have not yet the material for determining this fully. The Sotho cluster includes the North Sotho Tswana and South Sotho complexes. It is a matter of doubt if the Venda cluster should not also be included as a fourth complex of this cluster but pending a more detailed investigation of the whole problem of classification they may continue to be regarded as separate.

The Nguni cluster includes the South Nguni, North Nguni and Swazi complexes as well as certain other groups, such as the Transvaal Ndebele, the Ndebele (Tebele) of Southern Rhodesia, and the Tshangana of Portuguese East Africa and the North-Eastern Transvaal, which may temporarily be classed together as "Nguni offshoots". The South Nguni complex can certainly be still further subdivided, but here again we lack the detailed information upon which to elaborate such a subdivision. It must be emphasised once more that there is every need for further research into the whole problem of classification.

Classification of the Bantu south of the Zambesi

<u>Provinces</u>	<u>Clusters</u>	<u>Complexes</u>
South-Western	Ambo Herero	
South-Central	Venda Shona Sotho	North Sotho Tswana South Sotho
South-Eastern	South Nguni North Nguni Swazi Thonga	South Nguni North Nguni Swazi Nguni offshoots

There is obviously a necessity for another subdivision of the various complexes. Thus although all the Tswana may be said to form part of one complex, they divide themselves on the basis of historical, dialectal and other cultural differences into three sections, namely, the Southern Tswana resident for the most part in what is known as British Bechuanaland and consisting mainly of the Barolong and the Tlhaping, the Northern Tswana resident for the most part in Bechuanaland Protectorate and consisting of the Ngwato, Kwana, Ngwaketse and the Bakhatla, and the Transvaal Tswana resident in the Zeerust district of the Transvaal and consisting of the Bahurutshe and certain remnants of the Bakxatla.

to their historical and cultural affinities, and a clear discrimination between usages common to them all and those peculiar to individual tribes". The same may be said about the South Sotho who occupy Basutoland but are known to consist of a number of tribes of different origin which were welded together into the Basuto nation by the statesmanship of Moshesh. Several Nguni offshoots are to be found in Basutoland and it would be interesting to know to what extent they have retained their original cultural features to what extent they have borrowed from the original Sotho culture and what they have contributed culturally to the sum total of the Sotho culture. Undoubtedly the North Nguni complex may also be divided in this way. A division which suggests itself is that of a differentiation between the Lala and the non-Lala sections of the Zulu culturally and historically and also a consideration of the type of culture which is found in Northern Natal, i.e. on the boundary between the North Nguni and the South Sotho. Natal is of special significance as it is probably ^{that} as far as the Union is concerned, the old culture may be said to be most alive there, as a recent study of marriage in Southern Natal by Kohler has shown.

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The South Nguni complex also ^{calls} for some differentiation between those tribes which may be said to be original South Nguni (i.e. true Xosa) and those which are known to have joined them in fairly recent times as a result of the "reign of terror" established by Shaka among the North Nguni (Zulu); we have reference here to the Fingo tribes in particular. Other South Nguni subdivisions include the Pondo, the Pondomise, and certain other tribes said to be of Hottentot origin. But as Schapera has pointed out (p. 248 B.S.) there is still a need ~~more~~ for something which goes beyond mere speculation, namely a "classification of the different tribes belonging to this complex according to their historical and cultural affinities, and a clear discrimination between usages common to them all and those peculiar to individual tribes". The same may be said about the South Sotho who occupy Basutoland but are known to consist of a number of tribes of different origin which were welded together into the Basuto nation by the statesmanship of Mosheesh. Several Nguni offshoots are to be found in Basutoland and it would be interesting to know to what extent they have retained their original cultural features to what extent they have borrowed from the original Sotho culture and what they have contributed culturally to the sum total of the Sotho culture. Undoubtedly the North Nguni complex may also be divided in this way. A division which suggests itself is that of a differentiation between the Lala and the non-Lala sections of the Zulu ~~and~~ culturally and historically and also a consideration of the type of culture which is found in Northern Natal, i.e. on the boundary between the North Nguni and the South Sotho. Natal is of special significance as it is probably ^{true} that as far as the Union is concerned, the old culture may be said to be most alive there, as a recent study of marriage in Southern Natal by Kohler has shown.

It must be pointed out that these divisions are made on the basis of their significance for the student of culture in general or of language, usually a white individual. Classifications made on the basis of differences and similarities which are significant to the Native would not necessarily coincide with those made on the former basis. The phonetician and the linguistic student are able to see that the languages of these different tribes belong to one family, the Bantu Family of African Languages. They are able to distinguish them from European languages on the one hand and from those belonging to other language families in Africa e.g. Sudanic and Hamitic and by means of a study of their laws of sound change, their vocabulary and grammatical structure to show their inter-relations of the various forms of speech obtaining in Southern Africa. But Language is not only a means of communication, but also a vehicle of social tradition and therefore an instrument of cultural determinism. It both enlarges and narrows the limits of the thought-patterns of the individual. It is as an instrument of cultural determinism and a vehicle of social tradition that it is prized most highly by the members of a tribe or nation. To them foreigners (a term which includes not only the European but members of other tribes or tribes) may get hold of their languages for purposes of communicating his thoughts to them and vice versa, but to be able to get the "feel" of the language and to act and think like a member of the tribe concerned would require an intimate knowledge of the tribal social code which no foreigner ever acquires — or seldom does. For this reason the Chuana father will express doubts about the wisdom of his son marrying a girl belonging to another tribe, although she may possess a working knowledge of his language. The success of marriage he would point out depends not only upon a superficial acquaintance ^{with} of the language of one's spouse, but also and much more so upon an intimate knowledge of ways of doing and saying things which no mere putting together of

such and such words ever reveals to their fullest extent. He will bring up as points of potential conflict in such a mixed marriage the relationship between husband and wife, between parents-in-law and son and daughter-in-law, methods of conducting the confinement of a wife at child-birth, the respective rights of husband and wife over the children of the marriage--all directions in which such differences as do exist do not lay themselves open to discovery prior to marriage and yet are fatal to its success if not realised and not harmonised.

Again to the superficial student of culture these various tribal groups conform to the same cultural pattern. They are all partilineal, their political organisation and their family structure is very largely similar, their system of bride-price (boxadi or lobola), their system of age-grades, their initiation ceremonies, their magico-religious practices, their recognition of reciprocity and the mutuality of obligations of all kinds, show marked similarities and consequently for scientific and administrative purposes they may be lumped together under such expressions as the South-Eastern Bantu ~~and~~, the South Central and the South-Western Bantu. These categories are undoubtedly of great value to the student. The difficulty arises when attempts are made to persuade the African they are of equal value to him. When for example linguists press for a common orthography for the Sotho-Tswana group or the Zulu-Xosa group of languages in an effort to expedite the ultimate unification of these languages into one common form of speech and writing, not only Missionary Societies but even Native leaders oppose such attempts where they are consulted. But although the Missionary Societies and the Natives make common cause against the linguists they do so on quite different grounds. The Missionary Societies base their opposition on the fact that they have spent large sums of money on setting up type for the printing of Bibles, Hymn-books and other

religious literature for their converts and to overhaul these would involve them in further expenditure; and partly on the fact their knowledge of these languages and linguistics ~~generally~~ generally make it possible for them to challenge the phonetician's claim that their orthographies ~~than~~ are more suitable than those which they want to supplant for the languages purposes and people for whom they are intended. The Natives on the other hand oppose these innovations, not infrequently, not only because of linguistic conservatism but also because of cultural conservatism (though naturally this is an argument which the white man seldom hears). The average Zulu does not want to be converted into a Xosa and vice versa and these common orthographies look to him like sinister attempts directed towards that end. For the Xhosa Zulu is not merely a language, but in his mind it stands for practices, attitudes and an outlook on life which does not commend itself to him. For the Zulu Xhosa is a baby language spoken by people who are not "abantu" (hushu)

See Soga "Amaxosa Life and Customs" for Xosa attitude towards other languages. A Xhosa graduate who visited Zululand as recently as 1928 was staying at the kraal of the local Headman. The day following his arrival the Headman called out his tribesmen to see the stranger. Imagine the latter's chagrin and disappointment when one after these old men said in amazement "Hau ! kanti AmaXosa afana habantu" Oh ! So the Xosa do look like people i.e. Zulu

To the Tswana Sotho stands for curious blankets, for fat and lazy women only fit for brewing beer, and men only fit for the degrading job of being a policeman; to the Sotho Tswana stands for emaciated individuals who have no fight in them, who had the impertinence to ~~to~~ support the Dutch against them. The Tswana will tell you that the Sotho are renegade Tswana who really ought to be made to adopt a purely Tswana orthography and vice versa. On the other hand to the Tswana and the Sotho, the Zulu and the Xhosa whom they lump together under the term Matebele stand for thieving, wife-beating, witchcraft, lack of modesty in dress, untidy lazy women who smear their houses with cow-dung which has not been prepared in anyway. To the Zulu and the Xosa the