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THE INFLUENCE
OF ENGLISH
ON
BANTU LITERATURE

BY

D. D. T. JABAVU

THE LOVEDALE PRESS

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty-four years ago a certain public speaker alleged that "the Bantu had no literature." The challenge was taken up in a pamphlet now out of print by the present writer, to prove the contrary, and that task was taken up twelve years later by the Lecturers and Professors of the Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand and also by a quarterly bulletin issued by the "International Committee on Christian Literature" to the present day.

This literature, admittedly not vast, is intricate because it covers many languages and dialects.

In order to estimate the influence of English on it, for our purpose, one needs to find out to what extent any given author or book owes inspiration to English influence. It is often possible to observe in a Bantu book particular parallels to, sometimes plagiarisms from, certain known English books, when a surmise may be ventured as to how far one author is indebted to another. But one can rarely be sure. For example *Moretlo* (= "a bush of berries") is a little book of pretty short poems (on topics like Autumn, Clouds, Moonlight, Rain, the Zebra, David and Jonathan, the Locust and sixty-five other topics) and is reminiscent of *Gitanjali*; but one can hardly be justified in concluding from this superficial resemblance that the Tšwana author Mafoyane took Rabindranath Tagore as his model. Again, we may happen to know enough of the personal history of certain authors to feel confident and to dogmatise about their sources. For instance Thomas Mofolo and Zaccheus Mangoela were my school-mates in Morija (1899). They happen to be among the

best known writers of Southern Sotho books. Knowing, as I do, the English authors they studied at the time, and their discussions thereon, it may be permissible for me to infer that this and that feature in their writings is derivable from this and that English author they read at that particular time. In either case the procedure is at best a conjecture that may prove right or wrong. Under the circumstances caution will be necessary and we shall have to begin with what seems certain, and gradually descend to the region of probabilities.

RANGE

The range of Bantu Literature with which we are concerned comprises five principal languages: Northern Sotho (N.S.), Southern Sotho (S.S.), Tšwana (T), Xhosa (X), and Zulu (Z). The tongues of the Bantu in all are approximately 300, half of this number being principal languages, the rest dialects. The Sotho language is used by about 2½ million people in two main divisions: Northern (Pedi) and Southern (Moshesh); Tšwana by about ½ million in twelve dialects (Rolong, Tlhaping, Ngwato, Ngwaketse, Kwena, Kgatla, Hurutshe, Khware, Tawana, Tlokwa, Tete, Tswapong); Xhosa by about two million in four dialects (Gaika, Pondo, Baca, Hlubi); Zulu by about 3 millions in three groups (Zulu, Swazi, Ndebele). This gives eight million people using twenty-one dialects.

The small quantity of literature in circulation between these five languages cannot, even for comparison, be measured against the literature of any single great European language such as English, French, German or Italian.

In the present study we shall leave out reference books like grammars, dictionaries and Bible commentaries, and consider only creative work like novels, allegory, poetry, tradition, anthologies, folk-lore, fables, proverbs, ethnography, history.

This literature is characterised by extreme brevity, the books being mostly about 60 pages, 80, 100 to 150. This brevity makes it difficult for one to judge of merit and talent, because

quality cannot be separated from quantity in an estimate of merit; but there are exceptions and true classics which will be noted as we proceed. For convenience we shall deal first with the smaller literatures, Northern Sotho and Tšwana, and thereafter with the larger literatures, Zulu, Southern Sotho and Xhosa.

NORTHERN SOTHO

The people who use this language do not call it Northern Sotho, (a term belonging to classrooms of linguistics), but Sepedi, that is the language of the Pedi people, BaPedi. Here out of over forty publications we may grade nine books as being worth-while literature. Four of these are from the pens of European authors, German and French; and five by Bantu authors under the guidance of German and French missionaries. The influence here is therefore German and French and not English. The number of pages ranges around the hundred. The books are so small that none can be ranked as a classic. Nevertheless they provide wholesome reading for their public, and we may sum up by saying this literature is in its infancy, a promising infancy, because it is laid on a sound foundation for future development showing, as it does, the promise of following a direct route to original composition in topics like proverbs, customs and history.

From the 78 page book on the Life of Abraham Serote (*Tsa Bophelo bya Moruti Abraham Serote*) by E. M. Ramaila we quote:—

Xe a feditse lebaka la xaxwe a thwakwa ke Leburu le leng. Sekxowa se a beng a se boléla xakaone ke sengesemane. Leburu leo, xe Job a thoma xo bolela ka sona, la makala, la xalefa, la bitsa mosadi la bana la re "Ons het vandag 'n engelsman op die plaas: hy antwoord my op engels. O! Engelstaal op my plaas!" *Xo tloxa fao Job a bitswa* "Ou Engelsman." *Fela yena a kxona xo ithuta seburu ka byako, lebitso lona la se ke la phumoxa. A newa modiro wa xo disa le xo fepa pere e thsumo ya poo.*

(Translation : When he completed his course he was employed by a certain Boer farmer. The European language that he spoke up to that time was English. That Boer, when Job proceeded to speak in English, was surprised and annoyed. He called his wife and said We have today an Englishman on the farm ; he answers me in English. Oh, my ! Just think of it ; the English language in my farm." From that time Job was nicknamed "The Old Englishman." Although thereafter he soon learnt to speak Dutch, the nickname stuck to him. He was given the task of herding and feeding a bay stallion.)

TSWANA

Next, we take Tšwana literature. Here there are five principal authors, two being English, three African. Professor Schapera's compendium of Tšwana riddles need not be indebted to the old Anglo-Saxon riddles but it provides just as subtle an attraction. His other productions *Mekgwa le Melao ya Batswana*, and some articles, have blazed a trail for other aspiring writers to help develop this literature. History here is represented by

Dico (Wookey)

Ditirafalo tsa Merafe ya Batswana (Schapera)

Mokwena (Moloto) M.S.

Meleso (Penzhorn).

D. M. Ramoshoana has in hand numerous manuscripts awaiting publication, comprising 1,700 proverbs, twenty-one heroic lyrics, nineteen essays, and six stories of various plays of Shakespeare. His writing reflects credit to English influence through his *alma mater* Healdtown.

The one outstanding author in published Tšwana is Solomon T. Plaatje. He deserves more space to himself than we can allot within our limited paper.

Starting life with a primary education supplemented by private study and spasmodic ventures into journalism, he had a flair for languages, sharpened by his employment as court-interpreter, the languages being Hollands, English, German, Afrikaans,

Tšwana, Sotho, Zulu and Xhosa. He wielded a trenchant pen in various journals and produced two books in English, one political : *Native Life in South Africa*, an indictment of government policy ; the other, a novel *Mhudi*. But tonight we are interested only in his Tšwana books, three in number. His *magnum opus* is the volume *Sechuana Proverbs*, a collection of 732 proverbs each rendered in literal English, and then by paraphrase or by a corresponding proverb in English, or Latin or French or German or Italian,—a work of art.

Here are samples :—

Bana ba tadi ba itsioe ka mereto. Literal translation, " Kittens of the field-mouse are known by their mewling ") European Equivalent, " Like mother, like child." Latin " Qualis avis, talis cantus ; qualis vir, talis oratio."

Mongoa thipa ga ke mo lebale, ke lebala mmesi.

(Lit. trans. " I never forget the owner of the knife though I forget the one who roasted the meat"). European Equivalent, " God sends meat and the devil sends cooks."

U coa e dumang, u ea e dumang. (Lit. " From a growling lion to a growling lion "). (a) To get out of one mire to run into another. (b) French. Souvent la peur d'un mal nous conduit dans un pire.

Tau ga e ke ere e hupile lesapo e le kgoe.

(Lit. " When a lion has a bone in its mouth, depend on it he will never let go of it.")

Dutch : Een hond aan een been kent geene vrienden.

Tedu e choeu ga se bocofetsi.

(Lit. " A white beard does not denote old age.")

Danish. If a white beard were all, the goat would be the winner.

U se lelele kgama le mogorogoro.

(Lit. " Do not mourn for both the hartebeest and the hide.")

(a) The camel going to seek horns, lost ears.

(b) Spanish : Echar la sogá tras el caldero.

This is the influence of English at its best because it provides an almost dazzling searchlight on the idiomatic angularities of a foreign tongue through a medium comprehended by the average reader. It is an achievement not yet equalled by any other Bantu writer in the sphere of proverbs. His other two books are translations of Shakespeare's plays: *Comedy of Errors* (*Diphoshophosho*—mistakes on mistakes) and *Julius Caesar*. In these his talent emerges in his renditions of the rhetorical passages of the Roman orations in Julius Caesar with their ponderous stateliness. His version of the *Comedy of Errors* is vivacious while his vocabulary of the mother-tongue is copious. In Plaatje's work the Tšwana language will live enshrined as an imperishable record by a master hand and a medium capable of conveying abstruse English ideas in equally esoteric vernacular phraseology.

These three books are classics that dwarf the rest of Tšwana literature, at any rate until he may be challenged by Ramoshona's works when printed. For the present he is the doyen of Tšwana literature.

ZULU

Zulu literature today is considerable in output and largely the product of the last twenty years; for in 1921 it was very little but in 1922 it began to grow fast. Dominated by English models, it nevertheless includes much unsophisticated praise poetry as collected by Lewis Grout (1859).

Callaway's *Unkulunkulu* (1913) (Zulu notions of God), and *Izinganekwane* (fables); J. Stuart's series of volumes on Zulu heroes and anthologies; as well as collections by E. W. Grant (*Bantu Studies*), M. J. Mpanza and Chas. Mpanza.

Here we quote from the booklet *Icala Elidumileyo lomntwana uSolomon kaDinizulu* (1927, M. J. Mpanza), the praises of Judge-President Sir John Dove-Wilson:—

*Uye uSibambumthetho thina Ngilandi,
Insip' egez' izizwe eAfrika!*

*Magweb' ahlale nakwabagazi libi bahlab' ikhefu
Ziyakwesab' izizwe, mngan' awubekeki
Unemiphefumulo ephansi nephezulu!
Wethembekile ezintabeni nasezigodini zeAfrika
Fulathela kuSemnyama emnyango
Ngoba ungumashiya-ku-khalwa! Hulu! Hulu!
Mabulukwe amadoda nivevanje kwenze njanina?
Esaba wena nkosi yakomkhulu! Iyesabeka lendoda!*

(Translation: He maintains law on behalf of England; he is the soap that washes the races of Africa; thou deliverest judgment and sittest even at the expense of those with bad blood and makest them to be quiet; the nations fear thee for thou, O friend, art terrible to look at; for thou sendest to their destiny the souls of both those in their graves and those alive; thou art trustworthy on the mountains and in the valleys of Africa; turn your back and darkness falls behind the door because you leave humans crying Hooloo! Hooloo!

Why do the trousers of men shake and shiver at thy sight? It is because they dread thee, O thou officer of the King; thou art truly dreadful!)

The Zulu race is notable as the most military by nature of all the Bantu. This belligerent disposition is reflected in three books around the figure of the hero Shaka:

- (a) *UShaka* by R. R. R. Dlomo, a descriptive dialogue;
- (b) *Umbuso kaShaka* by F. Ntuli translated from Rider Haggard's *Nada of the Lily*; and
- (c) *UNkosi bomvu*, an adaptation of P. A. Stuart's "The African Attila," staged recently at the Freemantle School, Lady Frere, in a Xhosa version by some unknown Xhosa translator.

These three books meet the demands of anybody desiring to spend sleepless nights haunted by scenes of blood-curdling cruelty and ruthless slaughter of humanity.

Taken together with the Sotho book *Chaka* by T. Mofolo (translated into English by F. H. Dutton) and another Zulu book *UDingane* by R. R. R. Dlomo, these books constitute perhaps the most frightful narratives in South African Bantu literature. All are inspired, *mirabile dictu*, by English originals. English influence is also responsible for the following Zulu anthologies:

Thulasizwe (J. Stuart)
uHlangakhula „
uKhulumethule „
Vusezakiti „
uBaxoxele „
Indaba kaMbulawa (Siloma)
uMpande (R. R. R. Dlomo)

Quite a number of books have lately been written with the specific purpose of providing reading matter for primary and secondary schools. All bear witness to the influence of English; and some bear signs of exotic production; as for example in *Izinganekwane* there is a Zulu fable based on incidents excerpted from *Alice in Wonderland*, all strange to primitive Africans. This is a case where the influence of English is deleterious. On the other hand we have a number of books of merit from pens of Zulu writers supplying vernacular novels and history composed from an African standpoint:

Abantu abamnyama lapha bavela ngakhona by M. M. Fuze
Gugabadele by M. J. Mpanza
Noma Nini by B. W. Vilakazi
UDingiswayo kaJobe by B. W. Vilakazi
Indlafa yaseHarrisdale by E. H. A. Made
UJeqe by R. R. R. Dlomo
UCakijana bogcololo by A. H. Mbatha and G. C. Mdladla
Insila kaShaka by J. L. Dube
UShembe by J. L. Dube
Isabelo sikaZulu by P. Lamula
UMohlomi by N. S. Luthango
USambulele by A. I. Molefe

M. M. Fuze published his book when he was seventy-seven years of age and his account of 253 pages contains some original matter that makes his effort worth its place in Zulu literature. In this group the two novels *Indlafa yaseHarrisdale* and *Noma Nini* are the finest in the language being worthy of praise by all canons of Bantu story writing.

There are those of a didactic nature (*Isitha somuntu omnyama uye ugobo lwake* by J. L. Dube; *UZulu kaMalandela* by P. Lamula, *UKwazi kuyathuthukisa* by R. R. R. Dlomo, *EzomDabu* by Molefe and Masondo; *Izikhali zanamuhla* by R. R. R. Dlomo, some being marred by nauseous moralising such as is hard to ascribe to English influence of the present century.

When we come to the poetry book *Inkondlo kaZulu* by B. W. Vilakazi we come to the one great book of poetry in Zulu that attains to the rank of a classic. It is English influence *in excelsis*, by reason of its outright imitation of English modes (metres long, short and common; all varieties of stanzas, elegiacs, sonnets, rhymes, and even the heroic couplet reminiscent of Pope and Dryden) all punctilliously observed. Even the titles remind one of Keats in disguising their subject, ensuring that *ars artem celare est*. In the poems in pages 40 and 78 from which we quote a few lines, the influence of Gray's "Elegy in a Churchyard" is obvious, and in this connection Vilakazi of all Bantu poets evinces a curious penchant for the subject of death, devoting his talent thereto with an almost uncanny morbidity.

(a) *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa.*
Ngimbeleni ngaphansi kotshani
Duze nezihlahla zomyezane
Lapho amagatsh' eyongembesa
Ngamaqabung' agcwel' ubuhlaza.
Ngozwa nami ngilele ngaphansi
Utshani ngaphezulu buhleba:
"Lala sithandwa, la! uphumule."

(Translation. When I am overtaken by Death.

Bury me beneath the grass
Near the willow clusters
Where the branches will cover me
With leaves full of green herbage.
So that I may hear as I sleep below
The grass whispering from above :
“ Sleep darling ; sleep and rest.”)

(b) *UNokufa.*

Ngahamba ngifunana nawe
Ntombi yokufa wen' omehlo
Ahlal' ebeke ndawonye njalo,
Wen' obuso bungabekekiyo.
Ngaye ngakulanda ngakuletha
Endlini kababa ngakubona
Welul' izinsiba usondela.
Wazwifun' ukungifika kabi
Phakathi kwezixuk' eThekwini
Nganceng' idlozi wangilindela
Ngashushumba phakathi komnyama,
Ngangena nalo ikhehla ekhaya.
Ngaqalaza ngakubona Kufa,
Wangena ngonyawo walusonga
Waboph' ifindo ngasokhalweni
Wagwegwesa wathint' izinwele
Zafongqeka, wangen' engqondweni
Wayisanganisa wayishiya.
Was' uqhela uyakud' ubuka
Wenamile ngomsebenz' omkhulu
Owarwuzela lapha kwaMhlaba.

Translation. *Death.*

On I travelled searching for thee
Thou daughter of death whose eyes
Constantly gaze in one direction without a break,

Thou whose face is forbidding to look at.
I went tracking thee and brought thee
Into the house of my father, and beheld thee
Stretch out thy wings and approach.
Thou wast about to overtake me at a disadvantage
Amidst the crowds of Durban
But I prayed to my ancestral spirit and thou gavest me time by
waiting for my convenience.
And I hurried in the darkness,
And successfully brought the old man home.
I looked around and saw thee O, Death
Begin thy work by taking hold of his foot and folding it,
Tying it into a knot up at the waist.
Thereafter thou wentest on one side and touched his hairs
And madest them to curl. Then thou enteredst his mind
And thou didst confuse it, leaving it so.
Then thou didst move away to a distance to look at him
Pleased with thy grand work
For which thou hadst come here on Earth.)

Much more can be said about Zulu literature, including the contrasts it presents between merit that is due to English influence, and merit independent of it. We must however be satisfied for our present purpose with this outline of its characteristic features.

SOUTHERN SOTHO

The term Southern Sotho is also a term unknown to us Africans. It is an invention by classroom experts for what we know as the SeSotho of Moshoeshoe. In quantity S. Sotho is second only to Xhosa in the number of published *belles lettres* exclusive of Biblical commentaries. But in quality, variety, beauty, merit, there is little to choose. A comparison between the two literatures at this stage is irresistible :

(a) In folk-lore the S. Sotho books *Treasury of BaSotho-Lore* and *Litsomo tsa Basotho* (1909, 1911 Sotho and English) by E.

Jacottet ; *Har'a Libatana* by Z. Mangoaela ; *Mehla ea Malimo* by E. Motsamai ; *Raphepheng* by E. Segoete are a stronger set of five traditional records than the corresponding five in Xhosa, *Intlalo kaXhosa* by T. B. Soga, *Inxenye yentsomi zaseZweni* by H. M. Ndawo, *AmaMpondo* by V. Poto, *AmaMfengu* by R. T. Kawa and *Ntoziyateta* by W. S. Gawe. In all these there is no English influence.

(b) On the other hand Xhosa has stronger translation work from English than has S. Sotho. Compare the Xhosa Bible, *UHambo lomHambi* by Tiyo Soga, *Ukumiseleka kobutyebi bezizwe* by E. Makiwane, *ITshawe lendlu kaDavide* by N. A. Mazwai, *Ubom bukaTiyo Soga* by T. B. Soga, *Inkokeli yomHambi* by J. H. Soga, *ULimo* by S. E. Mqhayi, *UHambo lomHambi II* by J. H. Soga, which taken together are not equalled by the S. Sotho translations of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paballo ea 'Mele* by A. Mahase, *Phuthollo ea Mantsoe a Bibebe* by A. Mabile, and *Morena u re rute ho rapela*, by A. Dyke.

(c) In poetry it is a dead heat in quality, but Xhosa is ahead in quantity when we compare the S. Sotho poetry of *Lithoko tsa Marena* by Z. Mangoaela, *Lithothokiso* by Bereng, *Liphoofolo* by J. Mapetla with the Xhosa poetry in *Zemk' inkomo magwalandini* by W. B. Rubusana ; *Imibengo* by W. G. Bennie, *ImiHobe nemi-bongo*, *Inzuzo* by S. E. Mqhayi, *UmYexo* by J. Jolobe, *Izala* by J. Solilo—these sets, paranthetically being not superior to Zulu poetry already noticed.

So that in this neck-and-neck race the verdict will lie with creative work in the species of history and story-telling to be dealt with later.

Let us now retrace our steps. In S. Sotho folk-lore there is no trace of English influence. But in translation work we are heavily indebted to the European missionaries, particularly to E. Jacottet who by his translations has done a great service in bringing S. Sotho literature within the range of appreciation by English and French-speaking readers. The Bantu authors in

this regard have been pitiless on foreigners but future Sotho authors are almost sure to make up this deficiency because translation remains the weakest department of S. Sotho literature.

In poetry S. Sotho is strong and owes nothing to English models except in *Lithothokiso* and a manuscript known so far only to my friend Mr. G. Letele (Fort Hare lecturer), a manuscript that breaks new ground. This poem, *Lerato*, says Mr. Letele, constitutes a romance or love-story in verse with alliterative endings but not rhyme.

Let me illustrate Anglo-Saxon (Old English) alliteration from Beowulf, line 2999 :

Thaet ys sio foetho ond se fiord-scipe (that is is the feud and the enmity (for which the peoples of the Swedes will come against us)), where alliteration consists in the use of the letter f in two accented words occurring within the same line. Now this author employs this sort of alliterative technique not only in the middle (as we see in Beowulf) but also in his principiations and desinence suffixes. This is a new feature in S. Sotho, already adopted in Zulu by B. W. Vilakazi, but long familiar in Xhosa through the poems of Hadi in the *Imvo* issues of the nineties and other Xhosa poets during the last twenty years. This is English influence derived from English hymnology in our various church hymn books, and it is a feature likely to grow in popularity.

The highest water-mark of merit in S. Sotho creative writing is reached in its novels—five in all—the first three being from the pen of one author, Thomas Mofolo : *Moeti oa Bochabela* (The Traveller of the East, 170 pages) *Pitseng* (433) pages, *Chaka* (288 pages), the fourth being *Monono ke Moholi, ke mouoane* (Wealth is mist or Vapour, 227 pages) by E. Segoete, and the fifth *Pitso ea Linonyana* (The Conference of Birds) by A. M. Sekese. From *Monono ke Moholi, ke Mouoane*, a lively book, I will here quote a passage that suggests familiarity with *Paradise Lost* :—

“ *Ha tsoha sefefe se tsabehang. Ntlo kaofela ea sisinyeha ho isa motheong, lefatse la thothomela tlas'a maoto a rona, joale mafura a tsolohela mollong, a etsa likhanare tse tsabehang. Ho no ho se bophelo ka tlung, etsoe e se e tla cha hona joale. Sechaba kaofela se ka tlung sa patisana monyako, ho ea batla bophelo; ha re fihla kantle pel'a monyako, le teng taba li tsabeha ho feta. Sefefe se matla ka mokhoa osele, ke sefefe se secha seo ho seng le a mong oa rona ea kileng a bona se joalo.*

Ho no ho le lefifi hohle, letsatsi ha le sa le eo, kapa le timile kapa le fefotsoe ke sefefe, ha ho ea tsebang. Linaleli li ne li tlosoa tulong tsa tsona, li khera sebakeng li tsamaea li thulana, li pshatlana ka molumo o khaolang methapo ea litsebe, mafika a thuehileng ho tsona a ne a oela fatse, 'me hohle moo a oetseng a ne a tsosa malakabe a maholo, lefatse le ne le tuka le timella. Maru a ne a hlaha ka lebelo, a etsa maloti a matala le a matso-matso, a ne a otlana, a ne a otlana, a hlaha maholima le lialuma tseo ho seng motho ea ka emang. E ne e le tsietsi ruri eo ke se nang mantsoe a ho e hlalosa.”

(Translation :—A terrific storm arose and the entire structure shook to its foundation, the earth quaked beneath our feet, then the oil-tanks toppled over into the fire producing terrific flames. There was no safety in the edifice which was itself about to be enveloped in fire. The whole crowd of us made a stampede for the door for dear life and on getting outside we found matters exceedingly worse. The thunderstorm was tempestuous beyond compare and beyond the experience of any of us. Thick darkness reigned everywhere, there being no sunshine; and no one knew whether the sun had become extinguished or blown away by the hurricane. The stars collapsed from their celestial fixtures and were being tossed to and fro in the firmament now in collision, now smashing against each other in thunderous impact that broke our ear-drums; rocks that fell therefrom dropped to the earth creating stupendous conflagrations everywhere, the world now sinking under a chaotic volcano. Enormous dark clouds emerged in the shape of black mountain ranges

knocking against each other producing lightning flashes and cannon-like reports that no one could withstand.)

These five books can easily occupy us beyond the limits of our allotted time because in the first four of them the influence of English is often obvious but at other times it is suggested but faintly.

In sum, Mofolo's trilogy places him at the head of Bantu novelists, judged by accepted standards in writing, where account is taken of both quality and length. True, he is neither a Dickens or a Scott in literary stature, but within his range he compels admiration by his dexterity in describing rural life from the viewpoint of herd boys, or that of community beer carousals, or that of the black art in the underworld of witchcraft. He is equally happy when he deals with the life of adolescents in mission stations, educational institutions and mountain villages. The combined length of his three novels (848 pages) nearly doubles that of the three best Xhosa novels put together (*Noliswa* 130, *Ityala lamaWele* 62, *Inggumbo yemiNyanya* 250).

In proverbs S. Sotho boasts of a unique volume containing 824 aphorisms, each with its explication in the vernacular, but we pass it by as we cannot prove English influence in it. For the same reason we pass by *Pitso ea Linonyana*, a debating skit by birds taking off the loquacity of members of Native courts with delicious humour.

The translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress: Leeto la Mokeresete*, though better than its Tswana counterpart *Loeto loa ga Mokeresete* cannot hold a candle to the Xhosa version by Tiyo Soga. Incidentally the Tswana book cannot even translate 1000 (using *thousanta* a corruption of thousand) because here our Englishman attempted to translate before mastering the foreign language.

XHOSA

This leaves us with our local vernacular, Xhosa, which has enjoyed the advantage of being located at the seaports where the first missionaries landed a century ago. Xhosa has the strongest and most versatile literature in the five languages under consideration and is second only to Swahili in respect of quantity. I have already indicated where it is equalled or excelled in quality. We shall now consider its variety under ten heads :—

(i) Folk-lore or history. Here the books are *Intlalo kaXosa* by T. B. Soga ; *Inxenye yentsomi zaseZweni* by H. M. Ndawo, two books on Pondo History by V. Poto and W. D. Cingo ; Fingo History by R. T. Kawa ; *Ntoziyateta* by W. S. Gawe and two war books by B. J. Ross : *Tshaka* and *Xhosa Wars*. In the case of three of these books (those by Kawa and Ross) the sources are mainly English authors ; *Inkolo namaSiko* by S. J. Wallis.

Intlalo ka Xosa—by T. B. Soga.

This Book constitutes the first attempt in the Xosa language to explain within a narrow compass the customs and traditions of the Xosa people proper, as distinct from the other Xosa-speaking tribes of the Cape Province. The author writes with a sound knowledge of both the past and the modern conditions of things. His style has dignity, his vocabulary remarkably versatile. The volume is eminently readable, being characterised by a magnanimous patriotism and a keen *joie de vivre* in one's subject. See for instance this passage :—

Inkomo.

Ukufuy' inkomo yab' ibubunumzana negama kwa nobona buntu apa ema-Xoseni. Umakabe nazo ke wonke oyindoda, engenazo engaziwa budoda bani. Ite ke lento yabangela ukuba wonk' abe nenkomo ; nongenazo zimpuluke ngokumala, ezifuna yena nqi. Bezizuzwa embusweni, ekwendeni, nasekwendiseni intombi, nakukuzipiwa zihlobo nezalamane, zabe bezidliwa inyama namasi, zibuye zambeswe ukumbatiswa usapo olu. Ezizinkabi bezisihombo, into abezitanda azi qute ezixonxa ingalo umfo wase Manantsini, kube

ngumkita kobonelayo xa kuse nkundleni entlombeni nase mdudweni, abe ke yena, ukubil' oku, sel' ejukutyeka, selelichebencu eli ; kubona-kale selenqatyelwe zizango nezimbo zokuxel' amabal' azo nokwahlulahlula ezizimazi emaduneni. Yinto ke ebidal' umsinde wenene kube kutiwa ukutetwa 'kusemsindweni nasezintongeni namhla.' Balile babe zinyidilili. Inkabi ezi bezingama qegu, namaleqe, namadini, nemisito ; ngokukodwa kwamandulo zazingazani nedyokwe le. Ezizimazi bezinxakama xa ziza kusengwa komawazo paya nokuba kusezizweni emisitweni kubongiselwe ngabasengi ngentw' entle yendili nesidima ! Zazi bubukumkani nokumizwa komhlaba ka Xosa. Bebulapa ke ubuntu, unnumzana ehlala ngase buhlanti emana epulula lomxak' ake. Umf' onentlahla, ne ngxeba ! olusapo lunegazi ; umf' omzimba uyimpuluswa. Awu ! Ihomba lenene ! ! Ipin' imicepe yamasi yobunene ? Umf' onesitozela nokuteta kuncinane ; pof' unntu lo ezele bubele notando kwanesisa esikulu ! Apin' amaxesh' okonwaba nentluta ! He ! Into nenj' embala ibiba likiyokiyo ukuhluta yinyama nobisi. Inkomo nanzo ezindle paya, amaramncw' asendle eman' ezibamba ezibulala ngokuzidla, kube sekufunwana nawo ukub' abulawe, ezingelwa. Zimbi nanzo ematanga nabafana namakwenkwe. Kuhleliwe konwatyawe sisizwe.

(Translation :—Cattle. The possession of cattle was, among the Xhosa, a symbol of high social standing. Therefore every true man had to have cattle, else he was not recognised as a man. This ambition caused everybody to own cattle ; others lacked them only through losing them by disease and therefore not of their own doing. Their sources were : service to the chief, marrying, giving daughters in marriage, gifts from friends and relatives. They provided beef and curdled milk as well as karosses for the women. The bullocks were a matter of pride and beauty and the owner thereof, a typical tribesman, would in his dancing gesticulate acting the shapes of their horns and bodily form with his arms to the delight and envy of the spectators at court or at festivals or at wedding carnivals, he, the while drenched in copious perspiration until he exhausts his repertoire of musical exclamations and postures indicative of their colours and sex

distinctions. This performance evoked genuine wrath among both actors and on-lookers; and many would say, "This is the day of rage and fighting weapons." Women would cry piteously. The oxen were used as riding beasts, for racing competitions, for sacrifices and for wedding festivities, especially in primitive times when they knew not the yoke. The cows used to low when about to be milked at their respective kraals or away at tribal festivals and the milkers delighted in poetical outbursts of praise in all dignity and gravity. Cattle indeed were the core of true kingdom and land settlement to the Xhosa folk, wherein one found true society and where one beheld a Xhosa paterfamilias seated in gentlemanly fashion by his cattle-fold fondly caressing his armlet in token of his admiration for his herd, this being a corpulent gentleman, handsome, with a velvet-smooth skin, and possessed of a well-fed family, an immaculate gent! What Ho! His was the milk goblet of hospitality, this man of respectability and reserve of speech, yet withal endued with kindness, love and liberality. Gone are those days of happiness and fulness, yea, days when even a mere dog rolled in satiety and fat from meat and milk; days when cattle herds roamed far in the pasture-lands to be snatched, killed and devoured by wild animals which in turn were searched for, hunted and killed in revenge. Other herds haunted the reserve verdant grazing lands tended by youths and boys, the people rejoicing in halcyon bliss).

The above represents a high watermark of Xhosa idiomatic description by a stylish and enthusiastic writer.

(ii) Poetry. The outstanding poet is S. E. Mqhayi who for both quality and quantity of production is unrivalled in the whole field of Bantu poetry everywhere. His poems are in the books *ImiHobe nemiBongo*, *Inzuzo*, *uHintsa* as well as those sandwiched between his prose works. *UmYezo* by J. J. R. Jolobe and *Izala* by J. Solilo are two other books wholly devoted to poetry. Two authors H. M. Ndawo and B. Bangeni have poems in their prose works, while there is much poetry by various authors in the books

Zemk' inkomo maGwalandini by W. B. Rubusana and *ImiBengo* by W. G. Bennie. H. M. Ndawo has also a book on Hlubi and Baca Praise Poems of chiefs (33 pages, 1928). Primitive Xhosa poetry had no rhymes nor set stanzas. It gloried in archaic words and mystifying allusions which were often explained in subsequent lines. But English models have definitely disturbed this state of affairs ever since the composition and publication of hymn books for the use of church converts; so that in the poems of Mqhayi, Jolobe and Solilo we have true parallels to *Inkondlo kaZulu* (by Vilakazi) already noticed. This applies to many poems by "Hadi" (J. Ntsiko) published in the *Imvo* files of the nineties now unfortunately lost by fire. This parallelism to Vilakazi proves how much English influence has enriched Xhosa poetry in beauty tenderness and variety.

(iii) Translation. In translation from English, Xhosa has produced two classics: The Holy Bible (Revised Union Version) and *UHambo lomHambi I* (Pilgrim's Progress), as well as seven other translations of merit: two by J. H. Soga *UHambo lomHambi II*, *Inkokeli yomHambi*, two by S. E. Mqhayi: *ULimo* (Dowsley's Agriculture) and *UAggrey umAfrika* (C. Williams); Elijah Makiwane's *Ukumiseleka kobutyebi beZizwe* (Political Economy by J. Luke); N. A. Mazwai's *ITshawe lendlu kaDavide* (Prince of the House of David) and T. B. Soga's *UBom buka-Tiyo Soga* (from Chalmers' *Life of Tiyo Soga*, not to mention Ben Mazwi's *UkuPuma kweLanga kwiNiaba zaseHimalaya* (from H. Schneider's German book 1893).

The Xhosa Bible, according to B. J. Ross is truer to the Hebrew than the English versions because the Xhosa tongue possesses close linguistic affinities and identity of religious customs, while the Hebrew poetry passages have been turned into Xhosa poetry which retains the beauty of the original that is lost in the English prose. It is the composite work of several scholars who rank among the best wielders of the vernacular, and Xhosa speakers will ever owe them deep gratitude.

The second classic is Tiyo Soga's translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a work of art by an author gifted and proud of the idioms of his mother-tongue. It constitutes an illustrious contribution to Xhosa literature. Of the other seven translations one must single out the Life of Tiyo Soga by his nephew Tiyo Burnside Soga, a free rendition that reads not like a translation but as a creative production characterised by a vigorous *joie de vivre* and a boldness in wealth of picturesque phrases equalled only by Solomon Plaatje in his translations of Shakespeare's plays. It is English influence that has made this possible for Xhosa.

(iv) Biography. Biographical books worthy of mention number six:— *P. J. Mzimba* by L. Mzimba; *J. K. Bokwe* by S. E. Mqhayi; *Ntsikana* by J. K. Bokwe; *Veldman Bikitsha* by A. Lavisa; *Nathaniel Umhalla* by S. E. Mqhayi, *UMqhayi* by himself (an autobiography). They are small and undistinguished though valuable as humble records of lives worthily lived.

(v) Anthologies. There are two anthologies: *Zemk' inkomo Magwalandini* by W. B. Rubusana and *ImiBengo* by W. G. Bennie. This type of literature in Xhosa is far behind Zulu (see page 10) and is an imitation of its English prototypes.

(vi) Travel. Here there are two books: *EJerusalem* and *EAmerika* by D. D. T. Jabavu modelled on English travel books but small in size.

(viii). Sermons. *Iintshumayelo ezingummangaliso* (Wonderful Sermons) by B. Bangeni is a unique book by a gifted author who has written out thirty verbatim reports (in 220 pages) of sermons by African evangelists in Transkeian villages. How it was got together passes one's comprehension for, as they could not have been taken down by short-hand (there being no short hand system in Xhosa), they must have evoked phenomenal powers of memorisation on the part of the author. There is nothing like it in all Bantu literature in regard to *oratio recta*. This writer had previously given glimpses of this speech-report-

ing in his book *Kuphilwa Phi*, but here he has perfected it. The richness of language, the thrilling nature of the impassioned oratory of the preachers, the technique peculiar to evangelists of winning converts, now by threats, now by cajolery, now by duress, then by alarmism through the use of clicks—all these and other types of eloquence have combined to provide us with a book that rocks the imagination, and palpably stirs the emotions. This is a great book not yet widely known, and is probably inspired by familiarity with Shakespearean drama on the part of the author.

(viii) Drama. There are only faint beginnings of dramatic plays in manuscripts on the model of *Iziganeke zomKristu* by E. U. Oules and *Imfene kaDebeza* by G. B. Sinxo. Many playlets are to be seen on the stage conned from hurried improvisations of sketches written *in loco* with lead pencils. The histrionic talent of the African makes one anticipate a great future for African drama inspired by contemporary English plays.

(ix) Books on Social Life, like *Amavo* by J. J. R. Jolobe, *Umzi Ontsundu* and *Usapo* (1926) by B. J. Ross, *Ulwaluko* (MS.) by J. S. Mazwi *Inkwenkwe izala indoda* (MS.) by Walaza are due to English influence and are likely to grow in number. Zulu literature (with the writings of J. L. Dube, M. J. Mpanza, P. Lamula) in this respect is in advance.

(x) Novels. Lastly, Xhosa novels are more in number than those of any other Bantu language under our review, but the best five of them (*ITyala lama Wele* by S. E. Mqhayi, *UNolishwa* by H. M. Ndawo, *UMzali woLahleko* by G. B. Sinxo, *Kuphilwa Phi* by B. Bangeni, *InGqumbo yemiNyanya* by A. C. Jordan) cannot be regarded as equal to the best five Southern Sotho novels already noticed, from the viewpoint of length and merit, with the exception of Jordan's novel.

On the other hand there are three other Xhosa novels that must be mentioned (*Don Jadu* by Mqhayi, *UZagula* by Jolobe, *UMzingisi akanashwa* by Sipo Sowenu) as well as ten novelletes

UTandiwe wakwaGcaleka by L. Kakaza; *UNtsizi* by G. B. Makalima; *UNozipo*, by S. Mlotywa, *UNomalizo* by E. S. Guma, *UNomsa* by Sinxo, *UmFundisi waseMthuwasi* by G. B. Sinxo, *UJujuju* by Z. Futshane *UMandisa* by V. N. Swartbooi, *U-Pumzo* by D. S. Petana; *Unomathamsanqa* by H. M. Ndawo) worth attention, though very short, only as being sign-posts to a promising future development by the same or other pens.

All are inspired by English models except *ITyala lamaWele* which is an original effort to give a picture of Xhosa court-life before the advent of Europeans. The story proper, 62 pages, is short when measured by the criteria of ordinary novels, and the book in its unabridged edition of 158 pages is made longer by reason of inartistic padding of matter derived from present-day life and politics.

Nevertheless some of the literary devices employed in the pre-European section do recall the methods of modern English novelists. I hope to publish an English translation of it in due course as it is ready in manuscript.

The one novel that constitutes the *piece-de-resistance* in Xhosa literature is *Ingqumbo yemiNyanya* by A. C. Jordan. And as we know the author's acquaintance with Dickens, Jane Austen, and so forth we can with confidence ascribe to him the influence of English literature at its best.

The story is that of a Lovedale-Fort Hare student born of the Pandomise royal line at Tsolo, Transkei, who disappears under mysterious circumstances at the age of four, is presumed drowned, but is surreptitiously carried away two hundred miles to a village twelve miles near Lovedale where he grows up to find his way eventually into both Lovedale and Fort Hare, finally to return home and claim his throne. His tribe presses him to marry a raw woman, daughter of a neighbouring Chief's tribe but he refuses and, instead, contracts a morganatic union with a girl whom he had first met at the Lovedale Girls' School during his college days. This girl proceeds to flout all local traditions,

wears short skirts, parades bare-headed in public, calls her relatives by name, and breaks the tenets of Pandomise royal superstition by killing the tribal household cobra snake that was believed to be the impersonation of her husband's progenitor.

This rash act rouses the ire (*ingqumbo*) of the ancestors (*imi-nyanya*) who wreak their terrible vengeance in a series of catastrophes resulting in the death of the cultured queen, her son, the chief himself and others. The narrative keeps up a high standard of story-telling throughout its 250 pages of exciting episodes giving a graphic effect of the struggle of civilisation in a milieu of barbarism.

The story would supply good material for a stage tragedy. Judged by canons of novel-writing, this novel is easily the best production in the Xhosa tongue, equalling the *Pitseng* or the *Chaka* of T. Mofolo in Southern Sotho admittedly two of the strongest novels in any Bantu language where length is taken into account along with excellence of diction, dignity of high social personages, eloquence of courtiers, adequate characterisation of the hero with his satellites and the delicate touches with which the love affairs involved in the main and subsidiary plots are described. While the speeches of the counsellors are not as sedate as those in *ITyala lamaWele*, they are more incisive and demonstrative, in keeping with the temperament of the Pandomise. There are no passages of vivid description of picturesque rural scenery such as are typical of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*, but on the contrary the early chapters here give a living picture of certain phases of student life at the missionary institutions, revealing the telling influence of a good Christian Warden (like that of Bishop Smythe, who is but thinly disguised in this story) the value of sports and cultural social environment, as well as the joyous pranks of youth. Although the plot primarily moves round the terrors of superstition surrounding the life of a chief, showing how hard it is even for an ambitious young chief to break loose therefrom, the writer has skilfully woven into the

story an account of some highly progressive movements in Bantu life such as those of local farmers' associations, teachers' meetings, conventions of chiefs, boy-scout clubs and fraternals of ministers of religion. After the first score pages the story gathers momentum and becomes thrilling and irresistible to the end, the author employing language befitting each situation to the climax and cataclysm. The novel is likely to remain unchallenged for a long time in Xhosa literature, for it reflects actual life to a detail and in a wholesome fashion, linking up the barbaric past to the romantic present with masterly judgment.

If the influence of English on Bantu literature will inspire further classics of this calibre, then its continuation is worth while.

APPENDIX

- CRITICISMS OF THE NATIVE BILLS, 1/2.
 NATIVE VIEWS ON THE NATIVE BILLS, 1/2.
 FINDINGS OF THE ALL AFRICAN CONVENTION, 1/2.
 THE SEGREGATION FALLACY, (*out of print*).
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 BANTU LITERATURE, (*out of print*).
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 VIVANE, 1/2.

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The same writer has contributed chapters in the following books :—

- Western Civilisation and the Natives of South Africa*, 15/9
 by Dr. I. Schapera, (Routledge, London), (1934).
Thinking with Africa, (1927), 3/9 (Book Room, P.O. Box
 708, Cape Town.)
General Missionary Conference Report, (1925), 5/-,
 (Secretary, Box 1012, Cape Town).
European Bantu Conference, (1923), 1/3. ditto.

[All books out of print may be seen in Public Libraries].