

Dr. Thomas J. Woofter, jr., of the Research Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina, will deal with the 'Education of the American Negro'.

### *A New Orthography for Kikuyu.*

In 1933 a Committee of protestant and catholic missionaries convened by the Director of Education with an Education Officer as Chairman recommended the use of seven vowel letters in writing Kikuyu, and the symbols *o* and *ε* for the open *o* and *e*. They also recommended the letter *ŋ* for the velar *n*.

The Government of Kenya has decided to accept these recommendations, so that the new orthography will use the following vowel letters :

<i>u</i>	for the sound	<i>u</i>
<i>o</i>	„	close <i>o</i>
<i>ɔ</i>	„	open <i>o</i>
<i>a</i>	„	<i>a</i>
<i>ε</i>	„	open <i>e</i>
<i>e</i>	„	close <i>e</i>
<i>i</i>	„	<i>i</i> ,

and *ŋ* for velar *n*.

The Government as well as the Committee are to be congratulated on this decision, for it means changing from a very poor system of vowel representation to one which is practical and at the same time phonetically sound. Also the adoption of *ŋ* is definitely a change for the better, and it is only to be hoped that Swahili will now soon follow suit.

In this connexion the following comment may be made on the consonant system of Kikuyu. The sounds *b*, *d*, and *g* are always preceded by a nasal: *mb*, *nd*, *ŋg*; when standing between two vowels, *v*, *ɸ* and *ɣ* are pronounced instead of *b*, *d*, *g*. This shows that *v* and *b*, *ɸ* and *d*, *ɣ* and *g* are each one phoneme, the different pronunciation being due to the position of the respective sound. Therefore each of the pairs might be written with one letter, viz. *b* and *mb*, *d* and *nd*, *g* and *ŋg*, while the present usage is *v* and *mb*, *th* and *nd*, *g* and *ng*. The adoption of the principle of phonemes would thus mean a further simplification.

### *Orthographic Reform in Southern Rhodesia.*

This refers to the changes made in the orthography of Shona which is the general name accepted for the dialects of Mashonaland, hitherto known by the names of individual dialects or, unfortunately, by the name Swina which has crept in no one knows how and is both wrong and unacceptable.

The main dialects of Mashonaland are Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Ndau,

and Korekore. In the last-named very little linguistic work has been done and fuller investigation is still greatly needed.

Since a Missionary Conference at the Victoria Falls in 1909 there has been a growing desire in most quarters for some sort of unification of these dialects. Missionaries and the Native Affairs Department have for obvious reasons long desired it, and Mr. C. Bullock, now Assistant Chief Native Commissioner, has in particular been a stout advocate of intelligent orthographic reform to this end.

In 1928 a newly formed Department for Native Education (now the Native Development Department) had to face the problem of these dialects from the point of view of education and inspection. Were the new Inspectors to learn one language or four to enable them to do their work wherever they might be sent? In the same year a new vote of the Southern Rhodesian General Missionary Conference appealed to the Government to see what could be done. These three forces, all pulling in the same direction, at last got something done. The Government appointed a small local committee of missionaries to investigate, and took the further important step of securing the trained scientific help of Professor Doke of Johannesburg. Preliminary investigation by the Committee made it clear that the problem concerned four or five main *dialects* and not that number of different *languages*; and Professor Doke, during a busy ten months in the Colony, went everywhere and formed definite and well-grounded conclusions as to the exact sounds used in these dialects. His investigations were assisted by the Carnegie Corporation, and his conclusions were set forth in his *Report on the Unification of Shona Dialects*, published as a Blue Book for the Government of Southern Rhodesia. A later work, entitled *Comparative Study of Shona Phonetics*, is a thoroughly scientific treatise on Shona Phonetics, admirably printed and illustrated by photographs, palatograms, and kymograph tracings, and is invaluable for the student of Bantu languages. The Report is directed to the problem submitted to him and the Committee by the Southern Rhodesian Government, and contains the Recommendations on which Professor Doke and the Committee agreed.

At an early stage in the investigations Mrs. Louw, a member of the Committee and the author of the standard Manual of Karanga, collected opinions, based on her information, from Professor Westermann, Professor Daniel Jones, Professor Eiselen, and Professor Meinhof, and these opinions were before the whole Committee. The Committee's Recommendations were submitted also to the Institute, which gave its approval to this attempt to construct a practical orthography on the lines of their own Memorandum.

After some interval for discussion of them in the country they were referred to an enlarged Committee (still including Professor Doke), and with two alterations were accepted by that Committee and were shortly after definitely approved and adopted by the Government of Southern Rhodesia.

Since their official adoption in 1931 they have also been accepted by the various missionary bodies with, it must be confessed, more or less of criticism and reluctance, and progress of the slow and sure kind has been made in producing schoolbooks and religious manuals in the new orthography. At least three Missions have already equipped their presses with the new type, and a leading firm of printers in the Colony have done the same. Typewriters fitted with the six new symbols can be procured, and old typewriters can be adapted by putting the new symbols in place of some of the less needed characters of the ordinary keyboard.

One of the first publications to appear in the new script was a *Vocabulary of Mashonaland Dialects* (Sheldon Press, 1932, 2s. 6d.), a book which aims at collating a selection of words from the existing dialect vocabularies, and promoting the cause of unification by making it easier for people of various dialects to read works from any part of the Colony, provided they are in the new orthography.

So much for the course of events in this orthographic reform. It remains to show in what the reform itself has consisted. It is important to remember that the mainspring of the whole movement is the desire to unify the kindred dialects. Orthographic changes are not lightly to be undertaken as ends in themselves, but as means to a greater end.

The situation in the country was that the people using the different dialects had been evangelized by different missionary bodies. Roughly speaking, these bodies had each worked from different and widely separated centres, and the early workers in each case had specialized each in the dialect of the particular centre round which each body worked. Each centre tended to fix for literary purposes its own dialect and, in some cases, even to impose this dialect farther afield when the missionary body worked in areas outside that of its own dialect. Add to this that the various bodies worked in more or less water-tight compartments, and that each followed an orthography of its own devising, and even its own method of word-division. In one area the single letter *b* has had to do duty for three separate sounds, namely for the usual English sound of the explosive labial, for an implosive labial which in this country is the normal labial plosive, and also for the bilabial fricative (*v* in the I.P.A. system).

Further, it happens that these dialects, in addition to the implosive labial, use very commonly an implosive dental, and two sibilants which are apparently found only in this area and in the not distant area of Delagoa Bay. Thus Professor Doke and the Committee were compelled, by the desire for an orthography at once practical and rational, to recommend no less than six new symbols, which, it is freely admitted, make rather a strong dose of reform. For a language of long standing as a literary language, round which cling both sentiment and vested interest, it would probably have been impossible to go so far. In this Colony the moment for scientific reform has

not yet passed, and there is every hope that the proposals now officially adopted will be able to make their way easily in the literary language which is still to be developed as the people grow into the need and the power of self-expression on literary lines.

The new symbols adopted are *β* and *d'* for the implosive labial and dental respectively; *ʒ* and *ʒ'* for the unusual sibilants sometimes called the 'whistling *s* and *z*'; *v* for the bilabial fricative; and *ŋ* for the velar nasal. In addition to these new letters, the letter *c*, never before used by itself, is now being used in place of *ch*; and *x* has been adopted for the symbol of velarization—one of the marked characteristics of Shona speech—after the unvoiced labial *p*.

It has naturally not been an easy thing to effect these changes, and criticism has been directed at them, for the most part by those who are adverse to any change at all, and in particular to the introduction of any new symbols, even when it is clearly shown that these provide recognition for sounds not hitherto differentiated by foreign users of the language. Those who would die in the last ditch for a rigid adherence to the twenty-six sacred symbols of the Roman alphabet forget what this involves with regard to new sounds not provided for therein. You must either have new symbols such as have been adopted in Southern Rhodesia; or, you must devise new combinations of old symbols. Since the alphabet is mainly of importance to those who learn to read in the language as their mother-tongue, it should be obvious that new symbols are far easier than new combinations to teach to a child for whom, at starting, any alphabet is a collection of cabalistic signs. For instance, if a child has to learn *sw* for the whistling *s*, he has first of all to learn the ordinary significance of both *s* and *w* and then that of the natural combination *sw*, and then, on top of all this which is inevitable, he has to learn that in some cases this combination *sw* stands not for *s* plus *w* but for an entirely different single sound for which he might as well be given a new symbol at once, for what he has already learnt does not help him at all. The alternative of diacritics has been wisely ruled out by the scheme set forth in the Memorandum of the Institute, and it is unnecessary here to repeat the arguments against it. Moreover, it would be no more satisfactory to the 'last-ditchers' than new symbols.

In schools, where the new orthography is now being introduced as gently as possible, it has been quickly found entirely acceptable to the natives and there is no doubt that it will simplify the teaching of vernacular reading.

After the establishment of a practical orthography as nearly phonetic as possible, there comes the further task of unifying the dialects in respect of vocabulary and grammar. The Committee engaged has all along accepted as its slogan, 'Unify the orthography and pool the vocabularies', and it is hoped that this pooling of vocabularies (and of idioms and grammatical constructions) will take place gradually and naturally, following on the interchange of books, representing various dialects but all using the one orthography.

There has been no need for the arbitrary selection of one dialect as the dominant one, and the aim has been only to remove the artificial hindrances which prevent such natural mingling. That which goes on in every town and industrial centre where natives from the different speech-areas flock together will, it is believed, happen equally with the written language now that one orthography has made it possible. In the corners of the country, where all the people use for the most part one or other of the various dialects, it is hoped that these dialects will retain all their old life and vigour, and that each in turn will contribute of its best to the formation of a general literary language for all the Shona-speaking people.

It would not be right to end these notes without saying, what has already appeared implicitly in its place, that the progress of the reform in this country owes a very great deal to the enlightened and hearty support that the Government of the country has given to the work. It could neither have been so thorough nor so successful without that constant support.

(Communicated by FATHER BERTRAM H. BARNES, C.R.)

*'Les Langues communes au Congo Belge'*

Under this title Professor Ed. de Jonghe, who is a member of the Council of the Institute, has published in *Congo* (November 1933) a most instructive study on the language policy in the Belgian Congo. For a number of years the Belgian administration has been definitely in favour of using the vernacular languages for educational purposes. 'In colonies where the white colonists will always remain a small minority against a vast native population, it is not good policy—and some colonials do not hesitate in saying it is not permissible—that the mother country should impose its own language out of mere consideration of national prestige, in opposition to all rules of sound educational principles which establish that the true progress of civilization can be brought about only through the medium of vernacular languages.'

Consequently, the 'Commission d'Enseignement de 1922' says that the medium for primary instruction shall be the local language, and, if this is not sufficiently known or important, the nearest and best understood literary language, or, in a given case, the common language (*lingua franca*) of that region. The Commission did not object to the teaching of the elements of a European language in the higher classes of certain central and in secondary schools. 'But we insist on this point: The study of a European language should be limited to an *élite* which alone is capable of really assimilating it.' This *élite* will have to form the linguistic link between the natives and the civilization of the mother country. But it is essential that it should for this reason remain in close contact with the native population; its primary task will be 'to transmit the benefits of our civilization to the masses. It will have to create a native literature. If the activities of this *élite* are to be deep