

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

A Gift of Tongues

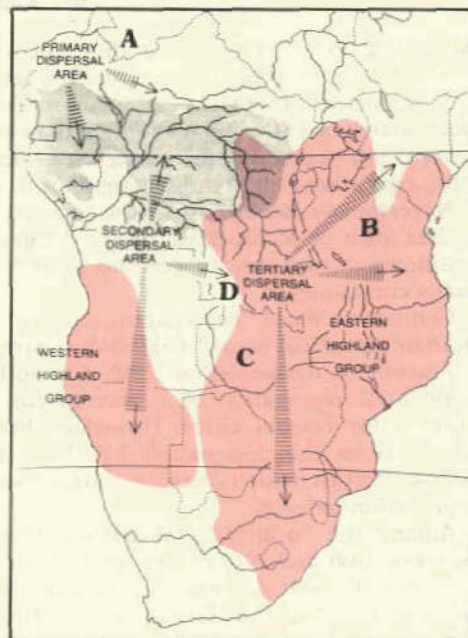
"The Spread of the Bantu Language"
by D. W. Phillipson, in *Scientific American*
(Apr. 1977), 415 Madison Ave., New
York, N.Y. 10017.

Early European explorers in subequatorial Africa were surprised to find that their porters spoke a language—Bantu, meaning "the people"—understood throughout most of the region. Bantu dialects are today spoken by 130 million people.

During the late 19th century, scholars theorized that these dialects were derived from some common ancestral tongue in the relatively recent past. In a review of the archeological and linguistic evidence, Phillipson, assistant director of the British Institute in Nairobi, suggests that the dialects were introduced to the area over a period of 3,000 years by migration from northern Sudanic regions (the Sudanic belt lies between the Sahara and the equatorial forest).

From the probable Bantu linguistic homeland in present-day Cameroon (A on map), the area where greatest diversity among neighboring dialects is found, Neolithic Bantu-speakers migrated eastward (2000 B.C.) around the equatorial forest to the Great Lakes region of Uganda (B). An early eastern stream of migrants moved south in the 4th century A.D. as far as present-day South Africa, while other groups possessing Early Iron Age technology pushed westward to central Zambia (C), where they met and reinforced a pre-metallurgical Bantu-

Bantu languages are distributed in a pattern similar to distribution of Iron Age pottery sites (red) but originated in Sudanic regions north of equatorial forest (gray). Loan words from Central Sudanic languages have been found in Bantu languages in Southern Africa.



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speaking migration moving southward along the Atlantic into the western highlands. By the 11th century A.D., this westward stream gave rise to a major Bantu center in southeastern Zaire (D), from which evolved the modern dialects spread widely through the eastern highlands.

Phillipson finds circumstantial but persuasive evidence that this linguistic dispersion correlates with the existing archeological record of the spread of Iron Age culture. The Sudanic belt is the probable homeland for both the ancestral Bantu language and early metal-working cultures. (The best-known iron-working centers were adjacent to the Sudanic belt, at Nok in Nigeria and Meroë in Nubia.) Today's known Bantu-speaking areas correspond broadly to evidence of Early Iron Age culture found in pottery at 350 different archeological sites.

SOCIETY

The Persistence of Segregation

"Trends in Residential Segregation: 1960-1970" by Thomas L. Van Valey, Wade Clark Roof, and Jerome E. Wilcox, in *American Journal of Sociology* (Jan. 1977), University of Chicago Press, 5801 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60637.

According to many recent studies, the social legislation of the 1960s has led to both absolute and relative improvements in the status of U.S. minorities. Increases in income between 1960 and 1970 were proportionately greater for nonwhites than whites (60 vs. 39 percent). In several key socioeconomic categories—occupation, political participation, education—blacks show significant upward shifts.

Nevertheless, according to the writers, who are researchers at the Universities of Massachusetts and Virginia, a "pervasive web of discrimination" apparently continues to bar blacks from housing in many communities.

Comparing mean "segregation indexes" for all 237 "standard metropolitan statistical areas" (SMSAs) existing in 1970 with those for the 137 areas so designated in 1960, the authors confirmed a *decline* in residential segregation of 8 percent for SMSAs generally, and of 9 percent for central cities. However, this decline has apparently resulted from the designation by the Census Bureau of 100 "new" SMSAs (cities which became SMSAs since 1960) with already low segregation indexes.

Among the "original" 137 SMSAs there was virtually no change between 1960 and 1970 in the level of residential segregation. In fact, 7 of the 10 most segregated cities in 1960 (Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Gary, Dayton, Oklahoma City) remained among the most segregated in 1970.