

W.H.I. Bleek and *Black Athena*

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This essay attempts to include the South African research of the German philologist W.H.I. Bleek within the issues raised by volume 1 of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. In addition we offer for the first time a translation of supplementary passages that appeared in Bleek's *Reinecke Fuchs in Afrika. Fabeln und Märchen der Eingebornen* (Weimar 1870), the German version of his earlier *Reynard the Fox in South Africa: or Hottentot fables and tales* (London 1864). In these passages Bleek addresses his German readers on the topic of the linkage between African languages and Egyptian languages - the very subject of Bernal's provocative thesis.

In *Black Athena* Bernal (1991:239) argues that between about 1830 and 1860 'a new principle of ethnicity pervaded all areas of life and scholarship'. What he terms the Egyptian-based 'Ancient Model' was destroyed and the racist Indian-based 'Aryan Model' of linguistic and cultural development was erected:

The Ancient Model had no major 'internal' deficiencies or weaknesses in explanatory power. It was overthrown for external reasons. For 18th- and 19th-century Romantics and racists it was simply intolerable for Greece, which was seen not merely as the epitome of Europe but also as its pure childhood, to have been the result of the mixture of native Europeans and colonizing Africans and Semites. Therefore the Ancient Model had to be overthrown and replaced by something more acceptable (Bernal 1991:2).

By the 1840s Egyptian language and culture were seen as the products of a categorically inferior and more backward race, inherently incapable of having made contributions to the great Aryan civilisation and the noble languages of India, Greece and Rome. Bernal argues that this change in the valuation of Egypt between the Ancient Model and the Aryan Model was linked to the rise in Egyptian imperial power under Mohamed Ali. Egypt supported the Turks against the Greeks and raised the possibility of a Mediterranean under the control of non-Europeans. The death of Byron in the Greek cause heightened the perception of a heroic Christian Greece besieged by Muslim Turks and Egyptians. 'By the 1830s Egypt was second only to England in its modern industrial capacity' (Bernal 1991:247). Bernal champions a revised Ancient Model that gives the

place of origin to Egypt, and so by implication to North Africa, over the Eurocentrism of an original Greek source¹.

A key figure in Bernal's account is Christian K. J. Bunsen who argued in his *Egypt's Place in Universal History* (1848-60) that Egyptian was an African version of the common linguistic root of both the Aramaic (Semitic) and Indo-Germanic races. Bunsen did not perceive the Egyptians as African. In this he followed others like Herder who saw them as essentially an Asian people and Blumenbach who placed the Egyptians, Arabs and Jews in the category of the Caucasian race, but Egyptian functioned as a common root between Semites and Aryans. Bunsen appeared to advocate the Ancient Model (identifying Egypt with Africa) against the emerging Aryan Model, but Bernal (1991:238) notes that his 'ambivalence about Egypt was agonized'. Bunsen was a friend and sponsor of Bleek, introducing the young philologist to Colenso in London. Reviewing Grout's *Zulu Grammar*, Bleek (1860:246-7) included 'Chevalier Bunsen' in that group of 'men worthy of the highest respect', even if 'the latest discussions show that philology needs that some refuse be brushed off from its rules and proceedings'. If Bleek articulates the Aryan Model then either Egypt will be demoted as 'African' and African languages will be severed from essentially Semito-Aryan Egyptian languages, or Egypt will be purged of its Africanness and Africa will be seen to have no connection with Egyptian languages and civilization.

What follows will show that Bleek's African-centred comparative grammar presents an anomaly *vis à vis* Bernal's thesis, and marks the persistence of an ambivalence associated with Bunsen that was integral to the sub-genre of the colonialist ideology constructed in Southern Africa². While Said's (1978:99) general contention that 'the Aryan myth dominated historical and cultural anthropology at the expense of the "lesser" peoples' is indisputable, there were tensions and crevices within the ideologeme. Bleek's South African comparative grammar is one such moment. It can be read as a prescient warning against the strategy of stressing the antiquity of Africa as an antidote to its marginalisation. Acknowledging the venerable antiquity of Africa's contribution to human progress can serve to demote African peoples. Our first step is to sketch the broad outline of Bleek's universal philology.

¹ Cf. Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (1995) for a critique of Bernal's argument.

² In the case of the dispute regarding the origins of the ruins of "Great Zimbabwe" - the largest prehistoric structure in sub-Saharan Africa - Egyptian meant non-African. Henrika Kucklick (1991) shows how the supposition of Egyptian or Phoenician builders for the Zimbabwe ruins was part of a racist ideology designed to devalue the 'civilization' of indigenous Africans.

beyond the Indo-European circle

In a review of Grout's *Zulu Grammar* Bleek commits himself to the following global theory of language development:

To the sagacity and research of Bunsen and Max Muller [*sic.*] mainly we owe a magnificent hypothesis, intended to constitute a theory of the development of languages in time successively, and their diffusion in direction and extent over the world

The Chinese and other monosyllabic languages of Asia went off from the main stock while it was yet in a rude or inorganic state. These languages have been called *family* languages. Some cause, to us unknown, seems to have stereotyped these languages in this early stage of their existence, and to have prevented their further development.

At a subsequent period, when the main stock had assumed somewhat of an organic character, the Tartar or Turanian languages detached themselves on one side, and Hamatism, or the language of Egypt, on the other; the former with a slight tincture of Iranianism, or tendency to Indo-European character, and the latter with a tincture of Shemitism. These languages are called nomad languages, as having advanced further than the family languages.

At a still later period the Shemitic and Iranian or Indo-European languages developed themselves in opposite directions. These are called *political* or *state* languages, as exhibiting the highest degree of refinement.

To complete this view, the languages of America and Oceania are thought to be connected with the Tauranian; and the African are united conjecturally with the Hamatic or Coptic, and perhaps, far southward, with the Tauranian (Bleek 1860:248-9).

The genderless Tauranian stock of languages share a 'tendency to the Indo-European character' while 'the language of Egypt' forms another branch 'with a tincture of Shemitism' (from Noah's son Shem, the ancestor of the Jews). Following Bunsen, Egypt, although sharing a common origin, is set off from the 'Indo-European character' (Tauranian) and identified as Hamatic with 'a tincture of Shemitism'; African languages being united, conjecturally, with the latter. Thus 'Hottentot gender forms' are related to 'the Coptic' and to 'the sexual gender of the Semitic tongues' (249)³.

³ James Orpen (1908:33) recalls: 'as Dr. Bleek told Sir G. Grey and he told me, the grammars of these two languages ['Bushman' and 'Hottentot'] are totally different, that of the Hottentots being akin to an early Egyptian language, which Dr. Bleek called ancient Coptic'. Cf. Westphal (1962) and Cole (1971) on the classification of African languages.

Bunsen's idea of a common origin for the Aryans and Semites informs this picture of the divergence of language families, and South African languages are articulated in terms of a theory of gender or noun classes.

Part I of *A Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, "Divisions and Affiliations of Southern African Languages", distinguishes three classes according to 'their structure and origin': 'As representatives of these three classes we may name the languages of the Kafir, the Hottentot, and the Bushman' (1862:1). 'Kafir' language belongs to an extensive family of languages that are called the *Bá-ntu* family:

Malay, Polynesian, and Papuan families are to be considered as members of the Oceanic section of the same class.

6. The chief characteristic of this class of inter-tropical languages is that the *pronouns* are originally borrowed from the *derivative prefixes of the nouns*, whilst in that class of languages to which the Hottentot, Egyptian, Semitic, and Aryan or Indo-European families belong, the *pronouns* are originally borrowed from the *derivative suffixes of the nouns*.

7. The former class is, on this account, called that of *Prefix-pronominal Languages*, and the latter the class of *Suffix-pronominal Languages*; both classes together are included in the group of *Pronominal Languages*.

8. Their main distinctive feature is a concord of the *pronouns* and of every part of speech, in the formation of which pronouns are employed (e.g. adjectives and verbs) *with the nouns* to which they respectively refer, and the hereby caused *distribution of nouns into classes or genders*.

9. This concord is evidently produced through the original identity of each pronoun with the respective derivative particle (prefix, or suffix) of the nouns which may be represented by it.

10. The different classes or gender of nouns are, in the only family of Suffix-pronominal languages which has as yet been clearly made out, brought into some reference to the distinction of sex as seen in nature. They are, therefore, termed *Sex-denoting Languages* (Bleek 1862:2-3).

Point 10 refers to the 'Hottentot' language that is of 'North African origin' and part of the 'Sex-denoting languages' that include 'Semitic and Aryan nations' (viii-ix). In this taxonomy the genderless 'Bushman' languages are very near the bottom:

The *Bushman* tongue is as yet too insufficiently known to allow us to assign to it its proper place in a general classification of languages; but it seems to be clear that its relationship to the Hottentot language is, at least, very remote. In fact, the probability is that it will be found to belong to what may be called

the class of Genderless Languages. Members of this class seem to exist in almost all other parts of the world, and they interrupt particularly the contiguity of Sex-denoting languages, in Northern Africa (Bornu, Mandenga, &c), Europe (Basque, Hungarian, Finnian, &c), Asia (Tartaric, Mongolian, Dravidian, &c). They occupy also some portions of America, and the whole Australian continent (Bleek 1862:1).

Despite Bleek's subsequent interest in the place of the 'Bushmen' within a linguistic typology that tied cultural development to sex-denoting capacity, this language group remains of marginal interest. As Bleek (1864:xviii) notes in *Reynard the Fox in South Africa, or Hottentot fables and tales*, the 'Hottentot' language is of the greatest interest because it is the most primitive form of a sex-denoting language class that fills Europe: 'Soon, however, what were at first mere isolated facts, became links, in a chain of evidence, showing that all those Sexdenoting Languages which were then known to us in Africa, Asia, and Europe, are members of one large family, of which the primitive type has, in most respects, been best preserved to us in the Hottentot language'. In short, African languages are linked to the Indo-European stock.

The preface to the first section of the Second Part of his *South African Comparative Grammar* (1869) states Bleek's impatience with his contemporary's obsession with the Aryan family of languages and clarifies his own project:

It is to be regretted that the greater number of philologists appear to be still in a sort of rudimentary stage, corresponding to that in which zoologists would be if they refused to study any animals excepting those directly useful to man, and their nearest kindred species. In fact, the so-called Indo-European Comparative Philology now occupies the same place that Classical Philology did fifty or sixty years ago. It will not go beyond itself, and, as it were, shuts its eyes to the possibility that any other circle of languages can be akin to the Aryan. Yet it is clear that the complex phenomena which characterise the Aryan circle of languages cannot be rightly understood without a careful comparative examination of other languages of simpler organisation, which show more of the ancient structure. Some of that energy, now so frequently wasted upon the discussion of questions to which the Indo-European circle of languages alone can never afford the clue, might well be given to the systematic comparative study of the more primitive Sex-denoting languages. To direct the attention of comparative philologists to these lower forms of language, and to prove the relations in which they stand with regard to the more highly developed Sex-denoting tongues, is one of the chief aims of this work (Bleek 1869: xx-xxi).

The sex-denoting or gender aspect makes 'Hottentot' the most interesting of the South African languages. Unlike the Bâ-ntu languages, 'Hottentot' is suffix-pronominal and sex-denoting. Although in 'Hottentot' 'the regularity in the numerical correspondence (as singular, plural, and dual) of the different classes or genders to each other has been far more strictly carried through', this only serves to make the etymology of the derivative suffixes 'even more obscure than that of the prefixes in the Bâ-ntu languages' (1869:133-4). Bleek rejects the hypothesis of some grammarians possessed by what he calls 'a mania' (104; see also 133) that the suffixes of the nouns of 'Hottentot' were originally pronouns. The sex-denoting character of nouns in the Hottentot language

was evidently imparted to it, after a division of the nouns into classes had taken place. It probably arose, in the first instance, from the possibly accidental circumstance that the nouns indicating (respectively) man and woman were formed with different derivative suffixes, and, consequently, belonged to different classes (or genders) of nouns, and that these suffixes thus began to indicate the distinctions of sex in nouns where it could be distinguished (Bleek 1869:122).

The evolution of sex-denoting grammatical capacity and poetic personification is an essential passage for the stimulation of imagination and the development of consciousness:

It is clear that the presence of nouns representing impersonal objects in classes (or genders) to which a sex-denoting character had become attached, must naturally have favoured their personification, thereby frequently leading the mind to ascribe to these objects the most obvious attributes of the respective sexes. But this does not prove that the suffix, which now indicates the gender, had not originally quite a different meaning. In fact, in many masculine nouns in Hottentot there is no doubt that the suffix of the masculine singular has a sort of local meaning, and this meaning seems also to influence the character of this gender, even in some of the most advanced Sex-denoting languages (Bleek 1869:297).

The following example is given:

If the word for 'man' were formed with one suffix (-p), and the word indicating 'woman' (be it accidentally or not) by another (-s), then other nouns would be formed with the same suffixes, in analogy with these, until the majority of the nouns of each sex were formed with certain suffixes which would thus assume a sex-denoting character The classes of the nouns in Hottentot thus possessed no naturally inherent sex-denoting character,

but were (so to speak) merely coloured by a sex-denoting dye, which has only thoroughly pervaded the nature of the classes in the most advanced of our Sex-denoting languages (Bleek 1869:298-9).

Bleek inserts a long footnote in German from Krönlein, the translator of the New Testament into Namaqua, arguing for the primacy of personification as a basic intuition or '*Geschlechtsbestimmung*'. Bleek comments: 'The gender may have to a certain extent the import which Mr Krönlein ascribes to it; but this is clearly a derived faculty, and can by no means be said to apply to all, or even to the majority of nouns indicating inanimate things or ideas in Hottentot' (1869:121 note). Still, the poetic faculty of the 'Hottentots', if not of the 'highest order', is more developed than prosaic Bâ-ntu, and the gender classification more regularised. However:

425. It may be assumed that the original meaning of the derivative suffixes of the nouns in Hottentot has been impaired and modified, and that they by no means impart as full a meaning as some of the prefixes in the Bâ-ntu languages, and are, therefore, still less equal in value to the derivative suffixes of modern languages (Bleek 1869:122).

Although 'their origin is similar' (122), the Bântu and Hottentot languages have subsequently developed to different degrees and the etymology of their prefixes and suffixes 'may be said to be as uncertain as that of the most ancient derivative suffixes in our own language' (137). There may be 'a sort of correspondence', 'points of analogy', between those languages and European languages, 'although none of these analogies are so extensive as to allow us to identify the meaning of any Bâ-ntu derivative particle, with that of our own' (137-8). As for Hottentot suffixes, the masculine and feminine singular that delineate 'various shades of meaning' would 'seem to place them almost in analogy with some case terminations in the Aryan languages' (139):

It is true that many philologists, and even some comparative philologists, whose opinion is otherwise entitled to much respect, deny *in toto* any relationship between such languages as Hottentot and our own, - the Aryan or Indo-European but when languages pass through successive stages of development, it is clear that their material may become so different as to render its comparison impossible with that of other members of the same family which have travelled in different directions. Yet these very languages may show unmistakable proofs in their whole structure that they have issued from one common stock, and have originally possessed the same grammatical features (Bleek 1869:271).

These are suggestive analogies rather than specific discoveries. The vital point is the linking of imagination to grammatical structure.

In "Scientific Reasons for the Study of the Bushmen Language" (1873), Bleek emphasises that the 'Hottentot' language is related to the languages of the most cultivated nations:

For the general science of comparative grammar, the languages spoken within or on the borders of this Colony are of the highest importance; - Kafir, as giving us the key to the great mass of kindred Negro (Prefix-pronominal) languages which fill almost the whole of South Africa, and extend at least as far to the north-west as Sierra Leone; - and Hottentot, as exhibiting the most primitive form known of that large tribe of languages which is distinguished by its Sex-denoting qualities, which fills North Africa, Europe, and part of Asia, which includes the languages of the most highly cultivated nations on earth, and which may be even of far greater extent than we have any idea of at present (Bleek 1873:150).

Although 'Hottentots' and 'Bushman' may share a distant common origin - as is evidenced by 'the outward aspect of the two races, in many of their habits and customs, and, lastly, in their mythologies' - they constitute two distinct 'nations' (1873:151). 'Bushman' language is not a degraded form of Hottentot language, despite what some of Bleek's contemporaries surmised⁴. The priority of the Indo-European and Semitic languages is not rejected. Rather the argument here is that this priority can be adequately grasped only by looking beyond the Aryan linguistic circle, and beyond the work of the 'mere Indo-European scholar' (Bleek n.d.:lxxxiii)⁵. Completeness and inclusiveness is a pre-condition of accuracy and translative understanding.

So we have the following typology: Bã-ntu (prefix-pronominal; African, as far north as Sierra Leone), 'Hottentot' (suffix-pronominal and sex-denoting; North African, Asian and European)⁶, and 'Bushman' (genderless or Tauranian; North African,

⁴ Bleek wrote the following in a letter published in the *Natal Witness*, on 9.11.1855: 'That Chevalier Bunsen - whose name I cannot pronounce without feelings of the deepest respect and gratitude - should have fallen into such a mistake, speaks sufficiently of the confused ideas generally entertained' (Bleek 1855:24).

⁵ Reference is to "The Concord, the origin of Pronouns, and the Formation of Classes or Genders of Nouns", a paper read before the Ethnological Society and mentioned by Bleek in a letter of 1871. The copy in the Don Afrikaner Library, Durban, has no publication date. Spöhr (1962:64) also gives no date for this text.

⁶ Cf. Whitney (1868:381): 'What a pregnant fact in African ethnology will be, if fully and irrefragably proved, the relation of the Hottentot dialects with the ancient Egyptians!'

European, Asian, American). What exactly, then, is the meaning of gender - the distribution of nouns into classes or genders brought into some reference to the distinction of sex as seen in nature - for Bleek?

gender and imagination

Part II of the *Comparative Grammar* (The Concord. Section I. The Noun) draws once more on Bleek's doctoral dissertation of 1851 to expand on the importance of 'classes (or genders)' (1869:93) in the development of language. The link between gender and sex is not one of simple identity for Bleek:

This use of the term *gender* has been objected to. In explanation I beg to state that in investigating the origin of the grammatical gender of nouns it will be found that the further we go back, the more it loses the apparent identity which it has at present in the English language, with the distinctions of sex. It is, therefore, necessary to divest one-self of the idea that gender must imply sex, and to treat the genders of nouns as that which they originally were, - namely, classes; thus giving to the term *gender* a wider meaning, having no necessary reference to sex (Bleek 1869:93).

Gender is not to be limited to distinctions of sex. It is a 'common characteristic of the so-called Pronominal Languages that a concord exists between nouns and certain other parts of speech':

Through this, a distribution of the nouns into classes (or genders) takes place, which does not exhibit a strict analogy with any natural distinction, except in some of the most advanced of these languages, - particularly in English, and with modification in Danish. But in all the more primitive types of the Pronominal Languages, the classes of nouns do not correspond exactly to the distinctions observed in nature, though they may have a certain reference to them (Bleek 1869:93).

Noting of the Southern African languages that '[n]one of these dialects has any other culture than that which it has received under missionary auspices in the most recent period', Whitney (1868:344 note) refers to the authority of Bleek's subdivision of the South African languages: 'See Lepsius's General Table of Languages, already referred to; and Dr. Bleek's Catalogue of Sir George Grey's Library, at Capetown, 1858'. Cf. Lang (1885:197ff) on 'Hottentot' mythology. Cf. A. Werner's (1915) *The Language Families of Africa* (1915), and the overtly racist C.G. Seligman, *Races of Africa* (1930), for the influence of Bleek's typologies.

A comparison of the 'different Aryan languages' shows that those languages 'in which the division of the nouns into classes (or genders) is rendered visible' through the concord 'may prima facie be expected to exhibit the most primitive structural features' (94). The South African languages exhibit 'this curious structural arrangement' in a way that is more 'discernible' than in 'our (European and other Aryan) languages' (95-6). The limited extent of the concord between nouns and other parts of speech in 'the more logical arrangements of the Dutch and English tongues' indicates they 'are of modern origin' (94): '400. We all know that a comparison of the kindred languages, - , nay, a mere retracing of the English to its Anglo-Saxon parent - shows that the German has in this case preserved the more original conditions of the language' (94).

Bleek (n.d.:lxxix) explicitly engages in another telling demotion discussed by Bernal, that of Chinese 'civilisation', when he speculates that the Chinese once had a sex-denoting language: 'But the deficiencies of Chinese civilisation, and their national faults of character (apparently arising from want of the higher imaginative faculty) are to us a new proof how much men need that poetic stimulus which the ancient structure of our languages has given to our minds. The thirst for science must already very strongly have seized upon the spirit of a nation when it can do well without that lever which the sex-denoting form of language affords the mind'⁷. Imagination, development, grammatical structure, and aesthetic stimulus are seamlessly interwoven. This power is the power of imagination to perceive similarities and metaphorical correspondences. Bleek singles out the poetic power of the 'Hottentot' languages that endows animals and inanimate things with human characteristics, and in turn greatly stimulates the imagination.

This raises the central ethno-aesthetic question advanced in *Reynard the Fox in South Africa*:

But we may well ask why it is that, so far as we know, the Kafir imagination seems not at all inclined to the formation of this class of fictitious tales

⁷ Cf. Bernal (1991:238ff) on the negative stereotyping of the Chinese in the middle of the nineteenth century, the period of the Opium Wars. Humboldt and Whitney also express negative judgements on the Chinese. Of the dependency of 'human development' on the 'development of representation', Taine (1873:14) comments: 'If the general conception in which it results is a mere dry notation (in Chinese fashion), language becomes a sort of algebra, religion and poetry dwindle, philosophy is reduced to a kind of moral and practical common sense, science to a collection of utilitarian formulas, classifications, mnemonics, and the whole intellect takes a positive bent. If, on the contrary, the general representation in which the conception results is a poetical and figurative creation, a living symbol, as among the Aryan races, language becomes a sort of delicately-shaded and coloured epic poem'.

[Fables], though they have otherwise a prolific Native literature of a more or less historic and legendary character This is the real origin of almost all those poetical conceptions which we call *Fables* and *Myths*. Both are based on the personification of impersonal beings – the former by ascribing speech and reason to the lower animals, whilst the latter substitute human-like agencies in explanation of celestial and other elementary phenomena in place of their real cause (Bleek 1864:xx-xxi).

The ‘almost’ in the following citation carries an immense burden:

As the grammatical structure of the languages spoken by the latter [the Kafirs and other black tribes of South Africa] does not in itself suggest personification, these nations are almost, as a matter of course, destitute of myths as well as Fables. Their literary efforts are, as a general rule, restricted to narrating the doings of men in a more or less historical manner – whence we have a number of household tales, and portions of a fabulous history of these tribes and nations; or their ancestor worship and belief in the supernatural give rise to horrible ghost stories and tales of witchcraft, which would be exciting if they were not generally told in such a long-winded, prosy manner, as must make the best story lose its interest (Bleek 1864:xxv, ea.)

What is at stake here is the correlation between grammatical structure and form of thought: ‘It has been seen that nations who speak Prefix-pronominal languages, in which the division of the nouns into classes has no reference to the distinctions of sex, possess no true mythology, but are merely addicted to ancestor-worship, which is probably the most ancient form of human religion’ (Bleek 1874:98).

The ‘higher flight of the imaginative faculty which the Sexdenoting (*sic*) nations possess (through the stimulation of this personification of impersonal things, consequent upon the grammatical structure of their languages)’, produces myths and higher religious ideas’ (1864:xxv). Myth is not a culmination but rather a bridge or transition from superstition to religious thought:

Mythology is, in its origin, most generally either a mere figure of or a poetical explanation suggested by the grammatical form or etymological meaning of words, indicating certain striking natural phenomena. In the primary stage of their production, Myths may be supposed to have been always understood in their true original character; and it is only when in the course of generations their real origin has been obscured, and they have become merely the petrified excrescences of a traditionary creed, that their apparent absurdity makes them at first sight almost inexplicable, particularly when found among nations

of a high intelligence (Bleek 1864:xxii).

While fables 'outlive' myths and 'their simple usefulness as moral teachers ... and salutary elements of the best national literatures', the 'more transitory existence' of myths lead mankind 'on to higher abstract ideas' (1864:xxii)⁸. Bleek (1864:xvii) reports that as early as 1850 he had noticed 'a striking similarity between the Hottentot signs of gender and those of the Coptic language', and this hypothesis formed the basis of his doctoral thesis. By 1864 he concludes that the similarity between European fables and Hottentot fables

shows a much greater congeniality between the Hottentot and European mind than we find between the latter and any of the black races of Africa. This similarity in the disposition of nations can in itself hardly be considered as a valid proof of common ancestry; but if there be other grounds to make us believe that the nations in question, or at least their languages are of common origin, it may render us more inclined to assume that such a similarity in their literary taste is derived also from the same source (Bleek 1864:xiv).

So, what is the relation between 'Hottentot' and Indo-European, Egyptian, and Semitic language families? Bleek posits, in accordance with Bunsen, a common origin and then a process of divergence: 'I have here assumed as a fact that the languages of the most civilised nations of the world have derived their *sex-denoting* character from the same source as the HOTTENTOT language' (Bleek n.d.:lxxix). Linking an African language group to Egyptian, and configuring these in relation to the Indo-European or Aryan would appear to run counter to the Aryan Model that tended to de-Africanise Egypt or marginalise its influence on Greek and European culture. Bleek proposes the 'congeniality between the Hottentot and European mind' and, given the influence of the theory of the North African origin of the Khoikhoi, recognises an affinity between Africans and Europeans. In his reminiscences Joseph Orpen offers the following extrapolation of Bleek's theory 'of the [language of the] Hottentots being akin to an early Egyptian language, which Dr. Bleek Called ancient Coptic'; This is just what we should expect to happen if a strong race from the north, akin to the most ancient Egyptians, took to themselves, either by force or otherwise, wives from a weaker race like the Bushmen, the progeny retaining the mother language's consonants, but the strong father language's grammar.

⁸ Cf. Tylor's (1865:10-11) discussion of Bleek's *Reynard the Fox in South Africa*.

⁹ Cf. Barnard (1992) on the classification of the 'Hottentots', and the historical controversy of their North African origin (the 'Hamatic Theory'); also Wright (1996), Elphick (1977), and Dubow (1995:74-119).

Thus the strongly received conviction is on these and other grounds that the Hottentot race has been a crossbreed which has acquired a permanent type and originates in a large Northern white race allied to the old Egyptian, taking Bushmen wives (Orpen 1908:33).

Orpen shows the triumphant success of the racialising Aryan Model. If Bleek maintained a more nuanced approach, the question of complicity with the Aryan obsession he often criticised remains.

We offer the following translation from the 1870 German version of *Reynard the Fox* (1864) in the hope of clarifying this issue. In this supplement to the English text Bleek addresses his readers in order to defend himself against his German detractors. As we shall see, this reaction appears to hinge on the proximity of the relation between 'Hottentots' and Egyptians.

In the following translation roman numerals indicate the translator's notes to be found at the end of the essay. Asterisks are Bleek's footnotes.



Dr W.H.I. Bleek, 1862, (copied from Pippa Skotnes (ed),
Miscast. Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen.
Cape Town: U.C.T. Press, 1996:125)

Meineste Fuchs in Afrika.

Fabeln und Märchen der Eingebornen.

Nach

Originalhandschriften
der Grey'schen Bibliothek in der Kap-Stadt und
andern authentischen Quellen.

Von

Dr. W. S. J. Bleek,

Curator von Sir W. Grey's Bibliothek in der Kap-Stadt.

Weimar,

Hermann Böhlau.

1870.

— Vorrede. —

Die obige Vorrede ist größtentheils eine Uebersetzung der englischen, die meinem „*Reynard the Fox in South Africa; or, Hottentot Fables and Tales*“ (London 1864) vorausgeschickt war. Das hier dem Publikum dargebotene deutsche Werk enthielt nun außer den hottentottischen auch eine bedeutende Anzahl von solchen Fabeln, deren Originalexte sich in Sprachen Nord-Afrika's finden, namentlich in der Haussa-, Vornu-, Wolof-, Akra-, Temne- und Bullom-Sprache. Von diesen gehört nur die Haussa-Sprache*) zu derselben Familie wie das Hottentottische, die andern sind aber nicht sexuell, daher erklärt sich der Besitz von Fabeln unter den sie sprechenden Völkern allerdings nicht aus dem Charakter ihrer Sprachen. Freilich ist es nicht unmöglich, daß der abgeschlossene Zustand der Vornu-Sprache**) von einer Sprachform abstammt, in der das Geschlecht ähnlich wie in unseren Sprachen unterschieden wurde. Aber die anderen obengenannten nord-afrikanischen Sprachen gestatten eine solche Hypothese, betreffend ihres Ursprunges nicht. Denn die woloffische (in Senegambien gesprochen) und die Akra-Sprache (in einem Theile der Goldküste zu Hause) gehören unverkennbar zu der Gor-Familie, das Temne und Bullom (beide in Sierra Leone) zu der Bantu-Familie, und diese beiden Sprachfamilien sind Glieder der Classe der Präfix-Pronominalsprachen, unter denen die Beziehung des Classenunterschiedes auf den natürlichen Geschlechtsunterschied (wie wir ihn bei den Suffix-Pronominalsprachen antreffen) sich nicht findet. Die Bullom- und Temne-Sprache namentlich als Glieder derselben Sprachfamilie, zu der auch das Kasirische, die Setschuana,

*) Siehe Sir G. Grey's Library, Vol. I, Part II, p. 239.

**) Sir G. Grey's Library, Vol. I, Part II, p. 247.

The above introductory remarks are to a large extent a translation of the English which preceded my "Reynard the Fox in South Africa, or Hottentot fables and tales" (London 1864). The work in German which is offered to the public here, now contains, apart from the Hottentot section, also a considerable number of such fables, the original texts of which are to be found in the languages of North Africa, namely in Hausa, Bornu, Wolof, Akan, Temne and Buli. Of these, only the Hausa languageⁱ belongs to the same family as the Hottentotⁱ. The others are sex-denoting, which does not explain the possession of fables amongst the native speakers of those languages from the character of the language. Of course it is not impossible that the refined state of Bornuⁱⁱ comes from a form in which gender was differentiated in a similar way to our own languages. However, the other above-mentioned North African languages do not permit such a hypothesis with regard to their origin. For the Wolof (spoken in Sene-Gambia) and the Akan languages (at home in part of the Gold Coast) belong unmistakably to the Gur familyⁱⁱⁱ, Temne and Bulu (both in Sierra Leone) to the Bantu family and both these language families are members of the class of prefix-pronominal languages in which the relationship of class difference to the natural gender difference is not to be found as is the case in the suffix-pronominal languages. The Bulu and Temne languages, as members of the same language family as Kafirⁱⁱⁱ, Setswana, Herero and Damara and other African languages of

* See Sir Grey's Library, Vol. I, Part II, p.239.

** Sir G. Grey's Library, Vol. I, Part II, p.247.

— Vorrede. —

daß o Tyi-hereró oder die Damara-Sprache und andere Neger-Sprachen Süd-Afrika's gehören, würden an und für sich für die Fabelbildung wenig mehr Anlaß geben als diese Sprachen. Dabei ist aber in Betracht zu ziehen, daß die Völker und Sprachen im Norden des Aequators, die nicht zum sexuellen Stamm gehören, doch in gar anderer und viel eingreifenderer Weise unter dem Einfluß des Gedankenganges sexueller Sprachen stehen, als dies mit den nicht sexuellen Völkern und Sprachen Süd-Afrika's der Fall ist. Denn in Nord-Afrika bricht eine Menge von Sprachen sexuellen Namens, mit den semitischen Sprachen näher oder entfernter verwandt, und mehr oder weniger auf einer höheren Bildungsstufe stehend, auf die Völkerstämme verschiedener Abstammung, nicht zu gedenken des mohammedanischen Einflusses und selbst der christlich-europäischen Beziehungen, wodurch die meisten west-afrikanischen Völkerstämme schon seit Jahrhunderten wenigstens einigermaßen afficirt worden sind. In Süd-Afrika hingegen ist die einzige einheimische Nation, die eine sexuelle Sprache spricht, die hottentottische, zu unbedeutend und zu weit in der Kultur zurück, um auf ihre Nachbarn einen bedeutenden Einfluß auszuüben. Doch haben wir schon oben gesehen, daß wenigstens die einzige Damara-Fabel, die uns bis jetzt bekannt geworden ist, anscheinend hottentottischer Abstammung ist. Unter den Rasseern haben die Nachforschungen des Bischofs Cotterill (von Grahamstown) bisher erst eine Fabel entdecken können, nämlich die vom Zaunkönig. — Von Natal ist uns eine ganz kleine Fabel zugekommen, die eigentlich nur die Erklä-

South Africa, would actually give little more cause for fable formation than these languages. Thereby one must take into account that the peoples and languages to the north of the equator which do not belong to the sex-denoting branch, come under the influence of the thought processes of sex-denoting languages in another and much more profound way than is the case with the none sex-denoting peoples and languages of South Africa. For, many sex-denoting languages of North Africa with a higher level of development, which may or may not be closely related to the Semitic languages, influence the tribes of various origins. This is not to mention the Muslim influence or even the Christian-European relationships, which have affected most West African tribes for several centuries. On the other hand, in South Africa, the Hottentot nation is the only indigenous one which uses a sex-denoting language, but it is too unimportant and too culturally retarded to exercise any meaningful influence on its neighbours. However, we have already seen that the only Damara fable that is known to us thus far, appears to have Hottentot origins. Amongst the Kafirs, the research of Bishop Cotterill (of Grahamstown) has discovered only one fable, namely that of the wren. From Natal we have a little fable which is actually only

— Vorrede. —

— rung eines Sprichworts ist. *) — Die Betschuanen (eine die Kaffern an ursprünglicher, einheimischer Civilisation bei Weitem überragende Nation) sollen eine größere Anzahl von Fabeln besitzen, von denen auch einige von dem Missionar L. Arboussset, zusammen mit Uebersetzungen europäischer Fabeln, in seiner „Choix de Fables et Proverbs, publié en Sessouto“ (Ville du Cap. 1847, Nr. 258 von Sir George Grey's Library, Vol. I.) herausgegeben worden sind. Leider kann ich dem Leser hier nur eine Sessuto-Fabel darbieten, die ich Casalis nachgezählt **)

Von Madagaskar würde ich etwa ein Duzend liefern können, wenn uns eine Uebersetzung der von Eingeborenen im Malagassischen veröffentlichten Angano (Nr. 723 von Sir George Grey's Library, Vol. I.) zu Gebote stände. Zwar hat mir Revd. W. C. Coustius die zwei ersten dieser Fabeln (der Wolf und das Lamm, die Frösche, die sich nach einem Herrscher umsehen) freundlichst übersezt, aber diese stimmen so sehr mit weltbekannten europäischen überein, daß mir ihre Mittheilung hier nicht am Ort zu sein schien.

*) Die inzwischen in Callaway's Märchensammlung (Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus, Vol. I, Natal and London 1868) publicirten Fabeln sind auch zu unbedeutend, als daß auf sie hin man den Natalischen Kaffern oder Zulus eine Neigung zum Fabelerzählen zuschreiben könnte.

**) Eine Sessuto-Fabel, die ich dieser Sammlung nicht einverleibt habe, ist von Christian Schrumpf in der Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Band 16, S. 471—474, veröffentlicht worden. In gleicher Weise habe ich auch eine Zulu-Fabel, die vom Bischof von Natal in einem seiner Pesebächer gegeben ist, der Uebersetzung nicht werth gehalten. Im Allgemeinen ist, was sich von Fabeln unter den süd-afrikanischen Bantu-Stämmen gefunden hat, zu unbedeutend, um besondere Rücksicht zu verdienen.

an explanation of a proverb.* The Bechuanas, (a much more advanced nation than the Kafirs with regard to their origins and indigenous civilisation) apparently have numerous fables some of which have been published by the missionary T. Arbouffet together with his translations of European fables in his “Choix de Fables et proverbs, publié en Sessouto” (Ville du cap, 1847, no. 258 from Sir George Grey’s Library, Vol. I). Unfortunately I can only offer the reader one Sesotho fable here, which I retell according to Casalis.**

I could offer about a dozen from Madagascar, if there were an available translation of Angano which was published by the natives^{iv} in Malagasy (no. 723 from Sir George Grey’s Library, Vol. I). Indeed the Rev. W.C. Cousins was kind enough to translate the first of these fables (The Wolf and the Lamb, The Frogs which were looking for a King), but these are so similar to world-renowned European fables that it didn’t seem to be the right thing to do in this instance.

* The fables which have been published in the meantime in Gallaway’s Fairy Tale Collection (Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus, Vol. I, Natal and London 1868) are also too important for one to attribute a tendency by the Natal Zulus to tell fables.

** A Sesotho fable which I have not included in this collection has been published by Christian Schrupf in the Journal of the German Oriental Society, Vol. 16, pp.471-474. In the same way I have not thought it worthwhile to translate a Zulu fable which is in the reading book of the Bishop of Natal. On the whole, what has been found of fables of the South African Bantu tribes is too unimportant to deserve special attention.

— Vorrede. —

Der Zweck dieses Buches gestattet es auch nicht, von den Märchen, Sagen und Erzählungen der afrikanischen Völkerschaften mehr als ein paar Proben mitzutheilen. Sonst würde hier gerade eine besonders reiche Ausbeute ergeben, da ja der Geist der meisten dieser Nationen auf diesem Gebiete höchst thätig gewesen ist. Manche solcher Märchen scheinen übrigens Gemeingut vieler Völkerschaften, ja manchmal vielleicht von ganz Afrika zu sein. So finden wir die Damara-Fabel „Was geschenkt ist, bleibt geschenkt“ (Nr. 42) nicht nur bei anderen süd-afrikanischen Völkern, wie bei den Zulu's (Uthlakanyana, Callawaya. a. D. I, 37—40), sondern auch in Nord-Afrika in dem Tenne-Märchen vom „Unverständigen Knaben“ (Nr. 36) und selbst auf Madagaskar wieder. Da das malagassische Märchen merkwürdiger Weise mit dem otjivererö'schen Berührungspunkte darbietet, so gebe ich hier eine Uebersetzung desselben. Der malagassische Originaltext befindet sich nebst einer englischen Uebersetzung in den werthvollen malagassischen Handschriften, die der Herr James Cameron der Sir G. Grey'schen Bibliothek zugestellt hat.

Itotosethy ging einst in den Wald und holte sich etwas Pango,*) das er in eine Schüssel that, die Nasofisibé (der großen schönen Dame) zugehörte. Er ging dann weg, und erst nach einiger Zeit kam er wieder in's Haus der Nasofisibé, und frug: „Wo ist mein Pango?“ Nasofisibé gestand, sie habe es gebraucht. Itotosethy sagte dann:

„Wie kann ich zugeben, daß Du mein Pango gebrauchst,
Aus dem Walde brachte ich mir das Pango,
Und nun ist das Pango von Nasofisibé verbraucht,
Dabei laun ich's nicht bewenden lassen.“

*) Pango (Sprich: Paingu) ist eine Pflanze, mit deren zartem Stengel die Böhne thätig gerieben werden. Sie werden dann erst ganz schwarz, aber nach ein oder zwei Tagen wird der schwarze Ueberzug mit ungeschälten Meißlern abgerieben, und die Böhne geht schneeweiß aus diesem Prozesse hervor.

The purpose of this book does not permit more than a couple of examples of the fairy tales, sagas and stories of the African peoples to be told. Otherwise there would be here an especially rich yield as the spirit of most of the nations has been extremely active in this area. Many such fairy tales appear to form part of many peoples, indeed sometimes perhaps the whole of Africa. Thus we find the Demara fable "That which is a gift, is always a gift" (no. 42) not only in other South African tribes, as with the Zulus (Uthlakanyana, Gallaway I, 37-40) but also in North Africa in the Temne fairy tales of "Ignorant Boys" (no. 36) and even in Madagascar. As the Malagasy fairy tale has, strangely enough, similar points to the Herero one, I have given a translation of it here. The original Malagasy text as well as an English translation is to be found amongst the valuable Malagasy manuscripts which Mr James Cameron gave to the library of Sir G. Grey.

Once upon a time, Ikotofetsi went into the forest and fetched some laingo* which he put into a bowl that belonged to Rafotsibe (the beautiful large lady). Then he went away and only returned to Rafotsibe's house after a while. Then he asked, "Where is my laingo?". Rafotsibe admitted that she had used it. Ikotofetsi then said:

"I can never admit, that you are using my laingo,
I brought the laingo from the forest for myself,
And now the laingo has been used by Rafotsibe,
I cannot be content with that."

* Laingo (pr. laɪ:ngu) is a plant whose tender stalks are used to rub the teeth with. First of all they become completely black, but after one or two days the black coating is rubbed off with unpeeled rice grains. Through this process the teeth become snow white.

— Vorrede. —

Rasotfibé antwortete: „Wenn Du's nicht dabei bewenden lassen kannst, so will ich Dir eine kleine Nähnadel statt des Paingo geben“. Und sie that so.

Flotosetsh nahm die Nadel, und ging zu einem Fischfänger. Der frug ihn, ob er seine Nadel gegen einen kleinen Fisch austauschen wolle; Flotosetsh antwortete: „Am Ende gibst Du mir ihn (den Fisch) gar nicht?“ Der Fischfänger sagte: „Ich will ihn geben“, und er gab ihm den Fisch.

Flotosetsh nahm den Fisch und kam mit ihm zu Waldbewohnern, mit denen er den Fisch gegen ein Beil vertauschte. Dann kam er zu Todtengräbern, die ihn fragten: „Sage mal, wo ist denn Dein Beil? Wir wollen damit Ochsenfleisch in Stücke hauen“. Flotosetsh sagte: „Ja, wenn aber mein Beil zerbrechen sollte, so müßt Ihr nicht vergessen, daß ich dafür entschädigt werden muß.“ Die Leute willigten ein, und er ließ sie dann das Fleisch zerhauen. Dabei zerbrach das Beil und Flotosetsh sagte: „Nun muß ich das Rindfleisch haben“. Und die Leute mußten ihm ein recht großes Stück Fleisch geben.

Flotosetsh ging dann seines Weges und kam zu einem sehr alten Mann. Der Greis sagte zu ihm: „Können wir nicht etwa einen Tausch machen, und Du mir Rindfleisch für meine Trommel geben?“ Flotosetsh sagte: „Du gibst mir doch wohl nicht Deine Trommel!“ Der Greis sagte: „Ich will sie schon geben“.

Flotosetsh nahm die Trommel und ging damit nach dem Markte zu. Auf dem ganzen Wege, bis er auf den Markt kam, schlug er die Trommel, und die Leute riefen: „O der Tausend! Seht nur 'mal, was der Flotosetsh für eine Trommel hat“, und alle Leute auf dem Markte schlugen dann abwechselnd die Trommel, bis sie zersprang. Dann sagte Flotosetsh:

„Aus dem Walde bracht' ich das Paingo,
Das Paingo wurde von Rasotfibé verbraucht,
Rasotfibé gab mir die Nadel,
Die Nadel kriegte der Fischer,
Der Fischer gab mir den Fisch,
Den Fisch kriegten die Waldbewohner,
Die Waldbewohner gaben ein Beil,
Das Beil zerbrach der Todtengräber,
Der Todtengräber gab mir Ochsenfleisch,

Rafotsibe answered, "If you can't be content with that, then I will give you a little sewing needle instead of the laingo". And that she did. Ikotofetsi took the needle and went to a fisherman. He asked him if he would exchange his needle for a little fish. Ikotofetsi answered, "But will you give it (the fish) to me in the end?". The fisherman said, "I will give it", and he gave him the fish.

Ikotofetsi took the fish and went with it to the forest dwellers with whom he exchanged the fish for a hatchet. Then he came upon gravediggers who asked him, "Tell us, where is your hatchet? We want to cut up ox meat with it". Ikotofetsi said, "yes, if, however, my hatchet should break then you mustn't forget that I must be compensated for it". The people agreed and he then let them cut up the meat. Whereupon the hatchet broke and Ikotofetsi said, "Now I must have the beef". And the people had to give him a really big piece of meat.

Ikotofetsi went on his way and came upon a very old man. The old man said to him, "Can't we make an exchange: you give me beef for my drum?". Ikotofetsi said, "You wouldn't really give me your drum!". The old man said, "I will give it to you".

Ikotofetsi took the drum and went with it to the market. He beat the drum the whole way until he came to the market and the people cried, "Goodness! Look at Ikotofetsi's drum", and all the people at the market beat the drum in turn until it burst. Then Ikotofetsi said:

"I brought the laingo out of the forest,
The laingo was used by Rafotsibe,
Rafotsibe gave me a needle,
The fisherman got the needle, (the needle was given
to the fisherman)
The fisherman gave me the fish,
The forest dwellers got the fish (the fish was given to
the forest dwellers)
The forest dwellers gave me a hatchet,
The hatchet was broken by the gravediggers,
The gravediggers gave me ox meat,

— Vorrede. —

Das Ochsenfleisch kriegte der alte Mann,
Der alte Mann gab mir die Trommel,
Die Trommel zerbrachen die Marktleute,
Dabei kann ich's nicht bewenden lassen,
Die Leute müssen deshalb mir zugehören."

Als die vornehmsten Marktleute dies hörten, gingen sie zu dem König und berichteten ihm, was vorgefallen. Der König sagte aber: „Zal Wenn Ihr sein Eigenthum zerstört habt, was ist da zu machen? Ihr müßt eben ihm zugehören.“

Die malagassische Sprache gehört bekanntermaßen zu der großen malaisch-polynesischen Sprachfamilie, die meiner Meinung nach gleich der Bantu-Sprachfamilie Afrika's mit zu dem Präfix-Pronominalsprachstamm zu rechnen ist. Dies würden aber unendlich alte Beziehungen sein, die nicht wohl so bedeutende Uebereinstimmungen im Märchengebiete erklären. Diese werden neueren Bemühungen zuzuschreiben sein, denen die malagassische Sprache auch manche spezielle Bantu-Wörter (wie den Namen des Ochsen, Hundes u.) verbankt.

Am Ende dieser Vorrede muß ich mich noch gegen die mir in Deutschland unlergeschobenen Behauptung wahren, als wenn ich einen besonders nahen Zusammenhang des Aegyptischen und des Koptischen mit dem Hottentottischen annehme. Dies ist nie meine Meinung gewesen. Was ich behauptet habe und wofür ich die Beweise theilweise schon veröffentlicht habe, theilweise aber am Schluß der zweiten Abtheilung des zweiten Theiles meiner vergleichenden Grammatik der süd-afrikanischen Sprachen veröffentlicht werde, ist folgendes. Das Aegyptische und viele andere nord-afrikanische Sprachen bilden zusammen mit der semitischen und der indogermanischen Sprachfamilie einen großen Sprachstamm, der dadurch gekennzeichnet ist, daß die Nomina in Classen oder sogenannte Geschlechter zerfallen, die mit den natürlichen Geschlechtsunterschieden in eine gewisse

The old man got the ox meat (the ox meat was given to the old man)
The old man gave me the drum,
The drum was broken by the market people
I cannot be content with this,
Therefore the people must belong to me.”
When the noblest market people heard this they went to the king and told him what had happened. The king said however, “Yes! If you have destroyed all his possessions what can I do? You just have to belong to him”.

It is well-known that the Malagasy language^{vi} belongs to the large Malay-Polynesian language family which, in my opinion, belongs to the prefix-pronominal language branch as does the Bantu language family. However this could be due to age-old relationships which would not explain important correlations in the area of fairy tales. These are attributed to more recent efforts to which the Malagasy language owes the acquisition of some special Bantu words (as the names of ox, dog etc.).

At the end of this introduction I must defend myself against the claim placed at my door in Germany that I thought there was an especially close link between Egyptian, Coptic^{vii} and Hottentot. This has never been my opinion. What I have claimed and about which I have already published in part, but will publish at the conclusion of the second section of the second part of my comparative grammar, is the following. Egyptian and many other north African languages form, together with the Semitic and Indo-Germanic language family a large language branch which is characterised by the fact that the substantives are divided into

— Vorrede. —

Beziehung getreten sind, obgleich sie sich ursprünglich jedenfalls mit diesen nicht decken. Das Hottentottische nun gehört auch diesem Sprachstamm an, den wir dieser Haupteigenschaft wegen den sexuellen (im Englischen *sexdenoting*) genannt haben. Daß das Hottentottische nun zu einer dieser Sprachfamilien in einer ganz besonders nahen Verwandtschaft stünde, ist nicht zu beweisen. Es hat die allgemeinen Charaktere einer sexuellen Sprache, und hat unter dieser wahrscheinlich die ursprünglichste Art der sexuellen Classeneinteilung der Romina am besten bewahrt. In der Form der Zeichen dieser Geschlechter stimmt es allerdings mehr mit dem Alt-Aegyptischen und Koptischen überein als mit den andern uns bekannten sexuellen Sprachen: aber in vielen andern Einzelheiten scheinen ihm die letzteren wieder näher zu stehen, so das Semitische in der Bezeichnung des Genetivus und Accusativus durch die Suffixe *-a* und *-i* (*-i* im Hottentottischen). In die semitischen Sprachen haben auch darin wie das Hottentottische die ursprünglichsten Verhältnisse beibehalten, daß sie meistens im Singular und Plural verschiedene Zeichen für die beiden Geschlechter haben, während das Aegyptische und das Koptische (wie das neuere Englische) im Plural nur ein Geschlecht unterscheiden, die indogermanischen Sprachen hingegen den Singular und Plural in jedem Geschlecht in ein Geschlechtszeichen zusammenfallen lassen. Selbst das Indogermanische hat manche Alterthümlichkeiten beibehalten, die sonst nur noch im Hottentottischen klar zu sehen sind.

Dies sind eben nur Andeutungen. Die Erläuterungen und Beweise zu liefern ist Aufgabe des obengenannten Buches, das hoffentlich bald erscheinen wird. — Bis dahin muß ich nur bitten, nicht als meine Ansicht darzustellen, was es gar nicht ist. Uebrigens gibt es auch in

classes or so-called genders, which have a certain relationship to the natural gender differences, although originally they did not tally with this. Hottentot belongs to the language branch which we call in English the sex-denoting branch because of this main characteristic. It cannot be proved that Hottentot is especially closely related to one of these language families. It has the general character of a sex-denoting language and probably, with this, it has maintained the original way of gender class divisions of the nouns best of all. However in the form of these gender signals, it is more in agreement with old Egyptian and Coptic than with the other sex-denoting languages known to us. In many other details, however, the latter appear to be more closely linked to it as in Semitic with the genitive and accusative indicators of *-a* and *-i* (*-di* in Hottentot). Indeed, with this, the Semitic languages have, like Hottentot, so retained the original relationship that they usually have different signals for both genders in the singular and the plural whilst Egyptian and Coptic (and also the more recent English) only show one gender in the plural, whereas the Indo-Germanic languages allowed the singular and the plural in each gender to have a gender signal. The Indo-Germanic languages have retained some archaisms which are otherwise only still to be found in Hottentot.

These, however, are only suggestions. The purpose of the aforementioned book, which will, I hope, appear soon, is to give explanations and evidence. Until such a time, I must request that my opinion should not be portrayed as that

— Vorrede. —

Allen vereinzelte Glieder dieses sexuellen Sprachstammes, die weder zur semitischen noch zur indogermanischen Sprachfamilie gehören, z. B. das Kaffia oder Khasi. Und wie viele Sprachen mögen nicht wie das Neu-Perfische ursprüngliche Geschlechtseintheilung der Nomina ganz abgestreift haben. In ähnlicher Weise gibt es ja in West-Afrika z. B. viele Sprachen, die offenbar zum Bantu-Stamm gehören, aber alle Spuren der noch viel reichhaltigeren und complicirteren Classeneintheilung der Nomina dieses Stammes beinahe oder ganz verlustig geworden sind. Der Analogie nach muß erwartet werden, daß bei vielen Gliedern des sexuellen Sprachstammes ähnliche Reductionsprocesse stattgefunden haben. Doch das sind Ansichten, die, wie unwiderstehlich sie auch das Studium der afrikanischen Sprachen uns ausdrängt, doch so vielen bisher gang und gebe gewordenen Betrachtungsweisen entgegenstehen; und eine so vollständige Revolution in lieb gewordenen Theorien verlangen, daß ich mich nicht wundern darf, wenn sie bedeutenden Widerspruch nicht bloß von Seiten der gedankenlosen Verehrer bestehender Ansichten finden.

Vonn, den 26. August 1869.

W. H. I. Bleek.

which it is not. By the way, there are also individual branches in Asia of this sex-denoting language tree which belong to neither the Semitic nor to the Indo-Germanic language families e.g. Kasia or Khasi^{viii}. And many languages may have completely wiped out the original gender classification of nouns e.g. new Persian^{ix}. In a similar way, for example in west Africa, there are many languages that apparently belong to the Bantu branch but have almost or completely lost the still very extensive and complicated class division of nouns of this branch. According to the analogy, it must be expected that similar reduction processes have taken place with many limbs of the sex-denoting language branch. However, these are opinions which, however irresistibly they impose the study of African languages on us, are on the whole opposed to many given opinions and demand such a complete revolution in much-loved theories that I would not be surprised if important contradictions were not only found from thoughtless champions of existing views.

Bonn, 26 August 1869

W.H.I. Bleek

(Translated by Elizabeth Greyling)

conclusion

Writing from South Africa, Bleek never lost his impatience with the 'thoughtless champions of existing views'. While Indo-European languages also bear traces of earlier forms of grammatical structure, it is in South Africa that 'pure' examples of the sex-denoting grammatical form are found. In rejecting the Indo-European obsession he challenged the idealisation of Sanskrit as the *Ursprache* of the Indo-European languages associated with the work of Herder, Frederick Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Grimm, and Bopp. However Bleek's qualified and ambivalent defence of a version of the Ancient Model - refining the connection between 'Hottentot' and Egyptian and Coptic - registers in muted fashion the force exerted by the installation of the Aryan Model. He mobilises a modified or weak version of the Ancient Model that acknowledges the African presence in Egypt and the influence of Egypt on Europe after the 1860, the date that for Bernal marks the achieved hegemony of the Aryan Model.

Somehow, as Bernal acknowledges, the Ancient Model can itself function in a way that assures, albeit indirectly, Euro-supremacy. While Beek does not see the 'Hottentots' as 'a crossbreed which has acquired a permanent type and originates in a large Northern white race allied to the old Egyptian' (Orpen 1908:33), he does effect an equally powerful demotion of Africa. Egypt forms a link between the mind of Europe and that of the 'Hottentots', a privilege that sets the latter apart from the 'other black races of Africa'. The African connection of the sex-denoting language family is attenuated, and deposited as a remnant of a form of noun classification that has been superseded. The connection between 'Hottentot' and Egyptian Coptic is mediated but not broken, and shifted to the past. African languages are shards of earlier formations on the way to modern languages.

For Bleek Africa, in the margins of human progress, symbolises the past rather than the future. Attempts to vindicate Africa by pointing to its archaic contribution to human development along the lines of Bernal's revised Ancient Model compliment rather than challenge one tenacious armature of colonialist ideology.

Translator's Notes

ⁱ According to Crystal (1988: 295, 314, 315-16) Hausa belongs to the Afro-Asiatic group whereas 'Hottentot' belongs to the Khoisan which is the smallest language family in Africa. The Afro-Asiatic family is also known as Hamito-Semitic and has six major divisions: the Semitic (e.g. Hebrew, Arabic), Egyptian (now developed into Coptic), Berber (e.g. Riff, Shluh) Cushitic (e.g. Oromo, Somali), Omotic (e.g. Walamo) and Chadic languages. Hausa is the most important of the Chadic languages which are spoken over an area extending from northern Ghana to the Central African Republic. It is also the only Chadic language to have a written form. Crystal further argues that the Khoisan languages are spoken in an area extending from Angola to South Africa,

and that the name 'Khoisan' derives from the Khoi-Khoi, the largest 'Hottentot' group and the San, the 'Bushman' in the Nama region of Namibia. However, San linguists and teachers from Namibia, Botswana and South Africa have recently rejected the conflation of San and 'Hottentot' (Khoi-Khoi) in Khoisan as 'a ploy by non-San speaking people to continue subjugating their unique culture' (John Grobler, "The Khoi don't share our culture, say San", *Mail & Guardian* April 26 to May 3 2001:34). This confirms Bleek's position.

ⁱⁱ The Gur or Voltaic group is a branch of the Niger-Congo family spoken around the Upper Volta River.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the original text the name of the language is given as 'das Kafirische'. 'Kaffir' is defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1984) as an archaic term for a member or language of a South African people of the Bantu or Nguni family; what is now called Xhosa. No longer used to designate a language, it has come to be used as a derogatory term. Spöhr (1965:ii) notes that Bleek used 'kaffer' as an ethnological term and 'kaffir' as a linguistic reference.

^{iv} 'von Eingeborenen' translated as 'by natives' makes it clear that Angano was published by local Malagasy people. It could also be translated without pejorative connotations as 'by indigenous people'.

^v The German language has noun genders as well as a case system. The article changes according to the case. Therefore it is possible to place the accusative at the beginning of a sentence thereby giving it more emphasis than the nominative. This is what is happening in the original text here. e.g. 'Rafotsibe gab mir die Nadel',

Die Nadel kriegte der Fischer

Translated as it stands this would be:

Rafotsibe gave me the needle

The fisherman got the needle

'Der Fischer' is a masculine singular noun in the nominative case whereas 'die Nadel' is a feminine singular noun in the accusative case. However this does not preserve the THEME/RHEME relationship of the original in which the focus (the THEME) is the needle. In the translation the focus has been transferred to the fisherman. 'The needle was given to the fisherman' preserves the emphasis of the original German i.e. the RHEME of the preceding statement becomes the THEME (focus) of the succeeding statement. However it does not necessarily preserve the full meaning of the original, as 'given' has a stronger element of voluntariness attached to it than 'got' (the literal translation of 'kriegte'). Therefore the two possible equivalents have been included in the translation, i.e. 'the fisherman got the needle' and 'the needle was given to the fisherman'. This strategy has been used for all succeeding passages that are of like construction.

^{vi} The Malagasy language belongs to the western group of Austronesian languages. These languages are spoken in Madagascar, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines,

Taiwan and parts of Vietnam, Kampuchea and New Guinea. There are many structural differences between the languages and, it is thought that the link between Indonesia and Madagascar came about through the migration of Indonesian traders ca. 1500 years ago. Despite its proximity to Africa, there has not been much influence from Arabic or African languages on the Malagasy language.

^{vii} Egyptian developed into Coptic in ca. 2 a.d. and was possibly still used in the early 19th century. It is now used by Christians as a religious language in Egypt.

^{viii} These are languages belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family and are spoken in Assam in north-east India.

^{ix} Now known as Farsi.

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