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Instreerdes.
SUMMARY.

The Language we today call Venda seems to have evolved from Swahili, Tshiluba, Luganda, Shona, Chichewa and Shambala. Venda forms a bridge between languages of Central and North-east Africa and languages of Southern Africa. Its vowel system is similar to that of Swahili, Luganda, Chichewa and Shona.

The consonantal system of Venda is more or less similar to those found in Luganda, Shona, Swahili and Kikuyu, except for the aspirated forms which do not occur in some languages, and the voiced forms which do not occur in others. This makes Venda a bridge between languages which are predominantly voiced and those which are predominantly voiceless.

The morphology of the words of many of the languages in Central and East Africa can be interpreted from Venda morphemes.

The verbs and derived verb stems can be explained from Venda forms.

The syntax of Venda makes it possible for one to construct sentences in the other languages with a fair measure of correctness.

Since the morphemes and tonemes of Venda allow adjustments we may conclude that Venda sounds, tonemic aspects, and syntactical aspects form the basis of learning any of the forementioned languages in Africa. The Venda language forms a functional bridge between languages North of the Limpopo river and languages South of the Limpopo river.

A good working knowledge of Venda will serve as a key to unlock the treasure in many a language in Africa.
Venda as a Bridge Language

Mr. Vice-chancellor, members of the Council, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:  
I wish you to accompany me along the road which Venda has taken on its way down South. It will form our bridge across the rivers of language boundaries.

Historically the Venda language was evolved from languages of Central, North, West and North-East Africa. It is a language which is unique in itself and which has developed from Swahili and other languages of East Africa.

Venda has traces of central west-Africa languages such as Tshiluba of Zaire. It also has traces of the Chichewa of Malawi.

The Venda language, being a mirror of the physical beings who use it in their communication from day to day, has survived many attacks by other languages around its borders. In its survival it has also acquired some aspects which belong to its attackers.

The Venda as a bridge language may be discussed under the following headings:-

(a) Phonetics and phonology
(b) Morphology
(c) Syntax.

(a) Phonetics and phonology.

In order to illustrate that Venda is a bridge language let us look into the phonetics and phonology of the languages occurring widely on the eastern side of the African continent:

(i) Vowels

All the vowels are voiced speech sounds in the following languages:-

VENDA LUGANDA1) SHONA2) SWAHILI3) KIKUYU4) N.SOTHO

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Fortune G.: Grammar of Shona, p.3.
(3) Ashton E.O.: Swahili Grammar, p.3.
From the above table it is evident that Venda, Luganda, Swahili and Shona have a basic five-vowel system while Kikuyu and N. Sotho have a seven-vowel system. Venda and the other languages compensate for the extra close vowels by means of raising the close vowels in relevant environments.

(ii) Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>LUGANDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHILI</th>
<th>KIKUYU</th>
<th>NORTHERN</th>
<th>SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>p</td>
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<td>p</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
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<td>th(tt)</td>
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<td>th</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>d(dd)</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
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<td>s</td>
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<td>z</td>
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<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>y(vv)</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>ã</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ã</td>
<td>ã</td>
<td>ã</td>
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<td>ã</td>
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<tr>
<td>k'</td>
<td>k'</td>
<td>k'</td>
<td>k'</td>
<td>k'</td>
<td></td>
<td>k'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VENDA LUGANDA SHONA SWAHILI KIKUYU NORTHERN SOTHO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process:</th>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>LUGANDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHILI</th>
<th>KIKUYU</th>
<th>NORTHERN SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation:</td>
<td>mmama</td>
<td>nkanda</td>
<td>mpeta</td>
<td>gere</td>
<td>lete</td>
<td>mmuši</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasalization:</td>
<td>mbebo</td>
<td>pfulo</td>
<td>mbreko</td>
<td>pfunga</td>
<td>pikeni</td>
<td>plega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velarization:</td>
<td>lenwa</td>
<td>remwa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>lengwa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palatalization:</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>shaganya</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>hlakanya</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elision:</td>
<td>mpato</td>
<td>mpunga</td>
<td>ko(ku-o)</td>
<td>veni</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>mphago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalescence:</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>weni</td>
<td>wevi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>meno</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phonological processes occurring in Venda seem to indicate that these processes are a phenomenon of the languages of the South.
and not of North and Central Africa. Both Swahili and Luganda exhibit very few of these processes found in Venda. Venda serves to take the northern languages across to the southern languages although it is also possible for Venda to take one to West Africa as it has many words in common with Tshiluba, a language of Zaire.

(b) **Morphology.**

The morphemes found in Venda also help one to cross over to the other languages:

(i) **Nouns**

The Venda noun consists of the prefix and the stem or a suffix:

- **mu-prefix** – thu stem > muthu (person). We find the same order of the morphemes in the following languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Morpheme Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VENDA</td>
<td>mu- -thu &gt; muthu (person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHONA</td>
<td>mu- -nhu &gt; munhu (person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. SOTHO</td>
<td>mo- -tho &gt; motho (person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZULU</td>
<td>umu- -ntu &gt; umuntu (person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAHLI</td>
<td>m- -tu &gt; mtu (person)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The plural of the above nouns assume the following forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Morpheme Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VENDA</td>
<td>va- -thu &gt; vathu (persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHONA</td>
<td>va- -nmu &gt; vanhu (persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. SOTHO</td>
<td>ba- -tho &gt; batho (persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZULU</td>
<td>aba- -ntu &gt; abantu (persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAHLI</td>
<td>wa- -tu &gt; watu (persons).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other noun classes behave similarly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHLI</th>
<th>N. SOTHO</th>
<th>ZULU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>muthu</td>
<td>munhu</td>
<td>mtu</td>
<td>motho</td>
<td>umuntu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vathu</td>
<td>vanhu</td>
<td>watu</td>
<td>batho</td>
<td>abantu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muri</td>
<td>muti</td>
<td>mti</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>umthi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miri</td>
<td>mtti</td>
<td>miti</td>
<td>mere</td>
<td>imthi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liyo</td>
<td>ziso</td>
<td>jicho</td>
<td>ihlo</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fako</td>
<td>meso</td>
<td>macho</td>
<td>mahlo</td>
<td>mehlo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shithu</td>
<td>chinhu</td>
<td>kutu</td>
<td>selo</td>
<td>isintu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zwithu</td>
<td>zvinhu</td>
<td>vito</td>
<td>dilo</td>
<td>izintu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hōmbe</td>
<td>ngombe</td>
<td>njia</td>
<td>ngope</td>
<td>gombe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzihombe</td>
<td>dzinombe</td>
<td>njia</td>
<td>dingope</td>
<td>izizombe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luthu</td>
<td>runhu</td>
<td>ulimi</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>uluthi, ulimi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tunhu</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) **Pronouns : Absolute**

The absolute pronoun consists of the prefactual element and the stem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA(1)</th>
<th>SWAHLI</th>
<th>N. SOTHO</th>
<th>ZULU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e-ne</td>
<td>i-ye</td>
<td>ye-ye</td>
<td>ye-na</td>
<td>ye-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who-ne</td>
<td>i-ro</td>
<td>wa-o</td>
<td>bo-na</td>
<td>bo-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wo-ne</td>
<td>i-wo</td>
<td>ha-wo</td>
<td>wo-na</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yo-ne</td>
<td>i-yo</td>
<td>ha-yo</td>
<td>yo-na</td>
<td>yo-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo-ne</td>
<td>i-ro</td>
<td>ha-lo</td>
<td>lo-na</td>
<td>lo-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-ne</td>
<td>i-wo</td>
<td>ha-o</td>
<td>o-na</td>
<td>o-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tshe-ne</td>
<td>i-cho</td>
<td>ha-cho</td>
<td>so-na</td>
<td>so-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zwo-ne</td>
<td>i-zwo</td>
<td>ha-vyo</td>
<td>tso-na</td>
<td>tso-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yo-ne</td>
<td>i-yo</td>
<td>ha-yo</td>
<td>yo-na</td>
<td>yo-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzoe-ne</td>
<td>i-dzoe</td>
<td>ha-zo</td>
<td>tso-na</td>
<td>tso-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lwo-ne</td>
<td>i-rwo</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>i-two</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ko-ne</td>
<td>i-ko</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho-ne</td>
<td>i-ho</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>go-na</td>
<td>kho-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho-ne</td>
<td>i-ko</td>
<td>ha-ko</td>
<td>go-na</td>
<td>kho-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho-ne</td>
<td>i-po</td>
<td>ha-po</td>
<td>go-na</td>
<td>kho-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho-ne</td>
<td>i-ko</td>
<td>na-ko</td>
<td>go-na</td>
<td>kho-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho-ne</td>
<td>i-mo</td>
<td>na-mo</td>
<td>go-na</td>
<td>kho-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>i-swo</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwone</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo-ne</td>
<td>i-ro</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>lo-na</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Fortune G. : Grammar of Shona, p. 133
From the above pronouns we can deduce that all the absolute pronouns in these languages are disyllabic. The N. Sotho and Zulu pronouns assume the same form while Venda and Shona seem to reverse the order of the elements. The Venda prefixal elements appear as suffix elements in Shona while in Shona the prefixal element is for all the pronouns.

In Shona the prefixal element does not follow the class of the noun while in Venda it does. It seems that Venda inherited the suffix element as its prefixal element in the formation of the pronoun but took the suffix element of the pronoun from Northern Sotho and Zulu. Venda lies between the two languages. The Northern Sotho and Zulu y seems to come from Swahili e.g. yena < yeye. The ene of Venda may have come from the Swahili yeye > ene.

The demonstrative pronoun consists of the vowel of the prefix plus the stem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA1)</th>
<th>SWAHILI2)</th>
<th>N. SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. uyu, uyo, ula</td>
<td>uyu, uyo, uye</td>
<td>huyu, huyo, yale</td>
<td>yoo, yola</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. svha, avho, vhala aya, avo, vavo</td>
<td>hawa, havo, wale ba</td>
<td>bao, bale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. uyu, uyo, ula uyu, uyo, uye</td>
<td>huu, huo, uie wo</td>
<td>woo, wola</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. iyi, iyo, ila iyi, iyo, iye</td>
<td>hii, hiya ile ye</td>
<td>yeo, yela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ili, ilo, lilo, iri, iro, iroo</td>
<td>yai, hili ile le</td>
<td>lela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. aya, ayo, aja aya, ayo, ayayo</td>
<td>maya, hayo yale a</td>
<td>ao, ale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. itsi, itsho, tshi la ichi, icho, ichhecho</td>
<td>hiki, hicho ile se</td>
<td>sfe, sela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. izwi, izwo, zwila izvi, izvo, zvevezvo</td>
<td>hivi hivyo ile tse</td>
<td>tse, tsela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demonstrative pronoun consists of the vowel of the prefix plus the stem:

The above demonstrative pronouns relate the distance from the speaker. The first position indicates "here" the second "there" the third "thereyond". These forms may be emphasised or repeated in other languages in order to show the preciseness of e.g. onohoyo (that very one) in Venda while in Shona the farthest distance is indicated by reduplicating the demonstrative e.g. ichechecho, iroro, ivavo (that very one, those very ones) etc. It appears that Shona an Swahili use tone to indicate the farthest position.

(iv) Adjective

The adjectival stem is governed by the pronominal concords of the noun it qualifies. The following are the adjectival stems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHILI1)</th>
<th>NORTHERN SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-hulu (big)</td>
<td>-kuru</td>
<td>-kabwa</td>
<td>-golo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-jiku (small)</td>
<td>-duku</td>
<td>-doo</td>
<td>-nyane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lapfu (long)</td>
<td>-refu</td>
<td>-refu</td>
<td>-telele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pfufhi (short)</td>
<td>-pfupi</td>
<td>-pfupi</td>
<td>-khutswe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-swa (new)</td>
<td>-swa</td>
<td>-pya</td>
<td>-swa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-svu (black)</td>
<td>-tema</td>
<td>-wesu</td>
<td>-so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tshena (white)</td>
<td>-chena</td>
<td>-epe</td>
<td>-sweu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-raru (three)</td>
<td>-tatu</td>
<td>-tatu</td>
<td>-raro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mamu (five)</td>
<td>-shamu</td>
<td>-tano</td>
<td>-hano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-vihi (two)</td>
<td>-viri</td>
<td>-mbili, sili</td>
<td>-bedi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-vhiha (bad)</td>
<td>-ipa</td>
<td>-baya</td>
<td>-bifa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-nona (fat)</td>
<td>-nona</td>
<td>-nemo, nene</td>
<td>-nona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tsuweu (red)</td>
<td>-shava</td>
<td>-ekunu</td>
<td>-hubeu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The adjectival stems of the above languages are more or less the same and in other cases too one can deduce the sound shift from one language to the other. For instance Venda pfuphi derived from Shona pfuphi, p > fh in Venda; lapfu from refu, rarfu from tatu, p > fh, r > t, f > pf.

Venda has common forms with Shona and Swahili and also common forms with Northern Sotho, therefore acting as a bridge between North and South.

Sometimes Venda uses both forms of the adjective for different meanings. For instance tsuweu and ngundu. Ngundu is derived from Swahili ekundu and in Venda it means 'most red' or 'red as blood', while tsuweu is used for ordinary red colour.

(v) Possessive.

The possessive in Venda shares many features in common with other languages. It consists of the possessive concord and the possessive stem:

(1) Ashton E.O. : Swahili Grammar, p. 46.
The possessive is almost the same in form and in meaning. For instance: Venda wanga Shona wangu Swahili wangu and N. Sotho waka. The Venda and Northern Sotho are the same except for the nasal compound which becomes k in N. Sotho (ng > k). The same thing takes place in wau > wago for Venda and N. Sotho (u > o).

The Shona and Swahili forms are the same e.g. wake > wake and wenyu > wenu where coalescence has taken place in both languages. In wavo > wau > wao > wabo all the languages are the same except Swahili where some form of elision seems to have taken place to make wao.

(vi) The Quantitative pronoun

The quantitative consists of the prefixal element plus the stem or suffix: -ota -ose -ote -oble:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHLIL</th>
<th>NORTHERN SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tshothe</td>
<td>chose</td>
<td>chote</td>
<td>sole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the quantitative appears to be the same for all these languages. The difference is only in the speech sounds which appear to form a sound shift;

Swahili: chote
Shona: chose
Venda: tshothe
N. Sotho: sole i.e. Swahili Venda Shona N. Sotho: t > th > s > hl.

THE VERB

The verb in these languages is normally disyllabic becoming polysyllabic when suffixes are added to the basic verb stem. There are very few monosyllabic verb stems which I consider to be linking elements between the Bantu languages and languages of West Africa or the Sudanic languages. Many of the verb stems are identical in form and in meaning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHLIL</th>
<th>NORTHERN SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-bika</td>
<td>-bika</td>
<td>-bika</td>
<td>-phega/apea (cook)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-imba</td>
<td>-imba</td>
<td>-imba</td>
<td>- (sing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-vhumba</td>
<td>-vumba</td>
<td>-umbu</td>
<td>-bopa (mould)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-swika</td>
<td>-svika</td>
<td>-ika</td>
<td>-fihla (arrive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lela</td>
<td>-lera</td>
<td>-lela</td>
<td>-lela (bring up for)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lala</td>
<td>-lala</td>
<td>-lala</td>
<td>-lala (sleep)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-linda</td>
<td>-linda</td>
<td>-linda</td>
<td>-leta (to keep watch over)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-vhona</td>
<td>-vona</td>
<td>-ona</td>
<td>-bona (see)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lima</td>
<td>-lima</td>
<td>-lima</td>
<td>-lema (plough)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lima</td>
<td>-lima</td>
<td>-lima</td>
<td>-sema (to scold, be watchful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-pona</td>
<td>-pona</td>
<td>-pona</td>
<td>-pota (to plunder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tanga</td>
<td>-tanga</td>
<td>-tanga</td>
<td>- (to encircle or begin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-onda</td>
<td>-onda</td>
<td>-onda</td>
<td>-ota (to be lean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tema</td>
<td>-tema</td>
<td>-tema</td>
<td>-rema (to cut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tenda</td>
<td>-tenda</td>
<td>-tenda</td>
<td>-tenda (-theta) (to thank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-penga</td>
<td>-penga</td>
<td>-penga</td>
<td>-(pheka) (to be mad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-famba</td>
<td>-famba</td>
<td>-famba</td>
<td>- (shoulder, walk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ruma</td>
<td>-ruma</td>
<td>-ruma</td>
<td>-roma (send)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ambuwa</td>
<td>-amuka</td>
<td>-amka</td>
<td>-apoga (cross, wake, clear up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-anea</td>
<td>-anea</td>
<td>-anea</td>
<td>-anega (spread, dry up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tshimbila</td>
<td>-chimbizika</td>
<td>-kimbia</td>
<td>-sepela (walk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-bva</td>
<td>-bva</td>
<td>-bva</td>
<td>-tswa (get out, come out)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dzima</td>
<td>-dzima</td>
<td>-zima</td>
<td>-tima (extinguish)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The verbs are all very similar in these languages. For instance the basic verb stem for ‘to hoe’ or ‘plough’ is -lima in Venda, -rima in Shona, -lema in Swahili, -lema in Northern Sotho; the same can be said of -onda (to be lean) in Venda, -onda in Shona, -onda in Swahili, and -onda in Northern Sotho. The same holds good for -ruma tuma -roma respectively.

The Venda verb -tenda is identical with the Shona and Swahili verbs in form and meaning. In -tshimbila (Venda) the Shona form means ‘to run’ but the other languages all have the basic meaning.

Derived verb stems

The basic verb stems can extend or change their basic meaning by adding suffixes to their final root:
The ni/ndi copulative concord or copulative subject is used in Swahili in the copulative construction. The ndi is used in Venda while ke is used in Northern Sotho. These are forms of the positive while for the negative we have the following:

**VENDA**: Ali a si mulapfu (ali is not tall)
**SHONA**: Ali asimurefu
**SWAHILI**: Ali simurefu
**N. SOTHO**: Ali gase yo metelele

The negative is formed by using -a, -si-, -ga se- formatives in the above languages.

The copulative construction can use pronouns, adjectives, adverbs etc. in all the aforementioned languages. There is a close relationship between the ni in Swahili and the ndi in Venda. The ni form is also found in Venda when using concords as copulative formatives e.g. ni vhathu (you are people)

**ADVERBS**

The adverbs in Venda, Shona, Swahili and N. Sotho modify the verb in respect of time, place and manner. Adverbs are words which are derived from other parts of speech as well as independent word. The following will illustrate the aforementioned languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHILI</th>
<th>NORTHERN SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zwino (now)</td>
<td>zvino</td>
<td>sasa</td>
<td>bja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gamusi, naasi (today)</td>
<td>Nasi, namusi</td>
<td>leo</td>
<td>naasi, letho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kule (long ago)</td>
<td>kare</td>
<td>kale, napo</td>
<td>kgale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masiari (day time)</td>
<td>masikati</td>
<td>mchana</td>
<td>mosegare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vhukwi (night)</td>
<td>hukwi</td>
<td>usiku</td>
<td>boego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngaфи (where)</td>
<td>kupi</td>
<td>wapi</td>
<td>ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phanja (front)</td>
<td>mberi</td>
<td>mbele</td>
<td>pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kule (far)</td>
<td>kure</td>
<td>kule</td>
<td>kgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lini (when)</td>
<td>rini</td>
<td>lini</td>
<td>leng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matshele (tomorrow)</td>
<td>mangwana</td>
<td>kesho</td>
<td>go sa sa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to observe that the adverb 'today' naasi > naasi > leo > naasi is the same for all the languages except Swahili. Swahili has sasa for 'now' while N. Sotho has go sa sa for 'tomorrow'. Shona and Venda have zvino/zwino for 'now'. All the languages use the noun vhukwi > usiku > boego as an adverb. Venda and Swahili use the locative suffix -ni which is also present in N. Sotho. N. Sotho has locative lapeng. Shona does not use the locative suffix but locative prefixes, e.g. pamusha (at the courtyard) pamosoro (on the head).

**IDEOPHONE**

The ideophones in these languages use the same ideophone which is more or less the same in form and meaning:
VENDA       SHONA       SWAHILI       NORTHERN       SOTHO
bu (falling) bu       pu, tifu       pu/po
nai (shine) nai      –kufa fofofo* ngai
waa (fall)  waa      mwa          waa
dugi (spark) —        tiki, teke       tuki
pilivhili (red) piliviri –kunuka fee* hwebii
shabwa (of water) —        chubwi

The ideophones in Venda are nearly similar with those found in Shona e.g. pilivhili > piliviri (for red). Sometimes it approaches those of Swahili e.g. bu > pu tshabwa > chubwi dugi tiki kwatsha < kacha in which the two languages are getting closer to each other. Even in the case of ideophones Venda can enable us to move across to Swahili with ease.

CONJUNCTIONS

The conjunctions link up sentences in more or less the same manner in these languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENDA</th>
<th>SHONA</th>
<th>SWAHILI</th>
<th>NORTHERN</th>
<th>SOTHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fhedzi (but)</td>
<td>asi</td>
<td>ile, lakini</td>
<td>fela</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uri (so that)</td>
<td>kuti</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>goro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bva (since)</td>
<td>bva</td>
<td>bali/bva</td>
<td>go tswa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na (and)</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zwino (and then)</td>
<td>zwino</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>bjaile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Venda and Shona are closer in their conjunctions. For instance they both use the adverb zwino/zvino and also bva (since) as conjunctions. All the languages in the above table use the conjunction na but all differ in the conjunction fhedzi > asi > lakini > fela. Venda, Shona and N. Sotho use the same form of the conjunction to introduce the subjunctive clause, viz.: uri > kuti > goro. Therefore Venda forms the bridge between Shona and N. Sotho while on the other hand is closer to Swahili.

SYNTAX

The languages exhibit the sentence structures which appear closer on morphological and syntactical bases:

VENDA: Lufhanga lwo xela (the knife is lost)
SHONA: Bangarashika
SWAHILI: Kisu kiempotea
N.SOTHO: Thipa elahlegile

Applying re-write rules1) on the above sentences we have the following:

VENDA

```
NP  VP  SC  V
S   N   SC  V
```

lufhanga lwo xela

NP = Lufhanga
VP = lwo xela
SC = lwo
V = xela

SHONA

```
NP  VP  SC  V
S   N   SC  V
```

banga ra rashika

NP = banga
VP = rarashika
SC = ra–
V = rashika

(1) Adopted from Chomsky N.: Aspects of the Theory of Syntax
SWAHILI

NP = kisu
VP = kime potea
SC = kime
V = potea

NORTHERN SOTHO

D
N
V
NP
SC
D
N
thipa
S.C.
e
lahlegile

When the interrogative sentence is involved we have the following:

VENDA

NP = swika lini
VP = o

SHONA

NP = svika rini
VP = wa
SC = fihlile
V = leng
Adv = o fihlile leng/neng

NORTHERN SOTHO

O = fihlile
Leng = o fihlile leng/neng

The above simple sentences illustrate the phrase structure of the languages we are dealing with. It is also evident that the sentences may be expanded to complex sentences and even to compound sentences without altering the phrase structure of the languages under discussion.

Venda will serve as key language to unlock the doors of these languages. It will help a person from either North or South to cross over easily to the sentence structure of any of the forementioned languages.

When the sentence has a noun which is qualified by an adjective we have the following:

VENDA

NP = munna muhulu
Adj = o ja
NP = khulu khulu
Here the adjectives follow the nouns they qualify immediately and nothing intervenes between them and the adjective.

SHONA: Murume mukuru onodya sadza. (the big man eats porridge)

SEMANTICS

Semantically Venda shares many features in common with Shona, Swahili and Northern Sotho as far as vocabulary and word forms are concerned.

The form of the word determines the meaning of the word but the latter is also influenced by the context. The meaning of a word or phrase is very important as far as language as a medium of communication is concerned. The order of the morphemes too has to do with the meaning of a word. Let us look at a few examples from the languages we have been dealing with previously in order to see the relationship between meaning and form:

(i) nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venda</th>
<th>Shona</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
<th>N. Sotho</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muthu (person)</td>
<td>munhu</td>
<td>mtu</td>
<td>motho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vhathu (persons)</td>
<td>vanhu</td>
<td>watu</td>
<td>batho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwana/nwana (child)</td>
<td>mwaana</td>
<td>mwana</td>
<td>ngwana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nhawa (year)</td>
<td>mwaaka</td>
<td>miaka</td>
<td>ngwaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwili (body)</td>
<td>mreli</td>
<td>mwili</td>
<td>mmele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwezi (moon)</td>
<td>mwedzi</td>
<td>mwezi</td>
<td>ngwezi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mpunga (rice/weed)</td>
<td>mpunga</td>
<td>mputa</td>
<td>mphoka*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tshihu (thing)</td>
<td>chinhu</td>
<td>kitu</td>
<td>selo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngoma (drum)</td>
<td>ngoma</td>
<td>ngoma</td>
<td>koma +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbeu (seed)</td>
<td>mbeu</td>
<td>mbegu</td>
<td>peu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyimbo (songs)</td>
<td>nyimbo</td>
<td>nyimbo</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ndimi (tongues)</td>
<td>ndimi</td>
<td>ndimi</td>
<td>timi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbudzi (goat)</td>
<td>mbudzi</td>
<td>mbuzi</td>
<td>pudi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mmbwa (dog)</td>
<td>ibga</td>
<td>mbwa</td>
<td>mpya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deducing from the above words it is clear that the basic meanings of the words have been retained in these languages although in certain words the area of meaning has shifted a little, for instance ambuwa in Venda means 'to cross a river' while in Shona Amuka means 'to get up from a state' or 'from sleep to a state of consciousness.' In Swahili it means almost the same as it does in Shona and yet in N. Sotho it means 'to clear up', especially of the clouds.

Ngoma in Venda means the drum, the initiation school, the fontanelle of the small child. In Northern Sotho it has the first two meanings but not the third, while in Shona and Swahili it has retained the basic meaning i.e. drum.

In the idiomatic expressions of many languages some words shift their primary meaning, for instance:

VENDA : u ja kholo (to win a beast, or worth a cow)
        u ja hatsi (to be suffering, to be poor)
        u ja tebole (to spend money recklessly)

N. SOTHO : go ja kgomo (worth a beast)
           go ja bjao (to have nothing, to be poor, to suffer)
           go ja tshetele (squander money)

In addition to the above characteristics, meaning may also be dependent on the tonemes of the languages concerned. For instance in

* The No. Sotho k < ng (sound shift) g < k.
  f < p (sound shift)
  hw < f (sound shift)

+ It is not found in this language but derived by analogy from other languages.
VENDA: Vhá ámbá múthù (They mean a person or it refers to a person) LL 
Vhá ámbá múthù (do they mean a person?) HH1
múthù (a person) LL
múthù (a person and not an animal) HH
ndí ēmangá (they are roofs) HH
ndí ēmangá (they are reeds) LL

NORTHERN SOTHO: Ke bóna pêlê (I see the rock-rabbit) HHI
Ke bóna pêlê (I see a xylophone) LL
Ke múthó (I am a person) LL
Ke múthó (is it a person?) HH

CONCLUSION

From our travels with a Venda drum from the borders of Ethiopia through Kenya, Tanzania, Rhodesia into the Transvaal we find that the Venda language shares many things in common with languages spoken in those countries.

From Maroteng in the heart of Lebowa to Gaborone through to Tshinhassa and finally to Kampala the Venda language can form the basis of one’s knowledge of the languages spoken in these areas.

With the Venda language’s system a person can learn some of the languages in the area without much difficulty.

Since the morphemes and the tonemes of Venda allow adjustments we may conclude that:

1) Venda sounds, tonemic aspects and syntactical features may form the basis of learning any of the forementioned languages.

2) The Venda language can be used as a bridge to cross rivers and pools of languages in this area.

3) Venda is the key to the study of the Northern Languages:

(i) múthu > munhu > moto > muntu > mtu > motho (person)
(Venda > Shona > Lingala > Tshivuba > Swahili > Northern Sotho)

(ii) ngala > zhala > nzala > tla (hunger)
(Venda > Shona > Tshivuba > Northern Sotho)

(iii) mvula > mvura > mvula > pula (rain)
(Venda > Shona > Tshivuba > Northern Sotho)

(iv) tshanda > tshianza > seatla (hand)
(Venda > Tshivuba > Northern Sotho)

(v) iwe > ibge > dibwe > lebe > ribwe (stone)
(Venda > Shona > Tshivuba > Northern Sotho > Tsonga)

(vi) mulimi > murimi > mudimi > molemi > muremi (plougher)
(Venda > Shona > Tshivuba > Northern Sotho > Tsonga)

(vii) u lha > kupa > kupa > kupa > go fa (to give)
(Venda > Shona > Swahili > Tshivuba > N. Sotho)

4) The Venda language can form a good link of the various languages of the Bantu Language family.

The Acceptance of the Chair of Venda.

Ri ofha vho-inwi midabe,
Vha wele miedzi na milambo,
Yha tjanwa matombo a kuna,
N’wali a vha khọla nga lulum luswa – Luvënda.

Khao ha khàno ngeladi vha do dzí wana ngalwo,
Lwone lu dö vha ònganyanga ha vha muya u si na ñama,
Vhaendeului vhatei vha Venda

Venda shango ja tsiku huvhili,
Hune mivhula’-vhusiku ya tshisana na mielela,
Mielela ya lehela mitongola,
Mitongola ya òkonya makole,
Makole a rothisa míjodzi,
Míjodzi ya vha milambo na tsinga dza Venđa.
Vha a ji funanaa shango ja Ñwali we denga, 
Fhululedzani vhafumakadzi vha Venda, 
Pembelani vahali vha Venda, 
Mukafo wa laru no Ñewa.

With the above words Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I have the honour to accept the chair of VENDA LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE in the University of the North and to help it in the present development as a vehicle of Venda culture and philosophy.

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