

distinctions as came his way ; he enjoyed the society of his fellow men, and could tell a good story and appreciate a good story told by others. But perhaps his most noticeable characteristic was the zest which he put into the work of academic administration for which he was so pre-eminently gifted ; and he was fortunate in being able to continue working with all his faculties unimpaired to within a few weeks of his death.

One final anecdote : in 1889, when that eo-fascist, General Boulanger, was plotting to seize power in France, Hartog was a young English student at the University of Paris and the Collège de France. The students organized a big procession to the Chamber of Deputies to express their support of the Republican régime and their opposition to Boulanger ; and Hartog, not being a French citizen, modestly took his place at the rear of the procession to see the fun. But somehow or other, before they had got very far, he found himself one of the leaders and in that capacity was eventually thanked for his services to the cause of liberty. His own account of the incident was that the police had halted the procession, which thereupon turned about and proceeded by another route—in fact that his presence in the front rank was a pure accident. That is no doubt true ; but the situation was appropriate. Hartog would never have thrust himself forward ; but he was naturally a leader and would be found in his proper place.

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### Carl Meinhof

Carl Meinhof died in his eighty-fifth year during the last days of the War in Europe, but it was many months before the news reached the outside world. Even at this date, however, it should not be out of place to say a word of appreciation of the man himself and his contribution to African studies. Although he himself never visited the School, his philosophy was well known here and promulgated by his ardent disciple, the late Professor Alice Werner, whose name also stands in the first rank of African language authorities.

Scientific interest in African languages was almost a German monopoly when Meinhof founded his school in Hamburg in 1910 and issued his journal, *Zeitschrift für Kolonialsprachen* (to become later *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-sprachen*). But by that time his philosophy in one particular sphere, the Bantu languages, was already crystallizing. And it is here, I think, that we owe our greatest debt to him, for he pulled the study of Bantu languages out of the slough of wild speculation in which it was floundering (some of the etymologies of the early linguistic giants themselves are strange, to say the least of it), and based it upon a foundation already tested and retested by years of patient and methodic study in the field of Germanic philology. Seeing the urgent need of accuracy before any valuable study could be made of these almost totally undocumented languages, he was one of the first to stress the importance of

a phonetic training, and those who passed through the Hamburg school were experts in this realm. By a happy coincidence he was able to harness the alphabet of Lepsius and mould it into a precision instrument such as Africa had not as yet known. With this instrument he and his collaborators were able to provide the material for the first comparative phonology of primitive languages. The *Grundriss einer Lautlehre der Bantusprachen* was first published in 1899, revised in 1910, and translated into English in 1932. It was illustrated by intense phonological studies in six Bantu languages—Pedi, Swahili, Herero, Duala, Konde, and Sango (the English version later substituted Zulu and Kongo for Duala, Herero, and Sango). It is a remarkable tribute to his thoroughness that his Ur-Bantu vocabulary (since increased by contributions from Bourquin, Dempwolff, and others) must still be used, after half a century of research, as the basis for determining the philology of languages recorded much later—the latest language to be analysed in this way being Nyanja (by Dr. Emmi Meyer).

Second only to this monumental work is his *Grundzüge einer vergleichenden Grammatik der Bantusprachen*, of which Alice Werner's "Introductory sketch of the Bantu Languages" is a virtual English rendering (though it includes much information from other sources, too). The *Grundzüge* is outstanding in the way it postulates a method of tackling Bantu morphology which has had no rival till Doke. It is interesting to note here that Meinhof himself, when I last saw him in 1934, while confident in the *Grundriss*, was of the opinion that much of the *Grundzüge* needed rewriting—in fact many of his improvements were passed on to his students—the more the pity that this book never saw a revised edition during his lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

These two books of his and the Seminars he held at Hamburg are so important that one is apt to forget his activities in other African fields. In 1912 he produced *Die Sprachen der Hamiten* which attempted to do a similar service over a very much dissimilar field, where he grouped the languages Ful, Hausa, Schilh, Bedaue, Somali, Masai, and Nama (Hottentot). Although his attempt at establishing a basic vocabulary was not successful, and some of his findings have since been challenged, he has focused our attention on certain outstanding phenomena which have given subsequent investigators a valuable jumping-off place, both in exploring the Hamitic languages (always postulating that we know what "Hamitic" is) and in investigating those mysterious languages which for a long time have been known as "semi-Bantu". As a matter of fact there is hardly a linguistic area in Africa in which he has not interested himself, and the number of articles containing his personal field investigations of varying intensity is colossal. He had begun life as a preacher in an obscure village in Pomerania, but became intensely interested in mission problems. It was this early training and understanding of simple people's difficulties that, as another reviewer has suggested, underlay his ability to put over a complicated subject in language that the average student

<sup>1</sup> I understand, however, that a revised and much enlarged edition is now in the press.

could understand. His *Die Moderne Sprachforschung in Afrika* (English version : *An Introduction to the Study of African Languages*) illustrates his concern for the missionary-linguist who so often has to face up to language problems with all too little background. Throughout his life he was an ardent Christian and not ashamed to proclaim himself as such, and his linguistic work itself was in the nature of a crusade.

Perhaps a personal note may also be admitted. I first attended Meinhof's Seminar as "Gasthörer" in the late twenties, and benefited enormously from him and from his opposite number, Professor Panconcelli Calzia, in the Lautabteilung. As a phonetician from University College I was definitely from the enemy's camp; for the battle between the Meinhof-Lepsius alphabet and that of the International Phonetic Association had already been joined and the first round lost with the acceptance of the latter by Westermann and the newly formed International Institute of African Languages and Cultures as the basis for future African orthographies. This was a bitter disappointment to Meinhof, especially as his alphabet had very nearly been accepted by the Institute (a tentative handbook having already been printed). And he was destined further to see the gradual emergence of the new system, until at a later visit I found even his own students using it in his Seminars. But he would never capitulate, and persevered to the end of his editorship (in Pfarrer Müller's *Wörterbuch der Džaggasprache*, just published). Many were the discussions we had of the rival methods; in fact the rivalry was almost an ideological one, for he protested against the *pädagogisch* approach of London as compared with the *wissenschaftlich* approach of Hamburg. But I shall never forget the courteous manner in which he greeted my half-baked ideas and helped me to formulate my contrary arguments the better to oppose him. And when I left at the end of an exceedingly profitable semester, his benediction was typical: "Grüssen Sie bitte meinen alten Freund Daniel Jones von mir. Er ist ein guter Kerl und ich habe ihn sehr gerne aber" (with a twinkle) "wir zanken immer!"

Another scene comes before me in a subsequent visit some years later, when Meinhof discovered that my wife could speak Cockney. Accordingly a special Seminar of phoneticians was convened, Meinhof as keen as any one of his students, to whom my wife recited:—

" My gel's fice  
Is some disgrace;  
Hevery li'l think  
Is outer plice!"

"Kein Wort verstanden," was the pronouncement, "aber ich höre etwas Nasalisierung!"

I am indebted to my friend Professor Lukas, Meinhof's successor at Hamburg, for lifting a corner of the veil that covers the war years. When I saw him in 1934 Meinhof was an enthusiastic admirer of Hitler (as indeed

were many in England at that time), who, he felt, was giving back to Germany her lost prestige and dignity ; for he was a patriot of the old colonial imperialist school. During the war there was a conference, called by the Kolonial-politisches Amt, to determine the future education system of prospective African subjects. Meinhof was asked what book he would recommend for translation into the vernacular. He replied : " The Bible." The official, who had plainly been expecting him to recommend some book extolling the glories of German military history, was nonplussed. " But why ? " he demanded. " Because," answered Meinhof simply, " it is the best book I know." The session ended abruptly and the subject was never resumed. But " der alte Herr " had made his testimony.

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