

**LINGUISTICS IN THE CORRIDOR:  
A REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE BANTU LANGUAGES OF  
SOUTH-WEST TANZANIA, NORTH-EAST ZAMBIA,  
AND NORTH MALAWI**

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**DRAFT FOR COMMENT**

**NOT TO BE QUOTED WITHOUT PERMISSION**

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# LINGUISTICS IN THE CORRIDOR: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE BANTU LANGUAGES OF SOUTH-WEST TANZANIA, NORTH-EAST ZAMBIA, AND NORTH MALAWI

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

More than half a century has passed since Daryll Ford and Ida Ward wrote the following words in their 'Foreword' to Clement Doke's survey of Bantu studies, published by the International African Institute in 1945:

"...this survey of Bantu studies is necessarily incomplete and the classification adopted is only tentative. The Institute considers, however, that such a preliminary study of this very wide and complex field will be of considerable value to all students of African languages; and it will have served a most useful purpose, if, as a result of its publication, gaps in existing knowledge are made more apparent, and further problems can be tackled more effectively. Those in possession of additional material, published or unpublished, will, it is hoped, be encouraged to make their information and hypotheses available as soon as possible."

Our aim in writing the present paper is similar, if on a considerably more modest scale. Indeed, it is some measure of the development in Bantu studies over the past five and a half decades that we can now present a review of research into a group of languages which received no more than a few scattered lines in Doke's study (1945: 31, 38, 40, 65-66). These are the Eastern Bantu languages spoken in the so-called 'Corridor' between Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika. In this paper we attempt to identify major gaps in our understanding of these languages, in the hope that this will encourage others to help fill these gaps.<sup>1</sup>

We also hope that this will encourage researchers to think similarly about other groups of languages and dialects, including Swahili. Doke devoted an impressive ten pages of his survey to a discussion of the literature on Swahili, plus a few paragraphs to the languages that we now recognise as Swahili's closest relatives (1945: 46-48, 55-65). An analogous review today could easily fill a book the size of Doke's slim volume. The bibliography of Nurse and Hinnebusch's linguistic history of Swahili and Sabaki - which is concerned only with one aspect of this small group of languages - is itself 27 pages long (1993: 727-753). Nonetheless, and as Nurse and Hinnebusch make abundantly clear, our knowledge of the dialects of Swahili, not to mention the other languages and dialects which comprise Sabaki, is extremely uneven (1993: 3, 5-19). From this and other points of view, we would suggest that general lessons learned from a review of linguistic research in the Corridor have a much wider applicability.

## 2 CLASSIFICATION IN THE CORRIDOR

The Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor is, as the name implies, shorthand for the region which lies between Lake Nyasa in the south-east and Lake Tanganyika in the north-west. Lake Rukwa lies in the north of the Corridor, roughly half-way between the two larger lakes. As an ethnographic and linguistic zone, the Corridor straddles the border region between three different countries, and includes large parts of south-west Tanzania, north-east Zambia, and the north of Malawi.

Early ethnographers and linguists made some progress towards recognising the coherence of the Corridor and its constituent peoples and languages (e.g. Fülleborn 1906; Johnston 1922; Guthrie 1948; 1967-72; Tew 1950). It was not until the second half of the 20th century, however, that our current understanding of the Corridor began to take shape. Monica Wilson's seminal survey of the *The Peoples of the Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor*, published in 1958, not only introduced the basic terms of the classifications that we now use, but has also had a continuing influence on researchers studying the people and languages of the Corridor.

Wilson's definition of the Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor was much broader than today's. She identified five major groups of 'peoples' in the Corridor: 'the Nyakyusa-Ngonde, the Hehe-Bena, the Nyiha, the Tumbuka, and the people who dispersed from Mwika (i.e. Namwanga, Mambwe, Lungu, and Fipa), between whom there are clearly marked differences' (1958: 6). Although Wilson continued to tinker with the composition of different groups, she retained the basic five in all of her subsequent formulations (1972: 137, map 9.1; 1977: 14, 142). Language was only one of the criteria by which these groups were identified and Wilson made no attempt to link them in a wider genetic classification. In some respects the limits of Wilson's Corridor were defined as much by distance from the Nyakyusa and Ngonde she and Godfrey Wilson had studied than by any strict application of criteria of similarity and difference. Nonetheless, her definition and classification of some of the 'dialect groups' which combine to form her Corridor 'peoples' has still to be superseded.

Wilson's 'Corridor' was given sharper linguistic definition, and its basic frame transformed into a genetic classification, by linguists working in the 1970s and 1980s. Bernd Heine, in his classification of Bantu based on 100-word lists, defined a 'Fipa-Konde' sub-group (11.919) of 'Eastern Highland' Bantu (11.9). 'Fipa-Konde' was divided in turn into 'Fipa' (11.9191), 'Nyiha' (11.9192), and 'Nyekyosa' (Nyakyusa, 11.9193) (1972, cited by Polomé 1980: 18). Heine's 'Fipa-Konde' was essentially the same as Wilson's 'Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor' without her Hehe-Bena and Tumbuka.

Derek Nurse, in an early classification based on lexical data he and Gérard Philippon had collected at the University of Dar es Salaam, was rather more conservative. He identified basically the same low-level groups as Heine, but only cautiously suggested that they might be joined with other groups at a much higher level (1979: 106-107). By 1983, however, Nurse had explicitly recognised a 'Corridor' sub-group equivalent to Heine's 'Fipa-Konde' (1983: 9, 11-12). Nurse (1988) subsequently examined the case for this Bantu sub-group in more detail, using both lexical and phonological evidence. Like Heine, Nurse divided his 'Corridor' into three, adapting Monica Wilson's group names for the purpose.<sup>2</sup>

MWIKA: including Pimbwe, Rungwa, Fipa, Rungu, Mambwe, Wanda, Namwanga  
NYIKA: including Lambya, Malila, Nyiha, Safwa  
NYAKYUSA-NDALI: including Nyakyusa, Ndali

However, while Nurse indicated that there was strong evidence for a combined Mwika-Nyika group at higher level, he appears to have been somewhat equivocal about the inclusion of Nyakyusa-Ndali in his wider ‘Corridor’ grouping (1988: 20, 22-23, 53, 91). In more recent work, Nurse has indeed limited his ‘Corridor’ to Mwika and Nyika, leaving Nyakyusa and Ndali in a group of their own (1999: 13-14).<sup>3</sup>

Another notable feature of Nurse’s classification of the Corridor languages has been his discussion of Wungu (Bungu). Although Johnston (1922: 4) grouped Wungu together with other Central and East Corridor idioms, Guthrie (1948: 78) and others had subsequently assigned it to the same group as Nyamwezi and Sukuma (see below). Lexicostatistical analysis of Nurse and Philippon’s data, however, showed that Wungu was lexically closest to the Mwika languages (Nurse 1983: 9; 1988: 91). Examination of Wungu phonology, on the other hand, led Nurse to suggest that its original affiliation may have been with Nyakyusa-Ndali (1988: 51-53, 73). More recently, Nurse has simply referred to Wungu as an isolate (1999: 32).

Nurse’s classification and its terminology are echoed in Catherine Labroussi’s recent work (1998; 1999).<sup>4</sup> Like Nurse, Labroussi recognises three groups in the Corridor: ‘Mwika’, ‘Nyika’, and ‘Nyakyusa’ – the latter including Ngonde and Ndali. She also recognises the existence of a ‘superordinate Nyika/Mwika grouping’ (1999: 352, fn.12). The main difference between her classification and Nurse’s is in its details: Labroussi divides her Mwika into two sub-groups, Northern and Southern. The sole member of her Northern Mwika is the language she refers to as ‘Fipa-Sukuma’: Southern Mwika comprises her ‘Southern Fipa’, Lungu, Mambwe, and Inamwanga (i.e. Nyamwanga) (1999: *passim.*). Like Nurse, Labroussi has difficulties in determining the classificatory position of Wungu: her own preference is ‘to place it alongside a macro Mwika-Nyika group’ (1999: 360).

Christopher Ehret has developed a rather different approach to the classification of Eastern Bantu, including the languages of the Corridor. This is based on the analysis of lexical (and semantic) innovation, focusing in particular on the appearance and spread of clearly identifiable sets of loanwords. In an early classification, Ehret suggested different lineages for a ‘Corridor’ group (including ‘Mambwe-Fipa’ and ‘the Nyiha dialects’) and Nyakyusa, treated as a single language (1973: 7, 16, 57). In his most recent classification, however, Ehret has split these languages in a quite different way (1998: 36, 55).

MWIKA: including Pimbwe, Fipa, Mambwe, Nyamwanga  
RUNGWE: including Nyakyusa, Ndali, Safwa, Nyiha, Wanda

Like Nurse, whose basic grouping he follows, Ehret does not recognise the genetic unity of all three Corridor groups. However, his combination of Central and East Corridor languages into a ‘Rungwe’ group represents a radical departure, both from his own earlier views and other recent classifications.<sup>5</sup>

Ehret's student Cymone Fourshey, however, has returned to the view that all of the languages of the Corridor comprise a genetic unity. In a lexicostatistical classification based on data from 14 Corridor languages, Fourshey derives them all from a common ancestor she calls 'Proto-Rukwa' (*in prep.*, also 1996: 6). 'Proto-Rukwa' is further divided into 'Proto-Rungwe' and 'Proto-Mbozi', the former being equivalent to Nurse's 'Nyakyusa-Ndali' and the latter to his 'Mwika-Nyika'. Fourshey's 'Proto-Mbozi' is then split into 'Proto-Mbeya' (i.e. 'Nyika') and 'Proto-Mwika'. In this classification Wungu appears as an early branch of 'Proto-Mbeya' (Fourshey *in prep.*).<sup>6</sup>

It is not our aim here to evaluate these competing classifications. As well as following different methodological procedures, they are based on different - and in most cases limited - samples of the languages and dialects of the Corridor. One particular problem, acknowledged by Nurse, is a general failure by researchers to gather data across the international borders (1988: 56). Current classifications are very much biased towards data collected in Tanzania, while the little classificatory work done in Zambia suffers from the same problem in reverse (e.g. Kashoki and Mann 1978). Another problem, as should become evident from the review that follows, is that our knowledge of the individual languages and dialects of the Corridor is generally inadequate. We know far too little about dialect geography, and almost nothing about many of the idioms themselves. Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that classification in the Corridor should be an imprecise art.

### **3 RESEARCH IN THE CORRIDOR**

This section summarises what is known about the different languages and dialects in the Corridor. We present this information under headings that reflect the widely agreed division of Corridor languages into three basic groups, with sub-headings referring to constituent languages and/or dialects as these are traditionally defined. Wungu is treated on its own as an unclassified language. For the most part the categories employed here correspond to the ethnographic and linguistic units recognised by Monica Wilson in her seminal work on *The Peoples of the Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor* (1958) and its subsequent refinements, taking into account modern linguists' narrower definition of the Corridor. Our presentation is structured in this way as a convenience: it should not be taken to represent a definitive statement about the status and classification of different idioms. As we hope to have made clear, too little is known about many of these idioms for them to be classified with any confidence.

#### **3.1 WEST CORRIDOR (MWIKA)**

It is widely agreed that the languages of the western half of the Corridor are closely related and form a valid genetic group, generally called 'Mwika'. This is an unfortunate name. It was first introduced as an ethnographic label by Monica Wilson (1958: 19-20), following Lechaptois' report that all of the peoples involved claimed common origin on a mountain called Mwika (1913: 24-25). Wilson, however, failed to locate this mountain on a map, and Roy Willis' informants apparently had no

knowledge of any stories about it, casting doubt on the original report (1981: 236, fn.27).

The West Corridor languages are usually thought to be most closely related to the neighbouring Central Corridor languages. The combined group has been given a variety of different designations in the literature: ‘Mwika-Nyika’ in Nurse’s original formulation (1988: 53).

The internal classification of the West Corridor group is less certain. Labroussi, as we have seen, divides it into Northern and Southern sub-groups. Her ‘Northern Mwika’ comprises a single language, the seven-vowel ‘Fipa-Sukuma’ (1999: 358). Unfortunately Labroussi’s study does not include data on either Pimbwe or Lungwa, related languages further to the north, so it is difficult to assess the validity of this north-south division.<sup>7</sup> The unity of the southern sub-group seems to be more readily established, though its precise membership remains to be determined. There appear to be some grounds for treating it as a dialect continuum, and there is little doubt that some of its constituent ‘languages’ are in fact dialects of one another (e.g. Lungu and Mambwe, Nyamwanga and Iwa).

### 3.1.1 Pimbwe

The Pimbwe are a little-known ethnic group whose traditional territory lies in the Rift Valley to the north-west of Lake Rukwa. The 1957 census counted 11,479 Pimbwe (Polomé 1980: 4): an estimate of 29,000 people in 1987 is given in the Summer Institute of Linguistics’ *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996).<sup>8</sup> Their neighbours in the south and east are speakers of closely related West Corridor languages, the Fipa and Lungwa. To the north-east they neighbour the Konongo, and to the north-west the Bende (Willis 1966: 53). Konongo is most closely related to Nyamwezi – which it is usually considered a dialect of – and other languages of West Tanzania (Whiteley and Gutkind 1958; Grimes 1993: 409). Although Bende (with Tongwe) has traditionally been classed in the same group, this affiliation is now uncertain (Nurse 1988: 58-59; 1999: 10). Given this proximity to Pimbwe, it is not surprising that one of Willis’ informants in the 1960s told him that Pimbwe had many words of both Nyamwezi – presumably meaning Konongo – and Bende origin (1966: 53, fn.292).

Very little has been written about the Pimbwe and even less about their language, *icipimbwe*. One of the first Europeans to settle in Ufipa, the White Father Lechaptois, seems to have thought that all of the West Corridor languages, including Pimbwe, were dialects of a single language (1913: 23). Harry Johnston, who was more discriminating, treated Pimbwe as a dialect of Fipa, but did not provide any specimens of it (1922: 58). However, Unterwelz, who wrote specifically about the Pimbwe, recognised their speech as ‘sharply distinguished’ from that of their neighbours (1925, cited by Willis 1966: 53). Guthrie was the first linguist to treat Pimbwe as a language in its own right, numbering it M11 in his Group M (1948: 80).

Very little of the lexical and other material subsequently collected on Pimbwe has appeared in print (e.g. material collected for The Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in Eastern Africa: see Polomé 1980: 15-16). Nurse and Philippson’s lexicostatistical data suggest that Pimbwe is most closely related to its

eastern neighbour, Lungwa (Nurse 1988: 91). This conclusion is supported by Fourshey, whose data (based on 100 word lists) show a higher degree of cognation between Pimbwe and Lungwa – 88% - than between any other two ‘languages’ in the Corridor (Fourshey *in prep.*). The available phonological data, however, indicate that Pimbwe differs in important respects from Lungwa and most other West Corridor languages. These differences are discussed in detail by Nurse, who hypothesises that Pimbwe may have been the first language to split from ‘proto-Mwika’, retaining older phonological features - some shared with Nyamwezi (i.e. Konongo) - and continuing to exchange lexical items with neighbouring Lungwa (1988: 50-51, 105).

### **3.1.2 Lungwa**

The Lungwa (usually written Rungwa) traditionally inhabited the plains at the northern end of Lake Rukwa. Their neighbours included the Fipa to the south-west, the Pimbwe to the north-west, Konongo to the north and Kimbu to the east (Willis 1966: 62-63). The Kimbu, like the Konongo, speak a West Tanzania language. The 1957 census registered a total population of 7,158 Lungwa (Polomé 1980: 4). Despite the optimistic projection of population growth given in SIL’s *Ethnologue* – 18,000 people in 1987 (Grimes 1996) – the Lungwa may well be threatened as a distinct ethnic group. A large portion of their traditional territory has recently been swallowed up by Katavi National Park, resulting in their restriction to a relatively small number of villages (Dan Brockington, personal communication, January 2000).

The Lungwa and their language (*icilungwa*) are as little known as the Pimbwe and theirs. Neither the revised edition of *A Linguistic Bibliography of East Africa* (Whiteley and Gutkind 1958) nor Polomé’s update (1980) was able to list any works on the Lungwa language. Johnston treated Lungwa (‘Luñgwa’, ‘Ruñgwa’, ‘Nya-luñgwa’) as a distinct language, noting that ‘in our scanty knowledge of it, it seems to have a nearer connexion with Fipa than with any other tongue, and on Fipa it certainly borders geographically’ (1922: 59). Guthrie also treated Lungwa as a separate language, giving it the referential number M12 (1948: 80). As already noted above, more recent research suggests that while Lungwa is closest to Pimbwe lexically, phonology indicates that its closest genetic affiliation may indeed be to (Southern) Fipa and/or other Mwika languages to the south (Nurse 1988: 50-51). However, the lack of more than basic information on Lungwa, as well as Pimbwe and other members of the West Corridor group, prevents us from coming to a more certain conclusion about their historical relationships.

### **3.1.3 Fipa**

The Fipa occupy a large area between lakes Tanganyika and Rukwa: their traditional territory includes the Lake Tanganyika shoreline, the extensive plateau to the east, and the Rukwa Valley (Willis 1966: 17). This territory, which forms the larger part of what are now Sumbawanga and Nkansi Districts in Tanzania, lies at the geographical heart of the West Corridor (Mwika) group. The northern neighbours of the Fipa include, as we have seen, the Pimbwe and Lungwa; their southern neighbours include the Lungu, Mambwe, Nyamwanga, and Wanda. Rather more has been written about the Fipa than most of their neighbours. This is a reflection, in part, of the size of the

Fipa population. A total of 86,462 Tanzanians were recorded as claiming Fipa ethnicity in the 1957 census (Polomé 1980: 4): the *Ethnologue* gives a 1992 estimate of 200,000 people (Grimes 1996). Nonetheless, our knowledge of *icifipa*, the Fipa language, remains somewhat incomplete, as the following notes should make clear.

Our knowledge of the dialect geography of Ufipa is, as for elsewhere in the Corridor, somewhat hazy. In addition to Pimbwe (see above), Johnston described ‘S.Fipa’ as a dialect of Fipa distinct from the main language. This ‘S.Fipa’ was presumably the same as the ‘southern dialects under Mambwe influence’ which he referred to in the same paragraph (1922: 58). More detailed information did not become available until the mid-1960s, when the social anthropologist Roy Willis published the first of a series of increasingly refined statements about the dialects of Ufipa as recognised by his informants (1966: 18; 1978: 136-137; 1981: 4-8).<sup>9</sup> Willis’ most recent and comprehensive statement can be quoted in full:

“The Fipa themselves recognize many dialectal distinctions between speakers of the Fipa language. At the most restricted local level they commonly claim to distinguish dialectal differences associated with the larger villages, such as Matanga, Sintali, Kate, and Mpui on the central plateau. At a more inclusive level Fipa recognize a number of regional dialects. The people inhabiting the plateau some thirty to forty miles northwest of Sumbawanga, especially in and around the mission and trading station of Chala, are known as *aKandaasi* and speak a distinctive dialect, *iciKandaasi*. In the northeastern region that has Namanyere village as its center the people are called *aSiiwa* and speak *iciSiiwa*. Near the Rukwa escarpment on the northeastern plateau live the people called *aSinkwaamba*, speaking *iciNkwaamba*. The northern and central Rukwa valley is predominantly populated by the *aKwa*, who speak *iciKwa*. Further north, near the escarpment overlooking Ukabende, live the *aKwaafi*, speaking *iciKwaafi*. The northern Lake Tanganyika shore, with the port of Kirando as its center, is the country of the *ayaNtile*, who speak *iciNtile*. Further south along the same shore, and including the territory of the northern Lungu, live the *aPeemba*, speaking *iciPeemba*. The inhabitants of the central plateau – including the ancient center of Milansi and the capitals of the two Twa states of Nkansi and Lyangalile, as well as the inhabitants of the southern Rukwa valley – are called *aSukuuma* and speak *iciSukuuma*. These dialectal regions have no clearly defined boundaries and generally include the speakers of other Fipa dialects as well as non-Fipa speakers such as Nyika, Mambwe, and Lungu. Their existence may be related to the markedly sedentary character of Fipa settlement.” (1981: 4-6)

Of the eight dialects named by Willis, Sukuma appears to be the one with most speakers.<sup>10</sup> It has certainly been the most accessible to researchers. Whiteley (1964) collected his Fipa data in this dialect (‘*ecíSukúma*’),<sup>11</sup> as did Willis himself (1978).<sup>12</sup> More recently, Labroussi has also recorded material in the Sukuma dialect, referring to ‘Fipa-Sukuma’ as ‘the linguistic variety spoken in the central and northern parts of Ufipa’ (1999: 358). If Willis’ description and accompanying map are correct, then Labroussi is wrong to imply that Sukuma is also the dominant dialect in the north of Ufipa – unless the northern dialects named by Willis are sufficiently similar to Sukuma to be gathered under the same heading. Labroussi’s ‘Fipa-Sukuma’ is certainly distinct from what she calls ‘Southern Fipa’, as recorded from an informant

from the village of Mwazye (1999: 349-350). This differs from Sukuma in a number of ways, not least in that it has a five- (as opposed to seven-) vowel system. As Labroussi notes, Nurse and Philippson's 'Fipa' appears to be a variety of her 'Southern Fipa', rather than a representative of the central Sukuma idiom (Nurse 1988: 105; Labroussi 1999: 350).

Labroussi comments:

“In the literature, all linguistic varieties spoken across the Ufipa plateau are covered by the relatively new and – linguistically speaking – vague term “Fipa”... In fact, a survey of different studies and classifications where “Fipa” is included, reveals that they can not all possibly refer to the same linguistic system. As I further argue in Labroussi (1998), based on phonological considerations, Fipa-Sukuma and Southern Fipa are not even dialectal varieties sharing the same common ancestor, as only a much deeper separation time can account for their phonological divergence.” (1999: 358)

Labroussi argues that 'Southern Fipa' is genetically affiliated to her 'Southern Mwika' sub-group, which includes Lungu, Mambwe, and Nyamwanga (1999: 349). The Fipa-Sukuma are, she concludes, 'a group of ultimately different origins, difficult to establish as yet' (1999: 373). It may be relevant to point out here that Labroussi, as noted already, did not include either Pimbwe or Lungwa material in her analysis. It may be added that her 'Southern Fipa' seems to be much the same as Johnston's 'S.Fipa' / 'southern dialects under Mambwe influence' (see above). Willis, it appears, was justifiably careful in his own description of the dialects of southern Ufipa. In his account, Sukuma *is* the southernmost Fipa dialect: the dialects spoken further south in Ufipa *are* varieties of Lungu, Mambwe, and Wanda (Willis 1978: 136; 1981: 7, Map 3).

What then of the linguistic description of Fipa? The following is Willis' summary of the state of our knowledge:

“No adequate account of the Fipa language has yet been published. According to the late Professor W. H. Whiteley, it is “a language ... about which singularly little is known” (Whiteley, 1964, p.2). The first mention of the language in print appears to have been in J. T. Last's *Polyglotta Africana Orientalis* of 1885, which includes the two words *mwezi mbalika*, “the moon shines.” Struck published two articles on Fipa, a lexicon in 1908 (Struck, 1908), and an outline grammar in 1911 (Struck, 1911). Both articles contain many inaccuracies. Johnston borrowed from Struck for his material on Fipa (Johnston, 1922). Whiteley, 1964, based on interviews with Fipa living in Dar es Salaam, is the fullest account available by a professional linguist. See also “A Note on Fipa Grammar and Syntax” in Willis, 1978, pp.136-141.” (1981: 235, fn.6).

The only major work on Fipa that Willis seems to have missed is the 233-page duplicated *Eléments de Dictionnaire Français-KiFipa*, undated and anonymously produced – though a good guess would be that it was written by one or more of the White Fathers working in Ufipa. Unfortunately Polomé, the source of this reference, does not say where copies of this duplicated dictionary might be found (1980: 8). Polomé also refers to the existence of a 40-page *ChiFipa Reader*, compiled by Father

John Rupya in 1965 (1980: 22, fn.12). Otherwise, in the two decades since Willis wrote his summary, the only noteworthy collections of Fipa material have been made in the context of wider studies (e.g. the researches of Nurse and Phillipson, Labrousse, and Fourshey). As we enter the 21st century, an adequate account of the Fipa language (and its dialects) still remains to be published.

Thanks to the work of Willis and others, we have a better record of Fipa speech forms and oral literature than we do of most other languages in the Corridor.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately the folk tales published by Bell (1945) and most of story texts reproduced by Willis (1978) only appear in English translation. Willis does, nonetheless, provide some illustrative word-for-word translations (1978: 142-148), and his book also supplies extensive data and analysis of Fipa greetings, proverbs, and what he calls 'authoritative communications'. A more recent sociolinguistic study is the unpublished undergraduate paper by Mathias entitled 'Language and Ceremonial Functions: The Study of Fipa' (1996).

### 3.1.4 Lungu and Mambwe

The traditional territory of the Lungu (sometimes spelt Rungu) lies around the south-eastern shore and to the south of Lake Tanganyika. The 1957 census of Tanganyika counted 13,751 Lungu (Polomé 1980: 4); the *Ethnologue* gives an estimate of 34,000 in Tanzania in 1987 (Grimes 1996). The majority of Lungu, however, live in Zambia. In 1953 it was estimated that there were 38,073 Lungu in what was then Northern Rhodesia (Willis 1966: 40); unfortunately more recent estimates of their Zambian population are not available (see below for a combined Mambwe-Lungu figure). The principal neighbours of the Lungu to the north are the Fipa in Tanzania and to the east the Mambwe in both Tanzania and Zambia. To the west they neighbour the Tabwa, and to the south the Bemba. There is also a large enclave of Lungu territory within that of the Bemba (Willis 1966: 39 and map).

The Mambwe, as noted above, are eastern neighbours of the Lungu. Most of their traditional territory is in Zambia, though population appears to be more evenly spread on either side of the international border with Tanzania. 1953 estimates in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) gave 21,388 Mambwe, while the 1957 census of Tanganyika counted 25,115 in what is now Tanzania - more than 60% up from the 1948 figure of 15,672 (Willis 1966: 47; Polomé 1980: 4). The *Ethnologue* gives an estimate of 63,000 Mambwe in Tanzania in 1987, with a combined total of 262,800 Mambwe and Lungu in Zambia (Grimes 1996). In addition to the Lungu to their west and north-west, the Mambwe's principal neighbours are the Fipa to their north, Nyamwanga to their east, and Bemba to their south (Willis 1966: 46).

Although the Lungu and Mambwe have separate ethnic identities and are treated as independent groups in the literature, *icilungu* and *icimambwe* are generally recognised to be dialects of a single language. As we shall see, rather more research has been devoted to the Mambwe and their dialect than to the Lungu and theirs, and most of this research – both ethnographic and linguistic – has been undertaken in what is now Zambia.

Existing bibliographies (Whiteley and Gutkind 1958; Polomé 1980) give the impression that nothing specific had been written about Lungu before the 1980s. It appears, however, that the earliest works purporting to describe Mambwe were in fact based on Lungu (Jones 1890; 1893; 1901). The author of these works, D. Picton Jones, was a missionary with the London Missionary Society, living at their station on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. As pointed out by the anthropologist William Watson, Jones 'evidently compiled his grammar from Lungu informants, using a Swahili interpreter, for it contains many foreign words, and uses throughout the Lungu pronunciation' (1958: 15, fn.1; see also Halemba 1994: xi, fn.13). Watson was referring specifically to the *Outline of Ki-Mambwe Grammar* published by Jones in 1893. Presumably the same is also true of Jones' other writings on 'Mambwe', including his early translations of portions of the New Testament. Jones' LMS successors were quick to improve on his early efforts and produce their own translations of the New Testament, and it would be interesting to know if one of their motives for doing so was to correct Jones' Lungu bias.<sup>14</sup> A compilation of New Testament translations published in two parts in 1921-22 was explicitly advertised as being 'in Mambwe-Lungu', indicating that by this time the Anglican church had already decided to treat Lungu and Mambwe as dialects of a single language, with priority being given to the latter.<sup>15</sup>

Johnston, who collected wordlists of both, also treated Lungu and Mambwe as dialects of a single language, which he later referred to as 'Luñgu-Mambwe' (1897: 488-495; 1922: 54, 57). Doke likewise linked Lungu and Mambwe, erroneously assuming them to be dialects of Bemba, together with Tabwa (Doke 1945: 31; Watson 1958: 15, fn.1). Guthrie, however, coded Lungu (M14) and Mambwe (M15) as separate languages (1948: 80). The lexicostatistical analysis presented in tree diagram form by Nurse suggests that there is more distance between Lungu and Mambwe in Tanzania than there is between Nyamwanga and Wanda, or Pimbwe and Lungwa: his tabulation of major phonological features, however, shows Lungu, Mambwe, and 'Fipa' (i.e. 'Southern Fipa') as being nearly identical (1988: 91, 105).<sup>16</sup> Kashoki and Mann's data from Zambia indicate a high, 92%, degree of lexical similarity between Lungu and Mambwe (1978: 54). The SIL's *Ethnologue* therefore describes Lungu and Mambwe as dialects of a single language, 'Mambwe-Lungu', reproducing the original formulation of the LMS missionaries (Grimes 1996).<sup>17</sup>

Apart from Alice Werner's collection of Mambwe proverbs (1940), almost all of the work done on Lungu and Mambwe during the colonial period was by missionaries. Towards the end of the period two more grammars of Mambwe were produced, one by Father John Rupya (1958) and another, anonymously, by the LMS (1962).<sup>18</sup> It would be interesting to compare these with Jones' early 'Mambwe' grammars. Further work on Lungu as an idiom in its own right did not appear until the publication of Kagaya's vocabulary in 1987. This was followed by the publication of Father Andrew Halemba's *Mambwe-English Dictionary* in 1994. At almost 1,000 pages long, this is by far the most detailed dictionary of any language in the Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor. As Father Halemba admits, he has not attempted to mark tones or other prosodic features because these and related phonological phenomena in Mambwe have never been studied (1994: xvii). More recently, David Moyer has compiled ethnozoological data, including lists of 'Mambwe/Lungu' animal names with their scientific equivalents, and more detailed material on Lungu ethnoornithology (1999).<sup>19</sup> This is among the most detailed data of its kind available

for any language in the Corridor (the scientific identification of animal species is especially weak in many vocabularies), and can be usefully compared with the relevant entries and lists in Halemba's dictionary.

### 3.1.5 Nyamwanga and Iwa

The traditional territory of the Nyamwanga (also known as Inamwanga and Namwanga) spans both sides of the Tanzania-Zambia border, roughly half way between Lakes Tanganyika and Nyasa. Their neighbours include the Mambwe in the west, Fipa in the north-west, Kuulwe and Wanda in the north-east, Nyiha and Iwa to the east, and Bemba in the south (Willis 1966: 32). 34,706 Nyamwanga were enumerated in the 1957 census of Tanganyika (Polomé 1980: 4); the *Ethnologue* provides an estimate of 87,000 in Tanzania in 1987 (Grimes 1996). In 1953 it was estimated that there were 12,400 Nyamwanga in what was then Northern Rhodesia (Willis 1966: 32); more recent estimates are not available. The *Ethnologue* does, however, give a 1993 estimate of 169,000 Nyamwanga, Iwa and Tambo in Zambia (Grimes 1996).

The Iwa live to the east and south-east of the Nyamwanga: their traditional territory is entirely within Zambia. To the north they neighbour the Nyiha of Tanzania, to the north-east the Malila, to the east the Wandya and Tambo, and to the south and south-west the Bemba. In 1953 there were an estimated 12,249 Iwa in Northern Rhodesia (Willis 1966: 32), roughly the same number as there were Nyamwanga in that country. The 1969 census of Zambia appears to have registered little change in the Iwa population: a total of 14,698 (Grimes 1996).

Neither the Nyamwanga nor the Iwa have been the subject of full-length studies: the same goes for their speech. Like Lungu and Mambwe, there appears to be good reason to treat Nyamwanga and Iwa as dialects of a single language. Harry Johnston, though, was not aware of the close relationship between the two idioms. He had very little information on 'Ci-namwãnga', which he thought was closely related to Bemba; whereas he regarded Iwa and Wanda as dialects of his 'Nyixa' (1922: 59, 60). Guthrie also treated Nyamwanga (M22) and Iwa (M26) as separate languages (1948: 80). Unfortunately, none of the recent lexicostatistical analyses based on data collected in Tanzania has included Iwa (e.g. Nurse 1988: 91). Kashoki and Mann's analysis, however, suggests that Nyamwanga and Iwa in Zambia are as closely related lexically as Lungu and Mambwe are to each other (1978: 54).<sup>20</sup> This is consistent with what is known about the shared history and culture of the Nyamwanga and Iwa; witness Roy Willis' decision to combine information on these two peoples in a single section of his *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* volume (1966: 32-39). The *Ethnologue* (1996) considers Tambo, like Iwa, to be a dialect of Nyamwanga. The case for the inclusion of Tambo in this group, as well as the idiom we call Southern Lambya, is discussed in a later section (see below).

The most notable publications dedicated solely to either Nyamwanga or Iwa are Joseph Busse's two papers on Nyamwanga ('Inamwanga'); one comprising a collection of texts and their translations (1936/37), the other a study of phonology (1940/41). Otherwise most of the literature published in Nyamwanga has been the product of Scottish missionary activity, beginning with Mrs E. H. Dewar's collection

of folk tales (1900), and continuing with a series of translations of biblical texts through to the early 1960s.<sup>21</sup> The only recent work on the language that has come to our notice is an unpublished University of Dar es Salaam Masters thesis which studies the impact of English on Nyamwanga (Mchome-Simpassa 1998).

### 3.1.6 Wanda

The Wanda (Vanda in some sources) are a little known ethnic group whose traditional territory borders the south-west shore of Lake Rukwa.<sup>22</sup> Their immediate neighbours include Fipa to the north-west, Kulwe to the west, Nyamwanga to the south-west, Nyiha to the south-east, and Wungu to the east around the southern end of the Lake Rukwa (Willis 1966: 60 and map). According to the 1957 census of Tanganyika the total population of Wanda was 9,477 (Polomé 1980: 4). The *Ethnologue* gives a 1987 estimate of 24,000 Wanda (Grimes 1996).

Very little has been written about the Wanda and their language, *iciwanda*. Von Glauning published a brief account of Wanda greetings in his overview of greeting practices in German East Africa (1903: 132). Harry Johnston, however, treated Wanda ('Ici-Wanda'), together with Iwa, as a dialect of his 'Nyixa' (1922: 60). Thereafter, Guthrie recognised Wanda (M21) as a separate language, though he conflated it with Wandya (1948: 80).<sup>23</sup> The analysis of Nurse and Phillipson's lexical data suggests that Wanda's closest relationship is with Nyamwanga (1988: 91) – and therefore presumably also Iwa (see above). The phonology of Wanda also appears to be close to that of Nyamwanga (Nurse 1988: 105). We know nothing, though, about Wanda morphology. More general information about language use among the Wanda should become available once the SIL's forthcoming report on their sociolinguistic survey of Wanda is completed (Ania Kotarska, personal communication, February 2000).

## 3.2 CENTRAL CORRIDOR (NYIKA)

In her original ethnographic survey of the Corridor, Monica Wilson used the name 'Nyiha' to refer to the following grouping of peoples:

“The Nyiha consist of a number of scattered groups living mostly on the drier parts of the table-land between the Lakes. They include (i) the Nyiha around Mbozi in Mbeya district; (ii) the Lambya who adjoin them in Rungwe district; (iii) the Lambya to the south of the Songwe in Nyasaland; (iv) the Wandya who adjoin them (to be distinguished from the Wanda at the south of Lake Rukwa); (v) the Lambya of Northern Rhodesia; (vi) the Nyiha of Northern Rhodesia; (vii) the people of the wet Malila plateau adjoining the Lambya of Rungwe district; (viii) scattered groups on the Fipa plateau; and (ix) the Nyiha of Rungwe district.” (1958: 28)

Wilson further speculated that the Safwa should be included in this grouping: 'In language and customs the Safwa are very different from the Nyakyusa and much closer to the Nyiha; indeed, it is quite likely that they should be classed as a dialect group of one Nyiha-Safwa people' (1958: 41). The anthropologist Alan Harwood

subsequently confirmed this hypothesis (1970: 1); and Wilson revised her ethnographic classification accordingly (1972: 141).

In his original classification, ‘based on existing statements by others, on opinions of native speakers, and on lexicostatistical evidence using the 100 word list only’, Nurse recognised a grouping comprising ‘Nyiha, Malila, Safwa, Lambya, Wanda’ (1979: 106). Wanda was later subtracted from this list, Tambo of Zambia added,<sup>24</sup> and the grouping as a whole given a version of Wilson’s name: ‘Nyika’ (1988: 20). Within his ‘Nyika’, Nurse recognised that Safwa was ‘the least compatible member’, thus confirming Wilson’s earlier intuition (1988: 22). Nurse also developed an earlier suggestion that ‘Nyika’ and ‘Mwika’ could be combined into a higher level ‘Mwika-Nyika’ grouping (1979: 107; 1988: 53). Fourshey (*in prep.*) presents essentially the same picture, renaming Nurse’s ‘Nyika’ as ‘Mbeya’, and his ‘Nyika-Mwika’ as ‘Mbozi’.

The internal classification of languages and dialects in the Central Corridor (Nurse’s ‘Nyika’) group is especially problematic. In our presentation below we have found it most convenient to discuss different idioms under headings deriving from existing ethnic labels. The use and ordering of these headings, however, does not necessarily reflect the status of or relationship between the various idioms. Monica Wilson came to believe that ‘Safwa, Nyiha, and Lambya spoke dialects of one language’ (1977: 14). In similar vein, the anthropologist Mariam Slater asserted that ‘Malila, Lambya, and Nyika are mutually intelligible’ (1976: 61). Anecdotal though statements of this kind are, they do at least point to the possibility that the Central Corridor, or large parts of it, might comprise one or more dialect chains. This should also remind us of the need to pay closer attention to the phenomenon of bi- and multilingualism in the region.

### 3.2.1 Nyika

There are a number of geographically distinct groups of people in the Corridor called Nyika or variants thereof (Nyixa, Nyiha). These related ethnonyms ultimately derive from Eastern Bantu \*-(y)ikà (class 9/10), which seems to have originally described savannah woodland or bushland (Wilson 1958: 29; Ehret 1998: 37-38),<sup>25</sup> though it now refers to grassland or plains in at least some Corridor languages.<sup>26</sup> It is quite possible that the different groups in the Corridor merely share a related name but not recent common ancestry, though this is claimed by at least some of them. It is also possible that the ethnonym \*Nyika has been inherited from a common ancestor, some of whose descendants have retained the ancestral name, whereas others (e.g. Lambya, Malila, Wandya) have lost it. In this case the groups which had retained the name would not necessarily form a valid genetic grouping and be as closely related as their shared name implied. Finally, even if these different peoples do share a recent ancestry, this is no guarantee that the languages or dialects which they now speak are similarly related.

Unfortunately we possess insufficient evidence at present to determine the full nature of the relationships between these similarly named groups and the different idioms which they speak. In the earlier literature it is not always clear which group or groups was being referred to. Von Glauning describes a single ‘Wanyika’ greeting exchange

without giving any clue as to which ‘Nyika’ he might have been referring to (1903: 131). Johnston described ‘Nyixa’ as a language with the ‘northern dialects’ Wanda (‘Ici-wanda’) and Iwa (‘Iši-wiwa’), adding that it neighboured Wandya (‘Ici-wandia’). This geographical description suggests that he was referring primarily to idioms south of what is now the Tanzanian border. However, his reference to the replacement of inherited \*/k/ in ‘Nyixa’ by both /x/ and /h/, implies that he was alluding to more than one related dialect, including possibly the Nyiha spoken to the north of the border in modern-day Mbozi District (1922: 60). Later classifications by linguists refer almost exclusively to the latter, coded M23 by Guthrie (1948: 80; Nurse 1988: 20). This is hardly surprising, given that the Nyiha of Mbozi are the largest Nyika group and their language the most written about (see below). The most notable exceptions have been the inclusion of Zambian Nyiha in Kashoki and Mann’s lexicostatistical analysis and classification (1978: 54, 56, 60) and, similarly, of Tanzanian Nyika from the Rukwa valley in Fourshey’s recent research (*in prep.*).

In lieu of a more certain classification of the different Nyika groups and their speech, they are discussed below under separate headings. In order to minimise confusion, directional terms have been added to their common ethnonyms.

### 3.2.1.1 Western Nyika

The 1957 Tanganyika census counted 26,379 Nyika living on the Ufipa plateau and in the Rukwa valley below (Willis 1966: 68).<sup>27</sup> Willis is our main recent source for the Nyika of Ufipa, who form a distinct population from the Nyiha of Mbozi and other ‘Nyika’ groups:

“The Nyika claim to be descendants of immigrants from Unyiha, near Mbeya. Many of them have been absorbed by intermarriage and common residence into the Fipa cultural and linguistic group; but a solid nucleus retain their separate identity as Nyika and inhabit their own villages, particularly in southern Ufipa and also in parts of the central plateau, near the historically important centers of Milansi and Sumbawanga.” (1981: 8)

Despite their claim to Nyiha origin, Willis was told that these Western Nyika ‘find the language of the Mbozi Nyiha hard to follow’ (1966: 68, fn.401). Willis also notes that the Nyika ‘speak a language which is not readily comprehensible to native Fipa-speakers’ (1981: 8). The implication of these statements is that Western Nyika is neither a dialect of one nor the other, but should be treated as a language in its own right. David Moyer has commented that Western Nyika seems to be like an archaic form of Central Nyiha, and that it can be understood by older Nyiha speakers (personal communication, April 1999). This suggests that Western Nyika and Central Nyiha share a common origin, but are in transition from being dialects of one another to being separate languages.

Until recently no actual data on Western Nyika were available against which these anecdotal statements could be measured. Fourshey, however, has collected lexical material on Western Nyika and included it in her lexicostatistical analysis of 14 Corridor languages. Her results show Western Nyika as lexically closest to Mambwe (72%), Lungu (68%), and Nyamwanga (69%), and she includes it in a single group with together with these three languages and Fipa. Interestingly, though, her Nyika

shares more cognates with Nyiha (62%) than it does with Fipa (59%), though the difference is probably not statistically significant (Fourshey *in prep.*). Although all of these figures should be treated cautiously, they are not necessarily inconsistent with the hypothesis that Western Nyika shares a recent common origin with Central Nyiha, but has subsequently adopted some of the lexical habits of ‘Southern Fipa’ (see above). In the absence of phonological and morphological evidence, however, this remains no more than a speculative interpretation of the few facts that are available.

### 3.2.1.2 Central Nyiha

The Nyiha (Nyika and Nyixa in some sources) of Mbozi District in Tanzania are the best known of the different Nyika groups and occupy a central position in relation to them. Their traditional territory extends from south of Lake Rukwa and towards the Zambian border. Their neighbours include Nyamwanga to the west, Wanda in the north-west, Wungu in the north-east, Safwa in the east, Malila in the south-east, and Lambya to the south (Wilson 1958: map; Willis 1966: map). The 1957 census registered the presence of 55,698 Nyiha in this region (Willis 1966: 68); the *Ethnologue* gives a high estimate of 306,000 Nyiha in Tanzania in 1987 (Grimes 1996).

The anthropologist Beverley Brock (now Gartrell) had the following to say about the culture and language of the Central Nyiha:

“The possession of a common name, ‘Nyiha’, does not imply that these people formed a united ‘tribe’ with a homogenous culture, distinct from their neighbours. The Nyiha of today say their culture and language are very similar to those of their southern neighbours, the Lambya. The Nyiha language is closely related to the language spoken by the Safwa and Malila, who live to the east and south-east, and some aspects of their culture are similar. Amongst the Nyiha themselves, one can find today much variation in details of culture, social organisation and language. The speech of those in the west has been much influenced by their neighbours the Nyamwanga, while those who live on the eastern side of Unyiha tend to speak more like the Safwa and Malila. These differences were commented on in 1900 by the first European missionary to live in the area.” (1968: 59)

Fourshey’s recent lexicostatistical analysis indicates that Nyiha does indeed share most cognates with Lambya (85%), followed by Malila (76%), Safwa (63%), and Western Nyika (62%) (Fourshey *in prep.*). However, one set of figures given by Nurse suggests a much closer relationship than this between Nyiha and Malila (89%) (1979: 107). The tree diagram reproduced in a later paper shows Nyiha as slightly closer to Malila than it is to Lambya, though in this case the degree of cognation appears to be much lower (c.79% for Nyiha-Malila) (Nurse 1988: 91). These variant results may be no more than artefacts of the different methodologies employed. They may also reflect the kind of local variation which Brock was referring to: without detailed information on individual informants and their speech it is difficult to know.

Most of the detailed research on Central Nyiha has been undertaken by Moravian missionaries. This work was initiated by Traugott Bachmann, who came to Mbozi in 1899 (Brock 1966: 24). Bachmann was responsible for the first bible translations into

Nyiha,<sup>28</sup> and also published a collection of Nyiha folk tales (1915/16). Elise Kootz-Kretschmer, a Moravian missionary based at Utengule (Usongwé) in Usafwa, collected Nyiha as well as Safwa texts before the first world war, but did not publish them until some years later (1929; 1932/33). The next - and last - major contributor to Nyiha studies was Joseph Busse, who produced a dissertation on Nyiha in 1943, but did not publish his 160-page monograph, *Die Sprache der Nyiha in Ostafrika*, until 1960. This included chapters on Nyiha phonology, morphology, and prosody, as well as collections of texts, proverbs and riddles in both Nyiha and German translation.

Relatively little new material has appeared in print since Busse's study. The geographer Gregory Knight has provided a useful list of Nyiha plant names with their scientific equivalents (1974: 263-270). Shorter lists appear in Cribb and Leedal (1982: *passim.*) and Mbuya *et al.* (1994: 31); while the Nyiha names of some edible mushrooms are given in Härkönen *et al.* (1995: *passim.*). This is as detailed information as we have on ethnobotany and ethnomycology in the Corridor.

### 3.2.1.3 Southern Nyiha and Wandya

The Southern Nyiha, as they are called here, are found mainly in Isoka and Chama Districts in Zambia's Northern Province. This is in the far north-east of the country close to the Malawi border (Grimes 1996). It seems likely that the 'Nyiha of Malawi' referred to by Kalinga are members of the same group: his map shows them living in the far north-western corner of that country (1978: 58, 65, fn.9). The neighbours of the Southern Nyiha appear to include Nyamwanga to the north and west and Lambya to the south and east, in both Zambia and Malawi: the available ethnographic maps, however, are not entirely reliable guides on this matter. The Southern Nyiha were not listed in the 1969 census of Zambia (Kashoki 1978: 14). The *Ethnologue* gives an estimated population of 320,000 Nyiha in Zambia in 1993, greater than the estimate for Nyiha in Tanzania (Grimes 1996). This seems to be far too high a figure, even allowing for the inclusion of Central Nyiha living in Zambia.

The Southern Nyiha are said to have broken away from the Central Nyiha and moved south around the time of the Ngoni raids in the mid-19th century (Brock 1963: 11, citing Brelsford 1956: 78). This might lead us to expect a close relation between the speech of the Central and Southern Nyiha. Unfortunately, we have no direct linguistic evidence to enable us to undertake such a comparison. The only reliable information on Southern Nyiha that we have are the results of Kashoki and Mann's lexicostatistical analysis of Zambian languages, which included Nyiha. This suggests that, of all the idioms analysed, Southern Nyiha is lexically closest to Zambian Lambya (70%) and Tambo (69%), though not close enough to be considered dialectally related to them (1978: 54).

The speech of the Wandya, however, who live to the south of the Nyiha in Zambia (and Malawi?), is thought to be a dialectally related to Southern Nyiha (Kashoki 1978: 14; Grimes 1996). This requires confirmation. Johnston treated Wandya ('Ici-wandia') as a language distinct from his 'Nyixa', assuming that Lambya and Ndali were dialects of it. The short list of Wandya words included in the second volume of his *Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages* comprises the only published data on this language known to us (1922: 60-61). In 1954 Monica Wilson

was told by the chief of the Central Lambya that ‘kiWandya differed very slightly from kiLambya’ (1958: 28). Otherwise, the Wandya and their language appear to have been largely ignored by both anthropologists and linguists, and we know precious little about them. Their inclusion in the Nyika group of dialects must therefore be treated as provisional.

#### **3.2.1.4 Eastern Nyika**

The Nyika of Rungwe District in Tanzania, here referred to as the Eastern Nyika, occupy a small area on the western side of the Kiwira River, to the south-west of Tukuyu town. This is on the western fringe of the area dominated by Nyakyusa speakers. East of the Kiwira their neighbours include the Nyakyusa of Masoko to the south and Nyakyusa-speaking Kukwe to the north. On the western side of the Kiwira their neighbours include Penja to the north, Ndali to the west, and Lambya to the south. The Eastern Nyika have never been identified as a separate group in census reports: it seems unlikely that they number more than a few thousand people (Walsh 1998b: 1-2).

Little research has been undertaken on the Eastern Nyika and their language. Monica Wilson described the Nyika as one among ‘a number of small groups with old languages of their own which, though related to that of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde, are more or less unintelligible to them’ (1951: 2). She also noted that, ‘Most of these people are now, we are told, being rapidly assimilated to the Nyakyusa and Ngonde in speech’ (1951: 2-3). The ‘ethnographic present’ of this statement was 1934-38, the period of the Wilsons’ major fieldwork.

Nonetheless, the statements of contemporary informants suggest that *kinyika* still survives as a distinctive idiom. A Kukwe speaker told Walsh in 1981 that she was unable to hear much that Nyika said (1998b: 4). A young Nyika man living in Dar es Salaam described *kinyika* (which he could not speak) as a dialect of *kinyakyusa*, adding that many Nyika are bilingual (bidialectal) in both (Martin Walsh, field notes, May 1998). These statements leave open the precise status of Eastern Nyika. One hypothesis is that it was originally a dialect of the Nyika cluster which has since undergone language shift to become a dialect of Nyakyusa. At least some oral traditions support the view that the Eastern Nyika originated as a splinter group of the Central Nyiha of Mbozi (Walsh 1998b: 5). However, in the absence of linguistic data on Eastern Nyika, this hypothesis remains highly speculative.

#### **3.2.2 Lambya**

Lambya presents a similar problem to the Nyika grouping, though perhaps in less extreme form.<sup>29</sup> Monica Wilson (see above) recognised three separate groups of Lambya in the Corridor, one in each country. They are, however, geographically closer than the different Nyika groups, and their historical traditions suggest close relations in the recent past. Again, we have insufficient data to prove these connections or produce a certain statement of the linguistic status of the different Lambya idioms. As we have already seen, Johnston treated Lambya (‘Ici-rambia’), together with Ndali, as a dialect of Wandya (1922: 60). Most probably he was referring to Lambya in the south, in present-day Malawi. In the *Ethnologue* (Grimes

1996), it is suggested that Lambya in both Tanzania and Malawi may be a single language together with Nyiha (both Central and Southern) and Wandya (given as a dialect of Nyiha).

In the following discussion we have retained Monica Wilson's division of the Lambya into three different groups. Linguistically, however, this may be an entirely false division, merely reflecting the presence of the international borders. The *Ethnologue* treats *icilambya*, the speech of the Northern and Central Lambya, as a single language: it does not record the existence of Southern Lambya in Zambia (Grimes 1996). As we shall see, the latter may not belong linguistically in the Lambya grouping at all.

### 3.2.2.1 Northern Lambya

The traditional territory of the Lambya of Tanzania is in the southern part of Ulambya Division in Ileje District, on the northern side of the Songwe river and the boundary with Malawi. The neighbours of these Northern Lambya include Nyamwanga to the west, Central Nyiha to the north, Malila to the north-east, and Ndali to the east (van Hekken and Thoden van Velzen 1972: 18-19; Slater 1976: map). The Central Lambya are their neighbours to the south, across the Songwe river and the international border. According to the 1957 census of Tanganyika, there were then 15,803 Lambya to the north of the Songwe (Polomé 1980: 4). The *Ethnologue* gives an estimate for 1987 of 40,000 people (Grimes 1996).

The Northern Lambya are, like the Southern Lambya, said to be an offshoot of the Central Lambya (Kalinga 1978: 63). Monica Wilson, who visited Northern Lambya territory in 1954, reported that 'The Lambya of Rungwe district [as it was then] speak the same language and are similar in custom to the Nyiha of Mbozi and the Lambya of Nyasaland: about this Mwambachi, the Lambya chief in Rungwe District, and his councillors were quite explicit' (1958: 28). In similar vein, Beverley Brock was told by the Central Nyiha of Mbozi that their language was 'identical' with that of their southern neighbours, the Northern Lambya (1966: 1). The available lexicostatistical evidence (see above) indicates that 'identity' is too strong a claim in this case, though mutual intelligibility is possible.

Monica Wilson added that 'many of the Lambya of Rungwe district speak kiNyakyusa as a second language, since they are administered from Tukuyu and trade and attend court there.' This was in the 1950s: Bulambya is no longer part of Rungwe District and administered from Tukuyu. Wilson also noted that 'Though Ndali and Lambya adjoin they do not understand one another without learning the second language' (1958: 28). Again, this was in the 1950s: there is some evidence to suggest that Lambya and Ndali now find it rather easier to communicate because of changes in the local dialect of Lambya under the influence of the bilingualism Wilson refers to (see below).

The only publication devoted solely to Northern Lambya – indeed to any variety of Lambya – is Joseph Busse's collection and translation of Lambya texts (1939/40). More recently, Labroussi has characterised the language of these texts as a 'Nyiha-like' variety of Lambya (1999: 352), in contrast to the 'Ndali-like' variety which she recorded and is spoken 'in parts of Ileje District where the Lambya

intermingle with the Ndali' (1999: 355). These variations are reminiscent of those reported by Brock for Central Nyiha (see above). They are consistent with what we know of the history of settlement in Tanzanian Bulambya. The Lambya presumably settled on what was originally Central Nyiha land; while they themselves have since been encroached upon in the east by Ndali settlers, many of whom are said to have come in the period between 1910 and 1940 (van Hekken and Thoden van Velzen 1972: 19).

### **3.2.2.2 Central Lambya**

The Central Lambya, as they are called here, live to the south of the Songwe river in the Chititpa District of Malawi. This is in the north-western corner of the country, close to the borders with Tanzania and Malawi. The neighbours of the Central Lambya include Southern Nyiha and Nyamwanga to the west, Ndali to the north, Sukwa to the east, and Tambo and different Tumbuka-speaking groups (Fungwe, Mwenewenya) to the south (Kalinga 1978: 55, 58). Kalinga gives an estimated population of c.20,000 people (1978: 55): the *Ethnologue* quotes an estimate of 41,000 people for 1993 (Grimes 1996).

As already noted above, Monica Wilson was told by the Northern Lambya chief in 1954 that his people spoke the same language as both the Central Lambya and the Central Nyiha. His counterpart south of the border said much the same:

“Nyondo, chief of the Lambya of Nyasaland, confirmed that his people were culturally similar to the Lambya of Rungwe district and the Nyiha of Mbozi, and stated that kiWandya differed very slightly from kiLambya. ‘A few words are different’, he said. But since the Lambya of Nyasaland have formed part of the kingdom of Ngonde for several centuries they have been influenced by Ngonde culture, just as the Lambya of Rungwe district are now being influenced by Nyakyusa culture.” (1958: 28-29)

The *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) accepts that Northern and Central Lambya are a single language. We do not have any data, however, by which to judge this claim and statements such as those reported by Wilson. Variations of the kind revealed by Labroussi for Northern Lambya (‘Nyiha-like’ and ‘Ndali-like’) may well be found in other Lambya-speaking areas, including the speech of the Central Lambya.

### **3.2.2.3 Southern Lambya and Tambo**

The Lambya of Zambia, here referred to as the Southern Lambya, are reputed to be another offshoot of the Central Lambya of Malawi (Kalinga 1978: 63-64). They are found in Isoka District in the north-eastern corner of Zambia (Kalinga 1978: 56), where they appear to be close neighbours of the Southern Nyiha (to the north-east) and Wandya (to their south-east) (Ohanessian and Kashoki 1978: map 8). Monica Wilson referred to ‘the 2,000 Lambya of Northern Rhodesia’ (1958: 29); Kashoki and Mann merely noted their population to be ‘very small’ (1978: 60). There is no entry for the Southern Lambya in the Zambia section of the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996).

Wilson admitted her ignorance as to the linguistic and cultural affinities of Southern Lambya, wondering how close it was to Southern and Central Nyiha (1958: 29).

Indeed, more than 40 years later, the only evidence we have comes from Kashoki and Mann's lexicostatistical survey of Zambian languages. This shows Southern Lambya as being very similar lexically to Tambo (94%), followed by Nyamwanga and Iwa (both 78%) and then Southern Nyiha (70%) (1978: 54). If the map in *Language in Zambia* is to be trusted, the Tambo live to the south of the Southern Lambya, the Nyamwanga to the north-west and Iwa to the south-west (Ohanessian and Kashoki 1978: map 8). Willis reports the neighbours of the Tambo to be the Iwa, Bemba, Wandya and Lambya. Their population in 1953 was estimated at 5,340 (Willis 1996: 71-72); the 1969 census of Zambia registered 7,171 Tambo (Grimes 1996).

There are at least two possible interpretations of Kashoki and Mann's figures. One is that Tambo must be a member of the Central Corridor (Nurse's 'Nyika') group of languages, with particularly close affinities to Lambya. This is the position taken by Nurse (1988: 20, 49, 91, 104). On this interpretation the relatively high Nyamwanga / Iwa figures (higher than those for Southern Nyiha) can be attributed to lexical borrowing from these large neighbours.

An alternative interpretation, however, is that Tambo and Southern Lambya are in fact members of West Corridor, closest to Nyamwanga / Iwa, and have borrowed to some extent from Southern Nyiha. Much the same interpretation is implied by Kashoki and Mann's tree diagram, taking into account what is known about the languages to the north of Zambia (1978: 60, diagram 2.2). This is also consistent with the *Ethnologue's* claim that Tambo, like Iwa, is a dialect of Nyamwanga (see above). On this interpretation Southern Lambya should be excised from the Lambya grouping and added to the list of Nyamwanga-Iwa dialects. If the Southern Lambya were indeed an offshoot of the Central Lambya, then it appears that they lost their language in the process of moving south.

### 3.2.3 Malila

The Malila are another relatively unknown ethnic group in south-west Tanzania. Their traditional territory lies in the highland area of the same name (Malila or Umalila), located south-west of Mbeya town, roughly half-way between the regional capital and the Malawian border. The neighbours of the Malila include Safwa (Songwe and Poroto) to their north and north-east, Central Nyiha to their west, Northern Lambya and Ndali to their south and south-east, and Nyakyusa speakers to their east (Walsh 1998a: 1). In the 1957 population census of Tanganyika, 20,745 people identified themselves as Malila (Polomé 1980: 4). The *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) cites an estimate of 52,000 people in 1987, more than double the number 30 years before.

Very little has been written about the Malila and their language has never been subject to detailed study. Harry Johnston (1922) did not mention Malila; Malcolm Guthrie, however, did recognise it as a language (M24) in its own right (1948: 80). As Monica Wilson's classification suggested, the closest linguistic relatives of Malila are its Central Corridor neighbours, Central Nyiha and Northern Lambya (see above). According to the geographer Gregory Knight:

“The Malila are related to the Nyiha, their languages being virtually identical. Malila claim to be able to converse much more easily with Nyiha than Safwa or Songwe.” (1974: 27)

This statement implies that Malila is part of a wider dialect continuum. The available lexicostatistical analyses lend some support to this idea. An early overview provided by Nurse shows a high degree (89%) of lexical similarity between Malila and Central Nyiha (1979: 107); though the tree diagram reproduced in his later paper suggests a lower figure (c.79%) (Nurse 1988: 91). The figures give by Fourshey (*in prep.*) also indicate that Malila is closest to Central Nyiha (76%), though not as close as Northern Lambya is (85%). As well as reflecting different methodological procedures (see above), these different results may also reflect variations in the dialects spoken by informants. Brock’s statement that ‘those who live on the eastern side of Unyiha tend to speak more like the Safwa and Malila’ (1968: 59) is relevant here, as is Labroussi’s recognition of analogous variation in the speech of the Northern Lambya (see above).

Unfortunately we have insufficient data on Malila to pursue these questions in more detail. The only published lexical material is a list of 22 Malila plant names recorded by the botanists Cribb and Leedal (1982: *passim.*). Apart from Nurse’s summary statement of Malila phonology (1988: 104), nothing has been published on other aspects of the language.

### 3.2.4 Safwa

The traditional territory of the Safwa lies roughly mid-way between lakes Rukwa and Nyasa. Their nearest neighbours include the Wungu to the north-west, Sangu to the north-east, Wanji to the east, Nyakyusa-speakers to the south-east, Malila to the south and Central Nyiha to the west (Harwood 1970: 3, Map I). The Wanji and Sangu speak languages which are not closely related to Safwa and other Central Corridor languages, but belong to the group which Nurse has dubbed ‘Southern Highlands’ (1988: 20). The 1957 census of Tanganyika recorded a total population of 63,027 Safwa (Polomé 1980: 4); the *Ethnologue* provides an estimate of 158,000 for 1987 (Grimes 1996).

The Safwa are better known than many peoples of the Corridor, thanks in particular to the researches of the Moravian missionary Elise Kootz-Kretschmer, whose three volume *Die Safwa* was published between 1926 and 1929. Nonetheless, the definition of ‘Safwa’ as an ethnic and linguistic category has always been problematic. German administrators, for example, differentiated between the Safwa and the Poroto (Admiralty 1920: 64-65), whereas their British successors initially treated the Safwa (including Poroto) and Songwe as different groups for administrative purposes (see, for example, Mbeya District Book, *passim.*). The most inclusive definition of Safwa includes Malila (e.g. Mwakipesile n.d.: 35). General practice, however, follows that established during the colonial period, treating the Malila as a separate ethnic entity. Otherwise, and following later British administrators, ‘Safwa’ is generally employed as label covering five closely related sub-groups: Safwa proper, Songwe, Guruka, Poroto, and Mbwila.<sup>30</sup> It is also generally assumed that each of these sub-groups has its own dialect of the Safwa language.

Whether or not this ethnographic classification maps directly into dialect geography remains to be established. The available evidence suggests that in general terms it does, with intermediate forms between ‘dialects’.

The following are Jan Voorhoeve’s comments on Safwa dialects, based on his research in the south-east of the Safwa-speaking area:

“Bishop J. van Sambeek, in his manuscript grammar of 183 pages (finished in 1933), recognizes two Safwa dialects: one spoken to the North West and regarded by him as Safwa proper, one spoken to the South East by the people of Mahíña, former chief of Uléenje or Umwíla.

The second volume of Mrs. Elise Kootz-Kretschmer’s 3 volume study on Die Safwa contains valuable historical information. The general impression is, that the North Western part of the Safwa territory has been dominated by related chiefs and must be rather homogenous, the rest of the country however (on both sides of the Poroto mountains and to the Sangu plains) had small chiefs of different stock. My informant distinguished (on non-linguistic grounds) four Safwa groups: (1) Soóngwe (between Lake Rukwa and Mbeya), (2) Sáfwa (around Mbeya), (3) Uléenje (between Mbeya and the Poroto mountains to the South, the Sangu plains to the East), and (4) Polóoto (from the Poroto mountains to the South).

There does not seem to exist a fixed linguistic norm (as in some other parts of Africa). Each group regards its dialect as proper Safwa. The South Eastern part of the country, however, seems linguistically the most diversified. There are dialect differences between Uléenje and Polóoto, but also within Uléenje. Van Sambeek’s grammar refers to the language of the people of Mahíña, who lived rather in the extreme South Eastern part of the country. My informants were all from Ilámbo, much closer to Mbeya. Their way of speaking seemed in between the two dialects described by Van Sambeek, with a marked tendency to conform more to the Mbeya dialect (called proper Safwa by Van Sambeek). The only consistent difference with the dialect of Mbeya seems to be the conservation of a closed back vowel before other consonants.” (Voorhoeve n.d.: 1, with punctuation corrected)

Unfortunately Voorhoeve seems to have got some of his facts a little muddled. Father van Sambeek (as he was then) participated in the founding of the Roman Catholic mission at Irambo (Ilámbo) in 1933 – the same year in which he wrote his manuscript grammar. Irambo was close to the court of chief Mahinya (Mahíña), which was in Ulenje village. Mahinya was the chief of the Mbwila, whose territory was also known as Ulenje (Uléenje) or, more commonly, Umwila / Imbwila (Umwíla) (Slaats n.d.: 73-77). Ulenje is now the name of both a village and a ward. Voorhoeve’s informants were therefore from exactly the same place as van Sambeek’s, and both of them described the Mbwila dialect. The differences that Voorhoeve noted were probably due to the influence of the main Safwa dialect on Mbwila in the years between 1933 - when van Sambeek collected his data - and 1966, when Voorhoeve collected his.

A SIL sociolinguistic survey team, which worked in four Safwa speaking villages in 1998, summarised their own findings as follows:

“The following speech varieties were reported to be close to Kisafwa: Kimalila, Kimbwila, Kiguruka, Kisongwe and Kiporoto. In addition, it is believed that there may be some strong similarities with Kinyiha.

During the group interviews, the people established that Kimalila and Kisongwe are considered languages spoken by groups distinct from the Safwa. In Ifupa, the group stated that Kimalila is closer to Safwa than Kinyiha, but in Ikukwa, the group said that Kinyiha is more similar than Kimalila and Kisongwe. The group in Haporoto also added Kiguruka to the list of languages similar to Kisafwa, and said that it is spoken in the Chunya area.

No group in any village specified which variety of Kisafwa was spoken there. The group in Ifupa stated that pure Kisafwa was spoken in Uyole (which is along the main highway) and in the Mbeya Range. The other three villages each said that the best Kisafwa is spoken right there in their village. Each of the groups implied that all of the related speech varieties are mutually intelligible. When a person who speaks one variety meets someone from another variety [sic], each speaks his own language and is able to understand the other.” (Turner *et al.* 1998: 18)

Ifupa village is to the east of Irambo in Ulenje Ward: villagers presumably speak a variety of the Mbwila dialect which was earlier studied by van Sambeek and Voorhoeve. Villagers’ statement that ‘pure’ Safwa is spoken in Uyole and in the Mbeya Range negates Voorhoeve’s claim that ‘Each group regards its dialect as proper Safwa’ (see above). Uyole and the eastern end of the Mbeya Range are certainly within Usafwa proper as generally understood: the area in which the anthropologist Alan Harwood worked in 1962-64 (1970: 1-4).<sup>31</sup>

The other three villages visited by the SIL team – Itimba, Ikukwa, and Haporoto - are all located around the Mbeya Range to the north-west of Mbeya town. The claims of these villagers to speak ‘pure’ Safwa are consistent with Voorhoeve’s statement. The three villages are in fact on the fringe of Usafwa: the old administrative boundary between Usongwe and Usafwa, as defined by the British, cuts through this area. Moreover, the ‘purity’ of Safwa spoken in the two villages on the northern side of the Mbeya Range – Haporoto and Itimba – appears to have been cast in some doubt by informants’ claims and counter-claims:

“The language assistant for the first list ..., collected in Haporoto, claimed to speak pure Kisafwa. However, the man asked to check the list reported that the first man mixed in words from Kiguruka. This second man also claimed to speak ‘pure’ Kisafwa.

In Ikukwa, the site for the second word list ..., one resident reported that Kiguruka is spoken in that area, though other sources claim that the language spoken there is ‘pure’ Kisafwa. The men whose assistance was asked in formulating the word list each claimed that they spoke ‘pure’ Kisafwa.” (Turner *et al.* 1998: 19)

The Guruka (Guluxa) live in the area to the north of Usafwa proper, and we should not be surprised to find elements of their dialect reaching down to the northern side of the Mbeya Range. Voorhoeve's principal informant did not mention Guruka as a dialect of Safwa: like Poroto (Polóoto), it has never been studied. Songwe (Sóongwe), however, has recently provided the material for an M.A. thesis (Mkomagu 1991). Safwa proper and Mbwila remain the best known dialects.

In much of the linguistic literature Safwa has been treated as an undifferentiated entity. Johnston (1922) seems to have missed it completely: Guthrie, however, recognised its existence and coded it (as his M25) accordingly (1948: 80). As noted already, the earliest work on the language was by missionaries. The Moravian missionary Elise Kootz-Kretschmer collected and translated a large number of Safwa folk tales and historical texts (1929; 1931/32; 1933/34). The Roman Catholic Father (later Bishop) van Sambeek produced a manuscript Safwa (Mbwila dialect) grammar (1933), which became the basis for a Safwa catechism and prayer book (Slaats n.d.: 84).<sup>32</sup> Van Sambeek's grammar also provided a starting point for Voorhoeve's professional linguistic work, which resulted in production of a draft grammar (undated) and a paper on Safwa (i.e. the Mbwila dialect influenced by Safwa proper) 'as a Restricted Tone System' (1973). More recently, the work of Voorhoeve and others has inspired a University of Dar es Salaam M.A. thesis on 'Tone and Accent in Kisongwe', the western dialect of Safwa (Mkomagu 1991). The only recent sociolinguistic work that has come to our attention is Mwansanga's undergraduate research paper on Safwa names (1999).

### **3.3 EAST CORRIDOR (NYAKYUSA-NDALI)**

Most commentators agree that Nyakyusa-Ngonde and Ndali together form a discrete group in the east of the Corridor. As far as we know, they are the only two languages in the group, though it is possible that traces of others might still be found on the fringes of Nyakyusa expansion. As we have seen, there is no consensus about the external affiliations of this group, and whether or not it might be linked closely to the West and Central Corridor groups.

#### **3.3.1 Nyakyusa and Ngonde**

The Nyakyusa and Ngonde 'live at the north-west corner of Lake Nyasa, on the marshy plain at the head of the Lake, and in the hills that rise steeply to the north and west of it. They straddle the Songwe river which divides Tanganyika [now Tanzania] from Nyasaland [now Malawi]. The area is enclosed by the Lake itself, the escarpment of the Livingstone mountains on the north-east and the Poroto mountains on the north-west' (Wilson 1951: 1). The neighbours of the Nyakyusa, on the Tanzanian side of the border, include Ndali to the west, Safwa (Poroto and Mbwila) to the north, and Kinga to the east. The neighbours of the Ngonde in Malawi include Sukwa (Ndali) to the west and various Tumbuka-speaking groups to the south, among them Henga and Wenya (Tew 1950: map). The 1957 census of Tanganyika counted 219,678 Nyakyusa (Polomé 1980: 4), whereas the 1945 census of Nyasaland enumerated 62,136 Ngonde (Tew 1950: 74). The *Ethnologue* gives estimates of

750,000 Nyakyusa in Tanzania in 1992, and 300,000 Ngonde in Malawi in 1993, a total of over one million people (Grimes 1996). On this reckoning the Nyakyusa and Ngonde together comprise by far the largest ethnic grouping in the Corridor.

The Nyakyusa and Ngonde ('Nyakyusa-Ngonde') have long been recognised as a single people, divided only by political boundaries, and many early writers referred to them collectively as the Konde. They are well known through the writings of missionaries, anthropologists, and historians; especially the works of Godfrey and Monica Wilson, whose main period of anthropological fieldwork was in the 1930s. Their language is also among the best known in the Corridor, though there remain major gaps in our knowledge. One of the most glaring of these gaps concerns the dialect geography of Nyakyusa-Ngonde.

The first printed study of Nyakyusa-Ngonde was the Scottish missionary James Bain's *Collections for the Mwamba Language Spoken at the North End of Lake Nyasa* (1891). Harry Johnston thereafter published a short vocabulary of Nyakyusa (1897: 496-503). In the second volume of his *Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, Johnston provided more Nyakyusa ('Ikinyi-kiusa') material and noted that 'It seems to have a mountain dialect, **Mwamba**, **Swciri**, or Iki-kukwe' (1922: 61). In a footnote he expanded on what he knew about the different designations:

"The peoples speaking this language and its dialects were first made known to Europeans by the other coast populations of Lake Nyasa as the Awa-ñkonde, but it is not clear whether this term was one of local origin or not. The people themselves, at any rate near the coast of Lake Nyasa, used to the present writer the comprehensive term of Awanyi-kiusa. But this may have only been the name of a small tribe or clan. Farther inland they are known as the Awa-kukwe, and the dialect spoken by the Awa-kukwe is also known as Mwamba and Ci-swciri. Mwamba probably only means 'up above' or 'mountains', and Swciri may have much the same signification." (1922: 61, fn.3)

It was left to Monica Wilson to sort some of this confusion out:

"Within this area there are local differences in language and custom. The dominant groups are the *Nyakyusa*, who live in Tanganyika on the Lake-shore plain and up into the hills as far as Rungwe mission, and the people of *Ngonde* who live on the Lake-shore plain in Nyasaland. These two groups speak dialects which, though differing somewhat in vocabulary and pronunciation, are easily understood by speakers from both ...

The Nyakyusa themselves may be sub-divided into those living on the Lake-shore plain (*MuNgonde*), those around *Masoko*, those to the east under the Livingstone mountains in *Selya* and *Saku*, and those to the north, viz. the *Kukwe* and *Lugulu*. The last two groups differ appreciably in dialect and custom from the others, but all speak dialects which are mutually intelligible." (1951: 1-2)

Wilson added more detail in a footnote:

“The term *Nyakyusa* means primarily the people of the Lake plain in Tanganyika, and those around Masoko, but it is now used by extension to include those in Selya and Saku, together with the Kukwe. We use ‘Nyakyusa proper’, for those on the Lake plain and around Masoko. The terms *Ngonde* and *Mwamba* are a source of some confusion because their meaning varies with the prefix used. The primary meaning of *Aba-Ngonde* is ‘the people of the plains’ but anyone travelling in the direction of the sacred hill Mbande, on which the Kyungu (the paramount chief of Ngonde) lived is spoken of as going *KuNgonde*, whether he start from nearby, or from as far away as Tukuyu ... *MuNgonde* is generally used by the Nyakyusa for the Lake-shore plain of Tanganyika ... *AbaMwamba* means by derivation ‘the hill people’, but is generally used for ‘the people to the north’. The Ngonde of Karonga call those on the plain around Mwaya *BaMwamba*, the men of Mwaya apply the name not to themselves, but to the people of Selya, while the people of Selya apply it to those in the hills to the north of them.” (1951: 2, fn.2)

In her main text Wilson continued:

“There are also a number of small groups with old languages of their own which, though related to that of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde, are more or less unintelligible to them; and they have equally distinct cultures. These include the *Penja* on the plateau to the west of the Kukwe; a small group of *Nyika* on the same plateau; the *Ndali* in the hills to the north of the Songwe; the *Sukwa* to the south of them; the *Lambya* and *Wenya* further west; small groups of *Henga* and *Mambwe* on the western border of Ngonde, and the *Kisi*, a people famous as potters and fishermen, who live on the north-east shore of the Lake. Most of these people are now, we are told, being rapidly assimilated to the Nyakyusa and Ngonde in speech and in law, but we have little first-hand knowledge of them. On the coast they are classed with Nyakyusa and Ngonde as *Sokile*, a nickname derived from the traditional Nyakyusa greeting (1951: 2-3).

Half a century later, most of the groups mentioned by Wilson have not become assimilated to the Nyakyusa and Ngonde to the extent that her informants suggested, though some of their local communities undoubtedly have. The Ndali / Sukwa, Lambya and Mambwe remain separate Corridor peoples with their own languages; Wenya and Henga speak dialects of Tumbuka (Grimes 1996); and many Kisi still speak their original Southern Highlands language, albeit Nyakyusa-influenced (Nurse 1988: 41, 70). There is, however, evidence to suggest that both Penja and Eastern Nyika have become Nyakyusa dialects. The case of Eastern Nyika has already been discussed. Wilson herself argued, in a later publication, that the Penja, like the Lugulu, ‘have been almost completely absorbed by the Nyakyusa’ (1958: 9). In her final statement on the matter, she referred to the Penja as one of the small groups which the Nyakyusa had absorbed, implying the process to be complete (1977: 14). Whether or not it is, remains to be determined. In 1981 a Kukwe informant could still describe the Penja as speaking a different language (Martin Walsh, field notes, November 1981), suggesting, at the very least, that they have their own dialect of Nyakyusa-Ngonde.

Wilson’s statement of the main of dialects of Nyakyusa-Ngonde has been little improved upon. Derek Nurse elicited the following information in Tanzania:

“It is the impression of speakers that Nyakyusa has the following dialects (again it should be borne in mind that speakers often confuse ethnic and linguistic factors, but, for lack of direct evidence, it is reported here as described by native speakers): 1. *Ngumba*, also known as *Kukwe*; *Ngumba* means ‘innermost plateau.’ 2. *Mwamba*, also known as *Sokelo*; *Mwamba* means ‘mountains.’ 3. *Ngonde / Kaaselya* (There was some disagreement among informants as to whether these are separate dialects or whether Ngonde includes Kaaselya.)” (1979: 119)

Ngumba is the name of an allegedly aboriginal group among the Kukwe (Wilson 1959: 83), treated as a separate people by at least some German administrators (‘Kuyumba’ in Admiralty 1920: 68). ‘Sokelo’ is from Busokelo, the modern name of the administrative Division in the north-east of Rungwe District (Wilson 1977: 13, Map 4): reference here is presumably to the dialect of the Lugulu, spoken in and around Mwakaleli. Nurse’s ‘Kaaselya’ is the same as Wilson’s ‘Selya’, the area and dialect to the south of Mwakaleli, and clearly different from Ngonde even further south. The failure of some of Nurse’s informants to specify this difference and identify other idioms in the south suggests a northern bias.

The *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) identifies only five dialects of Nyakyusa-Ngonde: Kukwe, Lugulu (‘Lungulu’ / Mwamba), Selya, Nyakyusa (proper), and Ngonde. Wilson’s description and other available evidence suggest that other idioms should be added to this list. In the absence of more detailed information on these idioms, however, especially those on the ‘Nyakyusa fringe’, it is difficult to make more than guesses about their status based on non-linguistic evidence.

Although our understanding of Nyakyusa-Ngonde dialect geography is uncertain, a considerable amount of material is available on the principal dialects. Following the early collections by Bain and Johnston (see above), most of the published work on Nyakyusa was produced by German linguists and missionaries.<sup>33</sup> This includes Schumann’s grammar (1899), Meinhof’s chapter on ‘Konde’ phonology (1899: 110-131, 236-242; also 1910: 171-195, 301-307; 1932: 134-154, 241-242), Endemann’s paper on the verb system (1900) and Nyakyusa exercises (1914), Berger’s collection and translation of ‘Konde-Texte’ (1933/34), Stolz’s list of plant names – edited and introduced by Berger and Blohm (1933/34), and Busse’s publication of texts (1941/42; 1949/50).<sup>34</sup>

The modern era of Nyakyusa-Ngonde studies was initiated by the publication of von Essen and Kähler-Meyer’s paper on prosody (1969). From Leiden, Mwangoka and Voorhoeve (n.d.) produced the first update on Schumann’s grammar, and Konter-Katani (n.d.) has prepared a Nyakyusa-English lexicon – both works, however, being unpublished. Meanwhile, the most important recent addition to the literature on Nyakyusa has been Knut Felberg’s *Nyakyusa-English-Swahili and English-Nyakyusa Dictionary* (1996). This is based upon material collected by Felberg while working as a teacher in Ipinda:

“Informants from several parts of the Nyakyusa linguistic area have been consulted. However, there has been a certain attempt to stick to the forms used in the Masoko and Ipinda areas. Speakers of Ngonde have not been consulted,

but some of the written material used has come from the Ngonde area.” (1996: xxi)

This dictionary represents a significant achievement, being the second longest - after Halemba’s 1994 Mambwe dictionary – available for any language in the Corridor. Although it is weak in many respects (e.g. the lack of terms for flora and fauna and of scientific identification of species), it comprises a useful linguistic resource and starting point for further research. Other recent works include Musiska (1988) and Mulinda’s (1997) comparative studies of ‘Nkhonde’ and Nyakyusa respectively; and Kishindo’s ‘Preliminary Analysis’ of Ngonde (1999). Nyakyusa and Ngonde data are also included in Labroussi’s analysis of ‘Vowel Systems and Spirantization in Southwest Tanzania’ (1999).

Perhaps surprisingly, given the number of Nyakyusa-Ngonde speakers and the amount written about them, relatively little has been published on the cultural aspects of language use. Christon Mwakasaka’s studies of Nyakyusa oral literature comprise the only body of recent work that we know on this subject (1975; 1977; 1978). Otherwise, Hodson’s short note on ‘Name Giving among the WaSokile’ (1934) and Walsh’s ‘Nyakyusa Greetings’ (1982) appear to be the only articles devoted specifically to other sociolinguistic themes. One theme which is certainly worthy of further study is the linguistic consequences of father-in-law avoidance, which traditionally prevents a daughter-in-law from using any word similar to her father-in-law’s name (Wilson 1977: 103). Nurse provides a preliminary list of alternative, ‘*kamwana*’, vocabulary (1979: 119-121); and further examples of what Felberg refers to as ‘*ingamwana*’ avoidance can be seen in his dictionary (1996: *passim*).

### 3.3.2 Ndali and Sukwa

Leroy Vail provided the following concise introduction to Ndali and Sukwa:

“Ndali is a Bantu language spoken by approximately 18,000 people in the Chitipa and Karonga Districts of Malawi and by about 80,000 people in Tanzania’s Mbozi and Tukuyu [i.e. Rungwe] Districts. The Ndali live on the lofty Tanganyika-Nyasa Plateau, to the north-west of Lake Malawi [Nyasa]. To their west live the Lambya people; to their north are the Kukwe; to their east live the Nyakyusa, while on the south are Tumbuka-speaking peoples. For the past hundred years at least the Ndali have been expanding southwards into northern Malawi, overrunning the small Sukwa group of Malawi. Today Sukwa, which seems to be a dialectal variant of Ndali, is spoken in only a few villages and is on the point of extinction.” (1974: 21)

Vail adds in a footnote:

“In Malawi Ndali is known as Sukwa, named after the Misuku Hills, in which area it is spoken. In spite of the different names, however, Sukwa and Ndali are the same language, with the original Sukwa dialect now almost dead, being restricted to but two or three villages in the most isolated areas of the Misuku Hills.” (1974: 21, fn.1)

The greatest concentration of Tanzanian Ndali live in what is now Ileje District, formerly part of Rungwe District. The 1957 census of Tanganyika enumerated 59,650 Ndali (Polomé 1980: 4). The *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) provides an estimate of 150,000 Ndali in Tanzania in 1987: there is no entry for Ndali or Sukwa in Malawi and therefore no similar estimate for that country.

Vail suggests that Ndali and Sukwa are two dialects of the same language, but that the latter has been largely replaced by Ndali, whose Malawian speakers have adopted the name Sukwa for themselves. In addition, however, Swilla has noted that ‘Important phonetic and lexical variations differentiate the two varieties of the language [i.e. Ndali] found in Malawi and Tanzania’ (1998: 95). This is confirmed by Robert Botne:

“Apparently, there are 3-4 villages where Sukwa is the primary (and, perhaps, only) language spoken. Sukwa is very much like Ndali; nevertheless, there are interesting differences. Tanzanian and Malawian Ndali appear to have a significant number of differences - some lexical, tonal, grammatical (tense marking, etc.). Lexical differences appear to reflect differences in borrowing - Tanzanian Ndali seems to have borrowed a lot from Kinyakyusa and Swahili, whereas Malawian Ndali has borrowed from Chitumbuka, Lambya, and Chichewa.” (personal communication, December 1999).

Until recently, very little was known about Ndali and nothing about Sukwa. Johnston thought that ‘Ici-ndali’, along with Lambya, was a dialect of Wandya (1922: 60). Guthrie originally classed Ndali in Group 20 of his Zone M (1948: 84), but failed to list it at all in his *Comparative Bantu* (1967-72), as noted by both Vail (1974: 1) and Swilla (1981: 379; 1998: 95). Monica Wilson, as we have seen, began by treating both Ndali and Sukwa as separate languages from Nyakyusa-Ngonde (1951: 2). In *The Peoples of the Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor*, however, she described them as ‘dialect groups’ of their eastern neighbours:

“...the Ndali differ somewhat from the others, but on grounds of common language and economy, and considerable similarity of custom, they are included with the Nyakyusa-Ngonde. Of the small Sukwa group we know little, but such evidence as there is indicates that they should be included with the Ndali.” (1958: 9)

Vail questioned Wilson’s suggestion that Ndali was a dialect of Nyakyusa-Ngonde, but proposed that they be placed together in Guthrie’s Group 30 of Zone M (1974: 21). Nurse also treated Ndali as a separate language, and initially placed it in a group with both Nyakyusa and Lambya (1979: 106). Swilla likewise argued that Ndali should be classed in the same group as Nyakyusa (1981: 392). Nurse later excised Lambya from this group, and renamed it ‘Nyakyusa-Ndali’ (1988: 20).

The first – and for a long time only – publication on Ndali appeared in 1934/35: Berger’s collection and translation of Ndali texts. Forty years passed before the publication of Vail’s paper on the noun classes of Malawian Ndali (1974), which was followed by Swilla’s independent work on the noun class system and agreements in Tanzanian Ndali (1981), and further research on the same subject in Malawi by

Kishindo (1998). Kabuje's University of Dar es Salaam undergraduate project on Ndali phonology and the teaching of English was written up in 1995. More recently, Swilla has published on the tense system of Tanzanian Ndali (1998), as well as turning her attention to sociolinguistic topics, including the study of Ndali names and naming (2000). Another professional linguist, Robert Botne, has presented papers recently on tense and aspect and verbs of motion in Malawian Ndali (1998; 1999). Botne also has a set of unpublished Ndali texts on various subjects, and is currently preparing a dictionary of Malawian Ndali (personal communication, December 2000). Having been almost completely ignored throughout the colonial period, it seems that Ndali is now beginning to get the kind of attention from scholars that it deserves.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.4 WUNGU (AN ISOLATE?)

Although a number of idioms in the Corridor remain to be conclusively assigned to one or other of the main groups, this is mostly because we lack information on them. The case of Wungu, however, is slightly different, in that it appears to be an isolate, perhaps belonging to a group of its own which is co-ordinate with others in the Corridor.

Harry Johnston grouped Wungu together with other Central and Eastern Corridor idioms (1922: 4). Guthrie and others, however, assigned it (as F25) to the same group as Nyamwezi and Sukuma – Nurse's 'West Tanzania' (Guthrie 1948: 78; Bryan 1959: 119; cf. Shorter 1972: 33; Nurse 1988: 20). Although Nurse (followed by Labroussi and others) have since reassigned Wungu to the Corridor, the *Ethnologue* still places it in Guthrie's Zone F, describing the language as 'Closely related to Kimbu and Sumbwa' (Grimes 1996).

Nurse argued that although Wungu appears to belong lexically to the West Corridor (Mwika) group, its phonology indicates a quite different affiliation, possibly with East Corridor (Nyakyusa-Ndali) (1983: 9; 1988: 51-53, 73, 91). More recently, Nurse has simply described Wungu as an isolate, indicating that it deserves closer examination (1999: 32). Labroussi has also described Wungu as anomalous:

"Wungu is an intriguing language as attempts to its classification [sic] can show... It shares enough with every language group in and around the Corridor to represent a peripheral member, but not enough to be undisputably classified in any one of them. I therefore prefer to place it alongside a macro Mwika-Nyika group in my own lexicostatistic grouping." (1999: 360).

However, this conclusion is contradicted by Labroussi's suggestion - discussed in more detail below - that Wungu might have arisen through the mixing of a 'Southern Mwika' people with a Kimbu- or possibly Safwa-like population (1999: 374). If this historical scenario or something like it were true, then we should expect to be able to classify Wungu either with its group of origin ('Southern Mwika' / West Corridor) or with the group which it had shifted to (West Tanzania or Central Corridor), rather than describe it as in a branch of its own co-ordinate with 'Nyika-Mwika'.

### 3.4.1 Wungu

The Wungu (also written as Bungu) are the dominant ethnic group in Chunya District, Tanzania, where most of them live in the fertile plains to the south-east of Lake Rukwa. The 1957 population census counted 14,926 Wungu (Polomé 1980: 4); the *Ethnologue* gives an estimate of 36,000 in 1987 (Grimes 1996). In c.1910 German administrators noted that Swahili was widely spoken (Admiralty 1920: 67); more recently Wungu have been reported to be bilingual (Grimes 1993: 406).

Little information is available about the dialect geography of the Wungu-speaking area. Johnston described Manda ('Ki-Manda') as 'an unrecorded dialect' of Wungu (1922: 59).<sup>36</sup> Manda is (was) the name of a chiefdom on the western side of Lake Rukwa, north of Uwungu proper. It is reputed to have been founded by refugees from Uwanda to the south-west of the lake, and to have been carved out of the southernmost part of the Kimbu chiefdom of Mwendo. Refugees from Uwungu itself are said to have later founded the chiefdom of Songezi, to the north of Manda, also on what was originally Mwendo land (Shorter 1972: 131-132, 175-176). Aylward Shorter, who began anthropological research among the Kimbu in 1964, provides the following information on the linguistic situation in this area:

“Along the whole of the western side [of Kimbu territory], north and south of the Rungwa, Konongo [from the north] has entered and mingled with Kimbu while the small chiefdoms founded in the Rukwa area by refugees from across the Lake have brought with them, as one would expect, influences from Ufipa. The Kimbu today recognize this western situation by referring to the mixed language of the Zina and Mwendo areas as *ikinyamwendo*, or the Mwendo language, but they regard it as being more like Kimbu than Konongo.” (1972: 36)

This implies that, contrary to Johnston's belief, the speech of Manda (and Songezi) can be classified as a Kimbu, rather than Wungu, dialect. A more conclusive statement, however, must await further research.

In Uwungu proper, Labroussi noted significant differences between the speech of an older male informant from Maleza and a younger man from Galula, whose dialect was 'more Safwa-like' (1999: 360-362). Otherwise we know nothing about the current dialect situation. Although samples of its vocabulary were among the first to be published, Wungu remains one of the least known languages of the Corridor. The C.M.S. missionary J. T. Last recorded a list of 'Ungu' words and phrases from a slave girl being taken to the coast (1885: 19). Harry Johnston later collected Wungu lexical material during his travels in the Corridor (1897: 486-501), and reproduced a small selection of this material in the second volume of his *Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages* (1922: 59-60). His statement that "Little or nothing is known about its [Wungu's] verb conjugation" (1922: 60) is still true today. Apart from the more recent collection of lexical data and the publication of discussions based on these (e.g. Nurse 1988; Labroussi 1999; Fourshey *in prep.*), we have very little in the way of descriptive material on Wungu.<sup>37</sup>

This lack of material is all the more keenly felt because of the anomalous position of Wungu and its evident importance to an understanding of historical linguistic

processes in the Corridor (Nurse 1999: 32). The ambivalent status of Wungu was first highlighted by Derek Nurse, who pointed to discrepancies between the lexical and phonological evidence for its wider affiliations in the Corridor (1988: 50-53, 73). More recently, in her study of the relationship between spirantisation and vowel reduction in south-west Tanzania, Catherine Labroussi has shown that Wungu presents the unusual combination of a seven vowel system with extensive spirantisation (1999: 360-362). Her explanation of this is that Wungu, like the Sukuma dialect of Fipa, has been subject to 'structural mixing'. In the Wungu case she suggests that this was the result of 'populations of the Southern Mwika type, intermingling with populations of the Kimbu (or Safwa?) type' (1999: 373-374).

Labroussi goes on to say that 'Although little is known about the history of this group, I believe that detailed ethnographic and historical research will confirm this population mixing hypothesis' (1999: 374). In fact we already know a fair amount about Wungu history from published and unpublished oral traditions and the researches of Aylward Shorter. The oral traditions claim that the Wungu chiefdom was founded by Sagara invaders who conquered the indigenous peoples of the area and united them under a single chief (Ellis 1957: 201-202; Finch 1959: 77-81; Shorter 1974: 5-7; Gay 1981). Whether or not these Sagara really did come from Usagara in (what is now) eastern Tanzania, as Shorter argues, it may be more significant that they are also alleged to have founded many of the Kimbu chiefdoms (Shorter 1972: 180-198; 1974: 5). Therefore, as well as sharing a border with Kimbu speakers (see the above), a very close historical connection is claimed between the Wungu and their Kimbu neighbours. This might well provide one source of the 'population mixing' hypothesised by Labroussi.

Other aspects of such 'population mixing' are suggested by descriptions in the traditions of the former indigenous inhabitants of Uwungu. A particularly clear statement, with reference to linguistic affiliations, was given by the chief of the Wungu, *Mwene Karolo Ilonga II bin Sasawata*:

"Before the conquest this and the neighbouring country had been inhabited by many different peoples, living here and there and without any one chief. There were the Wasangazila, Wamembe, Wakipindi, Wanjila, Wachuwi, Wambulwe, Walunga and Wapimbili. The Wasanganzila spoke a mixture of Kinyamwanga and Kinyika, the Wapimbili a mixture of Kikimbu and Kisafwa. The remainder had their own language, that is Kimembe, with slight differences of pronunciation. The Wakipindi and Wambulwe had an accent which was a lengthening of the vowels." (Finch 1959: 81).

According to another source, the Pimbili were subject to the Kimbu of Kipembawe; while an independent summary of Ilonga II's history notes that the Sanganzila 'were of Nyamwanga origin and seem to have been politically dominant' (Shorter 1975: 5). This is another possible source of the mix postulated by Labroussi. Otherwise, Finch's translation of Ilonga's history implies that the language of the indigenous Membe – the affiliations of which are not given – was adopted by the subjects of the new Sagara / Wungu chiefdom (1959: 79). Ilonga's son and successor, however, told John Gay that the Sanganzila and Membe were absorbed and their languages lost (1981: 2).

Further information on the different aboriginal groups can be extracted from these and other traditional histories of the Wungu and their neighbours. The Wungu also appear in the historical traditions of peoples further south in the Corridor, for example those of the Penja (Wilson 1958: 9, 45). Contrary to the impression given by Labroussi, there is already good evidence to suggest that Uwungu has long been subject to different cultural and linguistic influences, some of which may be responsible for the 'structural mixing' that preliminary analyses of Wungu suggest must have once occurred. There is also clearly a need for further research, both to describe Wungu and its dialects, and to further elucidate the affiliations of and historical circumstances that gave rise to the language as it is spoken today.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

As the case of Wungu reminds us, there are considerable gaps in our understanding of the languages and dialects of the Corridor. We cannot even be sure that the languages of the Corridor, as defined here, form a single genetic group. The genetic unity of the West and Central Corridor groups, the combined 'Mwika-Nyika', is reasonably well established. However, their combined historical and classificatory relationship with the East Corridor group, Nyakyusa-Ngonde and Ndali, remains uncertain. As we have seen, there is also considerable uncertainty over the classificatory position of Wungu. The current consensus seems to be that it is an isolate, belonging to a branch co-ordinate with one or other of the main Corridor groups (East Corridor or West/Central Corridor?). Alternatively, it has been implied that Wungu may represent the outcome of a language shift from one group in the Corridor (West Corridor?) to another, possibly external, group (Central Corridor or West Tanzania?).

Progress in clarifying these historical and taxonomic relationships is hampered by a general lack of knowledge about the languages and dialects of the Corridor. Our understanding of the dialect geography of the Corridor is certainly better than it was when Monica Wilson first sketched out her 'peoples' and 'dialect groups'. Much of our evidence, however, is anecdotal and based on informants' statements, coloured as they are by perceptions and definitions of ethnic identity. To make matters worse, linguists collecting lexical data from different languages have tended to restrict their sampling to the better-known idioms in a single country (more often than not Tanzania). In their analyses they have usually employed existing ethnic / linguistic labels, without subjecting these to critical scrutiny. As a result we continue to reproduce a list of languages and varieties whose precise status and relationship to one another remains undetermined.

Catherine Labroussi's recent analysis of 'Fipa' and 'Lambya' material has exposed some of the dangers inherent in using such labels uncritically, especially when they conceal unexpected variation. In future we should not be surprised to find further taxonomic complications of the kind revealed by Labroussi (i.e. her 'Fipa-Sukuma' vs. 'Southern Fipa', 'Nyiha-like' vs. 'Ndali-like' Lambya). As she notes, referring specifically to her own study, 'for this type of analysis an extensive dialectological survey is necessary' (1999: 375). We might add that such a survey would be desirable for any type of analysis, whether its aim was to determine historical relationships *or* contemporary patterns of language use.

Even the better-known languages of the Corridor remain inadequately described. Consider the fact that we possess only two published dictionaries of Corridor languages – on Mambwe and Nyakyusa – both of which were compiled by non-linguists. Many of the descriptive papers on individual languages are seriously outdated, though the number of professional studies is increasing, especially at the eastern end of Corridor. Monograph-length grammars exist only for Central Nyiha, the Mbwila dialect of Safwa, and Nyakyusa. Social and anthropological linguistics in the Corridor is equally undeveloped. Recent sociolinguistic surveys undertaken by teams from the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Dodoma are the only studies of their kind to have been undertaken, at least in the Tanzanian part of the Corridor. Very few papers have been published on different social aspects of language use, or on specialist topics such as ethnobiology. And our knowledge of the ‘oral literature’ of peoples in the Corridor is largely restricted to works on the Fipa, Safwa, and Nyakyusa. This is a poor harvest for more than a century of research.

We began this paper with a quotation from the ‘Foreword’ to Doke’s survey of Bantu studies (1945), noting that our aims, though rather modest in comparison, were similar. Despite the progress made in recent decades, there remain glaring gaps in our knowledge of languages and language use in the Nyasa-Tanganyika Corridor. Like Doke’s sponsors, Daryll Ford and Ida Ward, we hope that we have made these gaps more apparent, so that future research can be planned more effectively. Moreover, we would like to echo their wish that ‘Those in possession of additional material, published or unpublished, will, it is hoped, be encouraged to make their information and hypotheses available as soon as possible’. Finally, we hope that linguists working in other areas will be stimulated to take similar stock of research and its achievements to date.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Many people have helped us write this paper by providing information and other kinds of assistance. We would like to express our gratitude to them all, especially Robert Botne, Dan Brockington, Annemarie Burke, Cymone Fourshey, Ania Kotarska, Katherine and David Liddle, David Moyer, Louise Nagler, and Derek Nurse. None of them, of course, bears any responsibility for the conclusions we have reached.

<sup>2</sup> Ironically Nurse’s colleague and collaborator, the anthropologist George Park, failed to recognise the historical and ethnographic implications of the excision of ‘Hehe-Bena’ (Nurse’s ‘Southern Highlands’) from the Corridor. Park organised the symposium which Nurse’s 1983 paper was written for, and, as part of their subsequent joint project, produced a paper intended to complement Nurse’s 1988 overview (Nurse and Park 1988; Park 1988).

<sup>3</sup> In this paper Nurse has renamed Corridor as ‘SW Tanzania’ and Nyakyusa-Ndali as simply ‘Nyakyusa’. This is to be regretted: ‘SW Tanzania’ languages, as defined by Nurse, are to be found in both Zambia and Malawi as well as Tanzania, while Ndali cannot be considered a ‘variety’ of Nyakyusa as Nurse implies.

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately we have been unable to obtain a copy of Labroussi’s 1998 dissertation. Our discussion of her work is therefore based solely on her published paper (1999).

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<sup>5</sup> Ehret's 1998 classification does, however, recall Johnston's assignment of the Western Corridor languages to his Group L, 'Taňganyika-Baňgweulu', and of the Central and Eastern Corridor languages to his Group M, 'N. W. Nyasa' (1922: 4).

<sup>6</sup> It should be emphasised that this is work in progress. We are very grateful to the author for allowing us to quote from it.

<sup>7</sup> According to Nurse, Pimbwe is a seven-vowel language and Lungwa (Rungwa) a five-vowel language (1988: 105).

<sup>8</sup> The population estimates reported in the *Ethnologue* should be treated with some caution: they are based on extrapolations from earlier censuses, in this case the 1957 Tanganyika census. Extrapolations of this kind are fraught with uncertainty, as are assumed links between claims to ethnic affiliation in census returns and more objective determinations of ethnicity and language use and ability.

<sup>9</sup> The list of Fipa dialects in the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) is based largely on Willis' earliest statement, in which Ntile ('Yantili') and Pemba were treated as alternate names for the same dialect (1966: 18). Strangely, though, the *Ethnologue* omits Sukuma, which was first on Willis' list. The *Ethnologue* also lists Cile (Chile) as a dialect of Fipa. Ucile is (was) the name of a small chiefdom in the south-east of Ufipa. Willis, however, had earlier observed that 'Their language is now indistinguishable from Fipa', without mentioning which dialect of Fipa (1966: 67). Another small group whose speech should be investigated are the Kulwe (called Kuulwe by Willis), occupants of a traditional chiefdom on the borders of Ufipa, Uwanda, and Unyamwanga (Willis 1966: 65). According to Slaats, referring to the foundation of a Roman Catholic mission at the royal village of Mkulwe in 1899, their language and customs were 'very similar to those of the Wafipa' (n.d.: 27).

<sup>10</sup> This Sukuma is not to be confused with the well-known language of the same name spoken to the south of Lake Victoria. There is no known connection between the Fipa dialect and the West Tanzania language (Willis 1981: 235, fn.11).

<sup>11</sup> Whiteley's two Sukuma informants, interviewed in Dar es Salaam, also told him about the Kwa ('aaKwa') of the Rukwa valley, leading him to believe that all Fipa belonged to one or other of these two dialect groups (1964: 2).

<sup>12</sup> Willis also made the following interesting observation about this dialect: 'The Sukuma dialect group of the Fipa have a fund of esoteric words and phrases which they employ when they wish to disguise their meaning from outsiders, including, and perhaps especially, other sub-groups of Fipa' (1966: xi, fn.17).

<sup>13</sup> Father Peter van der Pas in Sumbawanga is reported to have collected an extensive set of Fipa proverbs. These remain unpublished (David Moyer, personal communication, March 2000).

<sup>14</sup> The first LMS station, where Jones began work, was at Kasakalawe, near the modern port of Mpulungu, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. This was in Lungu territory. In 1890 the missionaries moved up from the lake shore to the plateau, where they founded a new station at Kawimbe, on the land of a Mambwe chief (Watson 1958: 38-39).

<sup>15</sup> Jones' translations included his *Iwangeli liakwe Mwene witu na Gatula witu Yesu Kristu lilemvilwe na Marko (Mark)* (1893; reprinted 1903) and *Ulangililo upya wa Mfumu itu na gatula Yesu Kristu (New Testament)* (1901). Subsequent translations included the following: *Ilandwe lisuma lilemvilwe na Mako (Mark)* – a new translation by E. H. Clark (1909); *Milimo ya Apostolo (Acts)* (1912); *Ilandwe lisuma lilemvilwe na Mateyo (Matthew)* (1913); *Mateo, Mako, Luka, Yoane, Milimo ya Apostolo (- Akalata ya Apostolo nu Uumbwilo) (The Four Gospels and Acts, Romans to Revelation, in Mambwe-Lungu)* (1921-22); and *Lupapulo lwa Masamu (Psalms)* (1924). All of these works were printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society in London.

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the tree diagrams appended to Nurse's paper are based on one particular analysis (by Michael Mann) of Nurse and Phillipson's lexical data. Other strategies used by Mann produced 'slightly variant results' (Nurse 1988: 87). It may be, however, that there is more lexical

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distance between Tanzanian Lungu and Mambwe than between Zambian Lungu and Mambwe, reflecting the geographical position of Lungu in Tanzania, where its principal neighbour is Fipa.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to ‘Mambwe-Lungu’, the *Ethnologue* also has an entry for ‘Rungi’, described as an unclassified Bantu language on the south-east shore of Lake Tanganyika (Grimes 1996). The accompanying map of Tanzanian languages shows this ‘Rungi’ as an enclave in the Fipa-speaking area, some distance to the north of the ‘Mambwe-Lungu’-speaking area. We have not come across any other record of such a language in the literature, but suspect that this ‘Rungi’ may be a mistake for Lungu.

<sup>18</sup> We do not know if the *Cimambwe Grammar* (1973) cited by Halemba (1994: xv) is a reprint of the 1962 work of the same title cited by Polomé (1980: 9).

<sup>19</sup> Most of Moyer’s material was collected in the period 1978-82 (personal communication, March 2000).

<sup>20</sup> The figure for vocabulary correspondences is 92% in both cases. It should be noted that Kashoki and Mann’s figures are generally much higher than those which have emerged from lexicostatistical studies across the border in Tanzania. This should be taken as a reminder of the pitfalls involved in comparing figures derived from separate analyses using different data sets and different methodological procedures.

<sup>21</sup> These include the following translations, the first by A. Dewar, and most of the rest (except where stated) by J. A. Chisholm: *Ilandwe Lizima ilyakwe Tatakuru e Yesu Kristu lino Luke wawaliká* (Luke) (1903); *Milimo ya Wapositile (Acts I)* (1930); *Amapistoli ya Mupositile Pauli ku Wakolose na ku Watesalonika...* (*The Epistles to the Colossians and the Thessalonians in Chinamwanga*) (1930); *Amapistola ya Mupositile Pauli kwe Timoti, kwe Tito na kwe Filemoni...* (*The Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon in Chinamwanga*) (1930); *Amapistola yakwe Pauli umupositile ku wa Korinte...* (*Corinthians*) (1930); *Ukuwumbulika kwakwe Yohani Mutele (Revelation)* (1930); *Ivangeli lyakwe Yesu Klisitu lino Luke Wawalika (Luke)* (1931); *Ivangeli lyakwe Yesu Klisitu lino Marko Wawalika...* (*Mark*) (1931); *Itestamento Lipya (New Testament)* (1933); *Amalumbo (Psalms)* – translated by C. Sikaundi and F. Macpherson (1953); *Ilayano Kali, amawaliko yamwi aya kufuma mwi Testamento Kali (Old Testament selections)* – anonymous (1960); *Ivangeli lyakwe Yohani (John)* – anonymous (1962). Dewar’s first translation was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in London; all the rest by the National Bible Society of Scotland in Edinburgh or (in the case of the last work listed) in Glasgow.

<sup>22</sup> The ethnonym Wanda is plausibly derived from the Eastern Bantu root \**-bándá*, which may originally have referred to Rift Valley plains and grassland similar to the environment occupied by the Wanda themselves (Ehret 1998: 37-38).

<sup>23</sup> This mistake has been carried forward into the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996) where ‘Wandia’ is given as an alternative name for Wanda. Harry Johnston was at least careful to distinguish Wanda (‘Ici-Wanda’) from Wandya (‘Ici-Wandia’) (1922: 60, fn.1).

<sup>24</sup> Presumably Tambo was added to take account of the results of Kashoki and Mann’s lexicostatistical analysis (1978: 54).

<sup>25</sup> Derivates of \**-(y)ikà* therefore have a much wider distribution as place names and ethnonyms in different parts of eastern and southern Africa.

<sup>26</sup> In Lungu-Mambwe, for example, *inyika* usually describes a plain or grassland (David Moyer, personal communication, March 2000; compare also the entry under **nyika** in Halemba 1994: 594).

<sup>27</sup> As Willis notes, it can only be assumed that those who called themselves ‘Nyika’ in the census are in fact Western Nyika and not Central Nyiha (1966: 68, fn.399).

<sup>28</sup> Bachmann is named as the translator of the *Tesitamenti umupwa wa Mwene witu Yesu Cilisiti (Neues Testament unseres Herrn Jesu Christi, ins Nyiha übersetzt)*, printed in 1913 in London by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Other early translations, printed by the Moravians at Herrnhut, include

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*Fibula wa Xinyiha* (undated), *Teti-Teti: Fibel des Nyiha* (also undated), and *Inongwa izya mwa Tesitamenti muhali (Übersetzung altTestamentlicher Geschichten ins Nyiha)* (1913). The early New Testament translations were revised in the 1960s. At least two of the Gospels appeared separately under the imprint of the British and Foreign Bible Society: *Ivangeli inza sh'asimyile Umaliko (Mark: revised text)* (1960), and *Ivangeli inza sh'asimyile uYohani (John: revised text)* (1963). The complete revision was printed by The Bible Societies in Central Africa (Blantyre, Salisbury, Kitwe) in 1965: *Tesitamenti Umupwa wa Mwene Witu Uyesu Chilisti Umuposhi wa Nsi (The New Testament in Nyiha)*.

<sup>29</sup> According to Monica Wilson, Lambya is also originally the name of a locality, subsequently applied to the people occupying it (1958: 29).

<sup>30</sup> There are exceptions: Harwood, for example, treats Mbwila as non-Safwa, like the Malila (1970: 1, 3-4).

<sup>31</sup> Harwood calls the Safwa proper by the invented name 'Mwanabantu'.

<sup>32</sup> The only Safwa religious text we have a full reference for is an undated hymn book entitled *Inyimbo zya Shikilisti Shisafwa*, printed by the Vuga Press in Soni for the Moravian Church in Southern Tanzania.

<sup>33</sup> The religious literature in Nyakyusa-Ngonde is considerable. Meinhof (1910: 270 ff.) listed some of the Bible translations published by the Berlin and Moravian missions up to 1908. Some later works were cited by Berger (1937/38: 283) and others are available in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Felberg (1996: viii) provides a list of more recent Bible translations.

<sup>34</sup> Busse and his fellow missionary Theodor Meyer also produced draft manuscripts of Nyakyusa vocabulary (Busse n.d.; Meyer and Busse n.d.).

<sup>35</sup> Professor Botne also has a research student, Tiffany Kershner, currently in the field studying tense and aspect and the classification of verb types in Sukwa (Robert Botne, personal communication, December 1999).

<sup>36</sup> This Manda is not to be confused with the Southern Highlands language of the same name spoken on the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa.

<sup>37</sup> Von Glauning published a very brief description of 'Wabungu' greetings in his survey of salutations throughout German East Africa (1903: 131). One of the songs of the Sangu women's *uwuxala* society recorded by Walsh in 1981 is said to have been sung almost entirely in Wungu (Walsh 1980-81: *uwuxala* transcript no.003): the majority of these songs, however, are in a mixture of Sangu and Nyiha.

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