

University Report

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COSMO PIETERSE: Hello and this week a tightly packed programme with news of Zambian research for the Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in Eastern Africa, and of the discipline of history also in that part of the world. So let's go straight to the University of Makerere, Uganda to hear from Elizabeth Keeble.

**ELIZABETH
KEEBLE:**

In November 'University Report' broadcast an interview with one of the organisers of a workshop on the teaching of history that had been held in the University of Zambia. Sixty teachers from all over the country attended as well as delegates from the countries around Zambia, including two from each of the East African states. These six, I believe, were particularly vocal about the kind of approach that East African historians should use in changing over from the concentration on European history to that of Africa itself. I wondered what Uganda was contributing to all this, so I approached Dr. Okete Shireya who has been teaching in the Department of History for over a year.

Dr. Shireya, I must admit I was surprised to learn that there had been an enormous increase in the number of first year students taking history. Do you think that perhaps because of what you described to me earlier as the radical transformation in history teaching, that more students are being attracted to the subject?

DR. SHIROYA:

Yes, I think it's partly because of the work which the department has done, that these students are, in fact, choosing to pursue history. One of the things we've done is to go out to the field, to go and visit these students in their own schools and tell them something about our department and what we are doing. I think when they hear that we are now teaching, what I might call, real African history because of what you refer to as the radical transformation, because of this, these students like to come to Makerere University and take courses in history.

COSMO PETERSON:

So a conscious effort to recruit students, and a radical transformation of the syllabus. Well Uganda is by no means alone in Africanising its syllabus - nor is it alone in still having a large number of expatriate teachers. Inevitably this must create problems - so what Elizabeth Keeble asked Dr. Shiroya, what is Makerere's Department of History doing about it?

DR. SHIROYA:

What are we doing about this? I think what we have done, what we are doing at Makerere, particularly in history, is first of all, to try and write books so that those expatriates, although they are not Africans themselves, but we turn them into what we call 'objective Africanists'. In other words, they have the facts, they have the interpretation of African history and then they can use this to teach our own African children or pupils or students.

DR. SHIROYA:
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Another way in which we try to help in this regard is, in fact, to organise what we might call conferences. Conferences of teachers, teachers of history. - both Africans and Europeans - these teachers come to conferences and we discuss with them some of the problems and issues that confront teachers of African history. So from that point of view, writing books and organising conferences, we feel that we are going to have an impact, a positive one I hope, which will help these teachers, whether they are Africans or whether they are expatriates, to know something about the new interpretation in African history.

ELIZABETH KEBBLE: And the students coming out of University?

DR. SHIROYA: This is another important point, and now I might add a third one: that our own students as they go through the department, we process them so to speak, we teach them and train them to go out into the schools and interpret history the way we see it these days, so it is another way of saying that we are turning out teachers who teach history from the point of view of the new interpretation.

ELIZABETH KEBBLE: And all these new students that are coming in are absolutely certain of a place in secondary school teaching history?

DR. SHIROYA: This I should say is the truth.

COSMO PETERSE: Well obviously all these new teachers of history need materials to teach their transformed subject, and in collecting material Makerere - like most other African Universities is going out to the countryside to get oral evidence from the people, from individuals and from groups, as Dr. Shiroya goes on to explain..

DR. SHIROYA: Sometimes we approach it from the point of view of what we call 'collective interviews' meaning we collect old men on a particular day and warn them about our coming, and then we find ten to twenty men together and we engage in a discussion. Sometimes it is an individual interview, if we know that one man in the area is well known for his information or ideas, then we go to him and talk to him. So that in both these approaches our assumption, we hope it is a correct one, is that these people know something about the past, they are mostly in their eighties, nineties and sometimes we are lucky to get in those who are one hundred plus, and they talk to us. From this information we are able to come back to the University and process this material just like when you work in a library or in a collection or in archives. This is what we are dealing with and we hope that by using this information, this oral evidence, this oral tradition as we now call it, we are going to come up with books that say something about Africa before the Europeans came.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: Is this just the staff of the department, or do you involve students in this work too?

DR. SHIROYA: This work involves both staff and students. We usually go out with our third year students just before they graduate and instead of offering eight papers they offer seven papers and what we call a graduating essay which counts for the eighth paper. They take it very seriously, as part of their course work so to speak, and in their last year in school they turn out an essay because of what they've been working on in their own respective areas, and there is a member of staff supervising them in their areas so that it is joint work of staff and students and in this way we have been able to get most of the information, relevant information, from all parts of Uganda, and I think this is going on not only in Uganda but in East Africa, and from what I hear from our friends in West Africa the same approach is being in fact, applied over there.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE: And then presumably you'll join up and there will be an all-over picture of the history of Africa?

DR. SHIROYA:

Yes, this is what we hope to come up with. Just this past December we had a Social Science Conference in Dar-es-Salaam which brought together a number of scholars, including historians, and it was interesting for me to see what we are doing in Eastern and Central Africa because scholars came from Zambia, as far South as Zambia and also us in the North here. And they are doing almost the same work, you know, going to the field and getting material and information and writing books. So you are right in suggesting it is a continental approach and we hope that in the near future we should be able to know something about the continent as a whole, from this work which is being collected by a number of scholars.

ELIZABETH KEEBLE:

Before you actually write the books are there any sort of written pamphlets or broad-sheets which can be distributed to the schools before you actually get the books, as they take a long time to get.

DR. SHIROYA:

I'm glad you brought up that point because, we are not going to wait for books, publishing books is a long process, so the answer is yes. What we do is to come up with what we call departmental or seminar papers, we read these papers to small groups of scholars and discuss them.

DR. SHIROYA:
cont:

After we've discussed the papers and made corrections we feel safe to send them out to different schools and then these would be used as notes for the lectures and lessons. And they help in the interim period before we get the books out, so that the teachers have something to go on with instead of waiting for two, three or five years before the books comes out.

COSMO FLETCHER:

Dr. Okete Shiroya, lecturer in history at Makerere University talking to Elizabeth Keeble in Kampala. And Dr. Shiroya's department is hoping to bring out their first book on Southern Uganda - by mid 1972, and that books on the rest of the country will be ready for publication of 1973-1974. And I for one, look forward to them! Something else I'm looking forward to is the final report on one of the biggest research projects done yet on language in Africa. It's some time now since we heard news in University Report of the "Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in Eastern Africa" so just to recap, five countries are taking part - Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia, and today we hear from Zambia where their part of the project has been completed I don't have to underline how important a question language is, how necessary the information this survey is gathering is for so many aspects of national development. The information each country has gathered comes under three headings -

COSMO PILTERSE:
cont:

one, language distribution and classification, two, language in society, that is, which languages are used, how, in what circumstances and three, language in education, that is what languages are taught, why, by whom, and how well trained are the teachers.

In Zambia the team leader is Mr. Hubanga Kashoki - research fellow at the Institute of African Studies at the University in Lusaka. John Barnor talked to Mr. Kashoki. For some aspects of the survey, information was gathered by Mr. Kashoki and his colleague who dealt with language in education, by sending questionnaires to schools, to teachers and especially to language teachers. This information was then checked and collated. What were Mr. Kashoki's own methods?

MR. KOSHOKI:

First of all I tried to look into what has been done about the language situation in Zambia and here I was lucky to find that there was a survey carried out, roughly between 1956/59 by Professor Fortune and others. They compiled a list of languages spoken in the then Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. From the information I got I tried to tabulate the number of languages we have in Zambia, and I sent out a questionnaire at that very early stage to people I thought had considerable knowledge about the language situation, so I would be able to get from them what they thought about the languages in their area: What was the language called?

MR. KASHOKE:
cont:

Who spoke the language? What was the name of the people, and that kind of thing?

From this I then went on to develop a word list because I was going out to look at a comparative, a vocabulary of these areas so as to be able to see how closely related these words were in the areas -- this is just one side of it. I also had what I thought were Bantu typical sentences because as you know in Zambia all the languages, except for one or two in the extreme Western Province are in the Bantu family, and so I tried to compile sentences from what we think are typical characteristics of Bantu languages. This was again to help in the measuring of the relationships between these languages.

Another approach in this area was to ask people in those areas where I went, what they thought were the languages surrounding them, what they said their own language was, and whether the languages surrounding them were understandable to the people in the village in which they lived. This was help in the measurement of mutual intelligibility of these languages. You can't rely on this kind of thing, but it does help in your classification to some extent.

COSMO PIETERSE: But the land area to be covered by the survey is a vast one; the language area even larger. And Mr. Kashoke has been unhappy that his one-year long survey has been so short, he feels he may have just scratched the surface of the subject. But John Barnor sees another side to Mr. Kashoke's work - despite the problems he's faced, and the shortcoming of his results.

JOHN BARNOR: I agree that what you've done so far perhaps amounts to just a scratch of the surface, but at the same time I believe that it will provide a basis for others to work on, to go deeper into what you are doing now.

DR. SHIROYA: In fact, this is what is comforting to us, the thought that what we have done has set the stage for more in depth studies, so that people coming can see what has been done and can take over from where we left. I could give one example here, one thing I tried to do was to look into what we have been calling 'between language communication.' You know in Zambia the government has decided on seven languages as the officially approved languages for education, for broadcasting and so on. And what we've been trying to do was to measure mutual intelligibility between them. I could simplify this by saying, for example, does a Kaonde who has never been exposed to Bemba, how much would he understand of Bemba, or a Lozi who has never been exposed to Nyanja. How much of Nyanja would he understand at first contact?

DR. SHIROYA:

cont:

Now here again there was not really much time in which to do this adequately, so we are hoping that once people have examined the results, the findings of this study, and they find that this is applicable to our language situation here, they could go a stage further and take, for example, Nyanja and look at the languages in the Eastern Province which are more or less related to Nyanja and see what the relationship there is as regards mutual intelligibility. Because as you know, it is very important that if you are beaming Nyanja to a variety of communities you are pre-supposing that these people are understanding what you are beaming to them in varying degrees, so we are hoping that this study is found to be interesting so people will take it up and will go and do more work in this area.

COSMO PIETERSE:

Mr. Mubanga Kashoko, research fellow at the Institute of African Studies, University of Zambia Lusaka, talking to John Barnor.

Well the international survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in Eastern Africa is now nearing completion in all five participating countries - and of course, we'll be bringing you further news as soon as we can but in the meantime as usual until the same time next week from me Cosmo Pieterse it's goodbye for now.