Journal of African Languages and Literary Studies (JoALLS)

ISSN 2633-2108 (Print) ISSN 2633-2116 (Online)

Indexed by SCOPUS, IBSS, COPERNICUS, EBSCO and Sabinet

Volume 5, Number 3, December 2024

Pp 25-40

Reconstruction of Proto-Shona: A Case of Karanga

DOI https://doi.org/10.31920/2633-2116/2024/v5n3a2

Patricia Ruramisai Mabugu
University of Zimbabwe
Department of Languages Literature and Culture
Email: pmabugu@arts.uz.ac.zw

Lovemore Mutonga
University of Zimbabwe
Department of Languages Literature and Culture
Email: lovemoremutonga@gmail.com

&

Michelle Mabvumo
University of Zimbabwe
Department of Languages Lierature and Culture
Email: mabvumomichelle@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is an attempt at reconstructing Proto-Shona from a phonological perspective. Specifically, the paper hypothesises that there was one variety of Shona before it split into a variety of dialects as glottochronology studies have indicated. In other words, this involves the hypothetical reconstruction of the phonology of the ancestral Shona language. The investigation specifically focuses on the exploration of the partial phoneme inventory that constitutes what we are terming Proto-Shona and the phonological processes that resulted

in the splitting of Shona into the various surface dialects we have today. The research uses document analysis as the research methodology and the data for the reconstruction came from Hannan's Standard Shona Dictionary (1959) and Fortune's Essays on Shona Dialects (2004). The research partially applied a comparative method and internal reconstruction procedures to the three dialects that make up the core standard Shona, which are Karanga, Zezuru, and Manyika (Doke, 1931). The data collected for the research were guided by the phonemes that distinguish the dialects of Shona. The study reconstructs and compiles four consonants, which are /*ʃ/, /*ʒ/, /*f/, and /*v̩/ as phonemes that can be hypothesised to constitute Proto-Shona. We applied the distinctive feature approach to validate this claim. From phonological processes and acquisitional evidence, the study concludes that before Shona split into the various dialects it is associated with today, Karanga was the original protolanguage of Shona.

Keywords: *Proto–Shona, reconstruction, phonemes, Karanga, Manyika, Zezuru.*

Introduction

The study is broadly within the area of reconstruction of a proto language. Specifically, this study hypothesises the existence of an ancestral Shona before splitting into various dialects that are constitutive of the current Shona. The focus of this study is to trace the phonological forms of Shona before the split into various dialects that Doke amalgamated in his 1931 hypothesis to formalise the writing system of Shona. Central to this exploration is a hypothesis that investigates the typical sounds that constitute the Proto-Shona and the phonological processes that resulted in the splitting of the dialects and becoming 'different' in terms of sounds. In other words, this study hypothesises that before Shona was amalgamated into the number of dialects it is assumed to constitute, there was a language called Proto-Shona[1].

To add to this, the reconstruction is an identification of cognate sounds found in three dialects, Karanga, Manyika, and Zezuru[2] that are assumed to constitute core Shona, as indicated in Doke's discussions. Shona is used as the collective term for the dialects, which are Karanga,

[1]This hypothesis of Proto-Shona is controversial given that Shona itself is a man-made language by Doke. Historical literature on what language was spoken during the Mzilikazi raids is what the researchers want to explore. The researchers felt that the use of 'masvina' as the Ndebeles would refer to Shonas has derogatory connotations and hence opted for Doke'.

[2]Dialects spoken in Zimbabwe mostly in areas like Masvingo, Manicaland and mainly areas constituting the Mashonaland Provinces and Harare.

Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, and Ndau[3] (Doke, 1931). Among these dialects, Zezuru, Karanga, and Manyika dialects were recommended to constitute the core Standard Shona since they represent the full range of sounds needed to unify the writing system of the Shona language (ibid). In other words, according to Fortune (2004), these dialects had common sounds and outstanding sounds that were somehow related. Therefore, there is a firm assumption that these dialects of Shona share a common ancestor at some point in their history, which is hypothesised to be Proto-Shona[4]. This ancestor is assumed to have shared one sound system, and hence it is the main objective of this study to establish these proto-phonemes. Proto language refers to an ancestral or parent language from which other languages descend (Campbell, 1998). Having this firm assumption, the current study intends to reconstruct the dialect(s) that can be hypothesised to constitute Proto-Shona from a sound perspective. The present study also attempts to make a description of the sound changes among the dialects of Shona.

According to Anttilla (1989), the comparative method is the dominant method in comparative linguistics, which means that the method can be described as the reference point whenever dealing with language change. Campbell also clearly spelled out that

> The comparative method is central to historical linguistics, the most important of the various methods and techniques we use to recover linguistic history. (1998:108).

The present study intends to adopt the comparative method as a technique used in historical and comparative linguistics to reveal the ancestral Shona. The study mainly focuses on this method using Shona dialects, which make up the core standard Shona, based on the general principles of the method. This procedure is applied to reconstruct the hypothesised Proto-Shona and identify the proto-phonemes.

Reconstruction studies focus on phonological reconstruction. Nyauma (2016) studied the phonological reconstruction of Ekegusii and Egekuria languages spoken outside the Mara region[5]. The study was based on a comparison of the phonological forms using evidence from

[3] Ndau according to the current constitution is considered a language and no longer a dialect of Shona, see Section 6 of the current Zimbabwean Constitution.

[4]Proto-Shona because the reconstruction is based on Guthrie's Bantu language zones A to S where we have the S10 group called the Shona group.

[5]Region of Tanzania south of Kenya on the eastern of Lake Victoria (Nyauma, 2016).

the core vocabulary nouns of these two languages. The objective was to compare the phonological systems of the two languages in an attempt to reconstruct parent forms of the basic vocabulary nouns. Through the comparative method, Nyauma looked at how the languages share a common ancestor and the phonological processes that resulted in them splitting and becoming different. The study concluded that Egekuria was the ancestor of Proto-Ekegusii-Egekuria. Taking from Nyauma (2016), this present study takes on board the comparative method in attempting to reconstruct the ancestral Shona and older sound forms. Importantly, the present study also gives the phonological processes explaining the separation of the Shona dialects. To add to this, Pittayaporn (2009) studies the phonology of Proto-Tai. The focus was the reconstruction of the ancestral syllable structure and initial consonants of Tai languages using the comparative method. The study concluded that Proto-Tai was a sesquisyllabic[6] language, and the initial consonants included plosives and implosives. Pittayaporn's study is of great importance to the present study in giving insights that phonological reconstruction can yield proto consonants; therefore, the current study is an attempt to reconstruct the consonants of ancestral Shona.

Previous studies highlight the power of the comparative method and the phonological processes in explaining the relationships among languages and describing how languages split from their ancestors (Antony, 2010, Anttila, 1989). It was also indicated that comparative reconstruction has its basis in phonology, and it can only be applied to languages that have similarities, which can be either phonological or structural (Boestoen, 2008). This study specifically intends to reconstruct the phonology of Proto-Shona, significantly seeking to reconstruct the phonemes that can be hypothesised to constitute Proto-Shona. Therefore, the researchers seek to reconstruct the ancestor of Shona to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Which dialect constitutes what can be hypothesised as Proto-Shona?
2. Through the use of the comparative method, which sounds constitute Proto-Shona?

Byrd (2010) attempts a reconstruction of the Indo-European languages[7] syllabification by analysing the consonant clusters to predict which of the

[6]Proto-Tai consists of minor or reduced syllable with a full syllable as well.

[7] A family of languages spoken in Europe.

consonant clusters can occur word-medially. The scholar argues that there are at least five phonological processes used to predict the type of syllabification. More importantly, Byrd was guided by the Optimality Theory as the primary phonological framework explaining the reconstruction. The study contributes significantly to Indo-European languages by developing a hypothesis about the Indo-European phonological system through syllabification. Norquest (2007) focused on a phonological reconstruction of Proto-Hlai to reconstruct the phoneme inventory of Proto-Hlai. The reconstruction was based on data from twelve Hlai[8] languages spoken in Hainan, China. Norquest concludes by noting that sound changes occurred, and these sound changes include the aspiration of word-initial consonants, vowel raising, and vocalic transfers to mention but a few. The conclusion drawn on the sound changes was a result of the application of the comparative method's principle of the natural development of speech sound. This research attempts to describe sound changes that have taken place in the various dialects that make up the core standard Shona, thus adding another perspective to the literature.

Adding on, Huang (2009) attempts a reconstruction of Proto-Yue vowels to present an alternative reconstruction of Proto-Yue vowels in the literary stratum. Yue refers to a group of Chinese dialects. The study analyses the eighteen Yue dialects and reconstructs the vowel system by applying the comparative method. In conclusion, Haung reconstructs nine monophthongs, nineteen diphthongs, and two triphthongs. To understand the phonological history, further reconstruction of the advanced tongue root distinction among the dialects was undertaken. Taking a cue from such possibilities of applying the comparative method to the dialects of the same language, the present study will concentrate on the consonants rather than vowels, as the vowels seem to be the same in these dialects under study.

Miti (2006) describes the common Bantu consonants based on the two reconstructions, which are Proto-Bantu by Guthrie and Ur-Bantu by Meinhof's reconstruction. Miti highlighted that the modern Bantu consonants logically rely on the Proto-Bantu reconstruction of simple consonants by Guthrie. The scholar identifies the commonest sound changes called 'naturalness' among modern Bantu languages: fricativisation, glide formation, affrication, assimilation, and consonant

[8] Thirteen Southeast Asian languages which include Cun, Nadau, Zanda, Boating, Baisha, Younmen and Bouhim.

deletion (Dimmendaal, 2011). Therefore, it is the aim of the present study to find out if these common sound changes among modern Bantu languages can also be found in hypothetical Proto-Shona, explaining the phonological processes resulting in the separation of Shona into various dialects. Since one of the objectives of the study is to attempt a description of the sound changes among the three dialects of Shona under study, it is therefore important to refer to some of the sound changes in modern Bantu languages from their parent.

The importance of the reconstruction of proto languages is the indication of what can change and what cannot change in a language and what is permissible versus the impermissible ways in which languages change. This means that the historicity of a language contributes to the understanding of universal grammar (Campbell, 1998). Therefore, the present study significantly contributes to our understanding of the possible phonological changes in Bantu languages in their broad sense and Shona in particular. The present study is also an indication of possible ways in which sounds change in the Shona language. The present study is diachronic, which means the study of a language over time which is contrasted with synchronic linguistics, which deals with a language at a single point in time that is, attempting to write a grammar of present-day language (ibid.). This means that this study is mainly interested in tracing how Shona was spoken before it separated into various dialects that Doke unifies in the (1931) report.

Significantly, the focus of the present study is the phonological reconstruction of Proto-Shona. The choice of phonological reconstruction was triggered by Campbell (1998), who points out that the work of reconstruction mostly begins with phonology with the intention of reconstructing the sound system of a language. In agreement with Campbell (1998), Anthony (2010) highlights that phonology is useful to historical linguistics because sounds uttered by people tend to change with time in certain directions. This is an indication that phonological reconstruction will, in turn, lead to the reconstruction of the vocabulary and grammar of the protolanguage.

It is imperative at this juncture to point out that within Shona studies, there are few studies in this area. The studies that are available are descriptive accounts of the Shona sound systems. Such studies include Doke (1931), Fortune (2004), and Pongweni, (1989), to just mention a few. We will take up from where Fortune, 2004 left off and formalise the reconstruction and propose what can be termed Proto Shona.

Methodology

Methods of Data Collection

Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing and analysing documents. This method is employed in the present study to reconstruct the hypothetical dialect that constitutes Proto-Shona based on sound perspective. Documentary analysis is done by using textbooks like Fortune's Essays on Shona Dialects (2004). According to Fortune (2004), specifically, the researchers use data on the phonemes of the dialects that distinguish the dialects from one another. The data that is used in this research came from the standard Shona dictionary of Hannan (1959) through systematically selecting words guided by the phonemes from Fortune (2004). The kind of data collected refers to the Swadesh[9] list, including the basic vocabulary such as low numbers and basic geographical terms, because these words are believed to be words that are preserved from the proto-language or dialect and eliminate borrowed ones.

Method of Data Analysis

To analyse the data, the researchers use a descriptive approach. The choice of a descriptive approach was triggered by Kitavi (1992) who notes that there is no theory of language that can be exhaustive and comprehensive enough to adequately capture the different features that can be used to determine dialects or varieties of language. Moving on from this notion, the current study chose to use and be guided by the principles of historical and comparative linguistics and internal reconstruction (Campbell, 1998; Yule, 2010). To analyse the phonological features of the corresponding core vocabulary of Shona the researchers employ the comparative method in conjunction with internal reconstruction. The comparative method is employed for data that are tabulated by putting the corresponding lexical items in a list. Finally, the general principles of the comparative method were put into practice, for example, the direction of sound changes to reconstruct the proto forms of the corresponding vocabulary from the data.

[9] List developed for historical and comparative purpose in the 1950-70s and named after the U.S linguist Moriss Swadesh.

The comparative method is described as a procedure used in historical and comparative linguistics to describe the earlier forms of related languages (Campbell, 1998). This method is used to reconstruct what can be considered a 'proto' form in the common ancestral language. According to Kaufmann (1990), the goal of comparative and historical linguistics is to identify groups of genetically related languages to reconstruct their respective ancestors. There are technical terms that operate with the comparative method, as highlighted by Campbell (1998).

Dimmendaal (2011; 141) notes that complementary to the comparative method is a method known as internal reconstruction, which involves the reconstruction of earlier stages in a language on the sole evidence of synchronic alternation between morphemes in different environments. These internal reconstructions are usually, though not always, phonological. We will utilise this method to unveil what we are referring to as Proto-Shona.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section focuses on the presentation and analysis of the findings on the phonological reconstruction of the hypothetical Proto-Shona. The findings in this study show the dialect(s) that can be hypothesised to constitute the Proto-Shona and the hypothesised phonemes. The study attempts to reconstruct four hypothetical proto phonemes of Shona. There are other phonemes that distinguish the dialects of Shona, but for the hypothetical reconstruction purpose of this research, the study is limited to only four phonemes, which were described by Fortune (2004) as the most outstanding in distinguishing the dialects of Shona. The study also attempts a description of the sound changes among the dialects of Shona that resulted in the separation of Shona into various dialects. For ease of analysis, the data are tabulated by putting the corresponding lexical items in a list. This also makes it easy to apply the general principles of the comparative method. In line with the conventions in historical linguistics, reconstructed phonemes are not placed in square brackets, but an asterisk (*) is used instead to indicate that this is the proto form. This convention is going to be followed.

Reconstruction of Palato-alveolar Fricatives

Table1: Reconstruction of Proto *ʃ

Manyika	Zezuru	Karanga	Gloss
/tsuro/	/tsuro/	/ʃuro/	Hare
/tsoka	/tsoka/	/ʃoka/	Foot
/tsanga/	/tsanga/	/ʃanga/	Small grain
/tsara/	/tsara/	/ʃara/	Choose
/tsumo/	/tsumo/	/ʃumo/	Proverb

Rule number 1

/ʃ/ → /ts/ / ~~v~~—

/ʃ/ becomes /ts/ when preceding a vowel

Sound correspondence set one of the above-listed potential cognates shows that the voiceless alveolar affricate /ts-/ is recurring in two dialects, which are Manyika and Zezuru, whereas Karanga has a voiceless palatal-alveolar /ʃ-/ sound. In this case, the change from /ʃ/ to /ts/ is most plausible. The process responsible for this change is affrication. The process refers to the changes in which a sound, usually a stop and sometimes a fricative becomes an affricate (Campbell, 1998). Apart from this process there is also the fronting of the consonants, which is referred to as the replacement of sounds produced further back in the vocal tract by sounds which are produced further forward in the mouth (Mudzingwa, 2001).

The phonological motivation of this reconstruction is the fact that it is more natural for simplex segments, which are defined as consonants that are articulated by one oral articulator (Clements and Hume, 1995), to change and become complex segments. Complex segments are described as consonants that are produced with two oral articulatory features (Clements and Hume, 1995). These segments like affricates in Feature Geometric terms[10] (*ibid.*), are represented as internally sequenced or

[10]Feature Geometry describes the internal dimension of segments, that is, the features or ingredients that make the segments.

contour segments whose first part has the features of a stop and whose second part has those of a fricative. Affricates are represented as a root node characterised by the sequences [-continuant] and [+continuant]. This single root node implies a single segment, and the contrasting feature values imply linearity of the dependent stop and fricative features. If two dialects of the same language are [ʃ] and [ts], one can safely assume that [ts] is from [ʃ] as [ʃ] to [ts] is a non-attested sound change (Campbell, 1998). The direction is generally from the fricative to the affricate, though examples in the opposite direction are not unknown. This means that one can postulate that there was a change in Zezuru and Manyika dialects from /ʃ/ to a plain homorganic alveolar affricate /ts-/. In other words, the /ts/ is also referred to as a reflex of the sound of the proto-language. To add on to this, the rule of thumb in the reconstruction is that languages tend to be well-behaved concerning sound changes. This means that the plausibility of the reconstructed sound should conform to the perspective of linguistic universal and typological expectations, which is step number six of the comparative method. The step postulates that whatever reconstructed sound is to be the proto-form should not propose a set of sounds that are never or are rarely found in human language; for instance, reconstruction nasal sounds should be proto-forms without oral counterparts (Campbell, 1998). Thus, the reconstructed simplex segment is plausible because of the high degree of frequency among the world's languages. In support of the argument, this is further sustained by acquisitional studies, where it is noted that simple consonants are generally acquired first and later complex ones, as concluded by Mudzingwa (2001).

Table 2: Reconstruction of Proto *ʒ

Manyika	Zezuru	Karanga	Gloss
/ⁿzou/	/ⁿzou/	/ʒou/	Elephant
/ⁿzeve/	/ⁿzeve/	/ʒeve/	Ear
/ⁿzara/	/ⁿzara/	/ʒara/	Hunger
/ⁿzira/	/ⁿzira/	/ʒira/	Path
/goⁿzo/	/goⁿzo/	/goʒo	Rat

Rule number 2

/ʒ/ → /ⁿz/ / ⟵ v

/ʒ/ becomes /ⁿz / when preceding a vowel

The cognate set of the word 'ear' indicates that the nasalised fricative /^{n}z-/ is recurring in two dialects, Zezuru and Manyika, and only Karanga has a voiced alveo-palatal fricative /ʒ-/ sound. Using the characteristics of the Proto-Bantu of having simplex consonants, this means that the older form of the ancestral Shona is the alveo-palatal /ʒ/. Apart from these simple consonants, they are always described as the first consonant to be acquired in first language acquisition because of their simplicity in articulation. According to Mudzingwa (2001), prenasalised fricatives are described as complex segments, though they are phonologically analysed as single consonants. In first language acquisition, the prenasalised fricative is replaced with a voiced alveo-palatal fricative, making it a simple consonant because of the ease of articulation (*ibid*). To add to this, there is also a change in the place of articulation on the prenasalised complex segment; this change in the place of articulation is also referred to as the fronting of fricatives (*ibid.*). Therefore, one can conclude that the alveo-palatal fricative can be hypothesised to be the proto-form of Shona because it can be described as a simplex segment, as evidenced by Mudzingwa (2001).

Reconstruction of the Labio-dental Fricatives

The process responsible for the reconstruction of the labiodental fricatives is affrication. The process refers to the conversion of a stop or a fricative to become an affricate (Bostoen, 2008).

Table 3: Reconstruction of Proto *f

Manyika	Zezuru	Karanga	Gloss
/pfumo/	/pfumo/	/fumo/	Spear
/pfuma/	/pfuma/	fuma/	Wealth
/pfu^{ŋ}g^{w}a/	/pfu^{ŋ}g^{w}a/	/fu^{ŋ}g^{w}a/	Brain
/pfu^{m}ba^{m}we/	/pfu^{m}ba^{m}we/	/fu^{m}ba^{m}we/	Nine
/pfupa/	/pfupa/	/fupa/	Bone

Rule number 3

/f/ $\longrightarrow$ /pf/ /$\_\_$ high back vowel

/f/ becomes /pf/ when preceding a high back vowel

Sound correspondences in the cognate set one, which has the word 'spear' illustrate that /pf-/, a labiodental affricate, is recurring in two dialects, which are Zezuru and Manyika, and Karanga has a labiodental fricative /f-/. To reconstruct the proto-form of the hypothetical Proto-Shona, there is a need to look for the natural development of sounds, that is, the directionality of sound change.

Furthermore, the phonological process responsible for sound change is affrication. From the data above, the processes are taking place before the high back vowel. This means that there was a change in the other two dialects of Shona where we find that the change is taking place from a simple segment to a complex segment which can be described as a characteristic of natural directionality in terms of sound change. To add to this, we will borrow from Proto-Bantu, which is characterised by a relatively simple consonant system (Hyman, 2003; Thang, 2001). Therefore, the reconstruction of the simple consonant to be the proto phoneme can also be described as inherited from Proto-Bantu into Proto-Shona.

Moreover, the reconstruction of the simple segment /f-/ as the older form can also be justified by the evidence from phonological processes concerning first language acquisition. The evidence is of great importance because simplex segments are always the first to be acquired before complex ones. In other words, this means that we first have simple consonants before complex consonants, as evidenced by their being easy to articulate (Mudzingwa, 2001). Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that labiodental fricative /f/ is the older form of the hypothetical Proto-Shona.

More so, when factoring in the features held in common between the reflexes seen in each of the daughter languages in the sound correspondence, the reconstructed form is built upon the shared phonetic features (Campbell, 1998; Pongweni, 1989). Therefore, from the data above, the shared phonetic feature among the reflexes is the feature labial; therefore, it is plausible to reconstruct the labio-dental fricative /f/ to the older form of Proto-Shona. This is so because, in terms of directionality, it is more possible for a /f/ to easily become an affricate /pf/. This illustrates how Manyika and Zezuru changed the degree of phonetic feature relatedness.

Table 4: Reconstruction of Proto *v

Manyika	Zezuru	Karanga	Gloss
/bvu^{n}za/	/bvu^{n}za/	/v̤u^{n}za/	To ask
/bvudzi/	/bvudzi/	/v̤udzi/	Hair
/bvu^{n}zo/	/bvu^{n}zo/	/v̤u^{n}zo/	Exam
/bvuma/	/bvuma/	v̤uma/	Admit

Rule number 4

/v̤/ ⟶ /bv/ — high back vowel

/v̤/ becomes /bv/when preceding a vowel.

The cognate set of the word 'to ask' comprises the voiced labiodental affricate /bv-/, the phoneme that is recurring in two dialects. Manyika, Zezuru, and Karanga only have the labiodental fricative /v-/ instead. From the data, it is acceptable to reconstruct /v-/ from the older forms of ancestral Shona. This means that in the other two dialects, there is a change through affrication, resulting in affricates instead. Affricates are complex segments because they are produced with two articulatory gestures (Mudzingwa, 2001), which are a combination of a stop and a fricative (Katamba, 1989). The reconstruction of the simplex segments is an indication that before Shona as a language split into various dialects, it was characterised by simple consonants. Therefore, the phonological process responsible for the explanation of how Shona split into various dialects is affrication, as mentioned earlier. The change resulted in the formation of complex and highly marked segments, as indicated by the reflexes. The data indicate that Karanga maintained the protophoneme and the two dialects shifted from the ancestral form.

Reconstructed Phoneme Inventory of Proto-Shona

Table 6: Phoneme inventory of the reconstructed phonemes of Proto-Shona

	Labio-dental	Palatal
Plosive		ʃ ʒ
Fricatives	f v	

The above phonemes can be hypothesised to constitute Proto-Shona's older sound forms. All the above phonemes are from the Karanga dialect. This means that it is plausible to conclude that Karanga, as a dialect of Shona, can constitute the hypothesised Proto-Shona.

Conclusion

The data presented in this research indicate that the Karanga dialect constitutes the hypothetical Proto-Shona. The dialect constitutes the protophonemes hypothesised to constitute the Proto-Shona. These phonemes are /*ʃ-/, /*f-/, /*v-//*ʒ-/. The general phonological process responsible for the description of how Shona split into various dialects includes affrication found among the common sound changes among Bantu languages (Miti, 2006) and fronting of the consonants, which is the change in the place of articulation (Mudzingwa, 2001). The researchers postulated that simplex segments are proto-sound meaning that these simplex segments developed into complex consonants in descendant dialects. The development of simple consonants into complex consonants is also evidenced by first language acquisition, where a child first acquires simple consonants before complex segments; thus, it is plausible to conclude that the Shona language consisted of simple consonants before the separation into various dialects. Adding on simple consonants as proto sounds is also a characteristic of Proto-Bantu (Hyman, 2003); therefore, this can be assumed to be the characteristic of Proto-Shona as well since Shona is a language of the Bantu family. Thus, there is the assumption that since Shona is also one of the Bantu languages chances are that the hypothesised older forms might have descended from Proto-Bantu.

As can be discerned from the above discussion, this work is ongoing and has introduced the field of phonological reconstruction in Shona studies. The research recommends further studies on the phonological reconstruction of Shona to include the Korekore dialect, which was not included in this study. There is also a need to perhaps focus on how tone is presented in the various dialects for us to be fully convinced as to which is the protolanguage. In addition, one can also use the idea of minimality to determine which one is the oldest form. One might be persuaded to conclude that languages are generally monosyllabic rather than disyllabic. Hence, this research recommends further exploration from a tonal and minimality perspective to come up with a justifiable position.

References

Antony, D. W. (2010). *The horse, the wheel, and language: how Bronze- Age riders from the Eurasian steppes shaped the modern world.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Anttila, R. (1989). *Historical and comparative linguistics.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Boestoen, K. (2008). Bantu spirantization: Morphologization, lexicalization and Historical classification. *Diachronica,* 25(3), 299-356.

Bowen, G.A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal,* 9(2), 27-40.

Byrd, A. M. (2010). *Reconstructing Indo-European syllabification.* Kentucky: University of Kentucky.

Campbell, L. (1998). *Historical linguistics: An introduction.* Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

Clements, G.N. and Hume, E. V. (1995). "The international organisation of speech sounds", In Goldsmith, A. J. (ed). *The handbook of Phonological Theory.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 254-506

Dimmendaal, G. J. (2011). *Historical linguistics and comparative study of African languages.* Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.

Doke, C. M. (1931). *Report on the unification of the Shona Dialects.* Salisbury: Government of Southern Rhodesia.

---------- (1954). *The southern Bantu languages.* London: Oxford University Press.

Fortune, G. (1986). *A guide to Shona grammatical constructions.* Johannesburg: UNISA

---------- (1995). *An analytical grammar of Shona.* Cape Town: Longman.

---------- (2004). *Essays on Shona dialects.* Harare: ALLEX Project.

Francis-Ratte, A. T. (2016). *Proto-Korean Japanese: A new reconstruction of the common origin of the Japanese and Korean languages.* Doctoral dissertation. Ohio: Ohio State University.

Guthrie, M. (1967). *The classification of Bantu languages.* London: Downson's Pall Mall.

---------- (1971). *Comparative Bantu: An introduction to comparative linguistics and prehistory of the Bantu languages.* London: Gregg Press.

Hannan, M. (1959). *Standard Shona Dictionary.* Harare: College Press

Hyman, L. M. (2003). Segmental phonology. *The Bantu Languages.* 42-58.

Huang, K. (2009). A phonological reconstruction of Proto-Yue vowels. *Working papers in linguistics.*

Joseph, B. and Janda, R. (2003). *The handbook of historical linguistics.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Katamba, F. (1989). *An introduction to phonology*. London: Longman.

Kaufman, T. (1990). Language history of South America: What we know and how to know more. *Amazonian linguistics: studies in loanword South American languages,* 13-73.

Kitavi, H. M. (1992). *Comparative study of the Titui North and Machokos dialects of Kikamba.* Nirobi: University of Nairobi.

Lehmann, W. P. (1961). A definition of Proto- Germanic: a study in the chronological delimitation of languages. *Languages,* 37(1), 67-74

---------- (2013). *Historical linguistics: An introduction.* London: Routledge

Miti, L. M. (2006). *Comparative Bantu phonology and morphology: a study of second systems and word structure of the indigenous languages of Southern Africa.* Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS).

Mudzingwa, C. (2001). Phonological Structures in Early Shona Words. *Unpublished MPhil Dissertation*. Harare, University of Zimbabwe.

Murray. R.W. (1997). *Historical linguistics: the study of language change. Contemporary linguistics: an introduction.* London and New York: Longman.

Norquest, P. (2007). *A phonological reconstruction of Proto-Hali.* Arizona: University of Arizona.

Nyauma, S. N, (2016). *A phonological reconstruction of Ekegusii and Egekuria Nouns: Comparative Analysis*. Doctoral dissertation. Nairobi: University of Nairobi.

Pittayaporn, P. (2009). *The phonology of Proto-Tai.* Doctoral dissertation. New York: Cornell University.

Pongweni, A.J. (1989). *Studies in Shona phonetics: An analytical review*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.

Thang, K.L. (2001). *A phonological reconstruction of Proto-Chin*. MA Thesis. Chiang Mai: Payap University

Yule, G. (2010). *The study of Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.