

# CHAPTER 4

## THE SOCIO-POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

In Chapter 1, the percentage distribution of home languages was provided. This chapter will look at the sociopolitical history of the five largest language communities in the Province selected in terms of their numbers of speakers. The languages are Northern Sotho, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Setswana and Afrikaans. English will be included even though it is statistically not amongst the main languages in the province since it is a dominant language and is used as medium of instruction in most schools and tertiary institutions. The intention is to describe the origins of these language communities, their development and the social position obtained by them, so that with that information one can evaluate the language situation and suggest possible policies with regard to the revalorisation of some or all of these languages as part of the provincial social transformation in Chapter 6.

It is important to include the developmental history of language in the province even though it may not have a direct bearing on the model of policy I am going to propose. I do this in support of ideas like that of Halliday and Martin (1993) who wrote, "The history of a language is not separate from the rest of human history: on the contrary, it is an essential aspect of it. Human history is as much a history of semiotic activity as it is of socio-economic activity."(Halliday and Martin,1993). Before suggesting a language policy one needs to provide the historical background of the languages in the region.

The earliest inhabitants of Southern Africa are best traced from the Stone Age period. According to Bergh (1999) archeological findings show that the four northern provinces

(Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Limpopo) have been inhabited for some 2 million years. In Southern Africa this prehistoric period is marked by technological and other developments in what is referred to as the Stone Age period.

#### **4.1 The Stone Age period**

The *Stone Age* period shows the presence of inhabitants north of the Vaal River at Swartkrans and Sterkfontein next to Krugersdorp and dates from about 2 million years ago.

The Middle Stone Age period (not later than 20 000 years ago) can be associated with areas like Vuurherdgrot next to Potgietersrus, where there are layers of Acheul industrial complexes. These layers bears proof of the civilisation of the different middle age period industries. Other areas with such proof are said to be Pietersburg (Polokwane) and Kalkbank.

The last 20 000 years saw a change in that the natural environment (milieu) had more influence on the lives of people (the third Stone Age period). Drought caused great geographical redistribution of the inhabitants.

Cave paintings were found in the four northern provinces in Magaliesberg, Waterberg, Soutpansberg and Kruger National Park. Probably the San and their predecessors were responsible for these prehistoric paintings. The stone age was succeeded by the Iron age period.

#### **4.2. The Iron Age period**

The first Iron Age period is typified by the arrival in the third century A.D. of groups of people who were 'Bantu' speaking. These groups practised agriculture and animal husbandry, they had a well-developed pottery tradition and they mined metals, particularly iron. The early 'Bantu' speaking people migrated from the Cameroon area eastward along the northern borders of the equatorial forests and came into contact with Sudanese speaking people and adopted from them knowledge of animal husbandry, agriculture and metal working knowledge.

Between 300 and 400 A.D. people spread from the Great Lakes through Tanzania, Malawi, eastern Zambia and Zimbabwe to reach the four northern provinces at about 400 A.D. Almost all historically inhabited sites provide archeological testimony that they were inhabited during the Late Iron Age period and it is possible to connect archeological sites with the most important historical groups; eg. Molokwane and Kaditswene, extensive stone-ruined complexes near Rustenburg and Zeerust which are associated with the Modimosana BaMmatau-Kwena and the Hurutse, both Tswana groups as will be explained later in this chapter under the Tswana.

Later, mining played an important role in areas like Phalaborwa, Messina and Rooiberg where extensive mining operations took place. The permanent settlements of the whites north of the Vaal River during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the concurrent introduction of a new cultural pattern and technology changed the way of life of these Iron Age period groups.

### **4.3 The Khoisan**

Very little is known about the migration of the Khoisan people to the south of Africa. All

over southern Africa, right down to the southern tip, there are some stone implements, bone implements and rock paintings which are associated with the nomadic hunting group called the San or Bushmen. Muller (1971) asserts that the Dutch and the sea voyagers before them found only Hottentots or Khoikhoi on the shores of southern Africa. As farmers started hunting north of the coastal mountains they met the San. Probably the Bushmen withdrew into the interior because of the Hottentot threat. In 1774 farmers mobilised a commando, including Hottentots, to drive Bushmen away. They were forced to withdraw deeper into the interior. The Bushmen of the Cape and of the interior had now virtually disappeared. However, a few Bushmen are still found in Namibia, Angola and Botswana.

The Khoikhoi or Hottentots, who were organised into tribes, occupied an area from the mouth of the Orange River along the coast to the Fish river when the white people arrived. They kept cattle and sheep. Click sounds were common to both Hottentots and Bushmen languages. Muller (1974) asserts that the Hottentots acquired their click sounds from the Bushmen. Because of internal quarrels and pressure from neighbours, including whites, the Hottentots also withdrew into the interior. Recently we still find the Koranas and Griquas west of the Vaal River. The Nama of Namibia are part of the Hottentots and they still retain their identity and language. These two groups (Khoikhoi and San) preceded the Bantu people.

#### **4.4 The 'Bantu' people**

The African languages found in Limpopo Province all belong to the South-eastern 'Bantu' subgroup of languages of Africa. The term 'Bantu' is used here to describe a family of languages typologically and genetically homogeneous, and not to describe a

person. According to Finlayson (1987) there are about 450 'Bantu' languages which have been classified as a family. Finlayson (1987) quotes that both Greenberg (1972) and Guthrie (1962) agree on the origin of the Southern 'Bantu' as having started from north-west of the Equatorial forests. The controversy around this issue need not be discussed here as the main aim here is only to outline the socio-political history of Limpopo Province and not necessarily to trace and comment on Proto-'Bantu' and the spread of the Africans.

The time for the first crossing of the Limpopo River by the south-eastern 'Bantu' branch has been proposed as being in the fourth century A.D. (Finlayson, 1987:52). There was " a movement of peoples from a central nucleus out in various directions and meeting up with other peoples..... "(ibid.). This implies that we are dealing with languages which are not free from influence of other languages and cultures.

If there is one thing about which South African historians agree, it is that they can not agree on the origins of the naming of the 'Bantu'-speaking inhabitants of Southern Africa. The main problem seems to be the fact that no written records were kept until the arrival of the Europeans, and it was not until late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that any serious attempt was made at collecting evidence about African settlement and movement. Most of the early history of these people came from oral history.

The south-eastern Bantu languages include the Shona group in Zimbabwe; the Nguni group, including Zulu, isiXhosa, siSwazi and isiNdebele; the Sotho group include Setswana, Sesotho and Northern Sotho; the Venda group, and the Tswa-Ronga group including Tswa, Gwamba, Xitsonga and two minor Mozambican groups Ronga and

Chopi. As for the Sotho group, it is believed that the Sesotho, Setswana and Northern Sotho speakers were once one group even though there is no evidence as to what they called themselves. The mutual intelligibility of these languages and the cultural traits like using names of animals to identify themselves strengthens the thought that they once belonged together. It is suspected that famine, wars and the influence of European missionaries might have caused and/or widened the gap between groups. The colonial rule and later the apartheid government to which these groups were subjected further widened the gap between them and they saw themselves as different people. Attempts by linguists to get the languages united into one were probably an endeavour to reverse the process. Moloto (1964:20) writes: "In 1947, the Transvaal Education Department initiated further moves towards the unification of the orthographies (of the Sotho languages) and this resulted in the Somerset House Conference...". This attempt failed. Later on sociolinguists like Neville Alexander again suggested such a move, but it was not supported.

#### **4.4.1 The Northern Sotho**

All available evidence indicates that the Sotho group migrated southwards from the region of the Great Lakes in central Africa, and that the migration "occurred in a succession of waves" over many years (Mónnig 1983:5). According to him the great Sotho migrations seems to have preceded the Nguni migrations.

The linguistic similarities between Sesotho, Setswana and Northern Sotho, make it fairly obvious that they were historically one ethnic group, speaking one language, and that geographical separation has been the main factor in the multiplication of dialects which were ultimately regarded as separate languages (Mónnig 1983). There is

however mutual intelligibility between the languages.

The principal group among the Northern Sotho were the Pedi. Monnig (1983), Mokgokong (1966), Muller (1971) and Oakes (1989) agree that the Pedi broke away from the iron-making Kgatla people under the leadership of a certain Thobele. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century they moved eastward from the vicinity of present-day Pretoria and finally settled in the area between the Oliphants and the Steelpoort Rivers, now known as Driekop. Early inhabitants of the area around Sekhukhuniland were the Roka of Mongatane under Mashabela, who occupied the area east of the Leolo (Lulu) mountains; the Tau who had come from the direction of Swaziland and settled in the country to the west of the Leolo range; the Kone and the Matlala offshoots of the tribe on the present area of Matlala'a Thaba, west of Polokwane. The Pedi absorbed those clans already living in the vicinity "by judicious marriage and by conquest" (Oakes 1989:66). They were known for their cattle wealth and their iron industry and this invited clients who were brought within the evolving Pedi statehood.

Their position was strengthened further by their strategic positioning on the trade route from Delagoa Bay to their home land and even further west. The Tsonga traded with the Portuguese at the coast and then re-traded with the Pedi, who then acted as brokers for the clans to the west and at Phalaborwa (Oakes 1989. 66).

To maintain this control, the Pedi needed a strong, centralised government. The need to centralise the government grew even stronger as the ivory trade declined and cattle raiding took its place. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century control was vested in the Maroteng chieftdom at the head of a loose confederation of subordinate chieftdoms. "By giving

close female relatives as brides to the subordinate chiefs and by assisting struggling chiefdoms, the paramount chief formed bonds through family connections as well as loyalty” (Oakes 1989:66).

According to Monnig (1983) the different groups of the Pedi people were confined almost exclusively to the former Transvaal, where they lived in small reserves or locations which are scattered irregularly over the area before building a centralised government. This distribution resulted in a number of isolated linguistic groups with dialectal differences. The original speakers of the Pedi dialect were in the former central Transvaal under Sekhukhune, Mathabathe and Mphahlele. The Pedi dialect of the Sekhukhuni area was the one selected for standard Northern Sotho. There are, as mentioned above, a number of dialects like those spoken by the people of Ga-Seleka, Ga-Maleboho, Moletji, Matlala, Ga-Mamabolo, Dikgale, Molepo, Maake, Mapulaneng, Botlokwa, etc. A small group in the north-eastern Transvaal are the Lobedu, “whose hereditary leaders were Shonas from Zimbabwe (with the Venda) when a powerful ruler fled south with some supporters, bringing with her the secrecy of rain-making” (Oakes 1989. 66). This power attracted adherents from a number of chiefdoms which were mainly Sotho but also Tsonga.

#### **4.4.2 The Tswana**

According to Sounders (1989) archaeological evidence shows that people built with stone along the Witwatersrand centuries ago, and oral tradition says that among them, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, were the people of chief Masilo. His lineage split about this time to produce the Hurutse and Kwena kingdoms. Later divisions produced the Ngwaketse, Ngwato, Kgatla, Tlokwa, Rolong and Tlhaping.



The Tswana are members of the Sotho group of the south-eastern zone of 'Bantu' languages. According to Cole (1975) the Tswana cluster of dialects may be divided into four, viz. Central, Southern, Northern and Eastern. All but the Eastern dialects are classified as Western Tswana dialects. The central division includes Rolong, Hurutse and Ngwaketse dialects. The Hurutse of Zeerust, even though numerically few are regarded as the senior Tswana tribe. The Rolong are politically divided into four: Tshidi (Barolong boorraTshidi), Rratlou (Barolong boorraTlou) mainly in Khunwana, Kraaipan and Setlagole, Rrapulana (Barolong boorraPulana) at Letlhakane and Polfontein and Seleka (barolong booSeleka) with headquarters at Thabanchu in the Free State. The dialect of the Seleka section has been influenced by the neighbouring southern Sotho but still retains characteristics of the central division (Cole 1975).

Cole (1975) writes that there has been considerable speculation concerning the cluster name Batswana or Bêswana. One notion was that the name derived from the reciprocal verb stem *-tšwana* "come or go out from one another, separate", hence Batšwana (the offshoots or separatists) referring to either the separation of the Tswana from the main Bantu (or Sotho) stock to which they originally belonged, or to the separation from one another of the various tribes.

The second notion is that it derives from the verb stem *-tšhwana* "resemble, be alike" hence 'Batšhwana' (those who resemble one another), this could be so as early travellers asked neighbouring tribes what people lived ahead, and were told *baatšhwana* (they are alike or the same as ourselves) (Cole 1975. xxi).

The third notion was that it derives from the adjectival stem *-tšhwana* "darkish",

“blackish”, also “light-coloured” or “lightish”, as opposed to black, the diminutive of ‘*ntšho*’ (black), hence ‘Batšhwana’ “the darkish- or lightish- people”. To date there is no agreement on the origin of this name.

As for the standardisation of Tswana, it is based on the closely allied central dialects. According to Sandilands (1993), the earliest Tswana grammar was compiled between 1828 and 1858 by Isaac Hughes, a missionary of the London Missionary Society. His manuscript is found in the Grey library, Cape Town. He refers to Tswana fragments of the Lord’s prayer at Griqua Town in 1824. Some Tswana catechism and spelling books were printed in London and sent to Kuruman in 1826-27. The first hymn book appeared in 1831, *Lihela*, containing 50 of Moffat’s hymns. In 1840 Moffat produced a translation of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Ashton printed a translation of the Old Testament in 1850 ‘*Kaelo ka kaelon*’. In 1862 a ‘*Geografe*’ was printed and in 1867 an *Arithmetic* was produced by Roger Prince. Increasingly, books and translation work were produced in great numbers from this time.

From 1827 to 1839 Hughes was stationed at Griqua Town. His grammar book printed in 1859 had its outlines in 1834, titled ‘No. 280d. *Sechuana grammar*. The writer comments that: “the language itself is a vast and elegant structure...it must have grown up to its present comparative perfection in a much better country and a more civilised people, than the Bechuana can now boast of” (Sandilands, 1993:68). This suggested an unknown community which must have developed this language. Sandilands (1993) quotes Dr. David Livingstone, who mentioned that the “Setlapeng” dialect is “the most developed” type of Setswana and that Setswana is the most developed of the southern African languages.

In his research on the standardisation of Tswana, Moloto (1964) writes that in 1837 the Tswana were the first in compiling their grammar (their St. Luke, their new Testament and their Bible were all first publications in South African Bantu; (51). In 1881 another New Testament was published in London. The work of 1881 was followed in 1905 by Rev. A. J. Wookey's 'Secoana Grammar with exercises'. After Wookey's grammar, there followed what is known as the 1910 Orthography in which the accent marks were observed as well as the velar nasal symbol. This orthography had eleven vowels. Then followed Plaatjie's orthography, 1916, 1930. In 1916 a Morolong of Kimberley, viz. Solomon Tshekiso Plaatjie, who studied in London, produced a reader in the International Phonetic Alphabet script. This gave a minute analysis of Tswana pronunciation as it is today. Pursuing this study of pronunciation, Plaatjie used a number of phonetic symbols in his translation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* in 1929.

By the end of 1930, the Institute of African Languages and Cultures issued "Practical Orthography of African Languages". The orthography employed by the Institute was the same for Tswana as for Northern Sotho (Pedi).

In 1947 Sotho orthography was seen as a departure of Tswana, from a common system for Tswana and Northern Sotho. The then Transvaal Education Department initiated further moves towards the unification of orthographies, and this resulted in the Somerset House Conference of February 1947. Most of the members of this conference were appointed to a permanent departmental committee, the Sotho (Northern Sotho, Sesotho and Setswana) language committee, being inspectors of education, teachers, ministers of religion, assisted by university professors. The result was the issuing of

*Sotho Terminology and Orthography No.1* in 1957. A decision was made not to use diacritic marks and tone marks, except where it is likely to confuse people, or in scientific works. This orthography adopted the disjunctive rendering of words, that is, it approached word-identification analytically rendering particles also as separate words.

In 1960, the composite Sotho Language Committee was divided into Setswana, Sesotho and Northern Sotho Language Committees and during 1962 each committee issued its *Terminology and orthography No.2*. The Tswana sounds were those of 1957. In 1953 Cole published *Standardisation of Written Setswana* based on a dialect cluster, viz. Rolong, Hurutse, Ngwaketse. The Tswana language is taught at schools in the Northern Province and it is also studied at a number of universities in the country, including the University of the North.

#### **4.4.3 The Tsonga**

Xitsonga is one of the languages that make up the Tsonga group of the south-eastern Bantu zone with other languages like Ronga and Tswa. These languages show some phonetic, lexical and syntactic differences from other groups in the zone, viz, the Nguni, Sotho, and the Venda groups. According to Bill (1983) there is less agreement on the origin of the Tsonga group. There is some certainty about the fact that some Proto-Xitsonga speakers spread southwards into the low-lying coastal areas of present-day Mozambique, splitting off from the proto-Nguni speakers before these came into contact with the Khoisan. (Ibid).

Along with the Khoi of the southern Cape and the Nguni of the present KwaZulu-Natal,

the Tsonga group were the first to meet the Portuguese explorers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to Oakes (1989) the Tsonga who occupied the coastal strip from Kosi Bay to the Sabi River, were probably one of the first southern African communities to make contact with European traders at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. They controlled one route from the middle Limpopo River to the old trading port of Sofala in Mozambique as well as all the approaches to the former Lourenço Marques. By the mid-seventeenth century there were long-established chiefdoms of Tsonga and Ronga people in the area around Delagoa Bay. Bill (1983) also acknowledges that during the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an expansion of Xitsonga speakers had occurred throughout southern Mozambique.

Soshangane fled from Shaka after defeating the Ndwandwe in 1819, and invaded the area of southern Mozambique which was occupied by Xitsonga and Ronga speakers. He then established the Nguni kingdom of Kwa Gaza. In this kingdom Nguni customs were adopted and the Zulu language was learnt by the Tsonga. Even though most male adults had a basic knowledge of the Zulu language because of contacts in trade, they were now forced to speak it. Most of the women, however, did not learn Zulu (Bill 1983). After the death of Soshangane in 1856, his sons Mawewe and Muzila struggled for chieftainship. Mawewe won but was unpopular. His brother, who had fled to the then Transvaal, returned from exile and defeated the unpopular Mawewe in 1862. Muzila was succeeded by his son Ngungunyana, who was later defeated by the Portuguese in 1895 and the Nguni empire in Mozambique collapsed.

During the period from 1830 onwards, groups of Xitsonga speakers moved southwards and defeated smaller groups of Bantu clans living in Thongaland in northern KwaZulu-

Natal. Others moved westwards into the former Transvaal where they settled in an area from Soutpansberg in the north, to Nelspruit and Barberton in the south-east, with isolated groups reaching as far as Rustenburg.

Between 1864 and 1867, the Tsonga, or Magwamba, the clan name by which they were known in the Soutpansberg, were involved in battles between Paul Kruger's commandos and the Venda chief Makhado. For their services they were rewarded with a tract of land near Schoemansdal which became known as 'knobneusen' because of the habit the Tsonga had acquired of tattooing their noses.

Over the next 120 years Tsonga life changed drastically through contact with Christianity, Western culture, the town-ward drift of men and later women in search of work and wealth, and the more recent effects of apartheid legislation, which brought with it the settlement following on the establishment of Gazankulu as the Tsonga 'homeland' in 1969.

These people are found in the south-eastern areas of Zimbabwe and in southern Mozambique, and in South Africa most Tsonga people are found in the former Gazankulu area, while others live on white-owned farms in the former Transvaal, on the gold fields of Gauteng, the Free State and the townships of the Reef, Pretoria and Northern Province towns. For this study we are concerned with the Tsonga who live in the Limpopo Province specifically.

The first 55 years of writing in Xitsonga was dominated by European (predominantly Swiss) writers and translators. But from 1938 onwards numbers of Xitsonga writers

emerged. "Their growing self-awareness, developing skills in the handling of literary genres, and their search for self-identity through literature was a sign of hope for the future" (Bill 1983.9).

According to Hone (1981) the history of the Xitsonga language can be summed up in the following way:-

- In September 1938 the department of education's Language Service division project 'The Historical review of Xitsonga language' convened a meeting of Swiss missionaries to decide on an orthography and school book publications.
- 1938: The first novelette by a Xitsonga speaker was written by D.C. Marivate in Tsonga: '*Sasavona*'
- 1940: Collection of folktales in Xitsonga verse, *The romance of the hare, the deceiver* by Rev. H.P. Junod
- January 1948. Special meeting of Xitsonga, Ronga and Tswa language representatives to consider unifying the three cognate languages. The Tsonga Language Board (serving from 1938 to 1954) was replaced in 1955 by the Tsonga Language Committee.
- 1962. A second version of *The Tsonga Terminology and Orthography* (no.2 of 1957) was printed.
- 1964. *Everyday Tsonga* written by M. Ouwehard was printed in the modern orthography without diacritics
- 1965. In February the conjunctive versus the disjunctive way of writing was discussed and it was agreed that all forms should be written disjunctively.
- 1974. Appearance of the enlarged and revised sixth edition of Chartelain's English-Tsonga-English dictionary .

- 1975. New testament revised using the most recent recommended Tsonga orthography.

#### **4.4.4 The Venda**

The Venda arrived from north of the Limpopo like all the other 'Bantu' people. Although their original settlement was cohesive under a single chieftain, disagreements over succession led to members of the royal house breaking away with their respective followers and establishing themselves elsewhere. (Oakes, 1989). Their southward migration, according to Mativha (1972), was pioneered by hunters of precious stones and game, who narrated stories about the country south of Mashonaland. These stories awakened a spirit of adventure and during a struggle for leadership in Mashonaland, Chief Vele led his group away and came to the former Transvaal. The language that Mativha called Luvenda was the language of the Vhalemba and the Vhasenzi people who came to the land, which means 'vele-ennda'. This means that one of their leaders 'Vele' was outside the original home which is Mashonaland. The language which he and his followers spoke was called 'Luvenda', the language spoken outside of Mashonaland.

The leaders of the Vhalemba and Vhasenzi migrated southward in about the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and eventually established their homes around the Soutpansberg. (Mativha, 1972). The southward expansion was halted by contact with the Sotho and the Tsonga, and they retreated to the security of the Soutpansberg range. Their leaders gave the area the name Venda. Like most African tribes, the two tribes were divided by their traditions and customs but bound together by some agreements and contracts like marriage. This made them build a unified front in the then north-eastern Transvaal in



the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

According to Mathivha the Venda language of today developed from some form of Shona, Shambala, Nyanja, Sena, Swahili, Bemba and Nda. The Berlin Lutheran missionaries were the first to record the Venda language. As Mativha puts it, the earliest manuscripts in the history of Venda literature were done by Bouster in 1876, with the help of some of his converts. The written Venda from the earliest writings exhibited the influence of Northern Sotho and this, according to Mativha (1972), was because missionaries were first taught N. Sotho before going to Venda. The early evangelists who helped the missionaries in Venda were Northern Sotho speaking.

The written form of Venda (a grammar), developed by the Schwellnuss brothers, Theodor and Paul, called 'Das Tsivenda' was published in 1901 and its orthography was changed to what it is more or less today. C. Meinhof, who studied the phonetics and phonology of many languages including Northern Sotho and the Sudanic languages, improved the Venda orthography with his knowledge of speech sounds. Since then a lot of scientific studies were done on the Venda language .

According to Finlayson (1986), compared to other south-eastern 'Bantu' languages, Venda is linguistically an autonomous language. But it was found that Venda appeared to be most closely related to the Sotho group with regard to their direct cognates, i.e. words which could be traced directly back to a common ancestor, and that the Venda relationship to Shona was very close.

Finlayson (1986) concludes that in general, the evidence in respect to forms of

domesticity also seem to suggest that there is some link between Venda and Shona as well. The link between the Venda and Sotho groups on the other hand, appears to be on the male side since a number of terms in the languages refer to hunting and cattle-keeping.

In 1853 the former Transvaal Republic instructed its commandants to recognise the lands occupied by the Bantu, but at first there were no definitions of the boundaries. Under the terms of the Pretoria Convention of 1881, a standing Native Location Commission was instructed to assign the 'Bantu' 'such locations as they might be fairly or equitably entitled to, due regard being given to the actual occupation of the tribes concerned' (Mönnig, 1983:1). The work of this commission was interrupted by the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) but another location committee was appointed after the war and the native location in the former Transvaal as they existed before 1994 were those recognised by these two commissions. By the native Land Act of 1913 the Native locations were reserved for 'Bantu' occupation to the exclusion of all other races. In 1936 the Native Trust and Land Act provided for additional land to be acquired by or for the Africans. This enabled many tribes to buy farms to enlarge their tribal areas, while the government 'bought' the remaining larger portions which it held in trust for the African and on most of which various tribes have settled (Monnig 1983).

#### **4.4.5 The Afrikaners**

The history of the Afrikaans language can be traced back to the arrival of the Dutch at the Cape in April 1652. The language spoken by the Dutch underwent several adaptations. According to Kannemeyer (1993) there were different communities that spoke this language as a second language. There were the Khoisan people, the slaves,

the French and the German immigrants. The language naturally adapted to the local circumstances initially as a sort of a local lingua franca. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century Afrikaans served as a lingua franca among the lower classes of the populace in the Cape, especially the coloured and the white people. It existed alongside Dutch and English which were the languages of the elite and official domains. According to Kannemeyer (1993) the practice of granting small farms to the so-called 'free burghers' had already begun in Van Riebeck's time. There were, in the Cape, two parallel groups, officials who served in a temporary capacity who were responsible to Europe, and the free burghers who gradually became less dependent on Europe and developed along their own lines by adapting to local circumstances. The number of free burghers was increased by the arrival of the French Huguenots in 1688. The Huguenots had to mix evenly with the Dutch to prevent them from forming a separate community.

Even though written Afrikaans came relatively late, Afrikaans was a spoken language even before the Cape came under British colonial rule. It was "regarded as a patois and Dutch was used as the written and cultural language" (Kannemeyer, 1993:3). Henri Meurant (1812-1893) wrote his *Zamespraak tysschen Klaas Waarzegger en Jan Twyfelaar* (Conversation between Klaas Soothsayer and Jan Sceptic) in 1861 and it is regarded by some as the first publication in Afrikaans.

The political value of Afrikaans was realised earlier on and a series of movements to promote its use in public domains started. The period of the first Afrikaans language movement was 1875-1900. Afrikaans developed rapidly in the 1870's as a direct reaction to the British attempts at anglicising the Cape. The Afrikaners started questioning their position, origin and identity and they considered their future to be in

this country. This was the context in which the origin of Afrikanerdom should be understood. They came to the former Transvaal after the Great Trek in 1836.

Some white priests and teachers felt that the translation of the Bible into Afrikaans was a necessary move for the spiritual welfare of the "coloured" people. The Dutch Bible was found difficult and foreign to understand.

The *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (Fellowship of True Afrikaners) was established specifically for the inculcation of interest in the Afrikaans language. In 1876 the first edition of *Die Afrikaanse Patriot* appeared which served as a mouthpiece for the society. It published works written before 1900 and stimulated the intellectuality and encouraged political awareness among Afrikaners. This was not done without difficulty as there was opposition from those in favour of Dutch and those who favoured English. This led to the first Afrikaans language congress which agreed among other things, to have a monthly magazine, the first of which was *Ons Klyntji* (Our little one) published in 1896. It contained literary writings of the period. The Anglo-Boer war of 1899 contributed to the loss of interest in language matters (Meiring A.G.S., no date).

The second language movement was from 1900 to the 1930's. Political events and the economic successes like the discovery of diamonds and gold in the independent republics in the north, encouraged Britain to expand its influence. Afrikaner nationalism may be seen as a reaction to this. The Boers felt a need to defend their cultural, political and economic rights. The British wanted to unite South Africa under the Union Jack, ending the independence of the two Boer Republics. This is what led to the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, which in the eyes of the Afrikaners was a struggle for freedom.

The war ended with the Peace of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902 and the four colonies were united on 31 May 1910 (Kannemeyer 1993, Meiring, no date).

C.J. Langenhoven, a member of the Cape Provincial Council, submitted a motion in April 1914 proposing that Afrikaans should replace Dutch as medium of instruction 'for Afrikaans-speaking children up to, and including, standard iv' (Kannemeyer, 1993: 10). This motion was accepted and adopted. Other provinces followed suit. Later on Afrikaans became medium of instruction even in higher classes and by 1925 Afrikaans-speaking children learned everything in their mother-tongue. Dr. D.F. Malan, then Minister of Interior, proposed that Afrikaans become the official language along with English and Dutch, and this was accepted in 1925. There was, however, some opposition to Afrikaans from Dutch circles even though it was approved as appropriate for use in church from 1916, and the full Bible translation was completed in 1933 (and revised in 1983) and the *Evangeliese gesange* (Evangelical hymns) in 1942 (new version completed in 1978) (Kannemeyer, 1993:11).

The thirties saw further development of the Afrikaans language. Afrikaners felt that even though the language was accorded equal status with English as official languages, it had to be developed to meet the requirements of the changing world. According to Meiring the "Derde Taalbeweging" (the third language movement) was aimed at increasing the Afrikaner's intellectual life (Kannemeyer, 1993). J.B.M. Hertzog, the Prime Minister, pursued a policy of "South Africa first" both in politics and the economy. He concentrated on the problem of the 'poor whites' and consequently South Africa's economy improved and unemployment was decreased.

The rights of Afrikaans in government circles were established by the assumption of power by the National Party. A series of laws was passed to implement apartheid and this led to passive resistance, arrests and a ban on the African National Congress.

The federation of Afrikaans cultural organisations (FAK) was responsible for the protection and development of Afrikaans since 1929. It published manuals and technical terms and organised cultural festivals. Combrink (1978:68) states that, whereas initially “Afrikaans had an embryonic literature (mainly poetry), very few textbooks, no Bible, a puerile technical terminology and no standing in the world of commerce and industry”, within a relatively short period of fifty years the situation changed drastically.

During the first fifteen years or so of the National Party government after 1948, Afrikaner unity was slowly restored. This period laid the foundation for an independent republic outside the commonwealth and this was achieved in 1961. Serious criticism, however, of the Nationalist Party and their resulting discriminatory legislation, has been voiced since the fifties. Outside South Africa criticism was voiced in the United Nations Organisation (UNO) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). South Africa was isolated and it was banned from participation in most international organisations and sports. Some Afrikaner religious leaders and jurists also criticised the government while intellectuals like N.P. van Wyk Louw and J.J. Degenaar urged ‘ a more humane approach to the problem’ (Kannemeyer, 1993: 89).

Criticism in the country intensified in the sixties and black people demanded greater political rights. After the Sharpsville massacre of 1961 and other similar demonstrations by black people in the sixties, the Soweto unrest of 1976 resulted in social disruptions.

However, the government started to acknowledge the legitimacy of the black and 'coloured' populations' claims to greater political rights and freedom. H.F. Verwoerd's homeland policy was one attempt, as was P.W.Botha's later tricameral parliament for whites, coloureds and Indians. This was still essentially grounded in the apartheid philosophy. Since F.W. de Klerk took office in 1989, organisations like the ANC were unbanned and it was possible to envisage a fully democratic society for the first time since the rigid Verwoerdian era.

After the first democratic elections in 1994 Afrikaans remained an official language of the Republic of South Africa with the other ten languages. Webb (1998) notes that Afrikaans is not a homogeneous language as there exists several non-standard varieties such as Cape Afrikaans, Orange River Afrikaans and the Afrikaans of second-language speakers. (Webb 1998. 37). He further mentions the strong stigmatization in many black communities which is the result of Afrikaans's direct association with apartheid.

The history of Afrikaans demonstrates that with determination, any speech community can strive to make their language official if the community has the economic and political power. Languages can be adapted and standardised to support the establishment of new values, norms, attitudes and patterns of behaviour. They may be made to perform the role of facilitating development and supporting state administration. Any language can rise to the occasion as an official language sufficient in every way for the functions of a modern state or province. Political will is a necessary ingredient in the transformation of a language from a state of inadequacy to a state of adequacy as an official language.

#### 4.4.6 The English

English is not among the first five major languages in the Province, but because of its dominance, it is necessary to look at its history. English was introduced in the Cape before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the first British occupation of the Cape. It only gained a permanent foothold after the second British occupation of the Cape in 1806. After the Battle of Blaauwbergstrand between the British and the Dutch, English as a language was officially introduced in the country. The British Government of the Cape and later Natal promoted the use of English in all public domains. Their attempts at anglicisation strengthened the movement promoting the role of Afrikaans as already mentioned in this chapter. The standard variety of English in this country has maintained its linguistic links with British English in a remarkable manner. Nevertheless there is some variety in the use of the language in the country. For example we have Natal English, Eastern Cape English, Afrikaans English, Indian English and now lately 'African English' (Webb 2000:38). It is one of the official languages of the Republic of South Africa with the other ten, but it is by far the dominant language of the country as already shown in Chapter 1.

The linguistically most important dates in the history of South Africa follow as provided by Webb (1998:46):

From 300	The arrival of the 'Bantu' in Southern Africa. Presence of Portuguese, English and Dutch in Southern Africa.
1652	Establishment of a refreshment station by the Dutch government. Arrival of slaves from the west and east African coast, and the far east.
1659, 1673	The first and second wars between the Dutch East India Company



and the Khoisan.

- 1795,1806 Arrival of the British.
- 1819+ Border wars between white farmers in the eastern Cape and the Xhosa.
- 1820+ Difecane (wars of extermination and violent migration of Bantu tribes fleeing away from Shaka and his Zulus, causing deaths or displacements of some tribes. Some went as far as Zimbabwe, Malawi and Tanzania).
- 1830 Wars between the British colonial government and black tribes.
- 1836 The Great Trek (the movement of groups of Afrikaans-speaking farmers from the eastern cape northwards and leading to violent clashes with the Bantu).
- 1860 Discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa and the influx of foreigners.
- 1880,1899-1902 First and second Anglo-Boer wars between Britain and the two Boer Republics (the Transvaal and Orange River Republics).
- 1910 Establishment of the Union of South Africa.
- 1948 Afrikaans-speaking whites gain national political control in South Africa.
- 1958 Beginning of the establishment of black homelands/Bantustans.
- 1961 Sharpeville, a violent clash between the South African Police and black people over compulsion to carry identity documents, and the death of many people, and the establishment of the Republic of South Africa outside the British Commonwealth.
- 1976 The Soweto protests.

- 1994 Democratic government in South Africa, with a policy of 11 official languages.
- 1999 Second national democratic elections.

From the brief socio-political history of the six languages provided, it is very interesting to note their relationships and influence on each other. None of the African languages discussed is homogeneous since each comprises a number of dialects. Besides its dialects, Xitsonga is also spoken in Mozambique, while Tshivenda is spoken in Zimbabwe. There is in the province a diglossic situation at Mashashane where the speakers use both the Northern Ndebele variety and Northern Sotho interchangeably. Northern Ndebele has not been recognised as an official language as Chapter 5 will explain.

Both Xitsonga and Tshivenda languages were influenced by Northern Sotho mostly in their written forms because most missionaries, who first wrote these languages, were first taught Northern Sotho or Sotho before they learned the other two languages. There are also Tsonga settlements enclosed by Northern Sotho speaking settlements and vice versa. Even though most black people in the province speak an African language, these languages have not become sociolinguistically dominant, and very few 'non-Bantu' people speak an African language as first language. (Webb, 1998: 42).

Afrikaans is a 'South African' language even though it is historically related to the Germanic family of languages. In the process of language change, it has adapted to surrounding circumstances and this inter alia permitted the language to gain ground even though in most black circles it is stigmatised because of its direct association with

the apartheid policies. As an L2 to most Africans it serves a number of social functions as an official language.

The English language is a high status language to the extent that even though it is equal to the other official languages, it is gaining preference for reasons not only linguistic, as will be discussed in the next chapter. The politicisation of language institutions has been cited as a problem already in the first chapter. Chapter 5 will discuss the sociolinguistic profile of the Limpopo Province looking specifically at language knowledge, the geographical distribution of languages, demographic distribution, language functions, status, growth, shifts and language preference patterns. It will also focus on literacy, corpus development, public functions and domains and explore the prevalent language planning institutions.