

OBITUARY

DR. KARL LAMAN

THE death of Dr. Karl E. Laman on the 29th of June 1944 deprived Africa of a great scholar missionary and our Institute of a consistent friend and a highly valued coadjutor. Born in 1867, he received his training at Norrbarke in Sweden and at Hamburg where he studied African languages. In 1891 he went to the Congo in the service of the Swedish Mission. His assiduous labours during the next twenty-seven years placed him in the very front rank of Bantu philologists. His article in the first volume of this Journal revealed something of the complicated linguistic situation in the Lower Congo region. Only one language of importance exists there, namely Kongo, but it has at least twelve dialects, and several of these have been adopted independently by the various Missions, Protestant and Roman Catholic, for literary purposes. The Swedish Mission made use of four of these dialects but chiefly of the central dialect, Mazinga, spoken around Mukimbungu. Laman published two studies of this dialect in Swedish (*Om Språket i nedre Kongo*, 1907; *Lärobok i Kongo-språket*, 1912) and one in English (*Grammar of the Kongo Language*, 1912). He also made a new version of the New Testament and a translation of the Old Testament in the Buende dialect, the complete Bible being published in 1905. He was a pioneer in the study of Bantu tonetics, as was shown by his *Musical Accent or Intonation in the Kongo language* (1922), which was based on the Kingoyi or Buende dialect; he also studied the tonetics of Teke. He collaborated with Dr. Carl Meinhof in an essay on the phonology of Kongo (Mazinga) which was first published in the *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-sprachen*, vol. xix, and now appears in Meinhof's *Introduction to the Phonology of the Bantu Languages*. Laman's linguistic work culminated in his great dictionary (*Dictionnaire Kikongo-Français avec une Étude Phonétique décrivant les dialectes les plus importants de la langue dite Kikongo*), published in 1936 by the Belgian Royal Colonial Institute in Brussels. He had taken a prominent part in the efforts put forth to establish a unified literary Kongo, and this dictionary will no doubt help in that direction. A scholar with wide interests, he received the Linnaean gold medal in 1907 for his collection of African insects now in the Natural History Museum at Stockholm. The University of Uppsala honoured him, and itself, by conferring on him the degree of D.D. He was one of the first Swedish members of our Institute and from 1926 to 1937 represented the International Missionary Council on the Governing Body.

E. W. SMITH