

#06

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Linguistique
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Africaines



- _ Proto-Berber phonological reconstruction: An update
- _ Harmony and disharmony in Mbat (Jarawan Bantu) verbs
- _ Inheritance and contact in the genesis of Gisamba (Bantu, L12a, DRC): A diachronic phonological approach
- _ Comptes rendus / Book reviews



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Anthony TRAILL (ed. by Hiroshi NAKAGAWA & Andy CHEBANNE), *A trilingual !Xóǎ dictionary: !Xóǎ] — English — Setswana*, Cologne, Rüdiger Köppe (Quellen zur Khoisan-Forschung / Research in Khoisan Studies 37), 2018, 318 p.

by Lee J. PRATCHETT

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At a summer school for language description and documentation at the Leiden University in 2010, I placed a bid in a silent auction for Anthony Traill's (1994) *A !Xóǎ dictionary* only to be outbid by the field phonetics instructor. Taking pity on the then still post-graduate about to embark on an adventure in "Khoisan" languages, the instructor withdrew his bid and I became the happy owner of a fine lexicographic work on one of the world's phonologically most complex languages. Well-thumbed and well-travelled, having made more than one journey to the Kalahari desert, it now stands alongside a yet more impressive work: a lexicon that is phonologically even more complex, with entries that are even richer in detail, and with a Setswana-!Xóǎ section and an appendix full of flora and fauna terms, ideophones, and even a handful of profanities to top everything off.

Sadly, Anthony Traill passed away in 2007 before this dictionary project could be finished. In a preface to the dictionary, his wife, Jill Traill, reminds us that "of all [Tony's] unfinished work it was his dying wish to get this dictionary completed and published". It is particularly commendable that the editors have been able to see this wish through to completion, which now forms part of an important scientific legacy left to the !Xóǎ and the linguistic community (see Güldemann and Nakagawa (2018) for an account of Anthony Traill's pioneering work in Khoisan linguistics and African linguistics). As far as possible, I will try to highlight the differences between the present dictionary and the original so that this review might serve those considering updating their Khoisan collection.

Just shy of thirty pages, the first section of the dictionary is tantamount to a grammatical sketch of the Lone Tree variety of East !Xóǎ (!Xoon in other orthographies), of the Taa language complex. With approximately 2600 speakers in Botswana and Namibia, Taa is the last vital language of the Tuu language family. The sketch provides the necessary information for navigating the dictionary and teasing apart its many culturally and linguistically rich examples. Anyone coming across !Xóǎ for the first time is well advised to consult this

section, if only to understand the particularities of the phonologically-based orthographic representation and ordering of entries. The subsection on general grammatical notes (p. 10-29) covers everything from pronouns and basic aspects of inflectional and derivational nominal morphology with a brief overview of the gender system, to verbal morphology, and introductory remarks on clauses and word order. This section is by and large identical in form to the original dictionary and the topics follow a functionalist description (e.g. what are referred to as adjectives in !Xóǎ in the dictionary are in fact verbs). Interested readers are encouraged to consult complementary descriptions (see e.g. Güldemann 2013a; 2013b).

The subsection on general grammatical notes is followed by further phonetic definitions of the consonant and vowel contrasts and some phonetic rules (p. 30-36). It is worthwhile noting that the new dictionary maintains the phonologically-based linguistic orthography of the original. In a commentary found in both works (Traill 1994: 14 and p. 7 of the book under review), Traill himself recognises the arguments in favour of re-transcribing the dictionary with a user-friendly orthography (such as the one employed by the Ju|'hoan dictionary, cf. Dickens (1994)). A re-transcription entails not only considerable input from specialists, but consultation and consensus at community level. This aside, the language is still not fully described, effectively exemplified by the inclusion in the revised dictionary of five additional phonological contrasts discovered since the lexicon has been expanded. At this stage, the phonological representation remains the most faithful representation of what is phonologically the most complex language on earth.

The lexicon itself is divided into !Xóǎ-English (p. 37-232), English-!Xóǎ (p. 233-268) and Setswana-!Xóǎ (p. 269-313). There is also a final appendix (p. 314-318), which brings together lexica for different semantic categories such as birds, which in the original dictionary were listed together unsuspectingly under the entry for 'bird' in the English-!Xóǎ or distributed across the entire !Xóǎ-English section. The appendix also brings together plant names, ideophones, smells, and curses in a user-friendly way. In the preface to the dictionary, Jill Traill reflects on her husband's "insatiable curiosity and an abiding passion for the !Xóǎ people, their language and their culture". The !Xóǎ lexicon is testimony to this. Let us take one example:

‡hũn 3 I ‡hũm-tê 2 I dim.: g‡hũu-bâ (sg.), g‡hũu-O'ani (pl.) 1. Shepherd's Tree (*Boscia albitrunca* (Burch.) Gilg. Et Benedict var. *Albitrunca*). The fruit is eaten; the root has general medicinal value; the bark adds toxicity to arrow poison. *It is not used for*

firewood because its natural affinity is opposed to rain and burning it is believed to drive away the rain and to cause misfortune. This affinity may be harnessed deliberately to drive away unwanted incessant rain. The diminutive is a metaphor for the Brown Hyena because its foliage resembles this hyena's shaggy coat. 2. Coffee. |xāe †hūn to play seesaw (cf. †nōo ihì). Avoidance term is !gà'n |èe, lit. young girls, alluding to the soft foliage and lack of thorns (cf. !náu O'âni). (p. 160, my italics)

This entry is emblematic of the rich and informative descriptions that accompany many of the lexical entries. This entry shines some light on the morphophonological complexity of the language, particularly in the inflectional and derivational domains. †hūn is 'Shepherd's Tree', †hūm-tê is the same in the plural. The entry provides information on the agreement class pairing (3 I and 2 I) and thus the grammatical gender of the noun. The user is also provided with the singular and plural pairing for the diminutive forms, g†hūu-bâ and g†hūu-O'ani, respectively. This is surely enough to entertain the specialist linguist for a while. The lexical item's description is nothing short of a journey into the world of the !Xóǎ, and a bounty for cultural anthropologists, ethnobotanists, folklorists, and lexicologists alike. Above all else, in a fast changing world that in many respects scarcely resembles the one into which Anthony Traill stepped in 1969, it is a carefully curated record of an endangered way of life in the Kalahari made with and for the !Xóǎ. I have italicised parts of the description which do not appear in the original dictionary. The entry itself in the original dictionary can be found under †qhūn with the agreement classes 3 I and 4 I (Traill 1994: 143), all illustrative of the attention to detail in the valuable additions and revisions to the original dictionary.

The Setswana-!Xóǎ section, compiled by Botswanan linguist Andy Chebanne, is a welcomed addition that will hopefully make this lexicographic work accessible to a broader audience in Botswana, not least of all ethnic !Xóǎ students and Tswana-speaking teachers. The Setswana-!Xóǎ and English-!Xóǎ sections follow the conventional alphabetical ordering for lexical entries and neither contain any of the rich details found in the !Xóǎ-English section to which the reader is of course referred. The inclusion of the Setswana-!Xóǎ section is a powerful symbol of the momentum in the documentation of Khoisan languages in southern Africa and Botswana in particular, and the strides made towards linguistic empowerment (see e.g. Batibo 2009), all of which was made possible by the significant achievements by Anthony Traill.

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