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A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES OF BOTSWANA

Andy Monthusi CHEBANNE

Faculty of Humanities, University of Botswana
Visiting Fellow of the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, April – July, 2007

ABSTRACT The indigenous communities of Botswana discussed in this paper are generally referred to as the Khoisan (Khoesan). While there are debates on the common origins of Khoisan communities, the existence of at least five language families suggests a separate evolution that resulted in major grammatical and lexical differences between them. Due to historical conflicts with neighboring groups, they have been pushed far into the most inhospitable areas of the regions where they presently live. The most significant victimization of Khoisan groups by the linguistic majority has been the systematic neglect of their languages and cultures. In fact, social and development programs have attempted to assimilate them into so-called majority ethnic groups and into modernity, and their languages have been difficult to conserve in contact situations. This paper provides an overview of these indigenous communities of Botswana and contributes to ongoing research of the region. I discuss reasons for the communities' vulnerability by examining their demography, current localities, and language vitality. I also analyze some adverse effects of development and the danger the Khoisan face due to negative social and political attitudes, and formulate critical areas of intervention for the preservation of these indigenous languages.

Key Words: Indigenous ethnic communities; Khoisan languages of Botswana; Language and identity; Language policy; Sociolinguistics of Khoisan.

KHOISAN IN BOTSWANA: HISTORY AND CURRENT SITUATION

Much of the linguistic and anthropological information concerning the Khoisan was gathered during the 20th century, although some historical records date from much earlier. The linguistic and ethnographic distinction between Khoi (Khoe) and San dates back to the early 20th century (Dorman, 1917; Schultze, 1928; Vossen & Keuthmann, 1986; Barnard, 1988). The word Khoe (or Khoi), meaning person, has to most Khoekhoe speakers become a generally accepted term for the people and their languages. The word San, a Khoekhoe word for gatherers, comes from Saon (with a Nama gender common plural). This shows that even among themselves they make this socio-cultural difference. Anthropologists during the colonial era (e.g., E.C.E. Latham, quoted from Schultze, 1928; Vossen & Keuthmann, 1986; Barnard, 1988) used Khoisan as a racial term, referring to ethnic groups that African and European settlers in Southern Africa despised and regarded lowly (cf. Chebanne, 2003: 59). This term has to non-linguists therefore taken a pejorative connotation, even relegating these people to a subhuman class. It was only after Schapera’s 1930 publi-
cation of “The Khoisan people of Southern Africa” that the term was rehabilitated and conferred validity beyond racial and physical stereotypes. Over the years, other studies have helped to clarify this situation, most notably, works by Vossen (1997: 386), Westphal (1963, 1971), and Köhler (1971). Westphal’s (1963, 1971) studies were the first significant and comprehensive accounts of Khoe and San communities of Botswana, although they lack detail and polish. Nonetheless, Köhler (1981) objected to Westphal’s contention that Khoe and San languages did not share a common ancestry. Köhler’s (1971) hypothesis was that the common structure of word roots and the combination of rare consonants of click and glottal types largely demonstrated that Khoe and San languages shared an ancient origin, and that pursuing such a hypothesis would be scientifically credible and productive (Traill, 1986). Other studies on the Khoisan describing their current situation are presented in the African Study Monograph (Volume 22, Supplement Issue, introduced by Tanaka & Sugawara, 1996).

Khoisan studies is a domain that should be considered critical in linguistics and anthropology for the following reasons: 1) little is known about these ancient people (Köhler, 1971; Tanaka, 1980; Güldemann & Vossen, 2000; Chebanne, 2003) and very few languages of Khoisan communities have been studied; 2) they still maintain an autochthonous lifestyle, preserving ancient indigenous knowledge systems and subsistence patterns (Silberbauer, 1965; Saugestad, 2001; Barnard, 1988); 3) phonologically, they present interesting sounds that are typologically peculiar among world languages (Nakagawa, 2006; Traill, 1986); 4) the fact that their lifestyle appears incompatible with a modernity that appears to be destroying their chosen mode of existence and their culture renders it both timely and critical to understand them, and to help them maintain their ethnic, linguistic, and anthropological uniqueness (Takada, 2007; Sommer, 1992; Barnard, 1888); and 5) the Botswana language use policy means that no provisions are being made to maintain Khoisan languages, as a massive language shift to the majority Setswana language is encouraged (Batibo, 2005; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2001). It should also be noted that speakers of Khoisan languages do not form a homogenous linguistic community even as they share, for example, phonetic typology and common adaptations to their desert environment. The current classification of these communities according to their languages is shown in Figure 1.

In terms of number of different languages and linguistic diversity, Botswana is among the countries of Southern Africa with a significant number of Khoisan speech communities. While it is not immediately evident from the labels of Botswana, Batswana, and Setswana (all designating a mono-ethnic derivation), the nation is home to many disparate ethnic and language groups. Essentially covered by the arid conditions of the Kalahari Desert, Botswana is a sparsely populated country for its size (580,000 km²); its population is only 1.8 million. In their analysis of the 2001 Botswana population census data on language knowledge and use, Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo (2003) devised an analysis, represented in Table 1, which provides information not only on lan-
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PROTO-KHOE-SAN

KHOE-SAN

Hadza (language family)

Khoe-San Southern Africa

Sandawe (language family)

Khoe-Kwadi (Central) (language family)

Southern (Non-Khoe) (lf)

Northern (Non-Khoe) (lf)

Khoekhoe

Kalahari-Khoe

Nama

!Ora

!X66

!Xam

+Hua

Ju’hoan

+Khomaní

Kx’au/ei

Western

Eastern

Northern

Southern/Central

Northern

Southern

Khwe dam

Naro

Shua

Tshoas

||Aní

||Gana

Deti

Cua

Buga

|Gui

Cara

Cire-cire

|Ganda

+Haba

Cirecire

Kua

/Haise

Danisi (or Danasani)

Fig. 1. The Khoesan Languages

Notes: 1) Khoisan has 5 language families; and , 2) the abbreviated (lf) stands for language family; and 3) the term “language family” is used to make a historical linguistic difference between the Khoisan languages.


Table 1. 2001 Census data (from Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003: 396): Languages spoken in the home in Botswana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Language users</th>
<th>Percent of 1,601,885</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setswana</td>
<td>1,253,080</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>National status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikalanga</td>
<td>126,952</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>No status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekgalagari</td>
<td>44,706</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiyei</td>
<td>4,801</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herero</td>
<td>10,998</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setswepong</td>
<td>5,382</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebirwa</td>
<td>11,633</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbukushu</td>
<td>27,653</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subiya</td>
<td>6,477</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekgothu</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesarwa (Khoisan)</td>
<td>30,037</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>6,750</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>No status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndebele</td>
<td>8,174</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shona</td>
<td>11,308</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>34,433</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others foreign</td>
<td>18,811</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,601,885</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
language and ethnicity, but also on which languages are spoken and their status in Botswana. The table shows indisputable evidence that numerous languages exist in Botswana. On the basis of these statistics, Botswana is considered a multilingual nation.

According to the estimated numbers of speakers of the languages listed in Table 1, Bantu languages have more speakers than Khoisan languages (Table 1). Bantu speakers are also more easily identified than speakers of Khoisan languages. However, it should be noted that the above tabulated list is far from being exhaustive for the following reasons: 1) the label Sesarwa (or Khoisan) is a generic term that is used in Botswana without regard for the necessary distinctions between language and ethnicity within the Khoisan of Botswana, i.e., the specific glossonyms (language names) and ethnonyms (ethnic names) are never used in official references to these communities; 2) the anthropological characterizations of their socio-economic patterns and lifestyles are merely regarded in official circles as “under-developed,” “remote area dwellers,” and “impoverished,” and therefore the issues of their ethno-linguistic characterization are evaded; and 3) in official hierarchies characterizing groups as gatherers, pastoralists, or agriculturalists, agro-pastoralists, who participate in “modern” economic activities, are favored (Chebanne, 2003), and as a consequence, gatherers are considered landless and unorganized. In all accounts, the Khoisan ethno-linguistic communities are generalized under one socio-economic label, and their ethnic and linguistic identities are overlooked in official reports.

BOTSWANA: A HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

As is the situation in many countries of Africa, the territory that is now Botswana has experienced population movements over many thousands of years. The current language situation presents Botswana as a country with an imposing Bantu population in relation to the San communities. The history of the Bantu is now quite well documented, and their arrival in Southern Africa dates to over a millennium ago. Historically, they are relatively new arrivals in the region (Parsons, 1993). The term Bantu is used to refer to African languages that are linguistically characterized by a common reference term for human (-ntu, -tho). According to most classifications, the Bantu languages are further subdivided into branches and clusters. Historians also unanimously agree that when the Bantu arrived, the Khoisan were already present (Parsons, 1993). Khoisan rock-paintings and other archaeological evidence attest to this (Dowson & Lewis-Williams, 1994). In Botswana, the Setswana, Shekgalagari, Sebirwa, Setswapong, and Silozi languages belong to the Sotho-Tswana cluster of the Southern Bantu Branch; Ikalanga (together with Nambya) belong to the Shona cluster of the South Central Bantu Branch; Shikeyi and Ciikuhane (Subiya) belong to the Central Bantu; and ThiMbukushu, OtjiHerero, and RuGciriku belong to the Western Central Bantu languages. Although they are all historically related as Bantu languages, they have evolved differently over a thou-
sand years and are now mutually unintelligible. The Bantu peoples are historically sedentary farmers, but relocate to greener and safer pastures when necessary (Parsons, 1993). Their agricultural activities are therefore climate-dependent. In terms of population dynamics, it is the agro-pastoralists, that is, the Bantu of Botswana, who in the pre-colonial era dominated territorial claims through the land tenure systems linked to their agro-pastoral activities (Thapelo, 2002; Hitchcock & Holm, 1993).

Bantu socio-economic systems have also been consequential in their contact with non-Bantu and non-pastoralists, such as the Khoisan, who were either assimilated or pushed to the most inhospitable areas of the territory in search of peace. The consequences of contact with Bantu varied regionally. In the Okavango region, the Wayeyi and Gciriku seem to have had more harmonious relationships with the Khoisan as evidenced in the adoption of the phonetic phenomenon of clicks in their languages. As assumed by linguists in other contexts, linguistic adaptations of this nature only occur where social relationships are harmonious (Vossen, 1997). The Bakgalagadi, who were also agonized and pushed into the desert by their Bantu cousins, incorporate limited usage of clicks, an indication that at some point in time they came into prolonged contact with the Khoisan (Chebanne & Monaka, 2005). However, for the rest of the Bantu communities of Botswana, evidence suggests that their relations with the Khoisan were neither close nor welcoming, with only instances of Khoisan servitude and exploitation by Bantu agro-pastoralists referenced in historical accounts (cf. Thapelo, 2002; Hitchcock & Holm, 1993).

THE KHOISAN: ETHNO-CULTURE AND THE QUESTION OF INDIGENOUSNESS

The Khoe (also referred to as the Khoi) and the San have historically been labeled Bushmen. Many myths and misconceptions have been imposed upon them in the name of civilization by settlers who came into contact with them. Their languages, which are characterized by the click phenomenon, have seldom been the subjects of scientific analysis. Even as researchers and language and culture activists engage in the difficult task of preserving Khoisan, there are often debates on what exactly these communities consist of and how they should be labeled. While the common origins of the Khoe and the San communities cannot be denied, the thousand years of separate evolution have created grammatical and lexical differences that set them clearly apart as separate languages (Güldemann & Vossen, 2000). It is important and interesting in this discussion to note the following position of Tom Güldemann (e-mail communication with W. le Roux, 16 May 2002):

“...The problem is not with linguistic terms. The main issue is that non-linguists appropriate linguistic terms (including “Khoisan” and “Khoi” (better Khoe)), but then use them in a different sense. There is indeed no unitary “Khoisan” identity. Scientific linguistic classifications do in principle not refer to
identity, culture, race, social status, or any other non-linguistic feature and are thus irrelevant for sociolinguistic and similar matters. There also exists a misunderstanding here regarding the two terms “Khoi” and “San.” They are conceptually not on the same level. Roughly speaking, one can say the following: San refers mainly to a sociocultural classification in Southern Africa, namely people who are traditionally neither agriculturalists nor pastoralists. That this has become a term used also in the sociopolitical discourse has to do with the fact that the San as a whole were and are subject to discrimination and marginalization and thus share common interests today. “San” does not refer to any linguistic affiliation. In fact, languages spoken by San belong to at least three different groups, which have not been shown so far to be related. With the term Khoi, you apparently refer here to a more specific ethnolinguistic group, which should better be labeled “Khoekhoe” (for which see the reason below). In traditional scientific terminology, this refers to South African and Namibian peoples with particular languages (Nama, !Ora, etc.) and a pastoral culture.”

In talking about the Khoisan, an important issue that has often been raised (especially in official circles in Botswana) is that the Khoisan have no unique right to regard themselves as the sole indigenous communities of Botswana, and that moreover all people in Botswana are, in fact, indigenous (cf. Chebanne, 2002; Eide, 2001). Before discussing sociolinguistic situations, it is important to attempt to clarify the concept of “indigenous” in order to clarify the political agenda concerning the ethno-cultural status of indigenousness of the Khoisan. There are several considerations to be made in the definition of the terms of minority and indigenous people in Africa, especially in Botswana. The common understanding of the term is that indigenous peoples distinguish themselves from other groups by: 1) their prior settlement in the territory in which they live; and 2) maintenance of a separate ethnic and linguistic culture that is closely linked to their particular ways of using land and natural resources (cf. Schultze, 1928; Taylor, 2000; Chebanne, 2002; Saugestad, 2001; Eide, 2001). The ideal type of “indigenous peoples” focuses on aboriginality, ethnicity, and certain territoriality, e.g., as the Khoisan characterize themselves by their unique adaptations to the desert region of Botswana. Another issue affecting their aboriginality is their marginalization and pauperization by social developments that endanger their historical and ethnic ways of life (cf. Silberbauer, 1965; Tanaka, 1980) as well as their environmental adaptations. As minority groups and aboriginals, developments often put them at greater disadvantages in that they become invariably characterized by: 1) social and economic powerlessness; 2) subordination; 3) lack of territoriality; and 4) vulnerability due to lack of self-determination in matters of linguistic and cultural life (Cassidy et al., 2001; Chebanne, 2002; Mazonde, 2002). The Khoisan in Botswana therefore set themselves apart as indigenous, without prejudice to whoever may wish to consider any other ethnic group “indigenous.” In this situation of aboriginality and social marginalization, their sociolinguistic experience takes a unique and critical position. For these people, the debate over their objective identification can only underline their aboriginality. They do not have social structures by which they
can collectively engage other communities or defend their separate development. The magnitude of their vulnerability is demonstrated by their rapid disappearance in their settlement areas.

However, the current Botswana government development programs, in which these groups are generalized as dwellers in remote areas that lack basic amenities, have threatened their patterns of life. Socially, they have lacked status and have very often been victimized by their more organized neighbors in the new settlements, and consequently their ethnic and linguistic cohesion has been damaged. The government refutes their indigenousness, and also espouses the view that human culture is dynamic and that therefore there can be no compelling argument to maintain a rural and “primitive” culture (cf. Botswana Government, 2006). Under these circumstances and this social development agenda, the Khoisan can no longer maintain their social structures according to their cultural values. Therefore, the most significant effect of their marginalization has been the neglect of their languages and culture and the concerted effort by the government to assimilate them into so-called modernity (Chebanne, 2002; 2003). As the example of the |Nu of the Southern Khoisan demonstrates, the Khoisan people adopt other languages at the expense of their own when faced with extreme social and economic predicaments.

In the current socio-political context of Botswana, therefore, the term indigenous is considered problematic especially from the viewpoint of historical and socio-political processes (cf. Hitchcock & Holm, 1993). The strict consideration of geographical autochthons seems to imply a cut-off date in the chronology of settlement or colonization of the country. However, in the nature of issues affecting autochthons, there are essentially two considerations: 1) the view that makes a distinction between those who have espoused cultural exoticism with the associated talk of “modernism” and consider the rural and the remote as typically primitive; and 2) those that have resisted it or who have failed to make a transition to “modernism” and who consider the natural resources of their geography and environment as their means of sustenance (cf. Hitchcock & Holm, 1993). Indigenous peoples consequently are reduced to socio-economic marginalization and ethno-cultural endangerment (cf. Chebanne, 2002; Nthomang, 2004). As in socio-economic studies, the following sections of the discussion will demonstrate that their socio-linguistic situation is generally characterized by linguistic marginalization, stigmatization, and language shift and abandonment, even language extinction.

KHOISAN LANGUAGES AND POPULATION: CURRENT DISTRIBUTION AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC DYNAMICS

Research on Khoisan languages is ongoing. What has emerged thus far is the determination of language families (as shown in the Khoisan classification, above). However, the current determination of languages is essentially based on ethnic identities (cf. Güldemann & Vossen, 2000; Nakagawa, 2006; Traill, 1986).
On that basis, Table 2 presents the ethno-linguistic communities of Botswana; hopefully, future research will ultimately provide their objective language status and the relations between various dialects. The history of encroachment by other population groups and Khoisan communities’ own movements (voluntary or involuntary) as well as difficult historical and social attitudes and the current inappropriate socio-economic development policies have resulted in disruptions in the lives of Khoe and San communities (Chebanne & Monaka, 2005). This has also contributed to their current distribution patterns (Chebanne & Nthapelelang, 2000). For instance, Cashdan (1979: 39) reports significant changes in settlement patterns and migrations that are geographically and ethnically different from accounts by Westphal (1971). Table 2 presents an approximate list of existing Khoisan languages in Botswana.

No historical accounts are available regarding inter-Khoisan socio-linguistic dynamics (cf. Köhler, 1981). What happened when two or more Khoisan groups speaking different languages came into contact? How did they regard each other? What happened to groups such as the Khwe-Kwadi (made up of the Khokhoe, Nama pastoralists, and the Kalahari Khoe, who were gatherers), which reveal a linguistic common history, but are made up of pastoralists and gatherers? Some possible scenarios can be assumed, because in all human communities, languages that come into contact for a sufficient length of time tend to incorporate common vocabulary. In this regard, research findings by Traill (1986), Vossen (1997), and Sands (1998a; 1998b) clearly suggest inter-ethnic relationships and linguistic diffusion of vocabulary items. This could have
gone on for many millennia. The |Gui and !Xôô vocabulary and phonetic complexity of clicks observed by Nakagawa (2006; 1995) clearly attest to a sociolinguistic situation that facilitated harmonious interactions. The assumption made here is that the inter-Khoisan sociolinguistic situation is as ancient as the people themselves, and the present situation could have arisen from: 1) avoidance of social and linguistic conflicts; 2) maintenance of appropriate distance and territoriality among communities to ensure ethnic preservation for many years; and 3) the arrival of non-Khoisan, that is, the Bantu or the Batswana, in Botswana could have made them stand together and adopt similar strategies to defend their socio-historical identity. The current socio-cultural situation of the Khoisan seems to show facilitation of the generalization of their ethnic and linguistic identities by those who had no vested interest in understanding them (Janson, 2000).

To draw a general picture of Khoisan sociolinguistic dynamics, it is important to make quick observations of their individual ethno-linguistic situations according to their current ethno-linguistic distributions (cf. Janson, 2000). While surveys have been made by various researchers (cf. Hasselbring, 2000; Güldemann et al., 2000; Vossen, 1997; Köhler, 1971), actual language use situations are just beginning to emerge (cf. Batibo, 2005; Chebanne & Monaka, 2005; Visser, 1998).

1. The sociolinguistic situation of the !Xôô

!Xôô is a Southern Non-Khoe, i.e., a Southern San, language belonging to the Taa branch, whose closest languages were once spoken in what is now South Africa but are now extinct. Incontestably, it has some affinity with !Kui (|Xam, ||Xegui, and ‡Komani; Güldemann et al., 2000). The speakers of !Xôô are scattered over a large area stretching from western Botswana to the eastern Namibian border (Andersson & Janson, 1997). Hasselbring et al. (2001) reported that !Xôô is also spoken in some parts of the Northern Cape province of South Africa, and some eastern parts of Namibia. The !Xôô live in small groups without much contact with each other, but share a dialect continuum. Research by Traill (1985) suggests that !Xôô has two main varieties, namely ‡Ama Pfam (Western variety), and !Gwaa Pfam (Eastern variety). The other name referring to !Xôô is !Aa. The estimated number of speakers is 4,000. Linguistically, !Xôô is the language in the Khoesan family with the most elaborate click phenomenon, which can have as many as 200 combinations (Traill, 1985), and which presents daunting challenges in the development of its writing. This has impeded the development of !Xôô literacy.

The !Xôô language is still spoken in the contexts of cultural activities of family, settlement, and village interactions at community meetings, albeit with some interpretation if there is a non-!Xôô present. All age groups use it in most daily communication. However, school children are not allowed to use it on school grounds, and this has adversely affected its vitality among the youth (Chebanne & Monaka, 2005). Most people are not literate in their language.
Some, however, use the inadequate Setswana-based orthography to write letters and messages. Most !Xóõ speakers are multilingual, speaking another language according to whom they are in contact with, and these are typically Gui (north and east), Nama (south west), and Shekgalagadi (Chebanne & Monaka, 2005). However, this multilingualism does not include Setswana (Andersson & Janson, 1997), which they encounter only in the official administration and in the education of their children. Therefore their multilingualism with other marginalized languages does not provide sociolinguistic or economic advantages.

2. The sociolinguistic situation of the Juǀʼhoan and !Xũ cluster

Juǀʼhoan, the language of the Juǀʼhoansi people, is also commonly known as Kaukau and is spoken mainly in northwestern Botswana and Tsumkwe in Namibia. Juǀʼhoan is the main language which together with !Xũ (or !Xun) forms the Northern Khoisan. This language sub-family stretches into southern Angola. It forms a continuum with ‡Kx’aui|’ein (the southern branch of Northern Khoisan). However, the Juǀʼhoan spoken in Tsumkwe is not intelligible to those who speak ‡Kx’aui|’ein, and should be considered a dialectal variety of Juǀʼhoansi of northwest Botswana. From the research by Hitchcock & Holm (1993), surveys by Batibo et al. (2000), Hasselbring (2000), Hasselbring et al. (2001), and the Botswana census analysis by Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo (2003), the population of Juǀʼhoan speakers can be estimated at between 7,000 and 10,000 people in Botswana and Namibia. Geographical and social conditions are the basis of the differences between the Namibian and Botswana varieties. Juǀʼhoan has been studied extensively by Snyman (1974), who wrote a grammar guide and dictionary. Its orthography has been in place since 1969 and was updated in 1987 and 1991. Another dictionary on Juǀʼhoan was published by Dickens (1994).

The Juǀʼhoan language is mostly used for local village and family communications, as well as at community meetings (with interpreters). There are many native speakers who can now read and write Juǀʼhoan. This is mainly because of the efforts of the Nyae-Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia and also due to sustained linguistic and cultural anthropology research and missionary work (cf. Takada, 2007). With the assistance and cooperation of the Namibian Institute for Educational Development (NIED), which is publishing Juǀʼhoansi texts for school usage, much is happening for the preservation of this language. The orthography by Dickens (1994) has been adopted as official. However, much of this work has been realized in Namibia through the Nyae-Nyae Development Foundation at Tsumkwe, which has managed to prepare school books and texts. These socio-cultural activities have promoted the language at the expense of other San and Bantu languages. However, the adoption of economically powerful ethnic languages of Batswana and OvaHerero threaten some of the community-based gains.
3. The sociolinguistic situation of ṢHoan

Speakers of the ṢHoan language reside in southeastern Botswana (in the Kweneng and Kgatleng Districts). ṢHoan falls into the Northern Khoisan language sub-family, together with Ju|’hoan and !Xû. It is considered the southern branch of this sub-family, while the Ju|’hoan is part of the northern branch (Traill, 1973). However, there are some debates (Güldemann, 1998; Güldemann et al., 2000) that suggest that it could be a language family in its own right. This language comprises an eastern variety and a western variety, which is much closer to the northern sub-family of Northern Khoisan. However, excluding its own dialects, ṢHoan has no mutual intelligibility with the languages it is purportedly related to. With the sole exclusion of the linguistic classification studies by Westphal (1971) and Traill (1986), there has never been a comprehensive linguistic study of the language. No non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have worked among the ṢHoan. This situation means that, unlike other Khoe and San groups, there is the risk that this language will become extinct without any record of it. The statistics derived Cassidy et al. (2001) puts the total ṢHoan population in the districts of Kgatleng and Kweneng at 2,500 speakers. The speakers are multilingual with Setswana and also with Shekgalagarhi, and there has been a strong language shift towards these two languages (Batibo, 2003; Hasselbring, 2000).

4. The sociolinguistic situation of |Nu

The |Nu language died out some decades ago (cf. Vossen, 1997). However, information from Sands et al. (unpublished) indicates that as of 2006 there were fewer than ten speakers who claimed partial knowledge of |Nu. They could recall some words, but were unable to construct grammatically valid structures. The speakers are found far apart in farms and settlements (in South Africa and Botswana) and do not readily interact to keep the language alive. The two research groups, i.e., Vossen (1997) and Sands et al. (unpubl.) have also reported that two of the ten speakers are living in a remote area in southern Botswana. Whichever side of the border they find themselves on, Afrikaans is their main language of communication. As a Southern San language, |Nu would be related to !Xôô, which is spoken in southwestern Botswana. The !Khomani, who are ethnically and historically related to the |Nu, also reside around the Northern Cape district. However, they no longer use a San language. Practically speaking, with only ten speakers of an average of 60 years of age, |Nu is linguistically dead. The children of these few speakers do not know it and there is no possibility that the speakers could come together to practice the language. The current linguistic effort is for the purpose of recording it only.
5. The sociolinguistic situation of the Nama (Khoekhoegowab)

The languages that fall under the Khoekhoegowab categorization are the Nama, Damara, Hai||om, and the !Ora (cf. Haacke & Elderkin, 1997), which are mainly Namibian languages. However, in Botswana they all identify themselves as the Nama. Historically, they have had an influence on the other Khoisan languages, as some speakers of !Xóô, Naro, and Ju’hoan, according to their region, have been reported to also use Nama. This is an instance of Khoisan bilingualism, and is definitely neither unique nor a new sociolinguistic situation. In Botswana, Nama varieties are referred to with Setswana names such as Sekgothu, Sekhikwe, and Seqhanakwe (Batibo et al., 2003). Nama has long been codified and its orthography and dictionary date as far back as 1889, as developed by Kroenlein (cf. Haacke, 1999). The Nama orthography has inspired those working on other Khoisan languages. A new dictionary was recently published by Haacke and Eiseb (2002), and there are also grammar guides for the language (Batibo et al., 2003). Books and texts are available to foster literacy in primary schools. According to Namibian language policy, the first 3 years of education (grades 1-3) should be in the mother tongue, and Khoekhoegowab has been advantaged by this provision. This is a positive policy in Namibia, as it fosters maintenance of the mother tongue by young speakers.

Nama is the only language from the Khoisan family that has been adopted by Bantu ethnic groups, especially those that fled German colonial repression in the early 1900s (Molosiwa, 2000). Currently, Nama is also spoken by people with Herero and Banderu ethnic affiliations (Molosiwa, 2000; Smieja & Batibo, 2000; Batibo & Tsonope, 2000) who, except for their names, have completely lost their own languages. It seems also that Nama has absorbed most of the Southern San languages such as the Taa~Tuu languages, most of which are now extinct with the notable exception of the still-vibrant !Xóô language. Other ethnic communities who speak Nama but are non-pastoralists are most likely to be those who were linguistically assimilated by the Nama (Chebanne, 2003). However, in certain parts of Botswana, such as the desolate areas of the Kgalagadi and Ghanzi Districts, some ethnic Nama who have come to live among the !Xóô now speak the language of the !Xóô, and have completely adopted the culture and lifestyles of these hunter-gatherer communities. Similarly, in the Ghanzi area, some Nama who live among the Ju’hoans have adopted the Ju’hoan language. This is an interesting development and may shed light on some possible historical socio-linguistic dynamics of these Khoisan communities. Impoverished Nama speakers who find themselves minorities among the !Xóô and Ju’hoansi lose their pastoral ways of life and adopt the hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

6. The sociolinguistic situation of the |Gui and ||Gana

The |Gui and ||Gana belong to the Central Koiisan, together with Khoekhoegowab. According to Barnard (1986), there are at least 5,000 speakers of |Gui
and ||Gana, of which probably 2,000 are |Gui speakers and 3,000 are ||Gana. The |Gui and the ||Gana languages are mutually intelligible, although the speakers see themselves as different. This situation is also one instance of bilingualism in which speakers of the two languages live side by side in a dual lingual situation. The |Gui consider ||Gana to be “black Khoe” because of their rather darkish skin and their adoption of Shekgalagari cultural ways (Chebanne, 2003), though the people are still generally positive towards their language. Despite the fact that they have lived alongside !Xóõ speakers, there are only lexical borrowings, but no language switch from |Gui and ||Gana to !Xóõ. However, the speakers use Naro and Shekgalagari as lingua franca (Chebanne, 2003), which poses a threat to the currency of their own languages. Like most of these languages, there is no practical orthography on which to base any literature. However, Nakagawa (1996) provided an International Phonetic Association-based description of |Gui click consonants, and also initiated the development of a lexical database. Some descriptive and socio-historical studies, particularly by Tanaka (1991) and Nakagawa (1996), have also been conducted. Linguistic anthropological works by Sugawara (2001) and Takada (2006) are also available and provide updates on these Khoisan communities as well as interesting insights on prospective and retrospective accounts of their lives and means of livelihood.

7. The sociolinguistic situation of the Naro

Naro is also a Central Khoisan language, together with |Gui, ||Gana, and Khoekhoegowab. Naro speakers in Botswana (mainly in the Ghanzi District) number from 6,000 to 8,000 (Hasselbring, 2000). Visser (personal communication) estimated the number at 10,000, whereas Andersson and Janson (1997) put the figure at 9,000 (5,000 in Botswana and 4,000 in Namibia; cf. Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003). Naro speakers are found mainly in Botswana, but there are some in eastern Namibia. Many Naro speakers now live and work on Ghanzi farms. However, they have maintained their ways of life. Naro has been studied by many scholars including Barnard (1985), Bleek (1928; 1942), and Visser (personal communication). The Naro spoken in the west near the Namibian border is said to be slightly different, as it has been substantially influenced by Nama. Historically, Naro is classified with |Gui and ||Gana, but except for some lexical items, there is not much mutual intelligibility between them. Naro shows differences in grammatical and phonological structures, which suggest that either it retained the historical forms while others lost them, or it acquired them after it separated from |Gui and ||Gana.

Visser (personal communication) indicated that there is no intelligibility between Naro and Nama. However, some research indicates that this may not necessarily be correct, as their historical proximity and socio-historical relationships are quite evident (cf. Nakagawa, 2006). The Dutch Reformed Church at the Kuru Development Trust has also contributed to the documentation through its efforts to codify the Naro language and develop its literacy materials. These
materials include booklets on religious stories, excerpts from the Bible, phonological studies, socio-linguistic discussions, and a revised Naro-English dictionary, compiled in the late 1990s by Visser (personal communication). There is also a monthly magazine and a handbook on phonology, tonology, morphology, and syntax of Naro. These activities make Naro one of the most dynamic Khoe languages, enabling its speakers to face the challenges of future linguistic developments (cf. Visser, 2000).

8. The sociolinguistic situation of Eastern Kalahari Khoe languages

The Eastern Kalahari Khoe is related to the Central Kalahari Khoe (||Gui; ||Gana; Naro) and the Northern Kalahari Khoe (Khwe-dam – Buga and ||Ani). Research by Andersson and Janson (1997) and Chebanne (2002) designated Eastern Khoe as comprising the Khoe speech communities of Shua, Tshua, and Kua. Dornan (1917) was one of the earliest researchers to record some related speech communities of Eastern Kalahari Khoe. Surveys by Hasselbring et al. (2001) and analysis of census data (Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003) indicate that there are about 10,000 speakers in the entire eastern Botswana area where the Eastern Kalahari Khoe are found. Small numbers are also found in northwestern Zimbabwe. Ethnically and linguistically, these communities have been assailed by major socio-economic forces from their neighbors, the Tswana and the Kalanga, who employ them in their farming and domestic activities. The speakers of the languages of Eastern Khoe are now adopting Setswana and Ikalanga even in family communication situations, and are consequently rejecting and abandoning their own languages. This is a serious situation of possible language extinction.

9. The sociolinguistic situation of the Khwe-speaking communities: The ||Ani and Buga

The Northern group of Kalahari Khoe is made up of the ||Ani, Buga, and the ||Ganda (also known as Khwe). In the many research undertakings by German linguists, they have been grouped under the label Kxoe (pronounced Khoe, cf. Vossen, 1997). The northwestern Kalahari Khoe communities occupy the Okavango Delta of Botswana and are sometimes referred to as the flood-plain (or river) Khoe. They are essentially linguistically homogeneous, due to their geographical location and their shared history in and around the delta, which have characterized their lives for thousands of years. The ||Ani and the Buga are the main Khoe communities in the area. Their languages are mutually intelligible. By their own accounts, their main difference is that the ||Ani prefer fishing and arable farming while the Buga and the ||Ganda have historically remained hunters and gatherers. However, the current socio-economic situation seems to neutralize these differences.

Population estimates put the number of Khwe-dam speakers in Botswana at around 15,000, while an equal number may also be found in the Caprivi region

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Fig. 2. Khoisan groups pf Botswana and tourism and commercial areas associated with their historical habitation

Fig. 3. Khoisan ethnolinguistic groups and their localities and habitation in Botswana
of Namibia (Cassidy et al., 2001; Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003). These speakers have had much contact with the Wayeyi, who call them Wawusa, as well as with other ethnic groups such as the Mbutu, Geiriku, Ciikuhane, and the Tawana. There are also some Ju'hoan, called Kaukau in their area, who came to live among them and adopted their language. While Khwe-dam has absorbed other Khoisan languages, it is itself assailed by the main languages of the Namibia Caprivi Strip and northwestern Botswana. The fact that Khwe-dam speakers are multilingual, with knowledge of most of the languages spoken in the delta region, is causing them to become marginalized linguistically.

Substantial descriptive studies by German linguists and anthropologists have been conducted on the ||Ani under the label Kxoe (e.g., Güldemann et al., 2000). The literacy efforts associated with the Penduka Declaration shows ||Ani lumped together with Buga, and/or contributing to the Khwe-dam. Such efforts will require careful planning and an awareness of how the languages contributing to Khwe-dam will benefit it in terms of literacy development and linguistic studies (WIMSA, 2001; Figs. 2&3).

FROM SOCIOLINGUISTIC TO SOCIO-POLITICAL: WHAT ENDANGERS THE KHOISAN?

The preceding sections clearly present difficult sociolinguistic situations for the Khoisan in Botswana. Part of the explanation of the situation seems to be that, historically and socially, the Khoisan in Botswana have been in situations of disadvantage (Batibo, 2005). Two important anthropological observations may be made with regard to these communities (with the exception of the Nama-Damara in Namibia): 1) they have had difficulty adapting to the national socio-economic and political culture; and 2) they have remained in autochthony or aboriginality with little means to pursue a specific and fruitful culture even for purposes of self-preservation. They have therefore in the past decades remained in the periphery of socio-economic and political processes that have contributed to the modernization of Botswana.

What is the problem with the Khoisan? Is it their autochthony – their aboriginality and indigenousness? A fair response would be that they are, in the current situation, at risk of annihilation by the neglectful forces of a globalizing modernity and their incapacitated aboriginality, because they remain in indigenous situations (cf. Solway, 1990). They are not readily able to make choices that would preserve their cultures and lifestyles. In Africa, the term indigenous seems to be ominous and problematic especially from historical and socio-political viewpoints. This means that, practically speaking, indigenous communities are prohibited from self-determination as particular ethno-linguistic groups. In strict ethnographic and anthropological terms, they are autochthons, and their choice of habitat has made them victims of ill-advised development policy decisions. There are essentially two prevailing perspectives of their situation. The first one is external to them, what we may term the attitude of
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the others towards them. Historically, other Black Africans have viewed the Khoisan aboriginality or autochthony as primitive. This is the colonial view (cf. Nthomang, 2004) and it persists unabated (cf. Botswana Government, 2006). It acquired a certain racial character by ascribing some linguistic and cultural superiority to the colonizing communities, including the Bantu. The second is what we may term internal; their aboriginality operates at the level of a clan, which makes them inadaptable to an elaborate socio-political structure that can fit into or remain comparable to other communities’ socio-economic modes of production (cf. Hitchcock & Holm, 1993).

In the current socio-cultural and sociolinguistic situation, Khoisan values do not match those of other groups. Thus, there is a distinction between those who have espoused cultural exoticism (the Bantu agro-pastoralists) with the associated talk of “modernism” and those who have resisted it or who have failed to make a transition to it (the Khoisan hunter-gatherers). This difference in itself should be inoffensive, but a problem arises when they are inappropriately qualified as rural, remote, and typically primitive and therefore become viewed as targets for modernization. Their land usage and cultural expression are considered non-issues in development (cf. Saugestad, 2001; Solway, 1990; Nthomang, 2004). Their ethnic differences, and historical rights and justification to territoriality, are predicated on autochthony rather than on economic productivity, and are therefore not recognized. Thus, the lack of understanding of their socio-cultural and ethno-linguistic realms often results in abuses of their human rights of self-determination and autonomy. The current unmanageable language shift that characterizes their contact with other ethno-linguistic groups is a serious indication that the negative attitudes towards them make them suffer an irreparable inferiority complex about their culture and language (cf. Batibo, 2005; Smieja, 1996).

The sociolinguistic dynamics of Botswana, a vast, sparsely populated desert country with numerous ethnic languages, also means that the factors that account for language maintenance and loss are peculiar and diverse. For instance, the Botswana government, eager to avoid costly development in sparsely populated areas, sometimes espouses inappropriate development programs that change socio-economic and cultural dynamics (Cassidy et al., 2001; Nthomang, 2004). By pursuing these programs, the fragile national ethnic and linguistic diversity has experienced the neutralization of ethnic and language diversity and the stigmatization of ethnic languages. Practically speaking, what this means is that the concept of the national homogenous ethnicity development, as represented by Setswana (Botswana-country, Motswana-citizen), only privileges the majority ethnic groups and their language. Even though all children go to school for a basic minimum period “as equals,” some do not continue with education because they cannot manage the requirements of an imposed common language at an early age, and they are marginalized in terms of their own linguistic and cultural identities (Chebanne & Monaka, 2005). Most importantly, the linguistic trauma for children whose home language has no relation to the languages spoken in school is acute when starting school at
a young age. When they are not capable of linguistic competence in the school language, they are marked as “school misfits” (cf. Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997); such instances mark the onset of the language shift and loss of diversity (Batibo, 1997: 243). For such children, it is easy to see that all social situations could become burdensome, negative attitudes could persist towards the marginalized, and complexes of superiority and inferiority could become entrenched, due to the sociolinguistic conditions.

The sociolinguistic realities of Botswana, where the weak languages lose out in social processes, negatively impact the theory and practice of democratic development. The emphasis on the concept of national homogeneity and the uneasiness with ethnic and language differences is incompatible with the most basic and noble ideal underlying democracy, that of freedom of self-identity and practice of one’s own culture. The lack of facilitation of the use of a self-chosen language and the disregard of self-actualizing cultural expression in the national domain do not augur well for the Khoisan. The ideal situation would be one in which the country creates tolerance by accommodating diversity, even catering for manageable community-based language choices at school, and allow transition to languages of wider communication.

In sociolinguistic terms, there is no equity in ethnic and language neutralization in Botswana. What is apparent and regrettable is that there is marginalization of ethnic and language identities, which, for the Khoisan, have the tragic consequences of language extinction. This has come about for Khoisan ethnic and language communities because of their small numbers, their indigenous means of production, and their general poverty and proneness to negative socio-economic relations. Publications on the Khoisan by some academics at the University of Botswana (cf. Selolwane & Saugestad, 2002) revealed that Khoisan communities experience powerlessness, marginalization, disintegration, exploitation, pauperization, and deprivation with the net effect of social and economic exclusion from the main development programs of the state. The Khoisan face these socio-economic hardships (Cassidy et al., 2001) due essentially to this marginalization, which negatively impacts their socio-economic integration. As impoverished and illiterate communities, they cannot even present their cases on their own when talking to the government, necessitating the inclusion in their affairs of outside activists who, in making a case for the indigenous people, sometimes create further conflicts as government representatives feel dictated to or preached at (Mphinyane, 2002).

This vague and unconstructive Botswana language use policy is a vestige of its colonial heritage, and has been perpetuated by post-independence choices that were meant to destroy diversity and entrench ethnic and linguistic homogeneity (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997; 2002). While independence for Botswana brought remarkable infrastructural and social amenities development, the domain of ethnic languages has generally regressed, if not altogether negating social development. Before independence, the Khoisan ethno-linguistic communities were almost monolingual and were fervently attached to their aboriginal cultures. Clearly, their numbers and the sociolinguistic situations made them somewhat
Table 3. Current language use domains in Botswana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Languages qualifying</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Justified by 80+% of use inter-ethnically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Setswana</td>
<td>Justified by 80+% of use inter-ethnically; also Setswana is intervening in official domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal</td>
<td>Setswana; Ikalanga; Shekgalagari</td>
<td>Justified, but also imposed by monopolistic language use policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial</td>
<td>Otjiherero; Isindebele; Chishona (Zezuru); Nama (Sekgothu; Khoekhoegowab); Geiriku; Thimbukushu; Ciikuhane; Silozi; and all other San languages (</td>
<td>Justifiable for all languages as a cultural and free choice right. For all other languages other than Setswana a liberal policy could raise them to the next level in early levels of education; community affairs (medical and commercial adverts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Cua (Cire-cire); Kua</td>
<td>Justifiable as a personal choice for all known languages of the individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

precarious, at risk of linguistic extinction. Instances of majority languages annihilating minority languages are a common occurrence in the whole region (Chebanne, 2003). Also, because of the attitude of the non-Khoisan, most Khoisan speakers believe that their languages are difficult to write because linguists suggest unconventional symbols, and this has impeded informal writing even by the literate Khoisan (Visser, 1998). Table 3 captures this current sociolinguistic situation and demonstrates that the policy of language use has effectively put all indigenous languages except Setswana in the situation of being dysfunctional even among speakers in their private domains.

As Table 3 suggests, languages are rendered irrelevant even within speakers’ communities and programs of regional development (Table 3). This situation arises from the current language practice policy in Botswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997; 2002; Batibo, 1998; Chebanne, 2003), which excludes all other languages apart from English and Setswana from public domains. The only likely scenario is that the marginalized languages will decline and disappear (cf. Batibo, 1996; 2003; Batibo & Smieja, 2000). In view of the facts presented in the table, it is imperative to argue for language access for all indigenous languages in all domains. A revised and objective language use policy is needed in Botswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2001).

The important sociolinguistic point to emphasize in terms of this discussion is that the Botswana model of social development does not favor linguistic diversity. Yet, when development is qualified democratically, it should accommodate ethno-linguistic diversity in the pursuit of unity and progress. How this can be achieved in Botswana is already a topic addressed in various official documents. The National Commission on Education of 1993 recommended that
a third school language choice should be available to allow Khoisan language access in schools in appropriate regions. The National Vision 2016 (1997: 10), which enjoins the nation to be tolerant, democratic, and united in diversity of languages and cultures, is another significant milestone in the evolution of this thinking. In the National Vision, the issues of ethnic and language realities of Botswana are alluded to in pillars 8 and 9, that, “no Motswana will be disad-
vantaged as a result of … ethnic … language,” and “the country will still poss-

s a diverse mix of cultures, languages, traditions and peoples… We will
harness all that diversity.” However, by themselves these documents are not
statutes and are unable to effectively make the nation achieve those ideals of
preserving diversity and promoting languages, without fundamental constitutional
change and modernization in the vast area of human rights.

Social matters are of paramount importance in the minds of the people and
in the government’s goals of social harmony and unity in development (cf.
Reaume, 2003). Developments and policies have had the unfortunate effects of
causing social strife and disunity. As critics have observed (Chebanne, 2003;
Saugestad, 2001), national development programs, with their recommended spe-
cific actions aimed at empowering and promoting Khoisan ethnic communities,
have resulted in marginalization and the creation of negative attitudes towards
ethic realities resulting from forced assimilation. However, it is important that
at the level of governance these issues should be taken into account in devel-

opment plans in order to eliminate the trauma and disquiet that are byproducts
of such programs, as indeed has been witnessed among Khoisan communities
(Batibo & Smieja, 2000). Botswana must be proactive as well as innovative;
constitutionally liberal as well as responsible; diverse as well as unified; and
thriving culturally as well as linguistically. This is the only effective means
by which to prove to outside activists and advocates for ethnic and linguist-
ics groups that Botswana respects and cherishes its ethnic and linguistic diver-
who have examined issues raised in ethno-anthropological studies (cf. Solway,
1990; Saugestad, 2001) have bemoaned the likely evolution of the lives of the
Khoisan; scrutiny of the Botswana constitution has likewise revealed its inher-
et inequities and inequalities (cf. Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002; successively modi-
fied by the author)(1). The Botswana constitution clearly deemphasizes linguistic
and cultural determination of the nation in terms of its ethnic history and real-
ity. The general timidity and vagueness of policies or laws relative to language
meant and still means that outside the definition of ethnic territories, no other
statutory obligations specifically refer to linguistic rights. This situation, intended
or not, has had the assimilating consequences of encouraging the establishment
of ethnic and language homogeneity. By protecting linguistic diversity legally,
the problems of the marginalized can be addressed better, and their rights to
language usage can also be preserved. Without this change, the sociolinguis-
tic situation of the Khoisan is bleak and gloomy, and as time passes, the lan-
guage shift from diversity to stronger and socially empowered languages such
as Setswana and English will continue (Batibo, 2005; Batibo & Smieja, 2000).
CONCLUSION

This sociolinguistic discussion has endeavored to provide an overview of the ethnic and linguistic situation within the current socio-political context of Botswana. A deliberate distinction has been made between the language and ethnic groups to show how the ethnic and linguistic ecology of Botswana has favored stronger languages, that is, those languages that have broader domains of usage. Particular attention will have to be paid to the facilitation of disempowered ethno-linguistic groups to engage in national arenas and also to retain their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. Without positive actions to promote ethnic languages and cultures of indigenous Khoisan groups, these communities will disappear. In Botswana, as elsewhere in the world, modern social developments (land use changes, sedentarization, commercialization, favorable language-use planning in the onset of mass education) need to be managed so that they purposefully contribute to preserving ethnic and language diversity from negative change (Nyati-Ramahobo & Chebanne, 2003–2004). Ethnic and linguistic diversity contributes positively to human development and enhances the meanings and practice of democracy. The antithesis of human development is to believe that, in social dynamics, the strength of the majority is always the right choice for a country. Khoisan communities need protection and the promotion of their languages so that the Khoisan can continue to exist as Khoisan.

NOTES

(1) Nyati-Ramahobo (2002): Sections 77-79 of the Constitution guarantee ex-officio membership to the House of Chiefs to eight Setswana-speaking tribes only; consequently, their culture and language are only once used in the national local affairs. The recent amendments do not address the issues that caused the amendments. The Chieftainship Act (Cap. 41: 01 - 03), which in its statements defines tribal entities by ascribing such privileges to the Bamangwato Tribe, the Batawana Tribe, the Bakgatla Tribe, the Bakwena Tribe, the Bangwaketse Tribe, the Bamalete Tribe, the Barolong Tribe and the Batlokwa Tribe, effectively and ethnically recognizes them and their language to be constitutionally prominent in ethnic and national affairs in all socio-cultural domains. The Tribal Territories Act is the basis of tribal territory determination of and administration by those tribes that feature in (Cap. 32: 03), i.e., the eight tribes who form the core and permanent and ex-officio members of the Statutory consultative body, the Ntlo ya Dikgosi, and guarantees group rights to land and its administration. All other ethnic groups, subsumed or not with the eight, have only individual rights at only the level of Land Boards allocations. Effectively ethnic communities of the North-East, Chobe, Ghanzi, and Kgalagadi, can be relocated without consideration of their ethnicity and attachment to land. Sections 3 and 15 of the Constitution are deemed a source of ethnic discrimination, as they uphold Cap. 41: 01 of the Chieftainship Act and render sacrosanct Cap. 32: 03 (Tribal Territories Act); thus they are irrevocable and cannot be subjected to any piecemeal reforms that could be intended to eliminate tribal discrimination and the attended denial of linguistic and cultural rights of those ethnic groups that do not have Setswana as their mother tongue (full text available from Nyati-Ramahobo, University of Botswana).
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Author’s Name and Address: Andy Monthusi CHEBANNE, Faculty of Humanities, University of Botswana. Private Bag UB 00703, Gaborone, BOTSWANA.

E-mail: CHEBANNE@mopipi.ub.bw
THE EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY OF THE CHAMUS IN KENYA: THE HUMAN BODY AS NATURE

Kaori KAWAI

The Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

ABSTRACT This paper explores the way the Chamus of northern Kenya, belonging to the Maa group of the Eastern-Nilotic language family, speak extremely physically of the facts pertaining to the bodies and bodily phenomena. The Chamus view the body as a shared anatomical construct and physiological mechanism, and these properties as a mechanism of their culture and society. They treat physical disorders with their ethnomedicine, and have an indigenous reproductive theory. The human cycle of birth, life and death is an attribute of their bodily existence. The biological basis for human life resides in the body. This paper discusses the indispensable bodily interaction with others, and the biological property of the body as the basis for confirming life, citing the Chamus as an example.

Key Words: Physicality; Tangible; Birth and death; Bodily existence; Physical disorders.

INTRODUCTION

The Chamus inhabit northern Kenya, and belong to the Maa group of the Eastern-Nilotic language family. In this paper I explore how the Chamus speak extremely physically of the facts pertaining to the bodies and bodily phenomena. I describe this physicality of the Chamus in detail below. Here, I explain the external world of the Chamus (as opposed to the internal world, namely, the mind). The Chamus simply recognize something that is there, and do not ask why it is so.

Our body is our property. This notion unmistakably marks our recognition or sense. The human cycle of birth, life, and death is an attribute of our bodily existence. If I may speak of “nature lurking inside all our human selves,” based on the premise that our bodies are our biological possessions, then what I discuss here is the epistemological and ontological meaning applied by the Chamus to that “nature” called our bodies, and how such meaning is positioned in the world as they understand it.

The Chamus view of the body, which can be understood through their speech and practices, that is above all, everyone shares an anatomical construct and biological bodily mechanism. Even if such view of the biological commonalities of the body is exactly correct, the Chamus extremely emphasize those properties; in other words, they exalt and prioritize the commonalities as nothing but a mechanism of their culture and society. If I may rephrase these commonalities of the body as universal truths, how did the Chamus come to view the body as a given condition common to all people, or, more positively, view the body as
What does it mean to say that we have a bodily existence? How does viewing the body as a universal truth position the body in society? It is these issues that I wish to examine in this paper.

THE VISIBLE WORLD

In this section I wish to introduce the methods by which the Chamus construct the commonalities of the body as something that is worth believing. I pursue here the issue of how physical illness is perceived within Chamus ethnomedicine.

I. The Visible Body

Chamus ethnomedicine can be taken as a gestalt medical system that includes anatomical and organ-physiological knowledge, a process of identifying symptoms, the names of illnesses, nosology, pathogenesis, and techniques for disease prevention and treatment. At the basis of this lies a system of realistically viewing the body and a self-completeness that one seeks the understanding of physical abnormalities in the body itself. After having first apprehended the body as an anatomical material that is visible to the naked eye, the Chamus explain the various phenomena that occur by applying their logic of the material world (Kawai, 1998).

Here is a specific example: Headaches are taken to mean that “blood is bouncing in the narrow blood vessels at the temple.” Headaches occur because more than normal blood flow has entered these vessels. This excessive amount of blood cannot flow freely and so bounces as if it was undulating waves. The standard treatment for a headache is to perform a phlebotomy at the site of the pain around the temple, drain the excess blood, and return the volume of blood within the blood vessels to a suitable amount.

Chamus diagnoses are always made by touch and taking the pulse. Swelling, stiffness, ailments and pain are understood through touch and pulse-taking as abnormalities in the organs and blood vessels within the body. The basis of Chamus ethnomedicine is anatomical knowledge. They have detailed names not only for such bodily constructions as the various organs, but also for the blood vessels, muscles, tendons, spinal cord, lymph nodes, and bones. In addition to their knowledge of anatomy, the Chamus also have explanations for physiology, such as that the spleen and liver are organs pertaining to the blood, that the kidneys relate to waste secretion, and that the spinal cord is connected to the brain and responds to stimuli.

The background to this knowledge may well be the fact that dissecting livestock is a daily experience for the pastoral Chamus. The Chamus, indeed, know the anatomy of livestock thoroughly. The Chamus remove the diseased parts of livestock that have died of sickness and use the rest for food.
ally show some sort of symptoms of illness before they die. The Chamus are sensitive to the state of their livestock, and can infer various abnormalities from their appearance and behaviors. Having witnessed the livestock’s illness from a clinical standpoint, they pursue a deeper understanding of abnormalities through a process of investigating foreign bodies within the corpse, or observing organs misshapen by disease, during post-mortem examination. During an autopsy, the Chamus remove diseased and disfigured organs, or crack open the long bones of the limbs, and discover that “the lungs have turned whitish and soft,” or “there are worms in the liver,” or “the spine is dripping fluid, like water,” thus giving birth to various theories of illness.

The Chamus have developed various methods of home remedies for people, both medicinal and surgical. In many cases, symptoms are treated by stimulating the body in some way, with methods that employ external physical stimulation such as phlebotomy, hot compresses, moxibustion, acupressure, and massage, but also through the use of oral medicine. For example, emetics and laxatives are used to cause physical reactions such as nausea and diarrhoea. Chest and gut pains are often thought to be caused by a build-up of bile and fever. These symptoms can be purged from the body, whether through vomiting or defecation, by taking medicine.

In this way, the targets of the treatment are physicalities such as bile, fevers, and excess blood, which are thought to be direct causes of the symptoms, or else, physical conditions of the organs and tissues that differ from normal, such as “nerves that no longer respond to stimuli,” or “a liver in which the blood has clotted.” Chamus medical treatment can be defined as symptomatic or palliative treatment. Treatment fixates on recovery and normalization of abnormal internal conditions as determined exclusively by the manifested symptoms, which differs fundamentally from treatments supported by an identified aetiology.

Chamus ethnomedicine is built upon a presumption that biological mechanisms and bodily constructions are common to all people, throughout the course of illness – from awareness of the illness, through diagnosis, to treatment. Physical phenomena, namely illnesses, occur in common to all people, thus treatments and prophylactics are applied based on the physical commonalities. In the Chamus awareness, the logic of the physical world applies to physical ailments because they are suffered similarly by anybody. I submit that this awareness of the Chamus is expressed by tangible actions exchanged between people, and leads to mutual nurturing.

II. The Body as Potential

In a simplistic understanding, the explanation of symptoms based upon the physical commonalities of the body is a method to experience the sensations of others and to enable sympathy by bringing into play the imagination of the listener to ask, “If my own organs and tissues were damaged in the same way, what sort of pain would I experience?” Women who have spoken to me about
various illnesses explain the individual symptoms in this way. Nevertheless, they also confess that they “don’t know that pain” when they themselves have never suffered that particular illness.

The basic Chamus conviction that the anatomical body and its concomitant phenomena are common to all people, however, enables descriptions of the symptoms that have already been described by someone else to be conflated with the specific symptoms that “I, myself, am currently experiencing” – a way of thinking that maintains a subjective sense of oneself. Illness in everyday speech offers a general model of the objective phenomena that can occur anatomically. The intellectual and sensational experiences of specific symptoms are given frame and shape by flowing into the objectifying process of thought.

Thus, the Chamus do not understand or try to understand the sensations of others through analogy, imagination, or empathy. Both the speaker and the listener declare their own subjective experience, and then share the symptoms through the dual process subjective experience and objective physicality. Speaking of bodily phenomena as workings of the physical world is firmly rooted in the Chamus mechanism of cognitive encounters with their bodies and sharing the experience with others.

Another marked characteristic of the Chamus view of the body is the body’s historicity. They firmly believe that bodily experience is an irreversible process. People who see sickness around them always invoke all their own knowledge and memories pertaining to their own bodies. They recall past injuries, medical history, injuries incurred as a newborn or while a fetus, deformities or health at birth, the parents and their physical conditions, as well as touch on recent experiences such as what they ate or drank last night, and recent climate. These are all elements that trigger or become agents that bring about abnormalities in organs and tissues, together with foreign entities that invade the body.

In the Chamus cognitive process, symptoms are linked to various events that occur in the unique location called “my body.” The Chamus speak of the body as “that which I have become.” This body cannot always be healthy and is easily injured or broken. Individual episodes of specific bodily phenomena are viewed as potentials occurring from within and without through the historical processes of the body in question. The knowledge of original commonalities as phenomena that can occur anatomically is at the core of the Chamus logic of the physical world.

BIRTH AND DEATH

As described above, the Chamus treat the body to be absolutely visible and speak of the physical phenomena as visible. But what sort of ontological meaning does this “visibility” have? Here I discuss Chamus customs and knowledge pertaining to birth, the transition into physical being, and death, the transition into an invisible state of being.
I. Birth: From Invisible to Visible

Here I describe the Chamus reification of the indigenous reproductive theory. In Chamus society, the membership or social belonging of children is in accordance with the principle of legitimacy. The Chamus, however, do not systematically specify the legitimacy of a child, but rather, establish paternity by working backwards to the physical phenomenon of becoming pregnant. Some fortunate children inherited certain physical features from their biological father. People identify the “biological” father from such traits as skin color, shape of the head, shape of the ears, orthodontics, distension of the belly, curvature of the feet, etc. But when such clear clues are not visible to everyone, the indigenous reproductive theory comes into play (Kawai, 1994: 163-165).

The indigenous reproductive theory of the Chamus has it that conception occurs through the binding together of menstrual blood and semen. Such an explanation of reproduction is not uncommon among indigenous populations. The Chamus cannot see ovulation, but can see menstrual blood and semen. The physical body of the baby, which is a visible construct, is a mystery that needs to be explained by the available manifest mechanisms.

I focus here on the point that the Chamus are sensitive and cognisant of concrete images that support the correctness of this reproductive theory. The concrete images are abundant, and the Chamus observe and appreciate the process by which a baby’s body is formed and becomes visible: The fetus is already visible.

According to the theory, the fetus starts to be formed when the menstrual blood and semen are mixed inside the woman’s inner genitals. Conception is also possible between periods of menstruation, and is not governed by sexual behaviour. The Chamus call menstruation “breaking the male body.” Because semen is often discharged with the menstrual blood, sexual intercourse is avoided during menstruation. Consequently, ensuring conception lies mostly with the menstruating woman. The likelihood is thought to greatly increase during the period after menstruation when there is now no great flow to outside the body. Since menstrual blood and semen are fluids, both require three days to firmly bind together. The semen of different men “destroy” each other, so if a woman has sex with multiple partners during this three-day period, the semen of the first male partner, not yet firmly bound to the menstrual blood, is expelled from the woman’s body, together with the semen that came later.

Here I talk about external factors that are thought to affect the formation of the fetus.

Pregnant women avoid eating and acting in a group, which is one way of observing a prohibition called ndaare. *Ndaare* is not a religious prohibition, but is believed to affect the embryo in the mother, create physical deformities, and organ and tissue abnormalities. For example, “sleeping on your back” is *ndaare*. It is said that sleeping face-up sometimes causes the umbilical cord to entwine the fetus’s neck, strangling it to death. Even if, by good luck, the cord entangles only the hands and feet, the child will be disabled from birth at the loca-
tion of the entanglement. *Ndaare* pertaining to food include milk from livestock that sneeze (as this is thought to indicate they have worms in their heads), and meat and fats from livestock that died of disease. If *ndaare* foods are eaten by a pregnant woman, the roots of *Euphorbiaceae planta* are infused and drunk, in the hope that this will ameliorate undesirable effects.

However, food eaten during pregnancy is suspected of being the cause of any symptom the newborn infant may display, even if it was not *ndaare*. One woman explained that when a nursing infant tries to vomit during its first two months after birth, or if the newborn actually vomits milk, “the child was trying to expel *ngaya* (the first stomach of ruminants).” This is because the Chamus believe that fetuses eat using their mouths. This woman thought that the fetus had ingested the half-cooked first stomach of ruminants that she herself had eaten during pregnancy. This had remained in the intestines after birth, and the child was trying to vomit it out. In other words, she interpreted the condition by which the “first stomach of ruminants was stuck in the intestines” as a condition of the body.

A newborn infant encounters various dangers immediately after birth. The Chamus believe the newborn’s body is incompletely formed, soft, and easily injured. The gravest risk during labor is placental blood. If the placental blood flows via the umbilical cord back to the newborn’s stomach, the blood will destroy (“*lukoral*”) the newborn’s intestines. Children whose intestines have been “destroyed” suffer regular bouts of diarrhoea. The midwife must draw out the blood from the umbilical cord and tie its end, so that the blood does not flow back into the stomach between the time when the afterbirth has totally emerged and the umbilical cord is cut. Further, livestock milk that is fed to the newborn infant is mixed with boiled plant broth and given to cause mild diarrhoea. This is because umbilical blood that may have seeped into the intestines (*lukoral*) must be purged from the body as soon as possible, along with the feces.

Before the fontanelles of the skull have fully sutured, everyone will warn that the wind might blow in. This is because any wind that might invade in this way can reach the chest and damage its inner wall. Children whose inner chest wall is damaged will be plagued by coughs and chest pains. The mother smears cow dung on the crown of the newborn infant’s head and swaddles the head, to ensure that no winds reach the crown.

The continuity of the fetus to the newborn can clearly be seen here. The body of the fetus, which is not directly visible while in the mother’s body, completes the transformation into becoming visible by manifesting externally through birth. The body of the fetus and the body of the newborn after birth are one and the same, and the fetus exists as a real body. From the ontological point of view, the fetus qualifies as visible, and its existence can be adduced through observation.
II. Death: The World of the Invisible

The Chamus are fully aware of the decomposition that human flesh undergoes after death. They are, however, almost entirely unconcerned. For them, the dead are released from their physical image.

Currently, the Chamus bury their dead in the ground, but in the past, they used a method of processing dead bodies that could even be called “burial by hyena.” The body was left under a tree outside the encirclement of houses (*aulo*), to be eaten by hyenas during the night. The hyenas sometimes dragged the body into the bushes, out of sight from the still living.

The Chamus now prepare a body for burial immediately after death. The body is never left lying in state, nor is there a word for mourning. Three hours after the discovery of death, the body is buried. There is no specific cemetery, and the place of burial is simply the *aulo* of the houses in which the deceased had been living at the time. Small stones are placed on a mound of earth, and covered with branches from big trees and acacia cuttings, not particularly to mark the site of the grave, but as a practical measure to prevent hyenas and other wild animals from digging up the corpse. The cairn, branches and cuttings subsequently erode away. People do not visit the grave after burial, and the actual gravesite is eventually forgotten. The Chamus do not pay their respects at the graveside.

They call the dead *lemenan’gani* (pl. *lemenan’ga*). People who are now dead are all *lemenan’ga*, and have no other existence. The dead do not become ancestral spirits or poltergeists over the passage of time, or through the observance of ceremonies.

People may meet the *lemenan’ga* in their dreams. The *lemenan’ga* become manifest in their healthy selves. They are exactly who they were when they were alive, and in most cases, live in the same house. No one ever meets a *lemenan’ga* that they do not know. Talking in one’s sleep is thought to be conversations with the *lemenan’ga*, and is considered strong evidence for the reality of such encounters. Encounters with the *lemenan’ga* can be verified by a third party, by listening to a dreamer talking in his or her sleep. This can be called a sharing of the encounter with the dead with other people. If the *lemenan’ga* appear in dreams for several days in a row, a dreamer may become physically exhausted for not having slept well every night and may gradually become ill. At such times, a simple ceremony is performed in which milk and chewing tobacco are offered to the *lemenan’ga*. Nevertheless, the *lemenan’ga* are never evil. The still living simply do not have or believe in a close relationship with *lemenan’ga*. They are neither welcomed nor feared. I have not heard the Chamus speak of the encounters with the *lemenan’ga* as events to be feared, nor are the *lemenan’ga* objects of fear.

I stress here that meeting the dead in dreams is completely different from remembering a dead person. Some people say that the *lemenan’ga* come only at night and can be seen as faint flickers of light. People who have seen television in the city describe the manifestation as “like the TV.” One woman explained to
me the existence of the *lemenan’ga* as follows: “A person dies. In death, their body and bones crumble to nothing. But the *lemenan’ga* appears. Therefore, the *lemenan’ga* exist. I do not know where they are, nor where they live. But they come. Therefore, they definitely exist.” The existence of the *lemenan’ga* can be confirmed by encounters, never out of the ordinary, through dreams. Motomitsu Uchibori (Uchibori & Yamashita, 1986: 91), who studied death in the Iban society of Borneo, pointed out that dreaming is considered a firm basis for the existence of the dead and spirits. In much the same way, the empiricism of the Chamus leaves them no room to doubt the existence of these encounters.

The Chamus do not speak much of an afterlife, and not much can be said on the subject. The absence of a clear and positive view of the netherworld, and of a theory of the afterlife, has been variously cited in studies on the ethnology of East African pastoral societies (Evans-Pritchard, 1975; Nagashima, 1986). The lack of concern for the world after death can also be identified among the Chamus. The dead manifest themselves unexpectedly in dreams, with an external existence unconnected to the concerns of the living. There is neither opportunity nor method for the living to approach the dead. In response to my question of what sort of world is the afterlife, the answer is that, at the very least, it is different from the world of the living, and all contact between the two should be severed. For the living, the dead are not beings to whom one may pray or ask for something; moreover the dead on their part do not inflict punishment in response to the living who, for example, fail to observe such obligations as graveside visits. There is no relationship, rights nor obligations, between the living and the dead.

Even if the departed appear in dreams, all connection with the dead basically cease to exist. To the living, the dead are beings with whom they no longer have a relationship. In this sense, death is the ultimate loss.

**BODILY EXISTENCE**

The ontology of the dead highlights the strong specificity of the Chamus vis-à-vis the universality of humans bodily existence. Below, I try to clarify further the strong Chamus sense of the body, and their meaning of universality.

I. Existence and the Body

The Chamus do not possess a dualistic theory of spirit and body, nor do they recognise the antagonism of flesh versus soul or spirit. The Maasai dictionary (Mol, 1972) translates *ol-menan’gani* (pl. *il-menan’ga*) as ghost, spirit, dead person, corpse, which is equivalent to the Chamus *lenan’ga*. I hesitate to translate *lemenan’ga* as “ghost” for all the reasons described above.

To my abrupt question, “What happens when you die?”, nearly all Chamus responded, “It’s the end.” A similar view of life and death can be seen among the Iteso, who live in Uganda, also in East Africa (Nagashima, 1972: 76-88).
They, too, do not have an afterlife, or spirits after death. To reiterate, the basic Chamus view of life and death is that when people die, they cease to exist, never return, and become nothing. Nevertheless, the dead exist. The dead are clearly separate from the living. Because the living occasionally meet the dead in dreams, the existence of the dead is confirmed by Chamus empiricism.

As I have shown, the Chamus have thoroughly internalized the issue of bodily existence through the process of identifying the visible and biological. On the other hand, although death is a biological process that occurs to the body, the Chamus do not talk of the phenomenon of death, nor of its occurrence, as a physical outcome. The rapid burial upon death and the historic lack of funeral traditions seem to indicate that the method of processing the dead reflects the Chamus view of the corpse as both dead and non-existent.

If we assume that death severs the body from existence, then conversely, it is the body itself that provides the basis for living. Death is separated from life by the body.

II. Relationships with Others

Previously, I described the dead as beings with whom all contact had been severed. Given that the basis of life is the body, the meaning of severance of all contact sets apart the dead and the living, or beings in a community. Here, I return to the topic of the customs concerning death.

For a community, death is a complete separation of one member from others, and is a crisis not only psychologically, but also for maintaining the community. Uchibori (Uchibori & Yamashita, 1986: 120-121) theorized how the very construction of the Iban society, in which the possession of wealth and power are lineally inherited, ensures the continuity of the family, and ultimately of the community. The Chamus solution, however, is completely different, and enacted through the specific actions by the dying persons themselves.

A Chamus person has many things to do before he dies, with lomon le nkítugun’go, translated as “words concerning (my) inheritance.” With these words, first of all, all the sons are gathered and their financial rights and obligations are explained; such as the division and parcelling out of livestock, loans and repayments. The words encompass the lives of those who will be left behind, such as who is entrusted with looking after the wife, who is about to be a widow, and the affairs of children. Moreover, people whom the dying person had previously cursed are summoned, an accord is reached, and the curse is lifted as the dying person blesses them. Conversely, people who are thought of as likely to curse the widow and the children after one’s death are cursed. Next, the relatives are assembled, and maiyan performed, in which the dying sprays a mouthful of milk on to them. Maiyan can be translated as blessing, but is also an action to indicate that the dying person has no dissatisfaction or anger towards their relatives. After these rites have been performed, bead necklaces and earrings, and brass wristlets and anklets are removed from the dying person, and the head is shaved. This is called sorata, and means to
remove all adornments from the body. Financial issues, past antagonism towards others, and concern for the future of the survivors are all cast off in the same way as the adornments, which had been worn to commemorate various rites of passage.

This series of actions are performed according to the will of the dying person. People who become aware of their own imminent death go through these actions, even as they wonder, “Am I really dying?” The approach of death is visible to prophets called loiboni. Loiboni divine the causes of illness and misfortune as witchdoctors, and perform shamanistic medical treatments. The Chamus ask the loiboni when they will die and firmly believe in the answer divined. Thus, the loiboni constitutes the transition from possessing a body to non-existence.

The various Chamus actions and ceremonies after death are extremely simple. Although a funeral is held, there are no clothes or makeup to render the person’s death conspicuous, and the ceremonial activities that can be called funeral rites and their corollary activities are also sparse. Nor is there any theory of cause and effect concerning a person’s death. The Chamus do not ask, “Why has this person died?” but ask, “How did they die?” They ask how they proceeded to their death. More accurately, they do not question about death, but about life. For the Chamus, death is not presented as a problem for the people left living, but for the deceased.

The Chamus say, “People die without any encumbrance.” The chain of actions performed immediately prior to death clearly describes this disencumbrance as the result of specific, visible behaviors and actions. The disencumbrance is also a process that leads people to accept death. Given that the shape of experience depends on one’s culture, the culture also defines the specific shape of death for individuals. To discuss the cultural climate of death, much further study is required. I would just say here that, death among the Chamus, far from being experienced through the notions of an afterlife and ceremonies to be performed upon death, is rather experienced communally with an actual process of specific, individual actions by both the dying person and would-be survivors. This communal process constitutes the last bodily association between the dying person and the would-be survivors.

I have stated that bodily existence is the basis of living. The dead person has left his body and become certain being that one cannot contact. The bodily existence is the condition for mutual communication among communal partners. “People live in a society” is an ordinary proposition, but for the Chamus, community is akin to interaction among others with a bodily existence, namely, partners of the community.

III. The Body as a Tool of Awareness

I would now like to investigate the epistemological basis for the belief in body existence by the Chamus, which I have so far described.

The Chamus have developed ethnomedical concepts to treat physical and
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biological abnormalities within and without the body. For example, when a Japanese has a bad headache, he or she may say, “My head is splitting.” The Chamus will say, “Blood is undulating violently in my head”, which clearly describes the internal physical condition as visible. Such an expression is a graphic visual description as well as metaphorical description. The importance is that the condition is described as if it “can be known by sight.”

It is important to remember that Chamus medical treatment is symptomatic treatment based upon a presumption of the body as a physical object. This has a quite different character from the treatments found in some other societies that employ metaphorical ceremonies to combat curses and sorcery. Chamus treatment works directly on the body with the aim of evoking a specific reaction.

I argue that for the Chamus, the body is the object of their awareness as something visible. Chamus epistemology superficially presents an extremely modern empiricist perspective, which is also the basis of modern Western medicine. However, it clearly differs from an epistemology based on modern empiricism, which depends on language and concepts through logical inference. For the Chamus, the physical world, starting with the body, is not so much the object of awareness but, rather, a locus to be contacted directly using one’s own body.

Given this epistemology, if other people of the community are loci in the same way as one’s own body, much explanation is not required concerning the bodily existence of living humans. The dead exist and, although some Chamus encounter them visibly in dreams, they are uncontactable beings for whom there is no means for the living to deliberately contact. In other words, the dead are beings who cannot be touched using the body. Death to the Chamus can be understood as events experienced by both the dying and the would-be survivors as an actual process that consist of specific behaviors and actions.

I argue that awareness of others among the Chamus is close to the awareness of the body. The Chamus apprehend various events that occur in the living world as tangible processes consisting of physical phenomena and human actions, and they experience the external world in the form of specific interactions with this world using their own bodies.

Abstraction of the world of awareness without language and shared knowledge are undoubtedly limited by human evolution. The physical world of the Chamus exemplifies their universality by their belief in the tangibility of bodily interactions as the means to define how one can associate with the object of one’s interactions.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction of a book titled *The Human Universe of Things*, Uchibori (1997) stated that the human body itself is just a “thing” in the simplest meaning of the word, that it is also a “thing” in the sense of a symbol, and human
interaction in the world, in the final analysis, is nothing but the manipulation of the world – including, naturally, people as “things” themselves – that creates “things” using that very physicality. I agree wholeheartedly with this analysis. However, when facing up to physicality, I can’t subscribe to a standpoint that unilaterally takes the body as a “constructed thing” which is common in criticisms of conceptual essentialism.

Matsui (1997) focused on the attributes of the body as natural and cultural nodes of human existence, and he developed a theory that positions nature as a receptacle for culture, or as a deep layer of culture. Matsui mostly cited gestures and bodily techniques, but even in the areas of linguistic and conceptual awareness and knowledge, I cannot admit any basis for cultures or societies to flatly deny biological properties unconditionally.

The biological basis for human life resides in the body. In this paper, my intention has been to discuss the unavoidability of interactions using bodies, and assert that the biological properties of the body can be the basis for confirming life, through my description of the Chamus. That is to say, biological attributes (in other words Nature as a body), could in all probability form a firm basis to create the shape of life for one’s self in a social setting. For the Chamus, this is the only way that it can be, and as such I came to understand Chamus culture and society, and their belief in the universality of the body. I must hastily add that the universality mentioned here is decisively different from modern universalism, which is a concept of a people who claim to transcend the natural world. The universe of the Chamus is educed from the body and tangible actions using that body.

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Author’s Name and Address: Kaori KAWAI, The Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. 3-11-1 Asahi-cho, Fuchu-shi, Tokyo, 183-8534, JAPAN. Email: kkawai@aa.tufs.ac.jp
SLAVERY AND RESISTANCE ON NINETEENTH CENTURY DANISH PLANTATIONS IN SOUTHEASTERN GOLD COAST, GHANA

Yaw BREDWA-MENSAH

Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon-Accra

ABSTRACT  From the turn of the 18th century to the mid-19th century AD, the Danes experimented with plantation agriculture in the foothills of the Akuapem Mountains on the southeastern coastland of the Gold Coast (Ghana). Enslaved Africans were used by the Danes to cultivate the plantations. The Danish planters imposed controls over the plantation landscape. The enslaved workers reacted to their entrapped situations by resisting the various forms of control imposed on the plantation set-up. In this paper, the socio-cultural relations that emanated from the interactions on the plantations are examined. The paper specifically investigates the dynamics of power manifested in diverse control mechanisms imposed by the planters and the corresponding reaction from the slaves to counteract these impositions.

Key Words: Danish plantations; Akuapem Mountains; Plantation slavery; Enslaved workers; Resistance.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1788 and 1850 the Danes established plantations along the estuary of the Volta River and in the foothills of the Akuapem Mountains in the southeastern Gold Coast and used the labor of enslaved Africans to cultivate them (Bredwa-Mensah, 2004: 203-227; 1999: 25-45; 1996: 445-458; Kea, 1995: 119-143; Justesen, 1979: 3-33; Jeppesen, 1966: 73-98) (Fig. 1). The engine that moved the plantations was slave labor. The world of the enslaved workers was always limited by the demands of their masters to render labor related to plantation productivity. The economic and socio-cultural relations on the plantations in southeastern Gold Coast were therefore regulated by planter impositions to regulate both the physical layout of the plantations and the enslaved workers who cultivated them. Slave workers clearly understood the power relations that regulated interactions on the plantations and responded appropriately. This paper examines the dynamics of power manifested in the diverse control mechanisms imposed by the planters and the corresponding reactions on the part of the slaves to counteract these impositions.

DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE

In recent times, slavery has been central to studies in historical archaeology. Scholars of the archaeology of slavery have investigated diverse aspects of
the subject although the fragile nature of surviving artifacts of slavery in the archaeological record poses a great challenge to these endeavors. Despite the fact that tangible traces of slavery are often difficult to interpret without written and oral sources, the artifacts from sites associated with slavery serve as a compelling testimony to the human socio-cultural consequences emanating from enslavement. No wonder that in recent times, archaeological studies of slavery have focused on the patterns and forms of resistance among slave societies in response to restrictions imposed by slave owners. Slavery was fundamentally inhumane. All systems of slavery sought to oppress and degrade the enslaved. Slavery in any form constrained the enslaved from making a life of their own as human beings. Since actions produced reactions, the truth was that enslaved
people sought to reject their bondage in one way or another. Scholarly literature of the ways in which the oppressed and marginalized groups responded to their entrapment and domination indicates that they employed a wide variety of methods and weapons to cushion themselves against the harsh conditions of the economic system of which they were a part. For instance, Michael Craton (1997: 222) writing about resistance to slavery in the Caribbean noted that:

“Defining slave resistance merely to include plots and acts of overt rebellion is unduly limiting and misleading…it is necessary to define slave resistance to include all forms of resistance short of actual (or proposed) overt action. This proposes a whole spectrum of activities and behavior, shading from covert sabotage, through manifestations of internal rejection and anomie, to forms of dissimulated acceptance and accommodation that were, perhaps, as subversive as other forms.”

This view ties in with that of other scholars who have investigated systems of domination and control. According to Kottak (2002: 604) and Scott (1985: 28-47) imposed controls that tended to oppress, dominate and inhibit the freedom of others ignited potent but disguised reactions, rather than open and defiant forms of resistance. Other scholars (Aptheker, 1971: 161-173; Genovese, 1974: 585-660; Beckles, 1988: 1; Moitt 1992: 136-160; Shepherd, 2000: 896) have rightly shown that resistance among socially marginalized and powerless groups was not only perennial but also multifaceted. They considered resistance as conscious, covert or overt acts of defiance and identified acts of defiance such as false compliance, malingering, foot dragging, feigning ignorance, stealing, running away and sabotage, as commonplace weapons employed by the enslaved and powerless groups to protect their individual and collective interests. These small-scale acts of resistance employed by the oppressed, enslaved, marginalized, and downtrodden to counteract the imposed coercive and hegemonic ideologies of the dominators, masters, elites and planters are what Scott (1985) called the “weapons of the weak.”

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF SLAVERY IN THE SOUTHEASTERN GOLD COAST, GHANA

In Ghana, sites related to the slave trade and slave occupation and their research potentialities are known (Posnansky, 1984: 203; Posnansky & De Corse, 1986: 11). Only recently have a number of such sites have been investigated (Bredwa-Mensah, 1996; 1998; 2002; 2004; Bredwa-Mensah & Crossland, 1997; Perbi & Bredwa-Mensah, 2004a; 2004b). One important historical-archaeological enquiry has focused on plantation slavery. Among the issues I investigate in this paper are slave lifeways and the dynamics of power relations on the plantations. I use historical and archaeological evidence here to throw light on the diverse control mechanisms the Danish planters used to keep their enslaved workers in their assigned place in the social structure on the Akuapem plantations and the corresponding reactions employed by the enslaved workers.
to counteract these controls.

PLANTER’S CONTROL MECHANISMS

A common control mechanism administered by the Danish planters to regulate the lives of the enslaved workers was the spatial arrangement of the plantation layout. The arrangement of structures and other man-made features on the plantations followed a strict, grid system of linear and geometric configurations, architectural elements that no doubt indicate signs of control. For instance, the villages of the enslaved workers comprised wattle and daub houses arranged in a linear fashion along a straight, tree-lined avenue/alley that linked the plantations to Christiansborg Castle, the Danish commercial headquarters at Osu, on the coast. Portions of the alley exist in the research area especially at Pompo near Dakobi Plantation, on the southwestern slopes of Legon Hill and behind the European cemetery at Abokobi. Balthasar Christensen (1833: 8, 59) in his description of Dsabeng (Djabing), the slave village on the Frederikgave Plantation confirmed the mathematical precision with which the alley was laid in straight lines and the linear placement of slave villages in relation to the alley. He described the slave settlement as:

“A little Negro village composed by the houses of the serf Negro families, which were set up in two parallel rows each of ten houses. Its intervening broad way was planted with a double row of fruit trees which formed a handsome, straight avenue facing the hill where the residence of the plantation owner is projected.”

On all the plantations in the Akuapem Mountains, the houses of the plantation owners were located on higher elevations along cliff surfaces of the mountains, where the planter or overseer had a clear and commanding view of the slave villages and the cultivated fields directly below in the plains. In my view, this afforded the planter or overseer a psychological edge over the enslaved workers. The idea that their master had a clear view of the activities of the slaves both at home and in the fields must have been intimidating, and certainly created a sense of fear and inferior status in the enslaved workers. Again, this arrangement naturally allowed the planters to infringe upon the privacy of the slaves and, as a result, manipulate their behavior in both outright and subtle ways.

Another power control mechanism on the Danish plantations was the rules of the planters. The planters demanded that the slaves work for them four days out of a week. The rest of the days were given to the slaves to attend to their private needs (Christensen, 1833: 8, 35). During the mandatory working hours, the enslaved workers tended the fields and their surroundings to fulfill a variety of tasks demanded by the landscaping rules of the Danish planters. The production processes on the plantations dictated the duties of the enslaved workforce. Generally, the plantations specialized in the production of both subsistence and commercial crops, which were either seasonal or perennial. The major crops culti-
Slavery and Resistance on Nineteenth Century Danish Plantations in Ghana

Voted on the Danish plantations in the Akuapem Mountains were coffee, cotton and maize. Other crops cultivated included sugar cane, citrus, banana, plantain, cassava and guava (Bredwa-Mensah, 1996: 449; 2002: 117). The required slave duties included bush clearing, planting, hoeing, harvesting and "smoke-drying coffee beans" (Nørregard, 1964: 44-45). Farm tools such as cutlasses and hoes recovered during excavations at the Frederiksgave Plantation confirm the written evidence about some aspects of the required duties of the enslaved Africans on the plantations. Information about the daily work schedule on the plantations indicated that slave labor was performed according to a task system. Under this system, each adult slave was assigned a specific field task for the day. For instance, if a task involved brushing under cultivated crops, a slave was put in charge of a specific number of plants. On the Frederiksgave plantation, it was mandatory for each slave to take care of a thousand coffee plants. The work in the field started very early in the morning at 6 a.m. and continued until 10 a.m. The slaves took a three-hour rest during which time they were permitted to feed themselves, or do whatever they chose. The assigned daily task resumed in the afternoon from 2 p.m. to end at 5 p.m.

The production management on the plantations was under the close supervision of overseers/managers and headmen. The overseers were either Danish or free men brought down from the Danish West Indies to manage the plantations. Not all the plantations had overseers, perhaps due to the high mortality rate of Europeans and the difficulty in recruiting mulattoes from the Caribbean. Where there were overseers, they lived in stone-block houses erected by the proprietors. Grønberg, a mill-builder and a pensioned non-commissioned officer at Christiansborg, managed the Frederiksgave Plantation for several years (Christensen, 1833: 34; Behrens, 1917: 190; Jeppesen, 1966: 87). The supervision of slaves in the field was the responsibility of the headman called a bomba or bombær (Berg, 1997: 81). He was also a slave and his major responsibility was to ensure that slaves did not malinger in the field.

A patriarchal relationship was used as a control strategy by the planters on the Akuapem Plantations. It was common practice that the Danish planters provided the necessary agricultural tools, flintlock guns and plots of land at no cost to the plantation slaves. In addition, the planters annually issued each slave a piece of cheap, simple coarse cotton cloth called pantjes. On special occasions, such as celebrations and festivals, the planters gave out drinks, especially alcoholic beverages, as well as tobacco, as gifts to their slaves. The planters extracted rent from the plantation slaves. The quantity varied from plantation to plantation. On the plantation called United Brothers (De Forenede Brødre), for instance, the proprietor, Georg W. Lutterodt received from his 38 slaves an annual food rent in maize, yams, pineapples, plantain (pisang) and other crops. In addition, the slaves tapped palm-wine from numerous palm trees on this plantation for which Lutterodt drew some income (Christensen, 1833: 65).

What I wish to emphasize here is that in the design and layout of the plantations as well as in dealing with the enslaved workers, the planters imposed their idealized cognitive representations of eighteenth century rural Danish
manor houses and manorial relations of production on a Gold Coast terrain. The manorial estates of landed Danish gentry were laid out in strict, rigid geometric configurations to signify elegance, superiority and power. In the manorial relations of production, the estate owner saw to it that the farm was supplied with the most necessary means of production while the peasant was obliged to pay a portion of his product as rent to the lord manor (Christiansen, 1996: 129, 162). The Danish planters carried these production ideas and imposed them onto the plantation landscape. The arrangement of the plantations, to borrow from James Scott (1998: 2), “all seemed calculated to make the terrain, its products, and its workforce … manipulable from above and from the centre.”

SLAVE RESISTANCE

The documentary and archaeological sources indicate that the enslaved workers on the Danish plantations in the foothills of the Akuapem Mountains were dissatisfied with their condition. Accordingly, they pursued a range of actions to resist their enslavement. The resistance on the Akuapem plantations in the nineteenth century was by nature covert, small-scale, individual, equivocal and non-violent, but pervasive and persistent.

A persistent feature of resistance included acts that tended to slow down work on the plantations. One such act, which became perennial, was that the slaves feigned illness and infirmity. In 1843, Edward Carstensen, the Danish Governor at Christiansborg reported on the possibility of growing colonial crops on the Gold Coast and decried the pattern whereby the enslaved workers constantly became ill every year at harvest time so that they were exempted from work. In the said report, he noted that the central problem on the plantations was the annual illness of the plantation workers, which compelled the plantation owners to employ waged laborers hired from the nearby Akuapem, Osu and other Accra towns to harvest the crops. The services provided by waged labourers were expensive. The costs therefore wiped out the profits from the harvests. Concerning this problem in Frederiksgave Plantation, Carstensens wrote (Nørregard, 1964: 46):

“[The] expenses in connection with the harvest have been so high, that the benefits from the rich harvest have been neutralized, so to say. The reason is that a year of abundant harvest means the same as a rainy year; with a rainy year diseases always follow, [in particular the Guinea worm], whereby the plantation workers are prevented from participating in the harvest and thereby forcing the plantation owner to hire people to harvest the coffee beans.”

Another act of resistance was that the enslaved workers refused to render the mandatory four days work as long as there were no European supervisors on the plantations. Instead they worked for themselves. Christensen (1833: 33-34),
made an illuminating observation of this issue and wrote that:

“The Gouvernement [the Danish Administration in Guinea] notes that the plantations can hardly be run perfectly as long as there are no able overseers/managers experienced in colonial cultivation. This lack is felt all the more strongly since no European has been able to remain at the plantations, and the Negro serfs (slaves) cannot be brought to work for anyone but themselves, by overseers from their midst or the Natives, unless there is a European present who supervises them.”

There is no doubt that this behavior of the enslaved workers was an act of sabotage. It was a perennial problem on all the plantations and a major concern to the plantation owners who lived on the coast and were preoccupied with evermore lucrative ventures, such as trade. The planters could not therefore pay the needed attention to the management of their plantations, and the enslaved workers took advantage of this situation.

Another act of resistance that constrained plantation management was desertion. A common anti-slavery resistance culture that permeated every aspect of enslaved life on the Accra Coast and affected the plantations was the practice of slaves running to secure shelter in traditional cult worship centers. Danish documents cite a number of these centers as “powerful fetishes that serve as refuge for runaway slaves.” The sanctuaries included the Kyenku fetish at Obosomase in Akuapem, La-Kpa at Labadi near Accra and others at Berekuso (Akuapem), Odumase-Krobo and Osudoku near Shai. Kyenku, “the one who surrounds,” is the war god and protector of the Akuapem State. The proximity of this fetish to the Danish plantations in the Akuapem Mountains perhaps made it a favorite refuge destination. The Danish surgeon Paul Erdmann Isert (1788 [trans.] 1992: 162) described how runaway slaves to the Kyenku fetish secured their “freedom” in the eighteenth century. He noted that:

“A fetish priest is the caboceer [kabossie] who rules Schentema (Obosomase).... A slave who is not well satisfied with his master makes an effort and comes to this village. Then he goes to the fetish, or the temple of the idol, and seats himself inside on a kind of altar. The fetish priest, who goes there daily to make sacrifices, asks him what he is seeking. He answers, ‘I want to give my body to the fetish.’ The priest, who now understands him perfectly, accepts him, and from then on he is in reality the slave of the fetish priest for the rest of his life without the priest having had to pay a single cowry (the customary payment here) for him.”

However, by the 1820s, the various European, mulatto and African merchant groups on the Gold Coast who owned slaves and therefore relied on the labor of enslaved people challenged this practice. It was not uncommon for armed European officials and soldiers to pursue runaway slaves to their hideouts and, by a show of power, forcibly retrieve them. In 1843, the Danish Gover-
nor, Edward Carstensen in the company of 20 armed soldiers marched to Obosomase in pursuit of two runaway slaves. This happened after the fetish-priest backed by the leading men of the town had refused the Governor’s requests for the release of the slaves on two occasions. Carstensen (Nørregard, 1964: 65) described the encounter as follows:

“We arrived at Bosomach [Obosomase] at 6 a.m. when it was already daybreak. The fetish-priest had escaped, but I arrested his three sons plus the Lieutenant of the town and two spokesmen. Not long after, we heard a continuous yelling and shouting from the fetish grove: there were the two runaway slaves who invoked the help of the fetish against us. I entered the grove ahead of four soldiers and there encountered the two slaves armed with guns jumping around like mad. At my order to surrender, one of them aimed at me. In that moment, I fired my pistol and he fell. The other ran out of the enclosure upon which a shot was heard. He had shot himself.”

Later it turned out that the slave who was shot at by Carstensen was not hit by the bullet, but he had remained on the ground and pretended to be dead until the Governor and his men left the town. He was handed over to Carstensen at Christiansborg three days after the incident. The fetish priest was pardoned and the six arrested men from Obosomase were released from custody after a fine was paid by the fetish priest to the Danish Administration at Christiansborg.

The above incident illustrates the nature of European interference in a traditional institution that provided the means for slaves to secure their freedom during the nineteenth century. Again it demonstrates how runaway slaves resisted their enslaved conditions even to the point of defending themselves with guns. It also demonstrates the slaves’ preparedness to die rather than submit to the armed power of the Danish authority to be humiliated and brutalized by public flogging.

Archaeologists including McKee (1987) and Fairbanks (1972) pointed out that exploiting plant and animal resources in and around the fringes of plantations by the slaves indicated that slaves subverted the principles of patriarchal control. In their private time, the slaves on the Danish plantations altered the landscapes to meet their own needs. Evidence indicates that the enslaved workers on the Danish plantations created their surrounding world through assigned duties and the activities they pursued in their private time, instead of having it constructed for them. Historical documents and archaeological data provide some important clues about after-hour activities of the enslaved workers. According to Balthasar Christensen (1833: 9, 61), slaves on the Danish plantations were responsible for their own subsistence. To meet their daily food requirements, slaves cultivated the plots of land allotted them by the planters. On the Frederiksgave Plantation for instance, slaves used their so-called free time to cultivate maize, cassava, yams, plantain, and a variety of vegetables for their daily subsistence (Chris-
Archaeological evidence from Bibease and Frederiksgave Plantation sites provide important insights into the ways the enslaved workers exploited the surrounding landscapes. Faunal remains, gun parts and accessories recovered from the two sites suggest that the enslaved workers on the two plantations adopted a mixed strategy of hunting, trapping, fishing and collecting to exploit a variety of faunal resources such as small game, land snails, freshwater fish, and shellfish. Excavated animal bones represented both wild and domesticated types. The wild animals exploited by the slaves were antelopes, grass cutters, giant rats, ground squirrels, land tortoise, and small birds such as francolins. Among the identified domesticates were cattle, sheep/goats, pigs, chickens, and turkeys. Archaeological evidence strongly suggests that the enslaved workers on the Bibease and Frederiksgave Plantations were acclimated to the natural environments of the plantation complex. Familiarity with the wider plantation environment empowered the slaves to carve out domains and exploit them for their own domestic use.

There are documentary accounts that plantation owners supplied their slaves with flintlock guns. The recovery of parts of flintlock muskets and flint stones confirms that the slaves on the Bibease and Frederiksgave plantations had access to firearms (Fig. 2). They may have used either the flintlock muskets provided by their masters or a variety of traps to obtain the wild animals mentioned. Most of the animal bones excavated were broken and only a few showed butchering marks. Also some of these bones were charred indicating that meat was roasted. These observed conditions of the bones are consistent with the food processing practices in Ghana today. Meat is roasted for better preservation. Bones are often cracked to extract marrow for consumption. Soups probably consisted of a mixture of pulverized vegetables combined with meat, fish, and/or snails. Cooked yams, cassava, plantains, and maize were perhaps

**Fig. 2.** Gun accessories (flintstones) from Frederiksgave Plantation
combined in different ways and eaten with soups, stews, and sauces. The slaves also exploited freshwater crabs, fish, shellfish and two kinds of land snails from nearby Dakobi and Mamman Streams and their gallery forests, about 2 km and 1 km away, respectively. The enslaved workers could have obtained the marine and estuarine resources through trade or barter whenever they visited the Accra Coast.

Archaeological data provide a glimpse of the worldview of the enslaved workers on the Danish plantations. Artifacts such as stone axes, a pair of brass bells, white/gray shell beads and alcoholic drinks recovered during excavations at Frederiksgave, are ethnographically known ritual paraphernalia associated with the African cognitive systems (Fig. 3). Fetish priests and priestesses of traditional cults wear the white/gray shell beads on their wrists and ankles for spiritual protection and identification. Stone axes and brass bells also feature in the healing, divination and protective rituals of these traditional spiritualists. While these may be considered as material expressions of African religious beliefs, it is difficult to identify the specific fetish these were associated with. It is also difficult to tell how the plantation workers used the activities of the fetish as tools for resisting their enslaved situations.

Liquor may have played an important role in unifying and strengthening the social and spiritual worlds of the enslaved people on the Danish plantations. As a socially deprived and marginalized group of people drawn from different ethnic backgrounds into slavery, social drinking among adult slaves or sharing drinks together would have facilitated the building of a bond of social cohesiveness among themselves. Among African societies, alcohol is still regarded

Fig. 3. Alcoholic beverage bottles from Djabing, the slave village on the Frederiksgave Plantation
as a powerful fluid that is used to communicate and mediate between the living (the known and present) on one hand, and the ancestral and spiritual world (the future and unknown) on the other. Today, this functional role of alcohol is observed during the ritual performances connected with various rites of passage such as birth and naming, puberty, marriage and death. The enslaved workers may have used alcohol in such ritual situations to bridge the gap between their physical world and the spiritual world of their ancestors. The strong and powerful alcoholic beverages were probably used in libation prayers to strike a harmonious balance between the plantation community and the ancestral (spiritual) world that ruled over individual and collective destinies of the enslaved workers. I do not doubt that the plantation system constrained the African slave workers, yet it allowed them the opportunity to somewhat piece back together their lives. Through social drinking, the enslaved workers on the Bibease and Frederiksgave Plantations probably constructed social groups that provided a strong sense of sharing in a common fate and destiny, while the use of powerful fluids during rituals helped to harmonize the landscapes of the enslaved and the ancestral world.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated how the Danish planters imposed controls on the physical and socio-cultural aspects of the plantations in the Akuapem Mountains. The Danish planters tried to recreate the lordship and manorial estate system in the homeland through rules and spatial arrangement, whereby they sought to impose order on the enslaved. The enslaved workers reacted to their entrapment by seemingly complying with the plantation owners, but resisting the various forms of control imposed upon them. Through their activities in private time, such as hunting and gathering as well as various discreet and subtle sabotages, the slaves resisted, to some extent, the very enslavement on the plantations.

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Author’s Name and Address: Yaw BREDWA-MENSAH, Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana. P.O.Box LG 3, Legon-Accra, GHANA. Email: bredwa@yahoo.com
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