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0521428653 - Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples

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The Khoisan are a cluster of southern African peoples which include the famous Bushmen, or San, 'hunters', the Khoekhoe 'herders' (in the past called 'Hottentots'), and the Damara, also a herding people. The present-day Khoisan include hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, and wage labourers. In spite of differences associated with their economic pursuits, as well as differences in language and other aspects of culture, the Khoisan peoples share features of territorial organization, gender relations, kinship, ritual, and cosmology. These represent elements of structures held in common across economic, cultural, linguistic, and 'racial' boundaries. This book focuses on these structures and the diverse forms which they take within Khoisan culture and society. It is written within the framework of regional structural comparison.

Part I examines the theoretical aspects of regional structural comparison, and the prehistory and classification of the Khoisan peoples. Part II presents an extensive ethnographic overview of Khoisan culture and social organization – the first since 1930. Part III explores facets of Khoisan society in comparative perspective, and, in particular, the complex relationships between environmental conditions, ethno-linguistic boundaries and processes of change. There are chapters on settlement patterns, politics and exchange, religious belief, and kinship.

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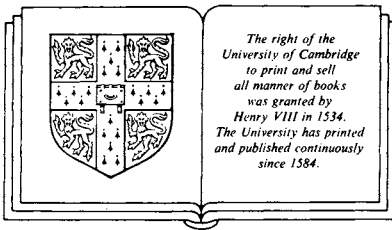
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HUNTERS AND HERDERS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

*A comparative ethnography of the
Khoisan peoples*

ALAN BARNARD

University of Edinburgh



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The pattern is the thing
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Preface

This book owes much to the inspiration of the two people who, a decade and a half ago, passed judgement on my earliest, awkward attempts at regional comparison (Barnard 1976a) – Isaac Schapera and Adam Kuper. The ethnographic content and general comparative approach to the Khoisan material were foreshadowed by Schapera's *The Khoisan peoples of South Africa* (1930), and one purpose of the present volume is to bring that masterly work up to date. On the other hand, my theoretical orientation owes more to the structuralist methodology pioneered in southern African ethnography by Kuper's *Wives for cattle* (1982). A second purpose of this book is to present Khoisan ethnography in a framework comparable to that which Kuper uses for Southern Bantu ethnography. The task is similar, if more complicated due to the greater diversity of social structure among the Khoisan peoples.

None of the chapters in the present book is a reprint of any previous paper, but several include material from earlier papers. Part of Chapter 2 appeared in 'Kinship, language and production: a conjectural history of Khoisan social structure', *Africa* 58: 29–50 (1988). Sections of Chapter 8 were included originally in 'Sex roles among the Nharo Bushmen of Botswana', *Africa* 50: 115–24 (1980). Material in several chapters (especially Chapter 12) is derived from 'Rethinking Bushman settlement patterns and territoriality', *Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika* 7 (1): 41–60 (1986). Part of Chapter 14 originally appeared in 'Structure and fluidity in Khoisan religious ideas', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 18: 216–36 (1988). Chapter 15 is based mainly on material from 'Universal kin categorization in four Bushman societies', *L'Uomo* 5: 219–37 (1981); and from 'Nharo kinship in social and cosmological perspective: comparisons between Southern African and Australian hunter-gatherers', *Mankind* 19: 198–214

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(1989). Chapter 16 is based on material from 'Kin terminology systems of the Khoe-speaking peoples', in J.W. Snyman (ed.), *Bushman and Hottentot linguistic studies, 1979*, University of South Africa, Pretoria (1980); from 'Khoisan kinship: regional comparison and underlying structures', in Ladislav Holy (ed.), *Comparative anthropology*, Blackwell, Oxford (1987); and from 'Kinship, language and production: a conjectural history of Khoisan social structure', *Africa* 58: 29–50 (1988).

My field research among Khoisan groups in 1974–5, 1979, and 1982 was sponsored respectively by the Swan Fund of the Pitt Rivers Museum (University of Oxford), the Hayter Travel and Research Committee and Department of Social Anthropology of the University of Edinburgh, and the U.S. National Science Foundation (BNS-8023941). Formal permission to conduct work in Botswana was granted by the Office of the President of Botswana, and I am grateful to that Office and to the other officials in Central Government, and in the districts, who allowed me the opportunity to conduct my fieldwork without hindrance. Equally, I would like to thank my informants, who so generously gave their time and offered me their friendship. To mention but a few, in Botswana I would like to acknowledge the help of Dabe, Dāse, G/uā'n//ae, Kamti, Khamai, K'uaba, Maxu, N/am//ua, N/isa, N/u, N//u'n//ae, N!ose, Sobe, Tatum, Tete, Thamku, Tshabu, Tsau'n//ae, Tshebe, /Hoha, /Homa, /Ise, ≠A ≠e, //Oro, //Xidau, !Ane, !Xa, !Xoba (and their namesakes). In Namibia I would like to thank Christiaan Afrikaner, Maria Magdalena Block, Daniel Dāsab, Paulina Dāsas, Eliphaz Eiseb, Josef Isaak, Josef Kahuika, Simon Kooper, Isaak Swarts, Thomas Tibott, and Jan !Gooseb. Johannes Boois, Kennedy McIntyre, and Motsame Phiri provided invaluable assistance as interpreters; my thanks to them too. I am also much indebted to the Ghanzi and Xanagas ranchers who allowed me to roam freely across their lands. Most of them, I am sure, would prefer to remain anonymous.

I am grateful to many colleagues who have contributed, both through comments on chapters of this book, and through discussions and correspondence on its issues through the many years of its preparation. It is difficult to mention their names without fear of neglecting someone, but my gratitude is due, among others, to Nick Allen, John Argyle, Megan Biesele, Kuno Budack, Alan Campbell, Peter Carstens, Liz Cashdan, Tony Cohen, Ursula Dentlinger, Tony Good, Mathias Guenther, Ørnulf Gulbrandsen, Wilfrid Haacke, H.J. Heinz, Roger Hewitt, Bob Hitchcock, Ladislav Holy, Rick Huntington, Tim Ingold, Sue Kent, Klaus Keuthmann, Adam Kuper, Jessica Kuper, Bob Layton, Richard Lee, David Lewis-Williams, Ken Maddock, Lorna Marshall, John Parkington, Nic Peterson, Beatrice

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Sandelowsky, Isaac Schapera, Rosalind Shaw, George Silberbauer, Jan Snyman, Hendrik Steyn, Jiro Tanaka, Tony Traill, David Turner, Rainer Vossen, Martin West, Ernst Westphal, Thomas Widlok, Polly Wiessner, Ed Wilmsen, and James Woodburn. I also acknowledge the Edinburgh students who attended my course 'Khoisan Peoples of Southern Africa' and thereby helped, if unknowingly, to mould this book.

Finally, as always, I owe a special debt to my parents for their unending generosity, without which I would never have been able to complete this work, and to Joy, for endless tolerance and support.

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A note on orthography

Not least because of the ‘clicks’, the spelling of Khoisan words often causes problems for authors and readers alike. Some explanation of these sounds, and some other sounds found in Khoisan languages, may be helpful. I also include here a few brief comments on the usage and spellings of ethnic group names and on abbreviations used in the description of kinship systems in this book.

Clicks

Clicks are consonant sounds produced by allowing air to pass into (rather than out of) the mouth. They are combined with other consonants to form clusters, e.g., *!kh* (a palatal click followed by a *k* and an *h*). Apart from odd expressions like ‘Tisk, tisk’ in English and certain words in the peculiar ‘mother-in-law languages’ of the Australian Aborigines, clicks occur only in the Khoisan languages, two languages of East Africa (Hadza and Sandawe), and certain Southern Bantu languages, particularly the Nguni languages of the Indian Ocean coast and related dialects spoken in the southern African interior (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, etc.). The latter groups acquired their click-containing vocabulary originally from Khoisan peoples.

There have been a number of attempts to put the click symbols into writing. In his catalogue of the Library of Sir George Grey, W.H.I. Bleek (1858: 6) recorded no less than 28 different *systems* that had by then been invented. He opted for the one created in 1854 by the Egyptologist, Richard Lepsius (1863 [1854]). This system, though with a ‘not equal to’ sign in place of Lepsius’ original broken vertical line for the alveolar click, was adopted by the 1856 conference of the Rhenish Mission Society (RMS) and has remained in general use ever since. Bleek later added the ‘bull’s eye’ symbol

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(a circle with a dot in the middle) for the bilabial click. The Lepsius-RMS-Bleek system (hereafter, the Standard Khoisan system) is the one I use.

The five basic clicks in this system are given below, together with their traditional labels and descriptions of their method of articulation and their sound.

- ⊙ Bilabial. A bilabial stop or affricate. Produced by releasing air between the lips, often as in a kiss. Found only in !Xõ and Southern Bushman languages.
- / Dental. A dental or alveolar affricate (sometimes described as a fricative). Produced by a sucking motion with the tip of the tongue on the teeth, as in the English expression of annoyance written ‘Tisk, tisk’, phonetically [ʃ /]. Found in all Khoisan languages.
- ≠ Alveolar. An alveolar stop, produced by pulling the blade of the tongue sharply away from the alveolar ridge, immediately behind the teeth. A difficult sound for many people, rather in-between / and ! in sound. Found in all Khoisan languages.
- // Lateral. A lateral affricate (sometimes described as a fricative). Produced by placing the tip of tongue on the roof of the mouth (the exact position varies) and releasing air on one side of the mouth between the side of the tongue and the cheek. More simply, the clicking sound film cowboys use, [ʃ //], to make their horses go. Found in all Khoisan languages.
- ! Palatal, sometimes called cerebral or retroflex. An alveopalatal or palatal stop, produced by pulling the tip of the tongue sharply away from the front of the hard palate. When made with lips rounded, it sounds rather like a cork popping from a wine bottle. Found in all Khoisan languages.

The other systems still in existence include that of the International Phonetic Association (IPA) and that employed in Bantu languages. Although the remainder of the International Phonetic Alphabet is used universally, the IPA click symbols are not used today by *any* Khoisan specialist, whether anthropologist or linguist. Except in the important monograph on Khoekhoe phonetics by D.M. Beach (1938), they have never found favour with specialists. The Bantu system has been in use in Xhosa and Zulu (originally in mission schools) since the 1820s and has recently gained favour among some Khoisan specialists (see, e.g., Wilmsen 1989a). This system has the advantage of employing symbols which are readily understood by literate speakers of click-possessing languages, but the disadvantage of phonological ambiguity. Specifically, two clicks found

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in Khoisan languages, the bilabial and the alveolar, are not present in Bantu languages and therefore have no symbol (though, confusingly, *c*, *x*, *v* and other symbols were occasionally used in nineteenth-century Khoekhoe texts for the alveolar click). Also, the *x* in the Bantu system signifies a lateral click (// in the Standard Khoisan system), while in other systems *x* signifies a voiceless velar fricative (written with an *h* or a *g* in Bantu languages). The Standard Khoisan click symbols and their IPA and Bantu equivalents are given below. The ‘bull’s eye’ for the bilabial click was only finally approved by the IPA in 1976 (see Pullum and Ladusaw 1986: 112), while the Beach’s ‘double-barred esh’ still awaits official approval (1986: 143–4).

<i>Standard Khoisan</i>	<i>IPA – D.M. Beach</i>	<i>Bantu</i>
⊙	⊙	(no symbol)
/	ɿ	c
≠	ɸ	(no symbol)
//	ɓ	x
!	ʘ	q

Click consonant clusters include the click plus one or more other consonants. The specific consonants which may be used in any given language are sometimes called ‘click releases’, and most linguists who specialize in the study of Khoisan languages include the click proper and the release as a single click phoneme. Thus, in a given language, *!k*, *!kx*, and *!kh* might be regarded as three distinct phonemes. Clicks may also be voiced or nasalized. Voicing (the simultaneous production of a *d* or a *g* with the click) is usually indicated by writing a *g* before or after the click symbol, while nasalization (with voicing) is similarly indicated by writing an *n* before or after the click symbol. I generally write the *g* or *n* before, although in some cases (particularly in the Nama language and in citing the work of other authors) I place the *g* or *n* after the click symbol.

An additional complication concerns the practice of some German scholars of indicating voicing and nasalization by wavy lines above and below the click symbols (see, e.g., Köhler 1981). In this usage, a wavy line above a click symbol written vertically, e.g., $\tilde{\text{!}}$, indicates nasalization (without voicing), and a wavy line below a click symbol indicates voicing without nasalization. A voiced, nasalized click is indicated in this system by the click symbol followed by an *n*, for example, *!n*. The Standard Khoisan equivalent would be *n/* or */n*.

Examples of click releases are given below, using a dental click series for purposes of illustration.

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/ or /k	dental click with non-phonemic velar release
/q	dental click with uvular release
/ʔ or /ʔ	dental click released on a glottal stop
/x	dental click released on a voiceless velar fricative
/xʔ	dental click released on a voiceless velar fricative followed by a glottal stop
/h	dental click with aspiration
g/ or /g	voiced dental click
n/ or /n	nasalized dental click (with voicing)
ṅ/ or /ṅ	nasalized dental click (voiceless)

Wherever relevant and possible, I have standardized the orthographic representation of non-Nama Khoisan languages according to the principles followed in my *Nharo wordlist* (Barnard 1985), without non-phonemic *k* after a click symbol. For example, Nharo *!kau* or *!au* is given in this book as *!au*. The deletion of this unconsciously articulated (but essentially inaudible) *k* is now normal practice for those linguists who specialize in Khoisan languages, and it seems sensible to follow suit in order to make comparisons between different languages easier. An exception to this rule is my retention of the spelling *!Kung*, arguably now virtually an English word. Indeed, proper nouns are generally spelled in this book according to common usage in English ethnography, rather than according to strict phonological rules (see ‘Ethnic group names’, below). Other exceptions occur in /Xam words. Here I follow the texts as recorded by W.H.I. Bleek and Lucy Lloyd (e.g., 1911). On Korana, I follow Engelbrecht (1936) and Maingard (e.g., 1932) in appropriate contexts. Their orthography is in general a compromise between Nama usage and the Standard Khoisan usage illustrated above.

The standard orthography of Nama or Nama/Damara differs in some respects from Standard Khoisan. Nama is, in fact, the only Khoisan language with a standardized orthography. It would be absurd to spell Nama words in any way other than the way Nama, the Damara, and other literate speakers of this language spell them, although for consistency in typefaces I do use slanted in preference to Nama’s more usual vertical click symbols. Beware, therefore, that in Nama a click symbol followed directly by a vowel symbol is produced with glottal stop (which is *not* represented orthographically) between the click and a vowel. A click symbol followed by a *g* indicates not voicing but the *lack of* a glottal stop. A click symbol followed by an *n* indicates nasalization. The pronunciation of Nama clicks is illustrated below for the dental click series.

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<i>Nama orthography</i>	<i>Standard Khoisan orthography</i>
/	ʔ or /ʔ
/g	/ or /k
/n	n/ or /n

Nama orthography was reformed in 1970 and again in 1977, but the differences between the old and new systems are very minor (*Nama/Damara* 1977). They concern mainly hyphenation and the representation of some vowels and diphthongs (e.g., the replacement of German-influenced *ei* with *ai*). In this book Nama words are given in modern orthography. Traditional spellings are included only where these are particularly relevant (e.g., in citations from early sources). Morpheme divisions are, by hyphens, only where I wish to draw attention to the meaning of specific morphemes.

Finally, it may be of interest to the non-specialist that the pronunciation of clicks in ethnic group names is entirely optional when speaking a non-Khoisan language. Acceptable anglicizations may be produced either by articulating a non-click sound of approximately the same phonological position (e.g., *p* for ☉, *t* for / or ≠, *k* for // or !), or by ignoring the click entirely and simply pronouncing the release followed by the remainder of the word. When speaking English, I myself say *Kung* for '!Kung', *Gwi* for 'G/wi', and *Gana* for 'G//ana'. Other non-English sounds may also be anglicized. In particular, the voiceless velar fricative of Khoisan languages is often rendered in English as a voiceless velar stop (e.g., *Ko* for '!Xō', *Kam* for '/Xam').

Non-click consonants and vowels

The remainder of sounds which occur in Khoisan languages are given in this book in standard phonetic symbols which should cause few difficulties.

A glottal stop, IPA², is written as ' – as is common practice now among several Khoisan specialists. I have standardized as *kx'* the orthography of the consonant cluster written variously as *k''*, *kx''*, and *kx'*, though these other forms may be found in citations from earlier sources. I take this to be more or less the same sound in all Khoisan languages, namely a voiceless velar or glottal affricate accompanied by a glottal stop. In some Western and Central Khoe dialects, and even idiolects, *kx'* occurs in free variation with *k'*, whereas in others these are distinguished as separate phonemes (see Barnard 1985: 8).

In Khoe languages there is generally no phonemic distinction between *s* and *ʃ* (sometimes written *š*) or between *z* and *ʒ* (sometimes written *ž*). I have therefore standardized these as *s* and *z*, respectively. The actual sound

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generally lies in between English *s* and *ʃ* (orthographic *sh*) or *z* and *ʒ* (orthographic *zh*). Köhler's (e.g., 1966a) Kxoe *ç* is similar to *ʃ*.

Following the practice established in my *Nharo wordlist* (Barnard 1985: 7), semivowels are written as *w* and *j* where they occur initially, but otherwise take the form *u* or *i*. For example, Nharo *khwe* or *khue* is written as *khue*. My orthographic *j* is a voiced palatal central approximant, as in Afrikaans or German *ja* ('yes'), not English *judge*. The letter *y* is not used for this sound except in Eastern ≠Hoã, where I follow Jeffrey Gruber's (1973) orthography.

Vowels are represented with standard phonetic symbols. Vowel length, or 'doubling' of vowels of like value but different tone, is phonemic in some languages. In Nama this is indicated by a macron over a single vowel symbol, e.g., *sāb* (meaning 'Bushman', masc. sg.). In other languages, vowel length is usually indicated by the use of two identical symbols, e.g., Korana *saab*. D.F. Bleek's (1929a; 1956) use of the colon to indicate length, say, *sa:b*, may be regarded as standard for some languages, such as /Xam, and is used in this way by Maingard (1932) and Engelbrecht (1936) in their Korana texts. I retain it in such cases. However, I do not use this symbol in Nharo (Bleek's 'Naron'), the fieldwork language she and I have in common. Nasalization is indicated by a tilde (or in Nama orthography, a circumflex) above the relevant vowel symbol, and pharyngealization or 'pressing' by a tilde below, e.g., ≠*ãã*, a term cited by Traill (1974: 9) as one of the many ethnic self-designations for the !Xõ.

Phonemic tone is very often difficult to identify and is not indicated here unless essential. The most notorious case is the Korana, Nama, and Damara distinction between the *tarás* ('wife', 'cross-cousin', 'marriageable female joking relative') and the *tàras* ('father's sister', 'sister', 'parallel cousin', 'unmarriageable female avoidance relative'). Here, for consistency, I write Engelbrecht's (1936) Korana *táras* as *tàras* – probably, as in Nama, having low falling tone on the first syllable. This contrasts with *tarás*, which has a high rising tone on the second syllable.

Ethnic group names

To a non-specialist encountering the Khoisan literature for the first time, the variety of ethnic group names and the diversity of spellings for them may seem as daunting as the clicks. My general policy is: (1) to stick to the best-known terms when referring to well-known peoples, (2) to use self-appellations when appropriate, (3) to use as precise a designation as possible, (4) to avoid the use of prefixes and suffixes in ethnic group names, and (5) to be etymologically and phonologically accurate without being phonetically pedantic.

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However, these principles are not always easy to reconcile, and decisions have to be made according to context. For example, I write ‘San’ and not ‘Sa’ as the synonym for ‘Bushman’, in spite of the fact that the *-n* in this term is actually a plural suffix in the language from which it is derived. To use ‘Sa’, although it might be in keeping with my fourth principle, would be un-English and therefore contrary to my first and fifth principles. To take another example, I frequently use ‘Zu/’hoã’ (singular) and ‘Zu/’hoãsi’ (plural) in preference to ‘!Kung’. This usage conforms to my second, third, and fifth principles. Although ‘Zu/’hoã’ is not as widely employed in non-specialist circles as ‘!Kung’, this usage also marginally conforms to my first principle in that it is in common use among specialists, especially to designate Central as opposed to Northern or Southern !Kung. I use the plural suffix *-si* in this case, since this is common practice among ethnographers of that group. However, following my fourth principle, I avoid the Khoe suffixes *-n*, *-na*, *-qua*, etc., used by early writers in ethnic group names (e.g., ‘Namaqua’). In this book I do not usually use Bantu prefixes, *Ba-*, *Ma-*, *Ova-*, etc., although I have used these when writing in other contexts, such as in Botswana government reports. In Botswana the use of *Ba-* is not only acceptable but standard English (e.g. ‘Batswana’, in reference either to ethnic Tswana or to citizens of the country), while elsewhere it is generally inappropriate.

Place names are also spelled in a variety of ways by different authors. In general, I follow here the form used in the country to which I refer. For example, the place name frequently spelled ‘≠Xade’ by ethnographers is rendered here as ‘Xade’, to accord with spelling standardization in Botswana. The names of non-literate individuals are spelled more phonetically, with standard click symbols where appropriate, or in the manner in which their names are recorded by earlier writers.

Abbreviations

The following standard kin type abbreviations are used, especially in tables and lists of relationship terms.

F	father	M	mother
S	son	D	daughter
B	brother	Z	sister
H	husband	W	wife
P	parent	C	child
G	sibling	E	spouse
y	younger	e	elder
s	senior	j	junior

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ss	same sex	os	opposite sex
ms	man speaking	ws	woman speaking
v	vocative	N	namesake

These are employed in strings to indicate specific genealogical position. For example, FBS means ‘father’s brother’s son’, FyBS means ‘father’s younger brother’s son’, FBSy means ‘father’s brother’s son who is younger than ego’. ‘Elder’ and ‘younger’ denote real relative age, whereas ‘senior’ and ‘junior’ denote relative positions in respect of linking relatives. For example, my FyBS is ‘junior’ to me, though he may be either older or younger. The distinction of relative position among classificatory siblings (often including parallel cousins) is common among Khoisan peoples. Some groups make this distinction on the basis of age, and others on the basis of seniority.