Socio-historical classification of Khoekhoe groups

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Overview

• Introduction

• Khoekhoe groups
  • in pre- and early colonial period
  • in later colonial periods
  • today

• Problems and challenges
Introduction

- The Khoekhoe played an important role in the network of language contact in southern Africa
  a) because of their traditionally mobile economies → larger migratory territories
  b) contact with all language groups in the area
     ▪ Tuu languages as the earliest linguistic layer
     ▪ Bantu languages (Herero, Tswana, Xhosa)
     ▪ colonial languages: Dutch → influencing Afrikaans
Introduction

• The Khoekhoe played an important role in the network of language contact in southern Africa
  a) traditionally mobile → larger migratory territories
  b) contact with all language groups in the area
  c) fled from the encroaching colonial system carrying with them their Khoekhoe language + Dutch and some cultural features
     → considerable advantages and prestige vis-à-vis the groups they encounter during their migrations
Introduction

• The Khoekhoe language played a dual role:
  o the *substratum* of groups shifting to other languages (e.g. Dutch/Afrikaans)
  o the *target of language shift* by groups speaking other languages

• complexity unlikely to be disentangled completely

• especially problematic due to the lack of historical linguistic data
  → wanted: a more fine-grained distinction of Khoekhoe-speaking ethnic groups in space and time
Groups in pre- and early colonial period

- Major groups before colonial disruption in the Cape:
  - Cape Khoekhoe
  - Nama
  - Eini
  (\(!\text{Ora} = \text{Korana}\)
Groups in pre- and early colonial period

- **Eini** (kwa) or Riverfolk (Engelbrecht 1936, Maingard 1964)
- Often but erroneously subsumed under !Ora
- Indigenous to the middle Orange River between Augrabies and Upington

Maingard (1964)
Groups in pre- and early colonial period

• !Ora in the Upper Orange region migrated according to oral histories from the Cape area to escape colonial domination.

• Two major routes:
  - to the east and then along the Orange northward
  - to the north into Little Namaqualand up to the Orange and then along the river eastward ("Ondervelders")

Maingard (1964)
Later colonial period

- Colonial disruption leads to emergence of new diverse Khoekhoe-speaking groups distinguished according to various parameters:
  - original ethnic core group(s)
  - individual leaders ("captains")
  - time and route of migration
  - final settlement
  - contact with non-Khoekhoe groups
  - influence by Cape Dutch component and degree of acculturation, including language maintenance
Later colonial period

• Cape Khoekhoe becomes extinct in its original area
  > virtually no linguistic data beyond short wordlists

• encroachment of Cape Khoekhoe descendants
  on areas away from the Cape strongly affecting other
  groups, thereby forming so-called ‘frontier groups’ like
  ‘Oorlam’, ‘Basters’, and Griqua

• language contact with a variety of other groups like
  other Khoekhoe groups, Cape Dutch, !Ui-speaking
  San, and also Bantu in the East
## Later colonial period

Khoekhoe-speaking groups studied more extensively from a linguistic perspective after colonial disruption:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nama</td>
<td>relatively good, but unclear distinction to Oorlam varieties; basis of Standard Khoekhoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eini</td>
<td>little data, mostly vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!Ora</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various ‘frontier’ groups</td>
<td>little data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Later colonial period

1. **!Ora** cluster in the Upper Orange region
   - Hoogstanders
   - Skerpioene
   - Black people
   - Side people
   - Cats
   - …

!Ora may be closest to Cape Khoekhoe but with unknown nature and amount of linguistic admixture

Maingard 1964
Later colonial period

2. **Oorlam** in Namibia (Budack 1986)
   - Amraal Lamberts
   - Bersebaers
   - Afrikaners
   - ...

   - stronger bilingualism in Khoekhoe and Dutch
   - documented in missionary contexts together with Nama
   - mainstream Namibian Khoekhoe is a koine of Nama and Oorlam varieties
Later colonial period

   • Xiri(kwa) aka Griqua
   • Rehobothers
   • Vilanders
   • ...

   - latest layer of Khoekhoe migration into diverse regions of Namibia and South Africa
   - possessed most European “know-how” such as political organization, Christian religion, guns, horses
   - bilingualism with strong tendency to shift to Afrikaans
Modern situation

- **South Africa:**

  1. Pre-disruption groups:
     - Cape Khoekhoe, Eini and most of Little Nama **extinct**
     - some remnants of Little Nama in the Richtersveld and Namaqualand but influenced by other post-disruption groups

  2. Post-disruption groups:
     - Upper Orange !Ora, Griqua, “Basters” **extinct**
Modern situation

- **Namibia** with a diverse range of Khoekhoe varieties:
  1. Nama-Damara
     - basis of Standard Namibian Khoekhoe
  2. Haillom-ǂAakhoe
     - partly divergent varieties spoken by hunter-gatherers

Haacke et al. (1997)
Modern situation

- Ongoing controversy about the scenario how Khoekhoe in its present form came to be spoken by different groups in Namibia

Scenario 1 (e.g. Vedder 1927): language shift on the part of Damara, Hailom and #Aakhoe

Scenario 2 (e.g. Haacke 2008): no Khoekhoeization of these groups
Linguistic challenges

• Insufficient documentation of both older and modern Khoekhoe varieties

• No systematic historical linguistic analysis of available data

• Overall homogeneity of attested pre-disruption Khoekhoe varieties does not match archaeological findings that pastoralism has a long history of 2000 years in South Africa