

**Anthony Traill 2018. *A Trilingual !Xóǀ Dictionary. !Xóǀ – English – Setswana*, ed. by Andy Chebanne and Hiroshi Nakagawa. *Research in Khoisan Studies* 37 Köln: Rüdiger Köppe**

*Anne-Maria Fehn*

Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena  
Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main  
CIBIO-InBIO: Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources, Vairão

### Review

<1> For any scholar with an interest in Southern African ‘Khoisan’, it is almost mandatory to become familiar with the works of Anthony Traill (1939-2007). Few linguists have matched the impact and scope of his studies on the phoneme inventories, phonological characteristics and other aspects of the languages now grouped into the Kx’a, Tuu and Khoe-Kwadi families (Güldemann 2014). Apart from his invaluable contributions to comparative ‘Khoisan’ studies, Traill is probably best remembered as the unchallenged specialist on the northeasternmost Taa variety subsequently referred to as (East) !Xóǀ. Starting from 1969, he undertook innumerable field trips to the Lone Tree-Kagae area in Botswana and, with the help of his !Xóǀ assistants, collected an extensive corpus of data on their language and culture which was to result in three major monographic publications:

- 1974 *The compleat guide to the Koon*. Communications 1
- 1985 *Phonetic and phonological studies of !Xóǀ Bushman*.  
Research in Khoisan Studies 1
- 1994 *A !Xóǀ dictionary*. Research in Khoisan Studies 9

<2> Traill was acutely aware of the highly endangered state of !Xóǀ, with the entire Taa branch of Tuu counting not more than 2,600 speakers (Brenzinger 2013: 14). Following his realization that “many lexical items will not survive beyond the present generation of informed speakers” (p. 1), he collected an impressive corpus of lexical data, encompassing not only core vocabulary for cross-linguistic comparison, but also cultural vocabulary and vocabulary related to specialist knowledge about anatomy, zoology, botany, geology, meteorology and astronomy.

<3> Traill’s !Xóǀ dictionary, along with a thorough introduction describing the language’s phonology and selected grammatical features, was first published in 1994. It primarily aimed at a specialized audience and included material to address researchers from multiple fields, including cultural anthropology, lexicography, phonetics and phonology, and comparative linguistics.

Several years after the publication of the first edition, Sidsel Saugestad from the University of Tromsø encouraged Traill to start working on an expanded version of his dictionary. The book was to include not only an English-!Xóǀ but also a Setswana-!Xóǀ section that would make the work accessible to speakers literate in Botswana’s national language. Traill enthusiastically took on the task, editing and expanding his lexical corpus, until his failing health forced him to abandon the project in 2005.

<4> The present work is the result of both Traill’s endeavors and the determination of his colleagues to fulfill his last wish and publish “The Trilingual !Xóǀ Dictionary”. The lexical part of the

dictionary was completed by Traill's student Hiroshi Nakagawa, himself an internationally acclaimed phonetician, while the Setswana-!Xóõ section was compiled with the assistance of Botswanan linguist Andy Chebanne. Editorial advice and help in the interpretation of transcriptional conventions was further supplied by Tom Güldemann and Christfried Naumann, who have considerable experience in documenting and describing Taa varieties from Namibia and Botswana.

The volume contains a preface by the author's wife Jill Traill which provides some background information, but does not include an editor's introduction. In general, the work's overall structure still follows Traill (1994): Traill's original preface including notes on orthography, phonetics and phonology, and grammar has been retained with minor modifications. These include the addition of two click accompaniment distinctions (**llkh** vs. **llqh** and **llk'** vs. **llq'**), along with three new non-click onsets (**px**, **ɖʒ** and **j**) which were identified in the expanded !Xóõ corpus.

- <5> The main part of the dictionary (!Xóõ-English) has been considerably expanded and includes corrections of entries already featured in the 1994 edition, along with many new entries and expanded translations and annotations rich in detail and cultural information. Entries further include grammatical information on noun and tone class, as well as on plural and diminutive forms. A typical entry looks like the example provided below (taken from p. 42):

√• **ᱚᱠᱟ ᱠ 3 I ᱚᱠᱟ ᱠ-ᱠᱢ 4 II dim.: ᱠᱢ-ᱚᱠᱟᱢ ᱠ-ᱢᱢ 3 I (sg.) ᱠᱢ-ᱚᱠᱟᱢ-ᱠᱢ ᱚᱠᱢ 2 I (pl.)**  
 child (gen. (both sexes)) (al.) (cf. **ᱚᱠᱢ**), extending to the late teens,  
 also childhood; underling, dependant

√ and • are editorial marks which the editors decided to retain. They were introduced by Traill and probably indicate different stages of revision from Traill (1994), although their exact meaning is unclear. The entry is to be read as follows: The noun **ᱚᱠᱟ ᱠ** 'child' belongs to noun class 3 (of five) and to tone class I (of two). The plural **ᱚᱠᱟ ᱠ-ᱠᱢ** 'children' belongs to noun class 4 and to tone class II. The diminutive form **ᱠᱢ-ᱚᱠᱟᱢ** 'small child' belongs to noun class 3 and to tone class I, whereas the diminutive plural **ᱠᱢ-ᱚᱠᱟᱢ-ᱠᱢ ᱚᱠᱢ** 'small children' belongs to noun class 2 and to tone class I. The entry further flags the noun as alienable and crossreferences **ᱚᱠᱢ** with the meaning 'diminutive (cf. child), young of'.

Entries for verbs further include information on transitivity and frequently provide example sentences to illustrate their exact meaning and grammatical behavior.

- <6> The second part of the dictionary is a English-!Xóõ index which has been substantially expanded from Traill (1994), followed by a newly added third part which contains a corresponding Setswana-!Xóõ index which was prepared by mother-tongue speakers of both languages. It should be noted that the two indices do not replicate all the entries and information included in the !Xóõ-English part, which should hence be considered the core section of the dictionary.

- <7> The work concludes with an appendix containing a list of bird species, plants, smells, sounds and swearing expressions which, in part, are also included in the other sections of the dictionary. The ordering of items has been preserved from Traill's original manuscript.

The overall format of the volume is reader-friendly, with a well-structured Table of Contents and a transparent introduction to the dictionary format available in Traill's own Preface. The book covers 318 pages, is available as Hardcover and costs 69,80 €. As the trilingual !Xóõ dictionary is the work of true specialists and provides the most up-to-date compilation of the lexicon of an endangered language, this price - although slightly elevated - appears certainly adequate.

## Bibliography

Brenzinger, Matthias 2013

'The twelve modern Khoisan languages'. In: Witzlack-Makarevich, Alena and Martina Ernszt (eds.) *Khoisan Languages and Linguistics. Proceedings of the 3rd International Symposium*, July 6-10, 2008, Riezlern/Kleinwalsertal, pp. 5–31. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe

Güldemann, Tom 2014

'"Khoisan" linguistic classification today'. In: Güldemann, Tom and Anne-Maria Fehn (eds.) *Beyond "Khoisan": Historical Relations in the Kalahari Basin*, pp. 1–41. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins

Traill, Anthony 1974

*The compleat guide to the Koon*. Communications 1. Johannesburg: African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand

Traill, Anthony 1985

*Phonetic and phonological studies of !Xóõ Bushman*. Research in Khoisan Studies 1. Hamburg: Helmut Buske

Traill, Anthony 1994

*A !Xóõ dictionary*. Research in Khoisan Studies 9. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe