Endangered HG languages (competence, structure, domains of use) and language shift
Friday 1st July 2022: 11.00-13.00
Room: F.101
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Abstract: This workshop is intended to be a follow-up to a panel that the two applicants had previously organized in Penang (CHAGS12 program, p. 67). Its present focus should be the presentation and discussion of current results of linguistic research, documentation as well as the analysis of HG language data collected in the areas mentioned below. In so doing, appropriate attention will be paid to external influences on these languages, as evidenced by an increasing number of loan words from neighbouring languages as well as from other majority languages, such as Swahili in East Africa, or Tswana in Botswana.

In the face of climate change and increased occupation by outside people of the traditional HG territory (which is not protected by appropriate land rights), marginalized communities can no longer live their traditional lifestyles, i.e. foraging, hunting, and more. As a consequence, they are often working as labourers for farmers and pastoralists who now occupy the HG territories. This form of employment results in increasing language shift away from the HG language as well as in the latter language erosion. as documented in grammatical and lexical simplification by dropping grammatical elements as well as lexical items.

The number of those who still speak the respective HG language and have continued to be respected guardians of comprehensive linguistic competence is quite small. In contrast, other members of the traditional speech community show a linguistic repertoire the constituents of which were sketched above. These and other problems will be presented and discussed during the workshop.

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**Endangered HG languages (competence, structure, domains of use) and language shift**

**Linguistic traces of Bantu-Khoe contact in the Okavango River Basin**

**Authors:** Anne-Maria Fehn (BIOPOLIS-CIBIO) afenh@cibio.up.pt; Beatriz Amorim amorimsba@gmail.com; Jorge Rocha jrocha@cibio.up.pt

**Abstract:** Khwe and Ts’ixa are two closely related Kalahari Khoe (Khoe-Kwadi) languages spoken by foragers along the Okavango River Basin shared between Angola, Namibia, and Botswana. Both groups subsided on hunting and gathering until the middle of the 20th century, but at the same time share a long history of contact with Bantu speakers from various subgroup(s). While the influence of “Khoisan” languages on Bantu languages of the Northern Kalahari Basin fringe has been explored rather, Bantu influence on Kalahari Khoe is still often treated as a recent phenomenon without historical significance. In this talk, we briefly outline the various linguistic domains in which Bantu influence in Khwe and Ts’ixa can be discerned. We will show that contact influence is strongest in the general lexicon, but also encompasses function words and grammatical markers. We offer a preliminary analysis of the different semantic fields displaying Bantu influence and assess their possible significance for deducing historical processes and contact scenarios. To conclude, we discuss the phenomenon of click loss and replacement in the light of recent genetic studies on the admixture histories of Khoe speakers. We argue that instead of being a preliminary to language loss, click loss was introduced by Bantu speakers who became integrated into Khoe speech communities on the fringes of the Kalahari Basin area.

**Keywords:** language contact; Khoisan; Khoe-Kwadi; Bantu

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**Stronger than ever: The effect of language contact on the expression of kinship in Omheke Juǀ’hoan**

**Authors:** Lee J. Pratchett (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) lee.pratchett@hu-berlin.de

**Abstract:** The Omaheke in Namibia has changed dramatically over the last 150 years, reshaped demographically, culturally, and linguistically by colonialism and the cattle economy. In the spirit of the conference theme Living Well Together, this paper describes a dynamic linguistic response by Omaheke Juǀ’hoan to their changing sociolinguistic landscape that speaks to the resiliency and centrality of hunter-gatherer communality. The Juǀ’hoan language has a grammatical gender system that expresses the dichotomy between kin and non-kin – or between “those who are frequently here and now with us, real, genuine people, as opposed to those faraway who we can only imagine” (Bird-David 2019: 190). One gender regroups consanguineal, social, and cultural kin and another gender regroups those whose markings and mannerisms diverge from the group, which includes all non-hunter-gatherers (Dickens 2005, Pratchett 2021). In communication, the distinction reveals itself through the subtle use of pronouns when referring to discourse referents. In Omaheke Juǀ’hoan speech communities, the gender system has undergone significant changes due to the influence of Khoekhoe – which is so pronounced that local Juǀ’hoan youth also adopt a Khoekhoe identity (Brown & Haihambo 2015). In this talk, I illustrate the stark yet subtle typological change to the gender system, as well as the general increase in its overall complexity. Most crucially, I demonstrate how the adaption by speakers of novel features effectively reinforces – and reaffirms – the expression and importance of Juǀ’hoan kinship. This talk therefore exemplifies community agency in the context of language change and how speakers actively navigate their changing sociolinguistic landscape.

**Keywords:** Omaheke Juǀ’hoan, Kinship, Language Contact, Language Change, Gender
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The Gyele lexicon: Flora and Fauna (Cameroon, Bantu A80)

Authors: Daniel Duke (Leiden University) daniel_duke@sil.org

Abstract: Gyele (Bantu A80) is a language spoken by the Bagyele forest foragers in Southern Cameroon. It is closely related to Kwasio (Bantu A80), which is spoken by neighboring farmers (Renaud 1976). The current study focuses on the flora and fauna lexicon of Gyele, based on extensive lexical research in the context of language documentation with the Kay Williamson Foundation (Blench 2009) and the Volkswagen DoBeS Bakola project (Volkswagen DoBeS 2013).

In the case of Gyele, there are no indications of a non-Bantu substratum for this lexicon. Most forest words are directly related to corresponding Kwasio words. However, animals which usually sold as bush meat often have multiple optional names, which are taken from other neighboring farming groups who are clients buying the meat. In the case of flora, the lexicon often corresponds to Kwasio. However, trees of commercial value are now referred to with names taken from Ewondo (Bantu A70), because that language is the lingua franca of the logging industry.

These findings are interesting from the point of view of the process of language change and adaptation by forest foragers, both currently and historically. Although Gyele is very closely related to Kwasio, the speakers are actively borrowing even in certain lexical domains in order to speak “the language of the customer.”

References:


Keywords: Central African Forest Foragers, Language Documentation, Lexicon, Forest Products, Cameroon

Endangered Ethnobiologies? Hunter-Gatherers and Loss of Zoological Lexicon

Authors: Robert Brightman (Reed College) rbrightm@reed.edu

Abstract: Endangerment of hunter-gatherer languages via influences from contiguous agro-pastoral peoples and encompassing states contracts certain relations with imputed differences between forager and non-forager biological taxonomies. Foragers allegedly distinguish fewer zoological and botanical classes overall and, as correlate, have fewer binomial lexemes differentiating “generic” (“oak”) into “specific” (“white oak”) categories. Evidence from Woods Cree (Algonquian, American Subarctic) suggests that this forager/farmer taxonomic divide may be yet another expression of Neolithic prejudice. Cree frequently subcategorizes generic lexemes by binomial forms of specific rank. The data supports “universalist” or “relativist” rather than “utilitarian” interpretation. Frogs are non-resources, but generic aðīkis ‘frog’ is subclassified with binomial forms denoting each of the three regional species. Behavior and metaphor motivate naming. The boreal chorus frog (Pseudacris maculata) is named iðinicōw-aðīkis ‘little Indigenous frog’ by virtue of gregariousness; its pragmatic
significance is distilled in the extemporized gloss “goddamn noisy little frogs in the muskeg.” Parallel binomials also occur for āpakosīs ‘mouse,’ another non-resource. Language endangerment since the 1980s, attributed to television and pedagogical English, has taken forms both of morphosyntactic simplification and lexical loss. (With an estimate of 20,000 speakers, the dialect is coded as “vulnerable” rather than “endangered.”) More specifically, increasing loss of biological taxa of all ranks has accompanied evanescence of iđiniiwi-pimācihowin, the “Indigenous livelihood” defined by hunting, trapping, and fishing in explicit opposition to wage labor. The lexicon was obtained in the 1970s from middle-aged persons resident in an isolated settlement; they could not be re-elicited from younger speakers queried in the 2000s.

**Keywords:** Language, ethnobiology, multi-species

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**Climate change, land policies and language endangerment: the case of the Ogiek of Mariashoni**

**Authors:** Ilaria Micheli (University of Trieste (IT)) imicheli@units.it

**Abstract:** This paper focusses on the Ogiek language spoken in Mariashoni (Mau forest) in Kenya. Ogiek is a Southern Nilotic, Kalenjin language, that has many similarities with Akie, spoken in Tanzania.

The worrying reduction of the forest cover in the last two generation has irremediably destroyed the Ogiek original habitat. This, accompanied by deforestation, as well as by repeated evictions of the Ogiek from their ancestral lands in recent years (luckily in June 2017 the African Court has ruled that the government of Kenya violated the rights of the Ogiek tribe by repeatedly evicting them from their ancestral lands) has brought the majority of the 11 Kenyan Ogiek clans to abandon their lifestyle and their lands shifting to farming and working for their Kipsigis, Maasai or Gikuyu neighbors. As a consequence, many of these Ogiek have also undergone a language shift towards their neighbors’ major languages or to Kiswahili.

A sociolinguistic survey carried out in 2014 demonstrated that in Mariashoni more than 95% of the population is nowadays bilingual in Kiswahili while just a few very old people remain monolingual in Ogiek.

Aim of this paper is showing how the language is now menaced by two major impact factors:

- the loss of traditional domains, since the reduction of the forest cover implied the disappearance of many species for which Ogiek still remember taxa, that are no longer used;
- the shift towards Kiswahili and/or Kipsigis that is demonstrated by the huge number of loanwords adopted (some of which adapted)

**Keywords:** Ogiek; Kenya; ancestral lands; eviction; language shift

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**The Akie as HG and their language now and in the future**

**Authors:** Karsten Legère (University of Gothenburg being Prof emeritus) legere.kho@gmail.com

**Abstract:** The presentation focuses on the Akie community in Central Tanzania. The Akie separated from the Kenyan Okiek a few generations ago. Both communities speak a largely identical language despite lacking contact with each other. The number of Akie speakers is small (about 250 people, of
whom about 50 are recognized as language experts and guardians). There are also around 800 Akie who are no longer able to speak the language. The majority of these Akie like to identify themselves as Maasai, although the latter often downgrade them as Ndorobo ‘people without cattle’.

The Akie mostly live isolated from each other in small settlements where languages of numerically prominent neighbours such as Maa or Ngulu, Zigula or Swahili are spoken. In some places, larger Akie groups live together and talk to each other in the Akie language as long as they keep away in the village from neighbours who belong to other ethnic groups. This is the case in Gitu, for example, where the Akie live in the Losekito hamlet. However, here as well as for the whole Akie community, the traditional way of life as HG is seriously threatened. Mainly because of missing land rights, their territorial sphere of influence has been successively grown smaller. As a result, Akie men are frequently herding cattle for the Maasai or together with Akie women working for Ngulu/Zigula farmers. In view of these and other facts, the use of the Akie language is increasingly reduced with consequences for language maintenance and competence.

Keywords: Akie as Tanzanian HG, changing life style, Akie language endangerment

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Loan Words in the Okiek Language spoken in Nessiut

Authors: Jane Oduor (University of Nairobi) odour_jane@uonbi.ac.ke

Abstract: The Okiek in Kenya live around the Mau forest complex and Mount Elgon regions. In the past, they lived in the forest itself and depended on hunting and gathering as a means of getting their food. At the moment, they have been evicted from the forest itself and hunting is illegal. At the moment, they live with speakers of Kipsigis, Nandi, Gikuyu, and Maasai. The speakers of these languages also speak Kiswahili. English is also spoken, because it is an official language in Kenya. With these languages present in an environment where only Okiek was spoken, there is a lot of borrowing. The Okiek have found themselves using many loan words from these languages. This paper intends to investigate the loan words in the Okiek language of Nessiut. The data used in the paper was collected during a language documentation project sponsored by Endangered Languages Documentation Project. The loan words identified were mostly picked from conversations, narratives, cultural monologues, etc. that were audio/video recorded during the documentation project. The paper classifies the words identified according to the languages they are borrowed from and also according to word classes. Some of the linguistic features of these words are also highlighted. The paper concludes that the great number of loan words in the Okiek language is as a result of living outside their original environment and a the drastic change in their way of life.

Keywords: Okiek, hunting, gathering, loanwords