The Social History of the Khoisan in Botswana: An Experience in Development of Marginalised Ethnic Communities

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Abstract

Social history is an account of people's social experiences over time. These experiences can be derived from different social domains or disciplines, such as politics, economy, environment, land, human rights, and sociology. It is, therefore, an integral and objective history, rather than create a parallel history of people. Its focus is to interpret people's experiences. The Khoisan have a secondary or subaltern position in their social historical development in Botswana. They are under marginalisation, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally. This marginalisation determines current social and historical condition of the Khoisan of Botswana as they find themselves in secondary or inconsequential social historical development. The Khoisan are talked about and planned for without objectivity and specificity as to how imposed social interventions could impact their lives. This is so because in Botswana, the Khoisan have not been constituted as an ethnic group that has rights to land, language, culture, natural resources that they could control for improving their lives. Therefore, the aim of this article is to interrogate issues about which the Khoisan are spoken about such as ethnicity, land, economic development, and how lack of their culture and language in the official government education system reflects their social historical condition of perpetual marginalisation. The paper further calls for socio-political and economic programmes that can preserve the Khoisan's socio-cultural and economic systems. The reason for this is that without specific social strategies for them, the Khoisan cannot feel emancipated to decide on their lives nor confident to work in ensuring their continued existence as ethnic groups with their unique social and historical identity. Socio-historically, these constitute their most excruciating experiences in the development of Botswana.

Keywords: Botswana; Khoisan (San, Basarwa, Bushman); social history, social development; marginalisation.

Introduction

The concept of social history is taken form Adas (1985) who construe it as a history that looks at ethnic experiences from the past to the present, and it interests itself with capturing the structural changes that the concerned people have gone or are going through in their lives. It, therefore, documents the processes that reconstruct and restructure the lives of people. The Khoisan social history is often dominated by anthropologists and archaeologists (Hitchcock 2000; Hitchcock and Biesele 2002; Dowson and Lewis-Williams 1994). There are also linguists who have taken a keen interest in Khoisan social and linguistic situation (Trail 1986; Vossen 1986; Köhler 1981; Güldemann *et al*., 2000; Batibo 2015and 1998). Except for some extrapolations from the rock paintings and some relics, it is difficult to talk of a Khoisan History in a systematic manner (Mokhtar 1990). In Barnard (1992) historical account, Khoisan (or Khoe and San) people were found in the Middle Ages south of the equator and in present-day South Sudan. The designations Khoisan, San, Khoe and San, Bushmen, Basarwa are used advisedly because these ethnic communities have their own preferred ethnic names. Whenever these terms appear in the text, they assume each other. Most of these groups were wiped out or absorbed from the Middle Ages to the early colonial period by the 'intruding' groups, such as Nilotic, Cushitic, Eastern Sudanic, Sog Sudanic, and later Bantu speakers.

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These historical accounts by Bernard (1992) further suggest that many San groups remained in the dry Kalahari (also called Kgalagadi) area and swampy Okavango. However, the Bantu farmers and herders managed to assimilate those who came under their control in the fringe of the Kalahari Desert system. Interest in Khoisan peoples, that is the Khoe and San, studies started in the early twentieth century when several scholars contributed to the linguistic and ethnographic distinction of Khoe and San (Barnard 1992; Villiers; 1997; Vossen 1986; Köhler 1981). Recent research findings in genetics also show how complex the Khoe and San relationship can be, historically and socio-culturally (Schlebusch *et al.,* 2012). It was the publication by Schapera (1930), *The Khoisan People of Southern Africa*, that generalised the term Khoisan and gave it a particularly linguistic and cultural characterisation. Many other disciplines have contributed a lot on Khoisan –linguists, historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, cultural analysts, environmentalists, geographers, human right activists, educationists, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and indeed, associations who represent these populations (Chebanne 2020; Batibo 2015; Glon and Chebanne 2012). It should be stated from the onset that the use of Khoisan coined by Schapera (1930) and differentiated by Köhler (1981), and conclusively debated and its usage clarified by Traill (1986) and Güldemann *et al*., (2000), does not imply cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. The point is that Khoekhoe or Khoe and the Non-Khoe (or San) are not the same people culturally and linguistically. This point will be further clarified later in the paper as language affinity transcend cultural lifestyles.

Schlebusch *et al*., (2012) study on the genomic variation in seven Khoe-San groups reveals social adaptation and complex African history. This complexity is occasioned by historical interactions that are now difficult to determine. The fact that the cattle herders can also hunt and gather, means that when they lose their livestock, they readily become hunter-gatherers. The San communities who acquire cattle may also at one historical moment be qualified as herders. Even as the Khoisan peoples are Southern African, their experiences in different environments and countries of the region (Angola, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe) vary a great deal by the kind of social policies that are designed to address their marginalisation and precarious socio-economic situations (Cassidy *et al*., 2001 and Saugestad 2001). However, in Botswana, which is the Khoisan (Khoe and San) geographical locus, there are social situations that are problematic as Weinberg (1997:8) laments:

> In Botswana, regarded as the Bushmen's last sanctuary, the situation is also equivocal. Several Bushmen groupings have lost their land completely; among them are the Nharo [Naro] of western Botswana, whose hunting grounds have entirely [been] colonised by cattle farmers (Riaan de Villiers, 'Preface', in Weinberg 1997:8).

The consequences of land and habitation loss have also led to cultural and language losses, as these speech communities were relocated to areas where other ethnic groups dominated them, economically, culturally, and linguistically. These elements of social history are elaborated upon in later in the paper.

The paper aims to discuss the Khoisan social history from historical, ethnic identity, socio-economic, land, linguistic and cultural aspects of their existence in Botswana. In the absence of their own elaborate oral history, and the capacity to speak for themselves, it is important to accept that their social history can be accounted for from multi-disciplinary aspects (Thapelo 2002; Glon and Chebanne 2012; Denbow 1984; Barnard 1992; Mokhtar 1990). While all these elements of social history do not preclude the fact that the Khoisan are only spoken about, they are important in the way that they help account for their socio-historical experience.

The Social History of the Khoisan

In the historical account of pastoralists by Boonzaier *et al*., (1996) a clarity is provided on the social and

cultural history of the Khoikhoi (Khoekhoe), whose life is characterised by cattle herding, and the Bushmen (San), who were, and some are still, uniquely hunter-gatherers. This pastoral history is important to note as it also characterised some distant Khoisan communities in the Makgadikgadi (Parsons 1992). While Khoisan has been used as a generic term for livestock herders and hunter-gatherers, it is Traill (1986) who raised an important question of whether the Khoi (herders) belonged together with the San (Non-Khoe, Bushmen). The answer he advances is that elsewhere they share common languages, but that there is an important cultural differences that set them apart. Related to this cultural life style differences, Boonzaier *et al*., (1996) give a racial or physical description by the view that the Khoekhoe are characterised by; a) the use of clicks in their languages; b) small stature and light skin; c) an economic system that was based in part on pastoral production (herding of livestock and small stock – sheep and goats), supplementing their subsistence with hunting and gathering; d) mobility, moving about the landscape in order to gain access to water, grazing, and other natural resources; e) a social system that was characterised by the presence of clans, lineages, and totemic groups; e) the presence of leaders (headmen and headwomen) with a certain degree of authority and power; and g) ideologically, the presence of ancestor worship and rituals aimed at the placation of spirits and rain-making.

Socially, the Khoekhoe tended to be patrilineal and patrilocal (the married couple moved to where the groom's father was). The Khoekhoe (Nama) had some social differentiation based on status and roles. Accounting for the characteristics of the San, Boonzaier *et al*., (1996) claim that they tended to be relatively egalitarian and bilateral, with a period of work for the wife's father in bride service uniquely hunter-gathering. While the cultural aspects of the Khoekhoe (Nama) differences to the San are valid, the physical and linguistic characterisation has been refuted by Traill (1986), Köhler (1981) and Güldemann *et al*., (2000), who argue that both Khoe and San share the usage of clicks in their phonological system, and some San groups speak languages that are closely related to Nama (Khoekhoe), and these are Naro, G|ana, and Hai||om (Güldemann *et al*., 2000; Trail 1986).

Genetic, historical, and historical linguistic accounts concord that the Khoisan, that is the Khoe and the non-Khoe (San) peoples have been in Southern African for millennia (Schlebusch *et al.,* 2012; Mokhtar 1990; Köhler 1981; Vossen 1988). However, there is a point at which these two disciplines vary in the way they account for these populations of Southern Africa. In making an account of their ancient history, historians make a distinction between the pastoralists (Khoekhoe, corrupted as Khoikhoi) and non-pastoralist (Saon, corrupted as San, those who forage as their main mode of existence). The historical linguistics account sees in these populations a distinction that is linguistic (Khoe-Kwadi, ancient of Khoekhoe, and other related languages such as G||ana, G|ui, Abi, Buga, Shua. Tsua, Cua, Kua, etc) (Vossen 1988; Güldemann *et al*., 2000) and cultural (those who are pastoralists, mainly, Khoekhoe) and gatherers (mainly the Non-Khoe or San namely Sasi, ǂHoan, !Xoon, ǂKai||'ein (Kaukau).

Both these language and cultural groups are characterised by speech with clicks phonemic system. However, in the account of Köhler (1981) and Traill (1986), there is fundamental linguistic differences (nominal system, syntax, and space conceptualisation) between the Khwe-Kwadi languages and the Non-Khoe-Kwadi languages. In his probing question, Traill (1986) asks whether the Khoe (Khoekhoe and their genetics relatives) have a place in the San (hunter-gathers) linguistic and cultural identities. The answer is that some Khoe are pastoralists, others such as Nama are pastoralists, while foragers can speak Khoe and some non-Khoe (San) languages (Vossen 1988 and Güldemann *et al*., 2000). Secondly, the point was made by Schapera (1930), Köhler (1981) and Mokhtar (1990) that it would help to put them as the indigenous populations who settled Southern Africa before the Bantu (Köhler 1981; Barnard 1992; Hitchcock and Biesele 2000).

Linguistic Ethnography of the Khoe and San

Ethnography is a branch of anthropology that describes cultures of ethnic groups with specific interest in their customs, habits, and mutual differences. In pursuance of their arguments, linguistics research maintains the position that the two terms in Khoisan (Khoe and San) are employed for convenience. Therefore, as generally used, and put together for convenience, it may just superficially mean speakers who use languages that use clicks. Nevertheless, the terms 'Khoi' (or Khoe) and 'San' when put together often raise further debates among linguists (Güldemann *et al*., 2000; Vossen *et al*., 1986; Vossen 1988 and 1998; Trail 1986) about their suitability for a collective designation for these peoples. In response to the misunderstanding that still exists regarding these two terms 'Khoi' (or Khoe) and 'San' (non-Khoe), Barnard (1992:7) explains that the term 'Khoisan' has long been taken as a cultural and linguistic label as well. Khoi (in old Nama orthography) or Khoe (in modern Nama orthography) means 'person'. In traditional scientific terminology, this refers to South African and Namibian peoples with languages (Nama, !Ora, etc.) and a culture of pastoralism. On the other hand, the term 'San' does not refer to any linguistic affiliation as languages spoken by 'San' belong to at least three different groups (Barnard 1992 and Vossen 1988). The term 'San' as it transcends a distinct cultural identity across the borders of Southern Africa is a collective term that refers to a diverse array of indigenous groups who speak the many languages within the Khoisan language family (Barnard 1992 and Saugestad 2001). Weinberg (1997:6) provides an elaboration of this understanding:

> Influenced by popular accounts, many people believe the Bushmen are a homogeneous group with a common culture. This is incorrect: Bushmen belong to diverse groupings with markedly different languages, customs, and belief systems. First ethnographers now treat the Bushmen as part of a broader cluster of Southern Africa people known as the Khoisan. Besides the Bushmen, or San, it includes the Khoekhoe (or 'Hottentots', and Damara). Next, a broad distinction is drawn between Khoe-speaking and non-Khoe-speaking Bushman groups (Riaan de Villiers, 'Preface', in Weinberg 1997:6).

The designation 'Khoisan' should, therefore, not ethnographically suggest same people, or genetically related languages, but a cluster that comprises a cultural diversity - pastoralists, hunter-gatherers as well as hunter-gatherer-fishermen (Güldemann *et al*., 2000). Consequently, there is a big internal diversity within Khoisan, or precisely, Khoekhoe and San (Non-Khoekhoe). As it shall be discussed later, some labels may not necessarily help to decide who is Khoisan and who is not. While nothing much is known of their ancient history, their location in Southern Africa, coupled with some ancient rock art paintings (Dowson and Lewis-Williams 1994) makes them a Southern Africa ethnic and cultural entity. Albeit some ancient ethnic and linguistic contact could also be postulated (du Plessis 2009), they are in the main, *africanus australis* (Southern Africa people), and that social contacts and interaction occurred over a long historical period. As it is evident from the Köhler (1981) Khoisan languages surveys and mappings, Botswana seems to be the locus of the diversity of these groups.

Social History of the Khoisan as Marginalised Peoples

Social history also considers experiences of racial alongside cultural differences in contact with other ethnic groups who were culturally more powerful or socially dominant. Shillington (1995) describes the Khoisan as shorter and lighter-skinned than the black negroid peoples of central and western equatorial Africa. The difference is not just physical but also cultural (Hitchcock 2002), and the cultural reality that the Khoisan are in the majority hunter-gatherers has rendered them object of exploitation by Bantu agriculturalists (Cassidy *et al*., 2001). Therefore, socio-historical status of the San has always been a

problem of inferiority and servitude. This has historically even resulted in the loss of their cultural identity (Saugestad 2001; Suzman 2001; Wily 1982). This negative view of the San is dominant in the numerous historical publications (Saugestad 2001 and Chebanne 2020).

In the arguments of Güldemann and Vossen (2000), the problem of the social characterisation of the Khoisan communities is not with linguistic terms. The main issue in their argument is that non-linguists' appropriate linguistic terms (including 'Khoisan' and 'Khoi' (better Khoe) that are used in a different sense (Hitchcock and Biesele 2000). There is no unitary 'Khoisan' identity (Trail 1986), but perhaps some common linguistic features (Güldemann and Vossen 2000; Traill 1986; Vossen 1988; Köhler 1981). In anthropological accounts and linguistic classifications, the use of Khoisan (or Khoe and San), there is no reference to ethnic identity, culture, race, social status, or any other non-linguistic feature, and therefore, these terms or concepts are seen as irrelevant (Güldemann and Vossen 2000). In most Khoisan discourses, there is often a misunderstanding of the two terms 'Khoi' and 'San' (Chebanne 2020). They are theoretically not on the same level. San refers mainly to a socio-cultural classification in Southern Africa of peoples who are historically neither agriculturalists nor pastoralists (Osaki 2001; Hitchcock and Biesele 2000; Barnard 1992). First, it should be noted that the use of 'San' in the socio-political discourse has to do with the fact that they were and are still subject to discrimination and marginalisation and thus share common interests today due to their social deprivations (Cassidy *et al*., 2001 and Bodley 1990). Contrarywise, therefore, arguments by Güldemann and Vossen (2000), show that languages spoken by San fit into at least three different groups, which have not been shown so far to be related. Second, the term 'Khoi', or rightfully, 'Khoe', refers here to a more specific ethnolinguistic group, which should better be labelled as Khoekhoe (Güldemann and Vossen 2000; Trail 1986; Barnard 1992), and in traditional scientific terminology, the term refers to South African and Namibian peoples with languages (Nama, !Ora, etc.) and a pastoral culture.

Khoisan Identity and Linguistic Classification

If a linguistic perspective is used in these arguments, there is a perfect genealogical relation between the Khoekhoe (or Khoe-Kwadi) languages spoken by pastoralists and one of the three language groups spoken by San peoples in that they form a 'family' of languages (Güldemann and Vossen 2000; Trail 1986). The Khoekhoe (Khoe-Kwadi) languages family includes the Namibian Khoekhoe (also known as Khoekhoegowab) and languages like Naro, Khwe (Buga and //Ani), G‖ana and G|ui, Cua / Kua and Shua languages etc. Linguists call the family 'Khoe' and the languages 'Khoe languages' - a term which means just 'person' (Chebanne 2020; Güldemann and Vossen 2000). Accordingly, there is a very imperative historical-linguistic connection between some San groups and the Khoe people (Barnard (1992). As Figure 1 demonstrates, there are more Khoisan ethnic groups and associated languages in Botswana than in any country (Köhler 1981). However, Botswana as a country has practically no strategy or social policy to preserve the Khoe and the San peoples that Köhler (1981) qualified as a linguistic heritage of the world (Chebanne 2020 and Saugestad 2001).

Figure 1: **The Khoisan Languages**

1. **KHOESAN**
2. **Hadza** (language family 1)
3. **Sandawe** (language family 2)
4. Khoe-San Southern Africa (language family 3)

4.1 Khoe-Kwadi / Central

4.1.1 Khoekhoe

4.1.1.1 Nama; !Ora

4.1.2 4.1.2 Kalahari Khoe

4.1.2.1 Naro; ǂ*Haba*

4.1.2.2 Western Kalahari Khoe

4.1.2.2.1 Western

4.1.2.2.1.1 Northern: Kxoe / Khwe [Buga; ǁAni; Gǀanda]

4.1.2.2.1.2 Southern: Gǁana; Gǀui; *Ts'ao*

4.1.2.2.2 Eastern

4.1.2.2.2.1 Northern: Shua, Tsíxa; Gǁoro; ǀHaise; *Cara*; Danisi /*Danisani; Deti; Ganadi*

4.1.2.2.2.2 Central: Tciretcire; Cua (Northern); Tsua; Tshwa

4.1.2.2.2.3 Southern: Kua; Cua (Southern); *Tshila*

4.2 Non-Khoe (San) (language family 4)

4.2.1 Southern

4.2.1.1 Ta / Tu: !Xóõ {East and West]; *Tshasi*

4.2.1.2 !Kui: *ǀXam; ǁXegui;* ǂ *Khomani*

4.2.1.3 ǂHua; Sasi

4.2.2 Northern

4.2.2.1 Jũ: Jũǀ'hoã; *!Xũ;* ǂ *Kx'auǁei*

It has been noted by researchers that when Khoisan (Khoe and San) peoples call themselves, they use names that mean 'person', 'peoples' (Khoekhoe (people-people; real people), Kua (person), Tsua (person) Cua (person), Tu (person), and Ju (person) (Güldemann and Vossen, 2000). This self-appellation has in many instances formed the basis of their ethnonyms but complicated the determination of a generic term for both these communities (Khoe and San) (Chebanne 2020). Linguists and anthropologists have also since converged in their classification and appellation of the Khoisan (Hitchcock and Biesele 2000). However, from a linguistic viewpoint, there is a clear genealogical relation between the Khoekhoe languages spoken by herders and those spoken by 'San peoples' in that they form a 'family' of languages as shown in Figure 1 above.

The Khoisan languages relationships in Figure 1 are adopted from Chebanne (2020; Güldemann *et al*., 2000; Vossen *et al*., 1986; Vossen 1988 and 1998). It is important to note that the italics type designates possible dialects (Traill 1986 And Vossen 1988). However, conclusive linguistic data is often not elaborate enough for dialectal continuum determination. The above classification also confirms the reported linguistic and genetic diversity of these languages as accounted for by Köhler (1981) and Traill (1986). It is important, nonetheless, to note that the classification made by Barnard (1992) who submitted that Khoisan peoples include: (i) the Khoekhoe (the Nama, historically referred to as the 'Hottentots'); (ii) the Damara (Blacks, who are Herero-type and speak a Nama-like language), the Khoe-speaking Bushmen (Gǁana; Gǀui; Naro, ǁǁAni, Buga, ǀGanda, Kua, Tsua, Shua), and the non-Khoe-speaking Bushmen of Southern Africa (!Xóõ, Nǀu, !Xũ, Juǀ'hoasi, ǂHõã) is helpful to appreciate ancient socio-cultural and linguistic dynamics which characterised contact and interactions of these people. Research by Vossen (1988), Barnard (1988), Traill (1986), and Batibo (1998), has also demonstrated that Khoisan internal diversity is being reduced and that speakers of these languages are diminishing at a disturbing rate as collaborated by Chebanne (2020) and Kiema (2010).

The Khoisan Language and Culture Ancestry in Southern Africa

In the research publication by Hitchcock (2002), the question of the ancestry of the Khoisan in what has become modern Botswana territory, is discussed under the title, 'We are the First People: Land, Natural Resources and Identity in the Central Kalahari, Botswana'. While the argument for being the 'First People' could be construed as pretentious if not offending (Saugestad, 2001), the fact is that they constitute an ancient population that Köhler (1981) qualified as people of the 'Ancient World', and this history has been corroborated by Mokhtar (1990) and Denbow (1984). In archaeological studies on Southern Africa by Lewis-Williams *et al*., (2004), it is evident that the Khoisan are the first people of Southern African sub-continent. The societal and past profile of the Khoisan has also been provided by Villiers (1997), who makes a characterisation of their social and cultural history that clearly show intimate attachment to the ecology of Southern Africa. Consequently, therefore, social history of the Khoisan should not be constructed around association with general history of other peoples (Mokhtar 1990; Shillington 1992; Denbow 1986), and importantly any interpretation of archaeological data that connects them to other people will only be recent. They have their evidenced archaeological and ecological adaption history that justifies a historical perspective of their own (Mokhtar 1990 and Lewis-Williams *et al*., 2004).

Linguistic data that is based on comparative and historical methods seem to strongly suggest connections and relationships that attach the Khoisan in Southern Africa to Hadza people of Tanzania, and notably put Sandawe language as possibly a remnant of Pygmy language (Güldemann and Vossen 2000). Some other important contributors in Khoisan understanding and their cultural history in Botswana are anthropologists (Hitchcock 1982 and Schapera, 1930). Hitchcock (2002) in his discussion of land and identity issues of the Khoisan, 'We are the First People' pursues the theme of ethno-history and, therefore, the social history of the Khoisan and their experiences in the past and present socio-political dispensations of Botswana. The question that he pursues is whether the Khoisan are the only indigenous people of Southern African, and he settles it by taking the position that in the sense of their ancient settlement of the sub-continent, they are indigenous to it. Various other themes of the indigenous Khoisan are raised by the anthropologist Saugestad (2001) and Hitchcock (2002) and by linguists Chebanne (2020), and they demonstrate some socio-economic consequences that impact Khoe and San lives. These thematic debates help understand the cultural and developmental challenges that these people face. Whether these criteria can be politically correct is another matter as issues of ethnicity, indigenous-ness became sensitive in some African national set-ups (Saugestad 2001; Chebanne 2020; Batibo 2015 and 1998).

Significantly, from a social historical and political perspectives, Botswana has maintained that it has no indigenous people or minorities that may be qualified in the way that anthropologists account socio-cultural development (Hitchcock 2002). However, the country has what the official discourse would qualify purely in terms of access or lack of it to developmental amenities in the form of roads, clinics, water, electricity, and economic participation (Maruyama 2019 and Cassidy *et al*., 2001). Consequently, a convenient term of 'Remote Area Dwellers' is in currency to refer to less privileged communities, who almost always would be the Khoe and the San (Cassidy *et al*., 2001). Nevertheless, the idea of the peculiarity of the Khoisan (Bushmen, San) was interestingly there at the time of the country's independence as Maruyama observes:

> After Botswana gained independence in 1966, the new government launched the Bushmen Development Programme in 1974 in recognition that the San (Bushmen) were the most marginalised group in the country and required social assistance. In 1978, after being renamed the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), the target of this programme was extended to include not only the San but all people living outside organised villages or settlements. The RADP encouraged these remote-area dwellers, known as RADs, among whom the San were majority, to relocate to

> government-planned settlements with water supplies, schools, clinics, and income generating projects (Maruyama 2018:179).

The change from Bushmen Development Programme to RADP is interesting from a developmental policy perspective, as an ethnic based policy went counter to the homogenisation of development programmes (Wily 2018; Cassidy *et al*., 2001; Saugestad 2001; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002; Wily 1979). However, in areas targeted by government schemes for poverty eradication (see RADP) it is these other groups than the Khoisan who eventually succeed to use those resources to their benefit (Wily 2018). It is a cultural question because other groups make choices since common civilisational values (Chebanne 2020). It is cogent, therefore, that marginalisation and poverty cannot be eliminated by equal and homogenising schemes (Wily 2018).), but by targeted programmes that consider the socio-cultural peculiarities of the San (Saugestad 2001 and Cassidy 2001).

The revision of the RADP (2009) was an admission that Botswana has socio-economic contrast even as it is a middle income status country, a majority of the San (Basarwa) are still facing problems of abject poverty, impeded access to land resources, and they are subjected to discriminatory treatment by fellow citizens, marginalisation, and negative identity constructs (Chebanne 2020; Hitchcock and Holm, 1993; Hitchcock 2002; Sylvain 2011; Thapelo 2002; Cassidy *et al*., 2001). Most of the San communities found mainly in western Botswana (Ghanzi and Kgalagadi districts) have similar characteristic challenges of high unemployment, high rate of illiteracy, teenage pregnancy and school dropouts, excessive alcohol consumption or abuse, lack of access to health services and language communication barrier (Kuru Family Organisation Report 2012; Republic of Botswana 2010; National AIDS Coordinating Agency 2010; BAIS Statistical Report 2004 and 2008). Most recently in 2012, the government introduced a 10-year Affirmative Action Plan for the benefit of RADs (including the San communities), acknowledging the fact that they lag the rest of the country as far as reduction of poverty levels were concerned. The aim of these changes was to establish a broad poverty strategy in which Remote Area Communities had an input (Maruyama 2018; Sebudubudu and Bolaane 2013).

Khoisan/Basarwa in the Context of Botswana Socio-Political Order

Chebanne (2002) discussed the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial handling of the Khoisan as a Botswana minority and demonstrated their pitiful social condition. This social condition of the Khoe and San is appositely also discussed by Bennet (2002), who argued that within the Setswana socio-political order the exact status of non-Tswana ethnic groups varied with Basarwa occupying the status of serfs. In this social order the Basarwa were not even qualifying to be members of a ward in a *morafe* ('tribe' or ethnic group) and, therefore, their membership and rights in Tswana *merafe* were not recognised. How this situation of serfdom of the Khoisan (Basarwa) evolved is historically not clear, but as anthropologists suggest, it may be linked to mode of production whereby agro-pastoralists encroached on the hunter-gatherers' lands and subsequently reduced them to serfs (Barnard 1992). The situation of the Basarwa puts them in detrimental condition especially in the way these marginalised people relate to their land, culture and language rights which have been eroded in their interaction with the mainline society (Hitchcock 2002). Their relationship to land is what held together their culture and language and gave them their anthropological peculiarity discussed by Hitchcock and Biesele 2000) and characterised by Banks (1998). These conditions and social situations are also corroborated in the oral history collected by Osaki (2001) among the G|ui and the G||ana of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). Osaki observes that:

> The Tswana people (society) included the Kgalagadi tribe and the Bushmen, who lost their own land in the slave class…. The Bushmen were put in the lowest class even under the Kgalagadi. The root

of various problems Bushmen are facing these days is traced to the traditional class-based social structure of the Tswana (Osaki 2001:34).

The Basarwa interactions with other Botswana ethnic communities have had tragic consequences (Chebanne 2020 and 2010) as in contact situations they abandon their culture, language, and land due socio-cultural hegemonic influences. Without any positive social policy this situation can only aggravate (Barnard 1992:240). The favoured social development, non-racial ideology, that creates social homogeneity, has indeed been acclaimed for democracy, as the concomitant freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of Botswana have made the country an example of social equality and smooth political governance in Africa. However, this generalising development approach is far from the protection that the Basarwa direly need (Chebanne 2020; Chebanne 2010; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). The Botswana's Vision 2016 (Republic of Botswana 1996) – 'Towards Prosperity For All', has never been intended to be a social developmental policy and, therefore, the idealism of its pillars' statements such as 'an educated an informed Nation'; 'a tolerant, just and caring nation'; 'respect for linguistic and cultural diversity'; and above all, 'a prosperous and innovative Nation', are illusionary meant as window-dressing piece and perpetuates its status quo (Chebanne 2015 and Nyati-Ramahobo 2004).

Therefore, it can be argued that development policies do not specifically address the needs of the Basarwa. It suffices to just add that Vision 2016 and its successor, Vision 2036, do not improve on the strategies that will preserve the Basarwa. Thus, when the anthropologist Saugestad (2001) appositively observed that their socio-economic situation was that of '*The inconvenient indigenous*', it is an argument on demonstrated socio-economic strategies of the state development policies that do not want to accommodate cultural diversity and peculiarities of these marginalised people. The encroachment of the Basarwa communities manifested by expropriation of language, culture and territorial rights are classical settler methods to deny these people cultural preservation, land ethnic identity, and their sense of self-worth (Barume 2000; Colchester, 1995a and 1995b).

Lack of Land, Culture and Language Rights and Consequences

One important aspect of social history that anthropologists and social historians consider critical are social experiences of ethnic groups in the way land, culture and natural resources are impacted by social development programmes (Glon and Chebanne 2012). The question of land in Botswana is regulated by the parliamentary Acts and legislations which categorise land tenure according to communal, state, urban (Maruyama 2018 and Silberbauer 1981). Officially recognised ethnic groups have a better claim to communal land (Bennett 2002; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002; Botswana Government 1994). The San (or Khoisan or Basarwa) are not part of the recognised ethnic rights that have special land rights or territoriality (Saugestad 2001 and Chebanne 2020). The question of securing land rights for the Basarwa has been identified through various fora including conferences and seminars, both national and international as a critical component in programmes for the uplifting and improvement of the position of the San (Ng'ong'ola 1997; Saugestad 2006; Mogwe and Tevera 2000; Silberbauer 1981).

The Botswana government-initiated resettlement programme for the San outside the boundaries of the CKGR in 1997 and 2001 respectively, attracted a lot of international debate and outright support when the magnitude of the problem was realised, internationally (Chebanne 2020 and Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). The High Court in Lobatse made a ruling in favour of the Basarwa applicants on the 13 December 2006 (Botswana High Court, 2006). However, the gains are minimal as they do not find expression in the current social development policies that do not empower Basarwa or foster policy considerations of their social issues (Kuela 2010). Kuela further writes painfully about the consequences of these removals (to

New Xade) as they led to alcohol abuse and overdependence on the government for food by families which previously provided for themselves. As the question of removals from national parks and game reserves has become controversial and international issue in recent years in Botswana and elsewhere (Chebanne 2020). The fact that the government of Botswana prefer non-ethnic designations such as RADs in their response to poverty alleviation and social interventions/protection means that there will never be a specific agenda for developing the Basarwa in Botswana (Cassidy *et al*., 2001:17):

> In Botswana the categories 'San' and 'Remote Area Dwellers' (RADS) overlap to a significant degree. While the former may total 47000 people, the later, non-ethnic based categorisation is the preferred usage of the Government. RADS are deemed to subsume the San.

This social development preference of the government (Wily 2018) is supported by existing policies such as The Tribal Land Act 2 (Republic of Botswana 2014). According to this Tribal Land Act 2, land is held by constitutionally recognised 'tribes' that form the mainline Tswana society, and disregards other ethnic group rights to land, as that would not qualify them for territorial considerations which were enacted during the establishment of colonial Botswana (Bechuanaland Protectorate), and only the eight (8) 'tribes' were registered as having tribal reserves in which a symbolic autonomy was practiced (Bennett 2020; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002; Saugestad 2001). The Khoe, San, Wayeyi, Bakalanga, Hambukushu, Herero, Nama, and Subiya (Chiikuhane) among others, found themselves subsumed under the ethnic groups by whose name the tribal reserves where called, and therefore, administratively, they were taken to form a single entity with those ethnic groups that 'had' land (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). Since all those ethnic groups that had land were Setswana speaking, it followed that other ethnic groups falling under them by virtue of the land they 'controlled', were required to adopt linguistic and cultural identities of the Setswana speaking group (Chebanne 2020; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002).

The experiences of land issues make the Basarwa cry painfully. In *Tears for My Lan*d, when Kiema (2010), a native of the CKGR, cries desperately for the land which they regard as home and source of sustenance, the pain is excruciating as it touches deep into the soul of the Basarwa. The CKGR is Kiema's native land, where his existence finds spiritual and cultural fulfilment. Nothing exists legally that can pity and comfort these people on this question of land rights (Chebanne 2020 and Saugestad 2001). There exist practical solutions from neighbouring countries. For instance, in South Africa authorities tried to redress the San historical mistreatment, and one example is where the ǂKhomani San won a claim in 1999 that provided them with 38 000 hectares of farming land that had forcefully been taken away from them during the 1930s. The historic nature of the victory was captured by the then South African President Thabo Mbeki, who announced that the victory marked a step towards the rebirth of a people that nearly perished because of oppression (Wilmsen 2002). Botswana needs to ensure that a bill of rights and judicial review system is put in place to guarantee minority rights (Chebanne 2020 and Saugestad 2001). In this system, all persons - the majority and the minority- would have their rights to language, culture, territory, and all other human rights that individuals may feel entitled to (Chebanne 2020 and 2010). As it has been demonstrated, democracy based solely on majority rule does not achieve equity (Saugestad 2001). This view of generalising equality has also been argued against by Guldbrandsen (1991) who took the view that such an approach aggravated development problems that emanate from forcible integration in the mainline society because of socio-historical social attitudes that are based on ethnic differences (Wily 2018 and 1979).

The Basarwa have had legal victories to reclaim their ancestral land and to have them develop water resources in the desert in the CKGR. However, the State found arguments to contest these court

judgments. As mentioned earlier, in 2006, the Bushmen won a landmark High Court case that ruled that the Basarwa had been evicted illegally and that they have the right to live on their ancestral lands inside the reserve (Republic of Botswana 2006). However, court judgments are received with misgiving and trepidations by the State and are often appealed. The example appeal case was that after the Basarwa won rights to return to their ancestral land, the Basarwa found themselves unable to equip or drill new boreholes. They appealed the argument of the Sate. but Botswana has been unhurried to implement the judgment, placing hurdles in the way of accessing Basarwa ancestral land. Thus far, because of difficulties in accessing water, many of the Basarwa still live outside the reserve.[1] The Appeal Court of Botswana had found that i) the Bushmen had the right to use their old borehole, which the government had banned them from using; ii) they had the right to sink new boreholes; iii) the action of the state towards the Bushmen (Basarwa) amounted to 'demeaning treatment'; and iv) that should pay the Bushmen's costs in bringing the appeal. Therefore, judgments of the Courts that are predicated on human rights are varied by the state on considerations that have nothing to do with ensuring the dignified existence of the Basarwa.

In the policy schemes of the Botswana bureaucracy, the idea of Basarwa holding or owning land is an anathema (Wily 2018; Chebanne 2020; Saugestad 2001). It is commonly construed that since these communities are not cattle husbandry-people nor crop farmers, land granted to them can be of no value and would not contribute to any development (Wily 2018 and 1979). Even where land can effectively be demarcated for them, the self-serving ruling elites will not even permit it, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

> In 1987, the Gantsi District Council attempted to utilize three freehold ranches for the benefit of the Basarwa but the then District Commissioner opposed the development. Similarly, when some NGOs were requested to develop the farms on the behalf of the District Council for the benefit of the Basarwa, central government intervened on grounds that such involvement of NGOs was not acceptable. To date, central government and District Council have not been able to develop the farms. The underlying controversy about the reluctance of the District Commissioner to have the farms developed was that he and the Minister were interested in the farms (Mogwe and Tevera 2000:83).

This observation presents a graphical example of the situation of the Basarwa in Botswana. Land is treated as precious resource that cannot be left in the hands of the Basarwa, as they are thought of as hunter-gatherers. Botswana's ethnic relationships and development programmes require circumspect development policy management (Wily 2018). Some of these groups do not share the same socio-cultural values as the mainline Setswana society and among them are Basarwa (Barnard 2002; Hitchcock and Biesele 2000). These social and cultural differences are significantly peculiar and cannot be harmonised, as it were, through superficial social development strategies imposed on them (Wily 2018; Kiema 2010; Saugestad 2001).

Consequently, even if the majority culture is closed and hostile towards these groups, there is an undeclared yet orchestrated force to assimilate the Basarwa (Chebanne 2002) through the government development programmes (Wily 2018). They cannot maintain their languages even when they live far from big population groups (Chebanne 2010 and 2010). The explanation is found in the prevalent negative social attitudes by the majority, which put the Basarwa in the lowest social status (Osaki 2010). To lobby and agitate for their rights or to make themselves as respected as any other group, almost always raises a negative reaction from the government and the majority Tswana communities who are their neighbours (Mogwe 1994). Thus, many of them are ready to abandon their language, as if for the sake of peace in the

1 https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/botswana-san-lose-court-case-water-access, accessed 29 September 2021.

settlements (Batibo 2015 and 1998; Chebanne 2020 and 2010). The only way is to respond constructively with programmes that can help maintain these languages, and this is what was suggested by Cassidy *et al*., (2001:73). This is also capture by Saugestad (2001):

> The options, in Botswana as elsewhere, should not be a choice between remaining with and old lifestyle or assimilating into the dominant society's culture. Indigenous people want to participate in development on their own terms, not to reject development. A living culture's chance to survive and develop itself depends on its ability and opportunity to control the introduction of technologies and other modern elements, not to turn them down. To achieve this, values codified by the minority must be recognized as complementary to the codification of the majority culture. In other words, minority culture should be accepted as 'different from but equal in value' (Saugestad 2001:64)

Regrettably, twenty years or more later, the Basarwa communities are still lamenting their continued social and cultural losses (Kiema 2010; Chebanne 2020; Wily 2018). Selolwane and Saugestad (2002) reveal that these communities experienced powerlessness, marginalisation, disintegration, exploitation, pauperisation, and deprivation with the net effect of social and economic exclusion from the main development programme of the Botswana state (Chebanne 2015; Batibo 2015; Thapelo 2002). These socio-economic experiences were also taken up from a socio-historical perspective by advocacy groups, who observe that

> the quality of life for the Basarwa declined during the colonial period. Their status further worsened during the first decade after (Botswana's) attainment of independence because of interaction with modern economy which resulted in exploitation, land dispossession and environmental destruction (Mogwe and Tavera 2000:78).

In the development policies of Botswana, the Basarwa have been rendered landless and have been profoundly traumatised by displacements from their ancestral lands (Kiema 2010). Most Basarwa people face socio-economic hardship and abject poverty (Cassidy *et al.*, 2001), and cannot extricate themselves from this vicious cycle (Saugestad 2001). Unlike other ethnic and linguistic groups, they do not have customary rights to land where they could freely engage in the affairs of their culture and language, or just freely practice it for their own purposes (Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). Cassidy *et al*., (2001:73) offer a recommendation that can be of value if implemented by the government of Botswana:

> In areas where San constitute local majorities, such as in the Ghanzi District, the benefits of growing political literacy are already apparent. Greater inclusion in mainstream politics will only ensure that San are better positioned to make their agendas heard, but also it will serve to diminish the perceptions of political alienation so prevalent in San communities.

However, nothing has positively evolved since then. Kiema (2010) writes painfully about the consequences of these removals (to New Xade) as they led to alcohol abuse and overdependence on the government for food by families which previously provided for themselves. The Basarwa are in settlements where they have been relocated and their lifestyle has changed (Maruyama 2018). While they no longer survive on roots and animal meat as they traditionally have, it is because these resources are now out of bounds for them. They are not allowed to hunt anymore, at least not with guns, and only rarely with the use of their traditional weapons (Saugestad 2001). They are supposed to buy their food from shops even though they have no money in their situation of poverty. A new phenomenon of overdependence on the state is highlighted by KiemA (2010) who talks sorrowfully of adults and children scrambling for the government truck when it

delivers monthly rations. In fact, alcohol abuse constitutes serious social problems among them (Letloa Trust 2012; Kiema 2010; Chebanne 2010; Maruyama 2018). Those who live near the main villages spend much of their time of the day drinking local brew in those villages. They leave their settlements or cattle posts early in the morning and come back around midnight. They travel on foot traversing forests with dangerous wild animals to forage in their ancestral lands. Some succumb to snakebites on these daily trips far from the settlement amenities. There are often serious quarrels and when men return home arguments often ensue, sometimes resulting in gender-based-violence (GBV) that could be fatal to the women folk (Cassidy *et al*., 2001). Saugestad (2001) has regretted the development model espoused by the state that will see these ethnic communities completely losing their identity and culture through mainline society homogenisation strategies (Wily 2018 and 1979). Their attachment to ancient land and resources are also what prompts irremediably loss of their cultural memory.

The CKGR was established in 1961, mainly to ensure the Basarwa's survival. However, since Botswana's national wealth has been founded on its diamond reserves, Basarwa's existence in places such as CKGR found itself competing with the national priority of obtaining income for national development. In the 1980s exploratory drills were sunk in the CKGR, and diamonds were found. Although the government maintained that there was no correlation between diamonds and subsequent events, in 1997, 2002 and 2005, there were a series of relocations of the Basarwa.[2] Land rights for minority Basarwa who come from hunter-gathering life-stye could not compete with what government viewed as a national resource for economic development. The difficult conditions of Basarwa have also drawn attention of the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) that has in 2011 regretted the persistent situation of Basarwa failing to obtain implementation of High Courts judgments to their favour. These problems arise from what Nthomang (2004) qualify as 'perpetual colonialism' and Marobela (2010) viewed as 'capitalist exploitation' of the powerless Basarwa.

The Basarwa and other ethnic groups such as the Bakalanga, regarded as minorities, were not accorded the same rights conferred by the Tribal Land Act of 1968 (Nyati-Ramahobo 2009). The dominant Tswana ethnic groups were allowed land rights through, for example, land boards named according to their ethnicity, such as the Ngwato, the Tawana, Tlokweng and Kgatleng Land Boards. There is, however, no such land board for the Basarwa. This is an act of exclusion and, by extension, a denial of the right to land ownership (Marobela 2010). The consequences of this colonial social history arrangement are still seen in Botswana today. Eight Tswana tribes (a numerical minority in the country) continue to enjoy the privileges associated with official recognition, whilst many of the other 38 tribes have experienced culture and language loss, disproportionate poverty, and invisibility on the national scene. Through assimilation policies, even as there are indications of a slow shift in practice towards recognizing minorities and the value of cultural diversity (Nyati-Ramahobo 2009), minorities such as Basarwa are left to endure marginalisation. It is therefore clear that the social history of the Basarwa is a history of exploitation, deculturalisation, and dispossession of land and persecution by dominant ethnic groups, governments, and capitalists, both local and foreign (Marobela 2010). It has also been a struggle to survive harsh brutalisation and marginalization. Above all, it has been a fight for respect and dignity of the Basarwa way of life that has been made more difficult with the discovery and exploitation of diamonds (Marobela 2010).

Undoubtedly, from the foregoing discussions, none of the state policies remotely show that the Basarwa in Botswana are at the same developmental pedestal as the rest of the other Botswana speech or ethnic communities. development phenomenon is itself generally uneven in Botswana which his considered one of the most economically uneven societies in the world. For instance, communities in the Okavango Delta (the country's tourism Mecca) are considered some of the most impoverished in the country owing to the 'tourism colonial enclave' system (Mbaiwa and Stronza, 2010). Urban-rural divide

2 https://minorityrights.org/, accessed 29 September 2021.

is another dimension. At present, nothing suggests that they could possibly disentangle themselves from this quagmire of intricate social condition of marginalisation, powerlessness, and despondency. They are in perpetual state of colonialism (Nthomang 2004; Chebanne 2020). All the so-called development efforts, decided for them, seem to only under-develop them and dependence on the state, and at most de-ethnicising them (Chebanne 2015). Basarwa are under perpetual colonialism and exploitation (Nthomang 2004 and Chebanne 2020) Even the efforts by international activism and the specific entitlement programme of the RADP have experienced failures (Selolwane and Saugestad 2002). The country's Vision 2036 has such lofty developmental ideals, among them being inclusive national development, knowledge economy, and quality of life. However, in the current state of the marginalised Basarwa communities, there seem to be little or no hope that 2036 will find them still as Basarwa, culturally and ethnically.

Conclusion

The paper took a critical discussion of the social and historical condition of Khoisan of Botswana from the contact situation with other population, their conditions under post-colonial state building and how they feature in social development of current policies. Social history of the Khoisan is currently determined by the social policy and the dynamics that it created is an intricate social experience. True developmental dynamism as essentially determined by the Botswana socio-political model of governance of ethnic issues cannot preserve the Khoisan. Presently, Khoisan ethnic issues, and facilitation to manage their land resources lack strategies that can help these communities to advance socially and economically. These situations create negative experiences that do not give hope that the future is bright for them. The consequences that result from these social conditions are aggravated marginalisation, ethnic identity loss, and language loss. Overall, they suffer loss of indigenous knowledge system. In sum this is a loss of people even as they would be considered alive.

Socially, they have been lowly regarded and very often victimised by their non-Basarwa neighbours. In the relocated settlements, they manage to survive as RADP beneficiaries, not as Basarwa, and consequently, as in pre-colonial history, maintained in poverty and despondency. The one most significant victimisation that is going on in the present age is the neglect of their languages and culture owing to a concerted effort to assimilate them into so-called modernity. Their communities share so much painful experiences characterised by economic and social hardships, ethnic endangerment, language dearth and eventual death. Their intra-linguistic and cultural diversity is such that no natural convergence and harmonisation would be possible. They stand apart as ethnic and speech minorities, but without socio-political means to affirm their presence as Khoisan. These communities are in a very precarious ethnic and linguistic situation – most of the speech communities are endangered, as indeed their future is bleak.

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