

**Ferdie Weich.** *San Dictionary/San-woordeboek. San–Afrikaans–English/English–San–Afrikaans/Afrikaans–San–English.* First edition/eerste uitgawe. 2004, xi + 377 pp. ISBN 0 7978 2704 8. Johannesburg: Macmillan South Africa Publishers (Pty) Ltd. Price/Prys: R198.

The compiler's introduction to this trilingual San–English–Afrikaans dictionary gives important information that helps to place it in perspective. In 1961, the compiler was posted in the territory that is now Namibia doing missionary work until his retirement in 1998. The San community among whom he worked lived, and some continue to live, in Northern Namibia around the Tsumkwe area. According to the compiler and from what is known from other sources, the South African army moved around these Tsumkwe speech communities during the Namibia independence struggle. Because of this association with the South African army during the struggle, the community was resettled at Schmidtsdrift near the Vaal River between Kimberly and Douglas in the Northern Cape. However, this community was not homogenous as it comprised 3 000 !Xuhn and 200 Khwe (a Western Caprivi community, not related linguistically to the !Xuhn). There is no information about the fate of those who remained in the original region of these ethnic communities. However, some sources allege there are some who remained further south of Tsumkwe. As for the Khwe, quite a number of them still live in the Western Caprivi (cf. Takada 2007).

In the introduction, crucial information is furthermore given regarding the identity of !Xuhn, the ethnic language which Weich also describes as Jun|'hoan. !Xuhn is an ethnonym, most probably a dialectal variation of the Jun|'hoan language. Previous and current research on the languages of Northern Namibia places !Xuhn (or !Kung) as the northern variety of Jun|'hoan) (cf. WIMSA 2001). The author seems to have preferred to adopt the ethnic and linguistically problematic label of San, which is purported to denote and provide a broader umbrella term for the Southern African indigenous populations linguistically called Khoisan. However, it should be made clear that San, having no linguistic value, brings together ethnic communities speaking diverse languages. Therefore, this San–English–Afrikaans dictionary is linguistically confusing as it takes an anthropological term for a language. However, there is much linguistic diversity and difference among these communities falling under this label, as is evident from recent research by Güldemann and Vossen (2000) and Snyman (1970, 1974, 1998). From what is currently known, there are at least four language families within what is called Khoisan. Anthropologically, the Khoisan may share certain similarities in their social organization and mode of life. Nevertheless, historically, linguists often make a distinction between Khoi and San (or Non-Khoe). Linguistically, the San are all speech communities belonging to the languages or language families Jun|'hoan, !Xoǝ, †Hoan and N|u, not related to the Khoekhoe group, comprising Nama and Damara (Khoekhoe-gowab), Khwe, Naro, |Gui, ||Gana, Kua, Cua and Shua.

However, in the community development activities of non-governmental organizations such as the Working Group on Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) and the Southern Africa San Initiative (SASI), the term San collectively describes all indigenous Khoisan communities as they are characterized by aboriginality and suffering the socio-economic effects of destitution and marginalization. These days, San has therefore become a sociocultural label, and as such, it is not at all suitable for a language or for the name of a dictionary, for that matter. The language treated in this trilingual dictionary should be understood to be !Xuhn, a northern variant of Jun|'hoan. Jun|'hoan is a Northern Non-Khoe language (linguistically San) and it is distantly related to !Xóõ and †Hoan, both spoken in Botswana. This should clarify the question of labels and the linguistic value of ethnic languages, or references thereto in the dictionary, and in this review.

As !Xuhn is related to the Jun|'hoan language, the author correctly associates it with the research carried out by Jan Snyman (1970, 1974, 1998), who was the first to suggest a practical orthography for Jun|'hoan in the early 1960s. The compiler also correctly observes that some researchers such as Prof. E.O.J. Westphal, Mr. W. Zimmermann (of the Language Bureau in Windhoek) and Rev. Flip van der Westhuizen also made significant attempts to develop an orthography for Jun|'hoan. However, it is the work of Patrick Dickens (1994, re-edited 2005), who also compiled a Jun|'hoan dictionary that significantly contributed to the formalization of the orthography. Based on the International Phonetic Alphabet, this writing by Patrick Dickens reversed the former suggested developments that sought to follow the Nguni click type orthography for the !Xuhn language.

Weich's dictionary therefore endeavours to use the Dickens orthography as much as possible. However, it is difficult to judge the extent to which this has been done, especially when considering the elaborate details linguists have presented on Jun|'hoan. There is no mention of the practical orthographic enhancements made to the Dickens orthography by the Nyae Nyae community under the guidance of Amanda Miller, an American linguist who has worked on Jun|'hoan phonetics for a number of years. Without some clarification on and evidence of the application of the phonetics and phonology of the language, it is difficult to tell how the orthography of this dictionary deals with the phonetic and phonological complexity of the language. The section on the consonants and symbols provides evidence of some awareness of the Dickens orthographic principles. However, these explanations and indications cannot be considered adequate for a language with such a varied phonology as !Xuhn. The notes on tone are also very scanty and do not suffice to provide information on the complicated grammar of the language. However, the task here is to assess the published dictionary, which will certainly be used as a reference work even among the speakers themselves.

With its definitions, a dictionary aims to provide such information on the vocabulary of a language that will satisfy the needs of the user. It should ordi-

narily not only familiarize learners with the meanings of lexical items and their correct and idiomatic use, but also provide experts with such linguistic information as will facilitate research and analysis (cf. Haacke 1998). Any dictionary, especially an indigenous language dictionary, should therefore present a compilation that will adequately reflect the grammatical information a lexical item contains in that language. This perspective will serve as guidance in reviewing this dictionary.

As stated earlier, the dictionary is trilingual, providing entries in !Xuhn–Afrikaans–English, followed by English–!Xuhn–Afrikaans, and lastly by Afrikaans–!Xuhn–English. Strictly speaking, these sections of the dictionary present vocabulary lists for the three languages. This has value for a very preliminary field-vocabulary list. Nevertheless, even as field-vocabulary list, this presentation is still inadequate because there is no grammatical sketch of the language. Without the use of example sentences in !Xuhn, it is difficult to appreciate the semantic equivalence of what is provided as Afrikaans or English translations. For a dictionary, this is rather insufficient.

Furthermore, it would have been expected that, since the author indicated that the language is tonal, the dictionary entries would show tone marking to distinguish between homophones and homomorphs, of which there are many in !Xuhn. Linguistically this is important as in many tone languages there will be orthographic homographs which nonetheless have tonal variations. Nowhere in the dictionary, however, this important aspect of the language is catered for. For other researchers and even for the speakers of the language, these vocabulary lists will present daunting difficulties and may be of little value for a grammatical and lexical appreciation of !Xuhn.

As mentioned earlier, the three language sections of the dictionary consist of rudimentary vocabulary compilations. That is, the entry of vocabulary items according to the three languages does not present general linguistic information that would qualify this compilation as a dictionary. There is no lexicographical lemmatization of entries. Headword entries, listed alphabetically, are presented with minimal lexicographical information. The only lexical distinction made is two grammatical categories — verbs and nouns. Any other categories can only be deduced from the provided Afrikaans or English equivalents. The treatment of semantic relations (synonymy, polysemy and hyponymy) cannot be shown in such a rudimentary vocabulary listing. This adds a critical problem to this dictionary: how to identify words grammatically (semantically, syntactically and lexically); and how else to determine the word without providing a grammatical context.

As there are no definitions or descriptions of the headword entries, the only sources of meaning are the English and Afrikaans equivalents. However, dictionary users, especially bilingual or multilingual ones, know how inadequate semantic minimalism can be. There is never any perfect word equivalence between languages. Languages that do not share the same cognitive linguistic structure and cultural knowledge will not necessarily entail similar

things and/or experiences. Normally providing translated sentences that contain the headword assists to understand its meaning, semantically and also the likely syntactic and contextual peculiarities its usage presents. Without definitions, it is difficult to appreciate the value of a vocabulary equivalence for all the languages, but importantly for !Xuhn. In addition, it is difficult to determine the usage in !Xuhn of other grammatical categories such as adverbs and adjectives, and also other aspects of the grammar that would make the target language an object of linguistic analysis (cf. Haacke 1998). As !Xuhn is meant to be the target language, there is nothing that helps the dictionary to realize this objective. !Xuhn words are accorded the same lexicographical treatment as the English and Afrikaans words.

As !Xuhn is basically the target language, its words should therefore be accorded a proper lexicographical treatment to enhance the linguistic value of the dictionary. There is no trilingual balance in the dictionary. Lexicographically it is inadequate, and linguistically it would pose challenges to the speakers of the language. Without showing the words in sentential context, it is difficult to check and determine semantic domains and the morphophonological integrity of the !Xuhn words appearing in the compilation. The lack of tonal notations is another omission. !Xuhn is a tonal language where orthographic homomorphs can bear various tonal presentations. Without tonal notations, it would therefore be difficult to ensure that the recorded entry lexically and semantically fulfils its linguistic role. This compilation which is merely a word-list will need more work to enable it to contribute to the study and development of this language, which is among the Khoisan languages threatened with extinction.

The Khoisan languages of Southern Africa are underresearched and their sociolinguistic status is precarious (cf. Batibo and Smieja 2000). Any text or vocabulary produced on them should add value to the endeavour to record them and to contribute to their preservation and promotion (cf. Haacke 1998). As small community languages, under constant risk of being assimilated by languages of greater communication, it is important also to produce lists that will assist in easily identifying vocabulary matches with other languages (cf. Haacke 1998).

There are several issues that should be paid attention to if this dictionary will have a second edition:

A close look at the treatment of dictionary entries suggests that the original compilation was based on Afrikaans. The English is simply a translation of the Afrikaans working language. There is nothing wrong with this. However, due care and attention should be paid to the lexical generation of the target language. In this dictionary, it will be observed, however, that in many cases where !Xuhn would present polysemy or synonymy, these lexical aspects have not been captured in the target language but in the working languages translating the various terms. English and Afrikaans were introduced to provide access to the target language, but the user is often left in the dark. A dictionary

should elucidate the words of the target language by their translation into other languages (cf. Kilian-Hatz 2003).

Lexical and orthographic harmonization is important for a dictionary. A dictionary such as this one can have the negative effect of conventionalizing lexical and orthographic practices that might not have been adopted by related speech communities. Even though there is a visible attempt to follow the Dickens orthography in this dictionary, there were many other enhancements to the Dickens orthography added in the past decade by other linguists who worked with the Nyae-Nyae community speaking the Jun|'hoan language (cf. WIMSA 2001). Indeed, the linguistic issues the compiler alludes to in the introduction will require expert linguists not only in phonetics and phonology, but also in semantics and syntax to adequately address the problems arising in the use of this compilation. There is no information on the technical aspect of the dictionary database. However, it looks as if the compilation was made from a document file. Modern lexical undertakings benefit a great deal from the use of a dictionary database with interactive management software. This technology can be handy in the practical and linguistic manipulating of the dictionary entries.

A lexicographical undertaking can be a personal and sentimental matter, affording the compiler to readily access the vocabulary he has recorded of the language of the people with whom he daily interacts. This seems to be the evident albeit undeclared objective of this dictionary. Therefore it is more than just a published personal memory prompt. The credit for this publication is the testimony of the compiler's love for and dedication to the language of the speakers with whom he lived for 30 years. This is commendable. However, within this long period, the author must have acquired sufficient knowledge of the language to have done more to make it linguistically valuable for its speakers and researchers. In fact, a publication such as this entails sharing the fruits of personal labour and knowledge with the users. The energy spent on these languages, which are increasingly assailed by sociolinguistic dynamics and modernity, demands that dictionaries should contribute to ensure their functionality of use.

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Andy Chebanne  
Department of African Languages  
University of Botswana  
Gaborone  
Botswana  
(chebanne@mopipi.ub.bw)