The Khoisan in Botswana – Can multicultural discourses redeem them?

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The Khoisan people are one of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. Botswana has the greatest diversity of these autochthonous communities. As ethnic minorities, they are characterized in the main by small numbers, aboriginality, and necessitousness compared to other ethnic communities who readily engage modern socioeconomic dynamics of the country. They are generally marginalized and their ethnic and social identity is completely eclipsed because in Botswana they are lumped together in cultural and language development with the main society and this has only exacerbated their plight as they are reeling under assimilation and marginalization. This situation has the effect of ethno-linguistic endangerment as they lose their individual ethnic and linguistic identities. Their agitations for ethno-linguistic preservation rights have been put in the lime-light by Human Rights NGOs. This paper examines the condition of these people within the current monolithic cultural framework, which has the effect of annihilating the Khoisan. It argues that handling the Khoisan issues within a multicultural discourse framework would be the most palpable way to cater for their continued existence as indigenous communities. It is through their languages, their preserved ethnicity, and within a framework of multicultural discourses that they can best communicate their identity through their culture.

Keywords: indigenous languages; ethnic identity; minority languages; language policy; cultural pluralism; minority education; mother tongue education; Botswana

Introduction: historical and ethno-linguistic perspective of the Khoisan

In most historical and linguistic researches, it is generally accepted that the Khoisan (that is, the Khoe and the San) are one of the ancient indigenous people of Southern Africa (Chebanne 2003, 2008a; Güldemann and Vossen 2000; Köhler 1981). Most of the time when the Khoe and the San refer to themselves, they use names or words which when translated mean, 'person/people': the word Ju|'hoansi means people – the singular, person, is Ju|'hoan. Words such as Khoe, Tuu, and Taa mean people. The word that is found in History books, Khoi–Khoi is a corruption of an indigenous term Khoe–Khoe, meaning 'the real people.' The Khoe and the San communities believe they are 'the people,' and this is their vision of things in their world of existence. Other ethnic communities are given specific names (|Hoõ (white person in Naro; Quini, Ngwato person in Tshoa; Gubuu, Kalanga person in Shua; and Poto kua, Ndebele person in Cua) (Chebanne 2003). The culture of these people

also makes a distinction between the 'people's habits/ways/manners' and the 'foreign people habits/ways/manners.' Theirs is considered human, couth, and harmonious, not aggressive, not greedy, and their philosophy is that they should be at peace within and with the other peoples and the environment (cf. Chebanne 2007a). The greatest tragedy for them is to be violated by what they consider not Khoe–Khoe or Taa–Tuun, that is, a foreign view of life and its purpose (Chebanne 2007a, 2007b, 2008b; cf. Chebanne and Monaka 2005). They have always desperately resisted the encroachment of communities foreign to them, but with varying success. Recent history shows that they succumb to the most powerful cultures which are associated with the imposition of alienating languages (Chebanne 2008a).

The term, Khoisan as used here should not be construed to refer to a homogenous linguistic entity, but to social and anthropological collectivity which historically has been characterized in Southern Africa by autochthony and hunter-gathering mode of existence, and this makes exception of the pastoralists Nama–Damara (Chebanne 2008a). Linguistically, there are various assumptions about their relationship, and at least three language families are often postulated (Güldemann et al. 2000). The following diagram illustrates the current classification of Khoisan communities according to their languages:

1 Proto-Khoe–San
1.1 Hadza (Tanzania) (*Language family*)
1.2 Khoe–San
1.2.1 Sandawe (Tanzania) (*Language family*)
1.2.2 Khoe–San (Southern Africa)
1.2.2.1 **Khoe–Kwadi**: Central: Nama,!Ora; Kalahari Khoe: **Western**: North – Khwe dam (Kxoe,!Ani, Buga, |Ganda); **Southern**: Naro; **Central**: ||Gana, |Gui; **Eastern**: Kua, Tshoa; Shua/Cire-cire; Ganadi (*Language family*)
1.2.3.1 **Southern San**: (Non-Khoe): Taa~Tuu:!Xóõ;!Kui; |Nu **(***Language family***)**
1.2.3.2 **Northern San**: #Hoan; Jũ (Jũn|'hoan;!Xũ (*Language family***)**

Classification adapted from Güldemann et al. (2000).

While the Khoe–Khoe communities to which the Nama–Damara belong have been known to be pastoralists (Parsons 1993), there are those who while linguistically related to the Khoe–Khoe, have social habits of the San or Non-Khoe–Khoe, and these might be the San who took Khoe languages, and maintain a life similar to the ancient hunter gatherers (Chebanne 2008a). Most of the hunter-gatherers communities who use Khoe–Khoe languages are found in Botswana, comprising the Central Kalahari Khoe (|Gui, ||Gana, Naro), the Eastern Kalahari Khoe (Khua, Cua), and the Northern Kalahari Khoe (|Ani and Buga) Chebanne (2003, 2008a). The majority, in terms of the number of speech communities, is found in Botswana (cf. Chebanne 2008a; Dowson and Lewis-Williams 1994; Güldemann et al. 2000, Andersson, L-G. and T. Janson 1997).

The Khoisan and autochthony: a social anathema in Botswana?

In Botswana, the Khoisan in their majority would be the only communities that could be qualified as autochthonous (Chebanne 2008a; cf. Chebanne and Monaka 2005). The concept of autochthony is used here in its strict anthropological and sociological entailment to refer to aboriginal ethnic communities (Chebanne 2002c, 2007d). Africans generally reject the notion of aboriginality because it is

misconstrued to imply those who have prior habitation of certain areas in their countries. Politically aboriginal communities, because they do not respect colonial borders pose problems for African governments. Tribal territorial interests and colonial borders and the governance of indigenous and ethnic issues are still a real challenge in many African counties. However, for anthropologists and other social scientists, these labels of autochthony and aboriginality describe communities that remain attached to the very rudimentary and historical cultural means of existence (Chebanne 2007b). With the exception made of the Nama and the Damara of Namibia, historically, Khoisan hunter-gatherers lived as small closely related individuals (Köhler 1981). The small communities facilitated sharing of meager resources in the desert territory, and lessened conflicts in the competition for food, and thus social cohesion community management were enhanced (cf. Dowson et al. 1994; Köhler 1981; Tlou and Campbell 1997). Conversely, small aboriginal communities also sociolinguistically facilitate dialectalization, and development of multi-ethnicity and the creation of ethnic minorities (Chebanne 2008a). This state of their existence has put them at a disadvantage, especially in Botswana.

Historically, because of their precarious lives and rudimentary mode of existence, the Khoisan communities have been lowly regarded by the mainstream society in Botswana (Cassidy et al. 2001). Therefore, the cause of negative social attitudes toward the Khoisan communities is essentially cultural (cf. Brenzinger 1992) and demographic (Chebanne 2002d). The hunter-gatherer lifestyle is often shunned by the agro-pastoralists who form the mainstream society (cf. Good 2005; Saugestad 2001; Thapelo 2002). According to Chebanne (2002d, 2) and Eide (2001, 3) the idea of indigenous or autochthonous peoples is offensive to other groups in Africa, and specifically in the socio-political context of Botswana (cf. Chebanne 2007b). This sociocultural situation presents difficulties in managing Khoisan affairs in a specific approach that would promote their un-perturbed existence. The following observation by Saugestad (2001) illustrates:

> The position of Basarwa (Khoisan) in contemporary Botswana is, as the saying goes, 'a very sensitive issue.' In spite of concerted efforts over a long time to cast all Batswana in the same cultural, social, and linguistic mould, differences persist. (Saugestad 2001, 36)

In Botswana, the government's preference to refer to them as 'Remote Areas Dwellers' (Thapelo 2002; cf. Cassidy et al. 2001; Good 2005), a term devoid of any ethnic or cultural value, is an indication that their mode of life and their social and cultural habits are perceived to be not amenable to unprejudiced social policies. The idea of the Khoisan as a peculiar people, maintaining a right to a peculiar existence is an anathema to the Botswana social policy (cf. Cassidy et al. 2001; Good 2005). This is so because it is misconstrued to imply that it claims prior occupation of and ancestry in the land and that they would be the rightful owners as the following excerpt demonstrates.

> The Botswana Government has not planned any programmes or activities in commemoration of the International Year of Indigenous People, which is 1993, in terms of the United Nations Resolution. This is because as far as we are concerned, all Batswana are indigenous to the country, except those who may acquire citizenship by registration. In addition, Government's development programmes and assistance schemes do not draw any distinction among the county's citizens. (Cited in Saugestad 2001, 52, from *Daily News* 5 March 1993)

In such a situation, it is difficult to settle such a debate intellectually. Nevertheless, what is patent is that the position of the government which seeks 'sameness' for its nation, insisting on a homogenous culture and language, is effectively annihilating to the Khoisan. It is apparent that if they are to be like all the other communities speaking other community's languages, and living according to their culture, then they are no longer themselves (Chebanne 2006; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002).

The current Botswana linguistic and cultural policies: do they take the Khoisan out of the multicultural eclipse?

Multicultural and multilingual issues of the Khoisan in Botswana have featured prominently since a decade ago (cf. Cassidy et al. 2001) and recently in issues related to mother tongue education (cf. Kamwendo et al. 2009). During this time the Government of Botswana has endeavored to undertake policy initiatives to respond to issues of ethnicity, multiculturalism, and multilingualism. A brief review and consideration of the resultant policy documents will illustrate where the country stands with regards to the calls for the engagement of multicultural discourses in development. How objective and viable these government responses are or will be toward multiculturalism and multilingualism will be evident in following sub-sections.

The revised national policy on education

This policy derives from the National Commission on Education of 1993 (Republic of Botswana 1993, Botswana Government 1994). The Commission had recommended, in view of ethnic communities agitations for recognition of their languages in education at regional level. The Botswana Government's response to the Commission's recommendations to consider the introduction of a third school language at regional level (cf. Recommendation 32), was off-putting, and preferred instead to introduce French rather than a local/regional language as wished by those who submitted that mother tongue education would respond to multiculturalism and the valuing of multi-ethnicity. Flimsy arguments about costs, teacher training, unwieldy teacher deployment, and globalization were cited as prohibiting factors that made a justification for preferring French to local languages.

The National Vision 2016: toward prosperity for all

The Vision 2016 text recognizes in one of its nine pillars, multiculturalism as one way to reach prosperity for all in 2016 (cf. Botswana Government 1997). Language and culture are identified in Vision 2016 as crucial features of ethnic and cultural identity and the enjoyment thereof. However, this Vision 2016 is not even a policy and, as its preface seems to suggest, it is just a dream, and will guide other policies' direction. Consequently, it will not be binding the government to deliver on those beautiful multicultural statements indicated on *Pillar 6: A Moral and Tolerant nation*:

> No citizen of the future of Botswana will be disadvantaged as a result of gender, age, religion, creed, colour, national or ethnic origin, location, language or political opinions… (Vision 2016, Pillar No. 6, Tolerance)

Constitutional revisions

In 2000, the government instituted the commonly known *Balopi Commission* to look into the constitution, specifically Sections 77, 78, and 79, to make them 'tribally neutral,' as in the agitations of ethic communities claims of ethnic and linguistic discriminations and assimilation had been made (cf. Republic of Botswana 2000). However, the recommendations for equity and equality caused upheaval among the 'majority Setswana tribes' and the end result was the adoption of compromised decisions which left the status quo intact, as Werbner (2004, 45) observes:

> But the Balopi Commission's report . . . satisfied few. It was mocked for its omissions and evasions, especially because it refused to say whether the constitution actually was discriminatory, or how its recommendations put an end to constitutional discrimination or guaranteed that former subject and ruling communities would have equal rights.

A page further Werbner (2004, 47) concludes:

> 'No final resolution of the underlying issues can be expected . . .'

Clearly, therefore, the government would rather delay issues, strategize for compromises, and not change the status quo that does not recognize multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism.

The national cultural policy

The National Cultural Policy has some encouraging statements on multiculturalism and ethnic culture recognition (Republic of Botswana 2001). In its argument for the need for a multicultural policy it states:

> Our multi-ethnic value system, traditions and beliefs as reflected through the various languages, performing and visual arts as well as other forms of cultural expression constitute the strands of a broader national culture and need to be well-researched in order to be known, appreciated and respected. (Republic of Botswana 2001, 6, National Cultural policy)

In the implementation strategies of these lofty ideals, the Policy does not envisage ethnic language teaching and learning in education, and use of such languages in communication media, but rather songs and dances are underscored, and the research talked about concerns material art and artifacts collection. These strategies come short of ensuring a dynamic multi-ethnic culture promotion and preservation. By heavily relying on Vision 2016, and purporting to be its implementation agent, neither it is evident that there is no consideration for local languages use planning nor is there a commitment to mother tongue education as an option for multiculturalism in Botswana.

Minister of Education speech at the official opening of the mother tongue education conference, 1 June 2005.

The Minister of Education (Nkate 2009, 24–5) in his opening speech presented the view to the effect that with regard to the mother tongue in education, the

government, while sympathetic toward such calls, felt that the small number of some of the ethnic language speakers, lack of teaching materials, and trained teachers, the promotion of mother tongue education would not be viable, and that it would only promote an 'inward-looking' development than enabling 'global economy' competition. This is the general excuse of the government, and since then no policy moves have been directed to implementing multilingualism in education. This following statement from the speech casts aspersion to the idea that the government may soon implement a multicultural mother tongue education dispensation:

> My Ministry has since conducted a study to inform us on the full implications of this recommendation (cf. Recommendation 32 of the Revised National Policy on Education, on the third school language, and which would be regional). The study looked at the demographics of each of the languages found in Botswana. It also sought to determine the state of development of each language... My Ministry is till studying the findings of the study but already is finding the issue problematic. (Nkate 2009, 24–5, in Kamwendo et al. 2009)

This foregoing statement captures the mood of the unwillingness of the bureaucracy and the government in implementing a multilingual education. Issues of globalization seem to overarch the policy directions, and the introduction of French as a school subject at the expense of local languages gives credence to strategies of resisting indigenous languages and cultures promotion within a multicultural perspective. As it is, Botswana is still in essence deeply rooted in the pursuit of a national architecture that is ethnically and linguistically monolithic.

It is evident from the foregoing policy positions, and from recent research as well as older ones that Botswana minority groups, such as the Khoisan, are in many accounts second class citizen and this seems not to bother laws and policies of the government (cf. Chebanne 2007b; Good 2005; Mazonde 2002; Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). The way their languages, culture, and ethnic identity are marginalized and neglected in policies does not augur well for their future. If the issues of the lack of multicultural discourses in handling the Khoisan communities persist, it is essentially because the responses to them are far from being adequate to address multiculturalism and multilingualism in Botswana. Botswana, entailing a country of Batswana (singular is Motswana), who speak Setswana, and have a common Setswana culture is a lovely ideal which has been perpetuated by bureaucrats and law makers since independence in 1966. This social homogeneity, through and by 'Botswana-ness' has inspired social policy in all developmental domains (cf. Chebanne 2007b). Policies of education in formal and informal domains have not in the main advanced the country to a consideration of inclusion of minority languages in any significant social and functional domains. Issues that relate to multiculturalism, such as education in the ethnic mother tongue, multilingual radio and television broadcasting, and multilingual public information issuance are not accepted or considered under any policy (cf. Chebanne 2008b; Mazonde 2002).

Consequently, in the policies of the State in Botswana, there is nowhere that any resemblance of multicultural discourses features. The perversion of the often referred to policy documents is found in the education system of Botswana, a country that has at least 23 languages (putting other Bantu marginalized languages and those of the Khoisan together), and which still pursues minimalist languages in education dispensation, minimally limited to English and Setswana. These governance policies consequently eclipse the Khoisan (cf. Chebanne and Molosiwa 1997; Chebanne et al.

1993). The 'eclipse' metaphor is used here for what the Botswana Government refutes as non-issues – languages and cultures of minorities – such as the Khoisan. The cultural diversity of the society is eclipsed. The specific nature of the Khoisan and their internal diversity is not even known in Botswana. If there is a need to refer to them, they are labeled as 'Basarwa,' a term often equated to 'Bushmen' (Chebanne 2003, 2008a). What seems to be socio-politically ideal in Botswana is the talk about 'equality' and 'access' for all in social and economic domains (Cassidy et al. 2001; Chebanne 2002a). However, these terms just simply entrench an agenda for a homogenous society, where the majority ethnic groups maintain a cultural and linguistic hegemony, and assimilate the small and vulnerable Khoisan communities. In such a situation, assimilation is viewed as the success of a social order with purported guarantees of social harmony and unity.

This eclipse can also be observed in the absence of multicultural discourses even among local intellectuals and political parties. This situation is indicative of a fundamental social problem or the misconception of how the society of the Botswana nation views itself (cf. Mazonde 2002). In fact even since independence, there is no political party manifesto that has ever taken a perspective of multicultural discourses to analyze and to respond to the social problems faced by the diverse ethnic communities of Botswana (cf. Chebanne and Nyati-Ramahobo 2003, 2004; Mazonde 2002). Even as for a decade or so the issues of Khoisan in Botswana have been debated, the Government of Botswana has vehemently opposed any form of multicultural discourse (cf. Mphinyane 2002). The defense of policies that negate multicultural discourses has been analyzed as indicative of the way the government felt about the cultural socio-political difference that the Khoisan communities bring to the ideal of a harmonious nation (cf. Saugestad 2001). This perceived cultural and socio-political inconvenience has been responded to by actions of the government that have been calculated to mute any voice auctioning for cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. All is done in the guise of cultural neutrality which effectively marginalizes and silences those who do not share in the same mono-cultural framework.

While the government argues for integration and equality, research has demonstrated that the policies of the government force this integration with the mainstream society (Cassidy et al. 2001; Mazonde 2002; Saugestad 2001) and this is done to the detriment of the Khoisan communities (Chebanne 2007b, 2008a). In Botswana, therefore, notwithstanding the fact that personal rights and freedoms are guaranteed by the Botswana Constitution, for every citizen (irrespective of color, tribe, or religious affiliation (Botswana Constitution 1965: Article II, 3)), ethnic minority groups and their languages face a number of impediments as common rights and freedoms in the domains of ethnic identity, culture, and language are not facilitated. Multicultural discourses are therefore systematically undermined or altogether opposed by the policies of the State. The following sub-sections examine the question of the Khoisan according to the discourses of ethno-cultural marginalization, education and linguistic alienation, and development. Recommendations on what can be done will be made after each brief discussion.

The Khoisan: ethnic and cultural marginalization

Marginalization should be construed here as a broad concept that describes the legal and institutional frameworks whose provisions exclude the reality of the existence

and the identity of diverse ethno-linguistic entities of Botswana. As it has already been stated, the Botswana official policies pertaining to culture and language (cf. the National Cultural Policy as read together with Article 60 (d) of the Constitution) and various other official pronouncements on language policy effectively refute multi-ethnicity and multilingualism, and effectively declare Botswana as an indigenously and linguistically a mono-ethnic country with Setswana taking the status and the role of a national language, and English taking, internally and internationally, a prestigious position of an official language. Associated with those constitutional pronouncements and privileges are the beliefs and practices that Botswana is a nation made up of only Tswana ethnic groups. Only the Setswana speaking ethic groups have an ex officio representation in the House of Chiefs (cf. Nyati-Ramahobo 2002).

While ethnically and linguistically the Khoisan are in diverse and various groupings, they share common problems of being demographic minorities, and it has been mentioned earlier on that they are also poor and attached to aboriginal life. None of the Khoisan community groups in Botswana has any count nearing 10,000 speakers, and none of them has any significant linguistic or cultural presence in the country (Chebanne and Nyati-Ramobobo 2003, 2004; cf. Chebanne 2008a, 2008b). This pitiful situation is not helped by the evident limitations of the Botswana Constitution in respect of the provision of language and cultural policies (cf. Mazonde 2002). While the government has since independence contented itself with the ideal of equality before the law and the attended individual freedoms, the excruciating fact of denying the existence of the Khoisan as ethnic entities casts a serious aspersion to the whole claim of individual freedoms.

The outcomes of this sociocultural marginalization of the Khoisan communities are that there is an undeclared discrimination by the laws and policies, which negatively affects the Khoisan communities' development. A positive discrimination, which recognizes their cultural and linguistic identity, would contribute to their constructive engagement of development policies. The land the Khoisan people occupy is declared State Land, and in it they cannot organize communities or settlements that could have their own local affairs run by them (cf. Chebanne 2007b; Good 2005; Saugestad 2001). It therefore means that there is no place where, the Khoisan, as an ethnic community, can fully express their culture and have their language used for dissemination of any public information (cf. Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). Consequently, wherever they are found, only the Tswana ethnic groups can 'give' them a language for the education of their children and culture for the edification of their lives and the communication of community information (cf. Chebanne 2002a, 2007b). As a result, the lack of constitutional and official obligations to match human rights in matters regarding linguistic and cultural interests of the Khoisan communities is a violation of human rights. The perpetuation of this is simply comparable to a colonial agenda (cf. Thapelo 2002), as indeed this social program is calculated to assimilate and to put in place a monopolistic linguistic and cultural expression in the building of a monolithic society, which refuses linguistic and cultural diversity (cf. Chebanne 2002a; Chebanne and Monaka 2005). Within this socio-political framework, the Khoisan interaction with other groups, they emerge as non-equals as they are only readily assimilated into other ethno-linguistic groups. There is very little that they benefit as people since they have limited social or human rights (Good 2005). The only remedy to this pitiful situation is for the Government of Botswana to implement sooner

rather than later policies on multilingual and multicultural education and community governance that take on board Khoisan languages.

The Botswana development discourses

Botswana has made significant developmental strides since independence in 1966. From one of the poorest nations in Africa, it has become by 1980 one of the economic shinning examples in Africa (cf. Government of Botswana, National Development Plans 5 and 6; cf. Mazonde 2002; National Commission on Education 1993). The development discourses are predicated on the ill-advised concepts of national harmony, unity, and common development (cf. Government of Botswana's Vision 2016). These discourses also view Botswana as a homogenous society, with similar needs for all the ethno-linguistic groups in the areas of the provisions of education, social amenities, and cultural development. It is evident that the development discourses also refute the idea that there would be inequalities and inequities in the society without language cultural diversity dispensation. The Botswana development discourse and its nefarious effects on the Khoisan is eloquently accounted for in Saugestad (2001), who qualifies it the 'inconvenient indigenous,' and Thapelo (2002) who qualifies it as a postcolonial deprivation. The ruling elite from the mainstream society, therefore, misconstrues the social issues of the Khoisan and opt to resolve them within a socio-developmental framework that violates their Khoisan ethnic identity and rights to their mode of life.

The socio-historical factors of the Khoisan ethno-cultural adaptation to remote and desert environment also makes policy pretexts to relocate them to settlements where they are in turn put under tutelage of other ethnic groups (cf. Chebanne 2008a, b; Saugestad 2001). While these settlement areas have social amenities, the change of lifestyle effectively denies the Khoisan communities their own self-determination as ethno-cultural entities (Chebanne and Monaka 2005). The effort to modernize their lives by provision of amenities disadvantages them. They do not choose, but they are forced to accept a new social order that does not value any of their socio-historical values. Thus, even in the debate about development and modernity the Khoisan people's life is definitely a target for annihilation.

The Khoisan communities also feel that there is selfishness and greed in the way that 'modern' methods are used in land use and allocation, undertaking economic activities, determining the way to access development (Chebanne 2003; Thapelo 2002). To some analysts, the social inequality of these groups is exacerbated by the postcolonial elite domination of the main Botswana socio-political development discourse which determines participation in or exclusion from social and economic amenities, institutions, ethno-cultural discourse, and the political economy (Mphinyane 2002; Thapelo 2002). To remedy all these ill-conceived and inappropriate development and social policies of Botswana, it is important to recognize that some ethnic communities are still characterized by autochthony and therefore there is a need for development to be managed in such a way that they are not forced out of their cultures and languages. Government should ensure that Khoisan communities are empowered through recognition of their ethnicity, language and culture; and that they are directly consulted on issues of development; and also that they are protected from the adverse effects of modernity – land use changes, relocations, and commercial activities that are all foreign to their culture.

The missing multicultural socio-political debate: consequences

The foregoing arguments undoubtedly demonstrate that multiculturalism discourses are missing in Botswana socio-political debate, and that the consequences of this are rather nefarious to the Khoisan people. It is evident also that the abject poverty and the general social situation of the Khoisan communities are lamentable. The Botswana socio-political discourse refutes multiculturalism, and therefore, the government and the Khoisan groups are involved in a dialogue of the deaf (Chebanne 2006), and some arguments provided in the foregoing sections have identified some of the issues in the opposing perspectives of the socio-political approach to the situation of the Khoisan groups. The premise of this debate is that on the government's side is the whole dominant culture and the bureaucracy that appeal to cultural supremacy, modernity, development, economic prosperity, and the misconstrued idea of a common social–cultural destiny. However, it has been clear that this is just mere neocolonial rhetoric as the bureaucratic policies have no regard for a human right construct and they are social and political impediments to the objective response to autochthonous group aspirations. However, a dim flame keeps on burning for the Khoisan groups, and is maintained by researchers (anthropologists, linguists, Human Right and outsider activism, and some timid community efforts; Chebanne 2002b, 2002c, 2008b; Chebanne and Monaka 2005). The researchers evidently advocate, together with the Khoisan, for cultural diversity and postmodernist values of free development choice, equity, enjoyment of community rights, and ethnic identity. All these efforts strive to promote Khoisan languages and cultures. However, without formal supportive State policies these altruistic efforts may not be effective to preserve language and cultural identity of these ancient peoples. When discussing these issues Saugestad (2001) had to say this:

> I have tried to show that even assuming the sincerity of the laudable objectives of social justice and equal opportunity for Basarwa (Khoisan) as stated on numerous occasions, the development models used are not adequate for achieving these objectives. (Saugestad 2001, 235)

It is worth mentioning that in the multicultural discourses, the creation and the maintenance of live and dynamic cultures are better exercised by the ethnic communities themselves, under enabling constitutional dispensations (cf. Webb 1995). And this involvement occurs when their identity, beliefs, and arts are preserved through recognition in the national constitution. In Botswana, the lack of these dispensations means that, since 1966, there has been a negative multicultural development and practically translating into two problems: firstly, poverty in the ethnic and cultural domains and the blossoming up of exotic development models emanating from all over the world in the name of modernism and development, but nothing ethnically authentic taking any significant cultural and linguistic space (cf. Chebanne 2002a, 2002c). And secondly, poverty, marginalization and deprivation in the socioeconomic domains become the blight of such Khoisan communities and this leads to developmental interventions that are often not appropriate economically or culturally (cf. Thapelo 2002).

What can multicultural discourses achieve in Botswana for the Khoisan?

The Khoisan peoples and their cultures are still alive in Botswana, but there is no guarantee that this situation can continue for another decade. Already there are disquieting signs that there are high attritions of these languages among the speakers (Batibo 2005). However, Nyati-Ramahobo (2008, 53) also reports some encouraging study that was carried out by the RETENG (The Multicultural Coalition of Botswana) and that indicated that Botswana ethnic language speakers, even though they could shift to the Setswana language, they still identified themselves with their ethnic groups, and there is a general preference for multilingual community radio stations. Botswana minority communities of which the Khoisan are a part, are therefore still alive and should be catered for in development within a multicultural discourse framework.

The fundamental question in Botswana is not so much whether these ethno-linguistic communities are indigenous or a minority, but what political and social provisions are in place that can help manage the Khoisan people's precarious existence and make their identity relevant. Whatever is done in developmental programs, they continue not to enjoy ethnic rights (linguistic, cultural) and territorial rights (customary land rights) recognized by the State for other dominant communities (cf. Botswana Constitution: Tribal Territories Act; Chieftainship Act; Section 77 to 79), especially when one looks into those Acts and laws that determine the socio-ethnic recognition of people in the country. In the current dispensation, the gap between the aspirations of Khoisan ethno-communities and the government is gyrating and widening. Outside and inside multicultural activism (by NGOs, UN Human Rights Charters) becomes the only mouth-piece for multicultural discourses. The RETENG (the Multicultural Coalition of Botswana) is doing a sterling ground work in mobilizing marginalized ethno-linguistic communities so that they undertake grassroots activities to develop and promote their languages and cultures. The RETENG has also helped and coordinated communities language development activities that have produced orthographies and literacy materials (cf. RETENG, http://www.RETENG.bw). While these non-State organs are doing a good job, they cannot replace the effectiveness of responsive policies that can be put in place by the government. Issues pertaining to multiculturalism cannot be left on their own account. The best solution should be based on a fresh constitutional dispensation to respond to the critical issues of multiculturalism and the promotion of its discourses in the Botswana's socio-political governance.

Botswana has often insisted on its peculiarity in its socio-political setup in Africa and has argued that this setup has ensured peace and stability. However, peace and stability in Botswana are attained at a cost as the minority Khoisan groups sacrifice their culture and languages as the UN CERD reports have shown on various accounts.

> Other tribes, especially the San (Khoisan) are reported to suffer from cultural, social, economic and political exclusion (and) do not enjoy group rights to land, and do not participate in the House of Chiefs... (Cited by Motshabi and Saugestad 2003, 12, from the UN CERD Report of 2002)

Even with this critical evidence little has happened in Botswana as Saugestad (2001) has observed and this remains valid to date.

> The Government response has been a cautious move towards some resemblance of multiculturalism... This will make little or no difference for the Basarwa (Khoisan). (Saugestad 2001, 75)

Multicultural discourses, at the level of political and social policies, if permitted, could facilitate Khoisan ethno-minorities in fully participating in the development of their country. In this regard, it is important to underscore the point that multicultural entails policy management of cultural diversity to build inclusive representation of all ethnic, linguistic, and social entities, in view of achieving multicultural harmony (cf. M'bokolo 1995; Serageldin and Taboroff 1992). As it is evident from the foregoing submissions, multiculturalism discourses in the educational and social domains would go beyond current policy hurdles and make learners from the Khoisan ethnic minorities to have a sense of self-worth and positively resist marginalization and assimilation (cf. Nyati-Ramahobo 1997). The argument made here is that multiculturalism would beautifully enhance peace, stability, and unity in diversity in Botswana. The following actions by the State can certainly reverse the disreputable consequences on the abject existence of the Khoisan people that have been underscored in this discussion.

- Early use of the mother tongue in education to build confidence in their linguistic heritage. Language is a right and the only pertinent expression of culture and identity. The education policy should recognize this fact and implement mother tongue in education.
- Emphasis or valuing expression of ethnic and cultural identity in local settings or administrative structures to enhance the value of cultural diversity and respect of difference. Cultural identity, however diverse the ethnic groups could be, is a resource and could enrich and resource the whole national cultural expression in arts and other indigenous material forms.
- Encouraging traditional culture and religious beliefs in the schools in the areas where a Khoisan ethnic group is in a majority and this with the aim of developing regional cultures. Botswana should not perceive itself as solely Christian nation, but should permit the expression of other religious and spiritual forms in public domains. Schools could seek the participation of communities in cultural and religious activities, and the curriculum developers should provide for these activities in the design of the curriculum.
- Developing or providing for opportunities in schools that will expose the beauty of traditional attires, so that they are not merely featured at few festivals or national events.
- Establishing capacity building programs to encourage Khoisan minorities' effective participation in national political and social domains. Radio and television programs in their languages should be put in place to facilitate unconstrained participation in community and national socio-political debates (cf. Wikipedia, February 2009).

The emphatic argument made here is that it is not adequate to feature Khoisan culture through artifacts, song and dance during some infrequent national events, as

some policy documents seem to assume. That sort of strategy will not efficaciously promote and preserve their language and culture. While annual exhibition of artifacts and dance festivals are conducted by organizations such as the Kuru Development Trust and other ethnic associations, this cannot be taken to be competent to seriously provide sufficiency to promote and preserve Khoisan cultures and languages. Real linguistic and social developments need to be put in place through active use of Khoisan languages in functional life situations – schools and radio/television programs. The National Vision 2016 (Government of Botswana 1997), albeit it is not a policy document, has some beautiful allusions to cultural and linguistic enjoyments, but with only seven years left to its fulfillment, nothing is near the ideal of this grand vision. As a dream vision and not a legal act, the Vision 2016 is not the one to be resorted to in response to the requirements of multiculturalism in Botswana (cf. Chebanne 2006). Only policies of developments that target maintenance and promotion of everyday experience of Khoisan language and culture in functional social domains can positively engage these Khoisan communities in development and modernization. Currently, there are some church organizations and individuals associated with the Kuru Development Trust that conduct literacy and art classes to respond to the need to develop Khoisan communities (cf. Visser 2009). However, the scale of these initiatives, only limited to the immediate villages of the township of Ghanzi, can never successfully remedy the situation of the dearth and death of Khoisan cultures and languages in the Botswana socio-development processes (cf. Chebanne 2006, 2007a).

The cherished freedoms that are associated with the use of one's language and culture in functional social domains enhance the value of diversity in a pluralistic nation (cf. Hargreaves 1999; Nyati-Ramahobo 1997, 1997b). Even for the government, the attainment of these ideals would positively reflect on the democratic efforts to uplift the lives of those they prefer to neutrally call the remote area dwellers. Multicultural discourses within any enabling socio-political context can never be a threat to any state or social order. Equally consequential in the arguments made here is the view that multiculturalism concretizes the elements that define and determine equality and equity in the provision of socioeconomic amenities to ethnic communities. Representation in any democracy is crucial, and the Khoisan would value the democratic dispensation of Botswana when their voices are heard on a common platform of a participatory democracy. National institutions should recognize them, and give then active roles to accomplish developments for themselves. The Khoisan should be put in another socio-political pedestal where they are not considered subaltern communities, but participants in national socio-political and cultural development. They should be their own community leaders; they should teach literacy skills to their children in elementary schools; and they should plan and implement their socio-developmental activities.

In pursuance of this argument, it is critically important to accentuate that multicultural discourses in Botswana should be predicated on ideals that seek to ensure that a human person becomes respecting and respectable, responsible toward the community and not irresponsible or reduced to relying on government food handouts. Every time communities feel forced or subjected to adverse policy of any type they become unsettled and revolting, withdrawn, and misdirected in their social choices. As Saugestad eloquently put it:

> The options, in Botswana as elsewhere, should not be a choice between remaining with old lifestyle or assimilating into dominant society's culture Indigenous peoples want to participate in development on their own terms, not to reject development. (Saugestad 2001, 64)

This realization would be critical for Botswana. The positive social qualities sought by a multicultural policy can be derived from the recognition of Khoisan peoples' right to self-identity through language and ethnicity. For Botswana, the basis for the multicultural discourse would begin with the full ratification of the International Labor Organization Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples as this helps to objectively engage the debate and the commitment to Human Rights and free choice in developmental policies. The right to self-identity, the right to protection from the generalizing and the globalizing effects of the present world order, and the right to one's meaningful ethnic language and culture are what define a human community's existence. There is no dignity in being marginalized by being taken as a cultural and linguistic irrelevance (cf. Nyati-Ramahobo 2002). The point being underscored here is that without their ethnicity and language, the Khoisan are not and will never be equal to the Tswana people whose language and culture is promoted though all media, and consequently, the Khoisan people are not free to enjoy their linguistic and cultural heritage. There is need for linguistic and cultural equitability for real social equality. The Khoisan peoples' current situation makes it difficult for them to decide for themselves, or to agitate for their ethnic and cultural identify (cf. Mphinyane 2002) in a territory that they can call a homeland (cf. Saugestad 2001).

As it has been amply stated earlier on, Botswana's social and development programs constitute an undeclared prejudice of ethnic minorities such as the Khoisan by the law. For instance, the provisions of Sections 3 and 15 of the constitution have been deemed inadequate in fully responding to the requirements of Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (cf. UN (CERD)) response to Botswana:

> 9.   The Committee is concerned that the State party's objective to build a nation based on the principle of equality for all has been implemented in a way detrimental to the protection of ethnic and cultural diversity. The Committee notes in particular the State party's reluctance to recognize the existence of indigenous peoples on its territory. (Articles 2 and 5)
>
> The Committee, recalling that the principle of non-discrimination requires that the cultural characteristics of ethnic groups be taken into consideration, urges the State party to respect and protect the existence and cultural identity of all ethnic groups within its territory. The Committee also invites the State party to review its policy regarding indigenous peoples and, to that end, to take into consideration the way in which the groups concerned, perceive and define themselves. The Committee recalls in this regard its General Recommendations 8 (1990) on self-identification and 23 (1997) on the rights of indigenous peoples. (CERD, observation 9 on Botswana, 2006)

It is therefore apparent that the Botswana constitutional dispensation of Article II, Section 3 become a mere clichéd chant or a superficial presentation, while fundamentally those who distinguish themselves linguistically and culturally live in a situation where they are denied their ethnicity, identity, and the rights accruing thereof. As a corollary, the disregard of multicultural discourses' framework, and their proactive and positive handling of language and culture diversity has led to

ill-conceived determination of what constitutes a nation or a society in Botswana. Linguistic and ethnic diversity are seen as a threat, yet that diversity could beautify and resource the cultural wealth of the country. Without a multicultural discourse framework, it is clear that what prevails in Botswana is theorizing culture, ethnicity and identity, but not their beneficial social practices. This still perpetuates neo-colonial ideals and is irrelevant in ensuring a democratic development for the country. In his analysis of the current San (or Khoisan) situation, Good (2005, 42) made this statement:

> Without a robust democracy there will be little equality in general in Botswana, and even less for the despised San, and without the emancipation of the San there will be no real democracy either. The elitist government is unlikely to concede these changes of its own volition, and they must be struggled for by an organised people. In the process of that struggle democracy will be enhanced. The foundations for a widening and deepening of democracy remain extremely frail, and conditions of 'negative peace,' and all it involves for the continued subordination of the San, seem likely to persist.

Not only are the democratic institutions weak, but also the civil society. All this contribute to inertia in the development of the provisions for multicultural discourses. For the Khoisan the delay tactics, evasions and the tergiversation to articulate an ordinarily acceptable practice of multiculturalism entail a slow but sure attrition of their culture, language, and identify. The multicultural discourses, if enabled, would provide a coherent scheme of democratization in social development, and this would be pertinent for Botswana's handling of its Khoisan communities. For the Khoisan, development as formulated and presented by the Botswana Government must be a free will choice. The multicultural discourses also require that Botswana goes beyond the current socio-political and ideological inhibitions of homogeneity to a new vantage point from where questions arising from ethnicity, social diversity, and language choices, are based on fundamental principles of human rights and dignity. Policies of the State should henceforth engage the debate from three approaches: (1) socio-political – handling of all social phenomena through documented social realities on the ground; (2) cultural–anthropological – handling all civilizational and cultural questions from the perspective of daily realities of existence, customs and habits, and attitudes of communities in their existence; and finally, (3) representational – acknowledging, interpreting, understanding or relating the cultural connotations, collective representations, and myths of communities as a means to a deeper understanding of their existence (cf. Dumon 2001). These perspectives in socio-developmental process should ensure that Botswana provides a basis for the establishment of a socio-political dispensation and the facilitation of common understanding and dialog with its ethnic and indigenous minorities of the Khoisan.

Multicultural discourses are better exercised in socio-political contexts that provide basic understanding and promotion of issues of ethnicity, ethno-culture, multilingualism, and unity in diversity. As suggested by researchers in Botswana, the country must seriously consider other models of social development for its autochthonous people and recognize its multi-ethnic, multilingualism, and multi-cultural nature (cf. Kamwendo et al. 2009; Mazonde 2002). There is also an imperative that the Botswana Government should ratify all UN charters relative to the Khoisan as indigenous and autochthonous communities. Without these measures, the issues that concern their well-being and their future will be neglected. When that

happens, Khoisan communities will be lost and they will pass into oblivion as there is not even any coordinated effort to document their languages and cultures. Urgent actions by the government, constitutionally and socially, will provide a democratic framework within which multicultural discourses will be capable of being heard and exercised in a relevant context. Botswana has many experiences to emulate from other countries, even from its neighbors. From South Africa and Namibia, which have proactively tackled this question or ethnic culture, language, and governance (cf. Webb 1995), Botswana can plan its ethnic languages use for significant social domains. Already the country's National Vision 2016 (Botswana Government 1997) seems to also provide some frameworks within which multicultural discourses can be articulated and extricate the country from its obstinate obsessions with monolithic policies and linguistic and cultural assimilating development perspectives (cf. Chebanne 2008b). Importantly, Botswana needs to understand who the Khoisan communities are, and also undertake to come up with policies that will preserve and promote these ancient ethno-linguistic entities. Botswana should not become a museum of Khoisan culture and history – when these communities would be dead, but a reserve of their living and dynamic cultures – when they are preserved.

Conclusion

The discussion has elaborately demonstrated that Botswana lacks a coherent socio-political discourse to meaningfully handle the question of the Khoisan ethno-linguistic communities. By insisting on the ideals that create a monolithic social entity, the country makes an unfortunate choice of rendering itself incompetent to respond to the mishandled question of its Khoisan communities. Preservation and promotion of cultures and languages require concrete measures that will see communities such as the Khoisan empowered to do what is best for themselves. It is therefore evident that if the country could opt for multicultural discourse' framework, in all socio-political domains, it could augment strategies for positive management of agitations for ethnic identity that Khoisan communities have manifested. This could evidently respond to their aspirations of self-esteem and the re-confirmation of their cultural values and identities. And in these multicultural discourse' perspective, a patent demonstration of the worth of a human community can be made. Botswana should review its national and institutional policies that have a bearing on multiculturalism and multilingualism and ensure that all ethnic and linguistic groups are taken on board. A refusal of hegemony and assimilation associated with the agenda to create a monolithic state would be liberating for the Khoisan. If this is disregarded, the Khoisan languages and culture would experience dearth and eventual death. This would be one of the greatest human tragedies in the modern times.

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