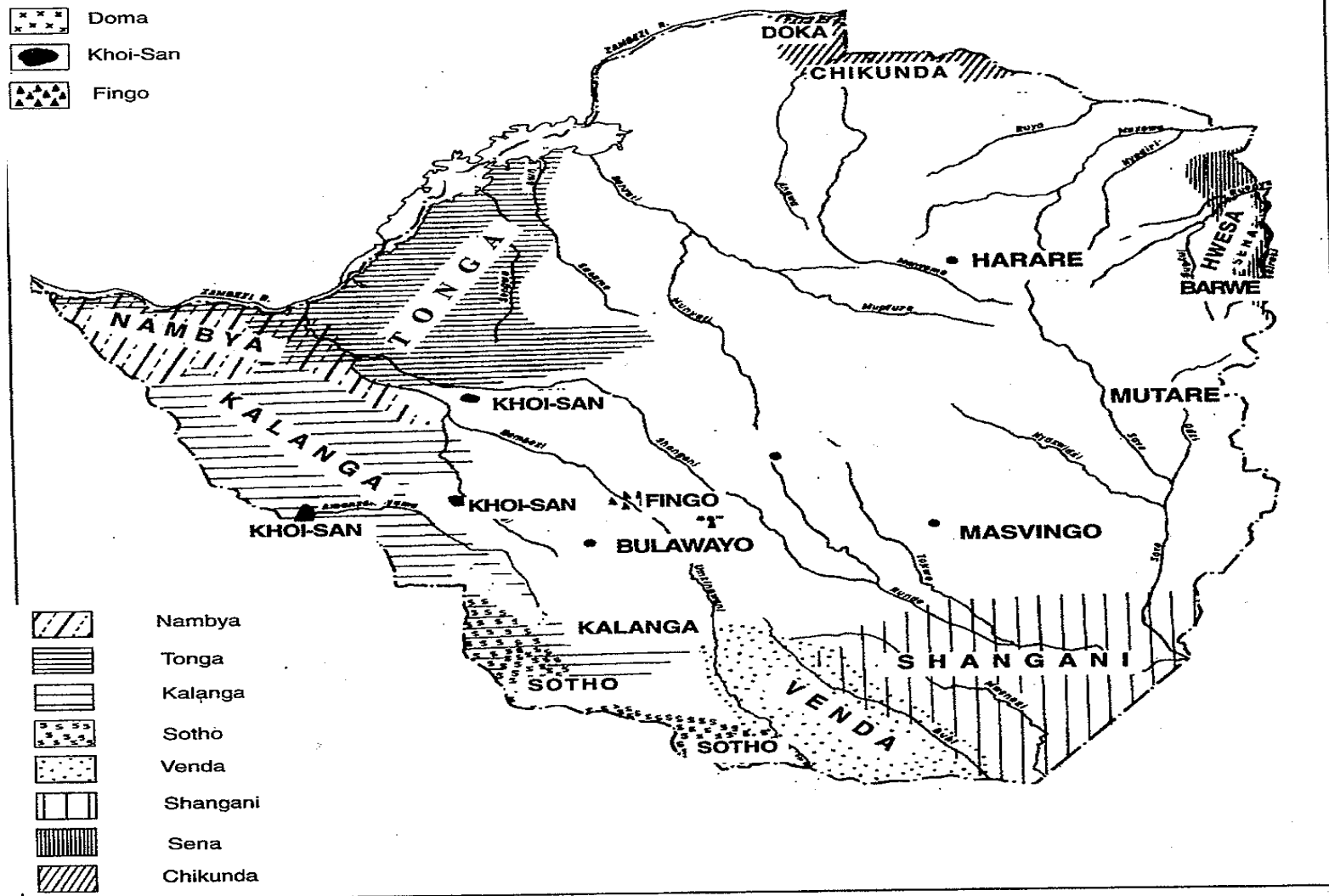


Tshawo, the Endangered Language of Zimbabwe

- The paper seeks to answer the following:
 - What factors influence the endangerment of Tshawo, the San language in Zimbabwe?
 - How effective are the efforts being made to rescue the language from extinction?

Location of the San in Zimbabwe



Areas of Minority Languages in Zimbabwe

Source: Hachipola (1998)

Tshwao Language Situation

- Tshwao has less than 20 active speakers who are aged between 60-90 years (Ndlovu 2014:8)
- They number about 2500 (Creative Arts & Education Development Association (CAEDA) census 2013).

Tshwao Language Situation

- Classification of Tshwao
- No listing of the Tshara-Tshwao or Tshwao language
- Some websites link them with Tsoa of Botswana
<http://languageshellyeah.tumblr.com/post/4274593897/endangered-language-tsoa>
- Tsoa is an endangered language with 9000 speakers in Botswana and Zimbabwe
- www.ethnologue.com/language/hio
- Tsoa has 3000 speakers in Botswana (2006), 6540-total in Botswana and Zimbabwe

Tshwao Language Situation

- Ethnologue further classifies Tsoa as ISO 639-3 [hio-](#) and gives its status as:
 - shifting
 - used by few children

Factors influencing endangerment of Tshwao

- Misrepresentations in literature: History texts
- Mukanya (1997) in *Dynamics of History: Book 1*
 - Batwa or Abatwa – from (butwa-grass), thus term means short people who disappear in grass because they are shorter than grass.
- Sibanda, Moyana and Gumbo (1998: 36) in *The African Heritage: Book 1*
 - Some San descendants continue to live in some parts of Central and Southern Africa

Misrepresentations Constitution

Zimbabwe Constitution (2013), Chapter 1,
Section six (1):

- “The following languages, namely, Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, **Khoisan**, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Sign language ,Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa are the officially recognized languages of Zimbabwe”.
- Geographers: maps have **Khoisan** language

Research in other San Communities

- **Lack of research-** Remain unknown, forgotten
- Lee 2003:176, Hitchcock 2012 Sylvain (2002) observe how other San groups in the region have benefited from interdisciplinary research on their various sectors

Factors influencing endangerment of Tshwao

Colonial and post-colonial policies

- Colonial
 - The Game and fish Preservation Act (1929)
- Post-colonial
 - The Rural District Act (1988, amended 2002)

Implications for the San language

- They had to learn the employers' languages in order to increase employment chances.
- They shift to Kalanga and Ndebele for material benefits
 - Their linguistic assimilation is a route to escape from poverty
 - There is no indication that they see shifting as a desirable outcome
 - Sour relations, San are called Amasili (silly)

Efforts to resuscitate Tshwao

- Creative Arts and Education Development Association (CAEDA) aims to:
- To raise awareness of existence of the San in Zimbabwe
- To revive Tshwao language and culture through:
- Orthography writing
- Text book writing
- Writing Tshwao school syllabus for Grades. 1-2

Achievements

- New Constitution recognises Tshwao language
- San now celebrates events like International Mother Language Day, International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- Produced an online dictionary with 70 entries.
- They have written a book on Tshwao culture
Tikwa Tshwao Kwi

Challenges

- Challenges and intervention strategies
- Tshwao vocabulary limited to hunter-gatherer life- need for term creation
- Syllabus – no orthography
- CAEDA does not seem to focus on efforts that prioritise increasing Tshwao oral communication in their advocacy work

Conclusion

- Efforts being made to revive Tshwao need to be supported.
- Tshwao language revival strategies need to prioritise oral competence for speakers as well.

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