The mutual interdependence of ethnology and linguistic prehistory (in the Kalahari Basin)

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Origins of language (a linguistic question?)
Origins of symbolic thought (an anthropological/ethnological question?)

Origins of language in narrative, especially mythology.  
*Language (at least its cognitive aspect) is not about communication!*
Research Practices in the Study of Kinship
Alan Barnard and Anthony Good

1984

Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa
ALAN BARNARD
1992

History and Theory in Anthropology
Alan Barnard
2000

Anthropology and the Bushman
Alan Barnard
2007

Social Anthropology and Human Origins
ALAN BARNARD
2011

Genesis of symbolic thought
[2012]

History of anthropology
Khoisan studies
Kinship
Human origins
*(especially origins and evolution of language and symbolic thought)*
Outline of the paper

Brief theoretical background

Studying kinship in the Kalahari Basin, as an aid to recent prehistory

Further back in time: myth, language, earlier prehistory …
Language family (W. Jones, J. Grimm …)

Sprachbund / linguistic area (N. Trubetzkoy, 1923)

Kulturkreis / culture circle (L. Frobenius, 1898; F. Graebner, W. Schmidt …)

Culture area (1890s museum work; C. Wissler, A.L. Kroeber …)

Ethnologisch studieveld / ethnological field of study (J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, 1935 …)

Regional structural comparison (A. Kuper, 1979 …)
Language family versus Sprachbund

(In anthropological terms, diffusion versus culture contact)
Leo Frobenius

- Notion of ‘culture circles’ (*Kulturkreise*) ...
- **Ethiopian**: cattle, cultivation, patrilineality, ancestor cults, cults of the earth, etc.
- **Hamitic**: cattle, hunting, matrilineality, sorcery, avoidance of the dead, etc.
Wissler’s age-area hypothesis. Which is more likely?

a. Older aspects of culture more likely in the **centre** of a culture area

b. Older aspects of culture more likely on the **periphery** of a culture area

c. Older aspects of culture **equally likely** in the centre or the periphery

Clark Wissler (right)
oldest items of culture

newer items of culture
Leiden structuralism

• J.P.B de JOSSELIN de JONG (1935), University of Leiden
  ‘Fields of ethnological study’, each defined by a common ‘structural core’ (but with local variations to be studied in detail)

• ADAM KUPER (1979), University of Leiden, Brunel University
  ‘Regional structural comparison’ in Africa
Collecting kinship/relationship terms

Step 1
Collect terms
Make sure phonology is correct
Get basic meanings
Get basic structure (and sometimes idealize it)

Step 2
Check reciprocals, and extent of classification (universal?)
Difference between reference and address?
… someone else’s and one’s own?
Get details of nuance, metaphorical usage, close vs distant kin …
Get details of alternative terms, their specific meanings, when used …
Other categories (e.g., joking/avoidance)
Look for unusual things (e.g., verbal kin terms in Khoe languages: use of suffix –ku or –gu)

Step 3
Work out how they relate to the rest of kinship
The rest of kinship (step 3)

Rules of naming (Ju/oan, Naro: grandparent → grandchild, Khoekhoe, Hai//om: cross/alternating descent name lines  
Do namesakes share ‘substance’, anything else?)
Rules of incest (and taboos of sitting, speaking …)
Rules of marriage (cousins, cross-cousins, half-siblings …)
Rules of postmarital residence (e.g., ambilocal, uxorivirilocal …)
Rights to residence in a place (e.g., rights to nlore membership)
Rights to resources
Rules of descent (and de facto kin groups)
Gift giving (at birth, at marriage …)
Formal prestations different from ordinary gifts? Given by? Why?
Cosmology (do animals have kinship? heavenly bodies? deities?)
Kinship in myth …
Place of kinship in initiation (e.g., place of grandparents)
Beliefs about rituals
Ordinary kinship behaviour
Breaking the rules (acceptable? sanctions? …)
etc.
What is the kinship system of the baboons? Do they have incest taboos? Do they obey them? Why not?

Are baboons people? How do baboons talk? Do baboons talk? How does Mantis talk to baboons?

Why are baboons not called baboons, but by a circumlocution (people who are different)?

In myth, what do baboons signify? Are they good/bad; what are their characteristics?

etc.
Three levels of abstraction

1.

2.

3.
‘Structural analysis in linguistics and in anthropology’, original in *Word* (1945), reprinted in *Structural Anthropology*
terminology

behaviour

language

'psychology'
(structures of thought)

ancient modes
of behaviour

present-day terminology

KROEBER (1909)

RIVERS (1968 [1914])

RADCLIFFE-BROWN (1952 [1941])
Ju/'hoan relationship terminology: basic structure
(ego is named after a grandparent – his FF)
Ju/'hoan relationship terminology:
an alternative structure
*(ego is named after an uncle – his FB)*
G/wi relationship terminology
(no naming system)
Naro (Nharo) relationship terminology
(ego must be named after a tsxõ or mama)
**Ju/'hoan relationship terminology: basic structure**  
(ego is named after a grandparent)

**Ju/'hoan relationship terminology: an alternative structure**  
(ego is named after an uncle)

**G/wi relationship terminology**

**Naro (Nharo) relationship terminology**


The language of myth

Wilhelm H.I. Bleek
1825-1875

Lucy C. Lloyd
1834-1914

Dorothea F. Bleek
1873-1948
/Han ≠kass’ō

Lucy Lloyd’s Bushman Notebook VIII – 12
(BC151_A2_1_087)
Lucy Lloyd’s Bushman Notebook VIII – 12
(BC151_A2_1_087), pages 7076-7077
She liked it, Thuan. Then, Thuan, maia he me kui, maia exclaimed, 

"No kanika a, I desire that thou shalt say to Faw, Rakkaa. Noi, father, why

is it that paid?

in front of their father continues to go among strangers?" Then

Thuan.
Then thing which /Kuamman-a this (imperative) say:

ʻÑ kaň ka, a ≠kákka !kóïñ,
‘I (stress) say to you say/ask grandfather,

"Why (interrogative) it is grandfather

(t haar action) (continuous action) among go

!ké ē /χárra?’
people who [are] different?”
Then /kọamāmaⁿ-a demanded: ‘I say to you: ask grandfather: “Why is it that grandfather continues to go among people who are different?”’
A description of habitually continuous action (\textit{ta /kŭ /ē //ē}), in an implied declarative sentence, within an interrogative sentence, within an imperative sentence, within another imperative sentence, within an indicative sentence …

within a myth or fable in which animals act as people, but in culturally-meaningful stylized form, and with deception …

told to an English woman by a /Xam man, who had learned it from his mother, who had heard it probably from her mother, who had learned it probably from someone else …

who had put it together with culturally-significant (human and animal) social action, with metaphor and with complex syntax …

for a reason well beyond the requirements of ordinary communication.
Gaunu-tsaxau, the son of Mantis, is collecting sticks for his father to use as arrows — to shoot at baboons. But some baboons capture him, beat him up, and break his head. They kill him, take his eye out and use it as a ball — which they fight over.

The narrative turns out to be a dream that Mantis is dreaming. But it seems to be true as well. And when Mantis wakes up, he joins in the baboon’s ball game. Hence /Kuamman-a’s question:

> Then /kụamman demanded: ‘I say to you: ask grandfather: Why is it that grandfather continues to go among people who are different?’
The child’s eye smells his father’s scent, and it avoids the baboons. Mantis catches his child's eye and anoints it with his perspiration. It ascends into the sky, and eventually hides in a quiver which ends up in the hands of Mantis.

Later Mantis places the eye in water and thereby restores life to the child.

At the end of the myth, Mantis explains to Ichneumon (mongoose), and to the child !Gaunu-tsaxau, why he played ball with the baboons – which was in order to secure !Gaunu-tsaxau’s release and rebirth. …
The narrator repeats elements of the story, revealing that Ichneumon doubts that !Gaunu-tsaxauu had really died.

Reassurance is given that !Gaunu-tsaxauu is weak, apparently proof that he really had died.

*The myth has elements of deception, pretended deception, and the deliberate misuse of kinship terms (three times, Mantis incorrectly refers to !Gaunu-tsaxauu as his grandson, when in fact !Gaunu-tsaxauu is Mantis’s son).*
Second Out of Africa migration

(Homo sapiens, bearing symbolic culture)
Linguistic complexity cannot be explained as a product of conversation or even communication

- The mean number of affixes in an Inuit dialect is 450
- Navajo has 11 classificatory verb stems
- Swahili has 18 noun classes
- Naro has 86 PNG markers

- /Xam has at least 24 verbal prefixes and 6 verbal suffixes, at least 14 ways to make a plural, etc.

- *Why are languages so complicated?*
Kinship and myth in world context: *Africa* (flexible kinship systems) or *Australia* (highly structured kinship systems)?
The social and symbolic worlds of *Homo sapiens sapiens* depend on kinship and on narrative, and in particular, upon mythology. *Homo sapiens sapiens* are, fundamentally, hunter-gatherers.

The same myths and characters are found on different continents, famously eaglehawk (eagle) and crow, and fox trickster figures. Likewise, the same kinship structures (Australian, and some South American and Asian systems are highly structured)

Why is that?
Symbolic thought (as far as we know) began in southern Africa. Is that relevant?

Where and when did language begin?