

Opposing sound shifts involving alveolar and palatal clicks (! ~ †) in the !Ui subgroup of TUU languages from southern Africa

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In a study based on a limited set of comparative series for TUU, Güldemann (2005: 23) noted that a (post)alveolar click (!) (hereafter ‘alveolar’) in !Xam alternates with a palato-alveolar click (†) (hereafter ‘palatal’) in N!uu and other TUU varieties.¹ Güldemann postulated a reconstruction for each series where his proto-forms all feature an initial palatal click (†).

The arrays now presented here in Tables 1, 2 and 3² include several more series, as well as comparative data for KHOE. This facilitates a closer study of the ! ~ † alternation, particularly in !Xam and N!uu. The brief notes given here will suggest at least three distinct patterns, where one involves a shift from alveolars to palatals (! > †), another, the *opposing* shift, from palatals to alveolars († > !), and yet another, an alternation (! ~ †) where the direction of shift is indeterminate.

Considering Table 1, it is apparent, firstly, that there is a wholesale pattern of shift, where both ingressive click *and* egressive (‘non-click’) initial alveolars in !Xam reflect as palatals in N!uu (t, d, !) > (c, j, †). Secondly, the inclusion of KHOE data³ reveals that a high proportion of the !Ui words are adopted. That the direction of borrowing in these cases is from Khoekhoe into !Ui, and that the direction of shift is indeed alveolar > palatal (in N!uu) is suggested by the evidence of other loanwords. One of these is the N!huki name for *Tweerivieren* (‘Two Rivers’), recorded by Ernst Westphal (c. 1953–57)⁴ as †*Ākhalnou* or †*Ākhalnou*. The equivalent in Namibian Khoekhoe (probably Nama) was recorded by Theophilus Hahn (1879)⁵ as !*Ākha†nous*, where !*ākha* is the masculine dual form of !*āb* ‘river’, making the name incontrovertibly Khoekhoe, since !Ui languages have an entirely different gender system.

¹ Various non-click consonants occur in place of the palatal click (†) in !Xegwi. These are not discussed here.

² Sources of data are listed at the end. Transcription conventions are those of original sources, and may not be accurate. Tone markings are omitted.

³ Comparative items from KHOE languages are supplied only where they are clearly the sources of items borrowed into !Ui.

⁴ See Westphal (n.d.), N!huki pronoun lists and grammatical notes. MS (unpaginated) housed in the Westphal Collection of the University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections, and available at <https://digitalcollections.lib.uct.ac.za/islandora/object/islandora%3A7658>

⁵ See Hahn (1879), Original Map of Great Namaqualand and Damaraland, 4th sheet. Drawing housed in the African Maps Collection of the University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections, and available at <https://digitalcollections.lib.uct.ac.za/collection/islandora-29968>

Subset 1a consists of a few cases where the pattern does not hold, and where an alveolar click (!) in a word borrowed from Khoekhoe is preserved in both !Xam and N!uu. Subset 1b shows a few cases where no source can be found in KHOE, and where the lexis is potentially original to TUU.

If we now turn to consider Table 2, and look *only* at the columns for !Xam and N!uu, it might seem that the identical pattern is manifested. But when we take the Khoekhoe data into account, it is clear that a semi-opposing shift is in play. Here, palatals in Khoekhoe as well as N!uu reflect in !Xam as alveolars, (‡ > !). The reason for assuming this directionality is that the word for ‘springhare’ has proved (Vossen 1997: 493) to be reconstructable for Proto-Khoe, as *‡o.

There is again a subset of cases (2a) where the pattern does not hold. For both subsets 1a and 2a, it is possible that these borrowings from Khoekhoe occurred at a different stage, when the sound shifts were not in effect. In this instance there is no subset 2b equivalent to 1b above, which might have indicated potentially original palatal-initial lexis. It transpires that it is difficult to find evidence of any palatal clicks (‡) in !Xam proper – that is, in words not borrowed from KHOE or restricted to Katkop.

Lastly, turning to Table 3, if we again look only at the columns for !Xam and N!uu, it might seem that the identical pattern is once more manifested. For these series, though, it has not been possible to find sources in Khoe, which leaves the direction of shift indeterminate, and allows us only to state an alternation (! ~ ‡). These items are possibly original to TUU.

These opposing sound shifts seem to warrant further investigation, but for such a purpose the comparative series will need expansion. Another factor perhaps deserving attention is the metalinguistic awareness of such sound shifts on the part of speakers themselves. For example, protagonists in !Xam folktales were sometimes characterised by a distinctive form of speech involving the alteration of certain sounds (Bleek 1936). Of note here is that !Kabbo⁶ rendered the direct speech of the Mantis by replacing alveolar clicks with palatal ones (! > ‡).⁷

Sources of data for the tables (with language names in standard English where possible)

TUU: !Xam, Katkop: Du Plessis (in preparation); N!uu: Sands and Jones (2022); !Xegwi: Lanham and Hallows (1956); !Xoon: Traill (1994).

KHOE: Namibian (Nama, Dama, Heilom): Haacke and Eiseb (2002); South African (Kora): Du Plessis (2018); Naro: Visser (2001); Khwe: Kilian-Hatz (2003); Other Kalahari (Shua, Deti): Vossen (1997).

NTU (or Bantu): Xhosa: McLaren (1963); Sotho: Mabile and Dieterlin (1988).

⁶ This name, really better spelled as !Kabo, was the Khoekhoe name (meaning ‘dream’) of the !Xam speaker known in his own language as Kx’ānisō, and in Colonial Dutch as Jantjie Tooren.

⁷ See comment by Lucy Lloyd on the reverse of p. 2293 in Wilhelm Bleek’s MS notebook 24, available online at <http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/>

Table 1. Pattern A (t, d > c, j) and (! > ɕ): where |Xam and Khoekhoe alveolars (t, d, !) > N|uu palatals (c, j, ɕ).

Gloss	!Ui (TUU)		Taa (TUU)	KHOE		Notes
	Xam	N uu, Katkop ¹	!Xoon	Khoekhoe ²	Kalahari	
Data set 1: Xam alveolar (t, d, !) > N uu palatal (c, j, ɕ) < Khoekhoe source t, d, !						
finish	toa	coa		toa	toa (Naro)	
need, lack	tôa	jôa'a		tôa		
salt lick, pan		jebe		dabe-s		
throat	dom	jum		dom-mi		
egg ³	!kui-ten (pl.)	ɕui-ke (pl.)	ɕguhi ('rotten')	!upu-s	ɕ'ubi (Khwe), 'yubi (Deti)	
neck ⁴	!khau		ɕkx'aõ	!aos		
honey, bee	!khau	ɕhau		!habu-b 'bee'		Xhosa <i>isi-gcawu</i> 'spider, noxious insect'
headcloth	!khī	ɕqhii		!khai-b		Xhosa <i>i-qhiya</i> ; S. Sotho <i>qhai</i>
speak with	(ɕkoä) ⁵	ɕxoa (N uu, Kat)		!hoa		
Data subset 1a: Xam alveolar = N uu alveolar (! = !), < Khoekhoe source ! (no shift, possibly recent borrowings)						
person w. special powers	!gīxa	g!aixa	g xai ⁶ 'magical power'	!gai-ao-b		Xhosa <i>u-gqira</i> 'doctor', S. Sotho <i>le-qega</i> 'alt. name for <i>lethuela</i> '
gun	!kabu (~ ɕkabu)	!'abu (N uu)		!apu-s		Xhosa <i>gqabhu</i> (ideo.) 'of bursting'
axe	!kō	!'oo	!oo 'knife'	!ō-s	boo (Naro)	
ground, earth ⁷	!kx'āu (~ !āu)	!'āu		!'au-b (Kora)		
three	!noara (~ !nwana) ^{8,9}	n!oona (~ n!oana)		!nona	n!oana (Naro)	
Data subset 1b: Xam alveolar = N uu alveolar (! = !), no sources in Khoekhoe (possibly original lexis)						
grandmother	!koeke	!uuki (~ !uike)				
person	!ku (~ !kui)	!ui				S. Sotho <i>bō-Qhu</i> 'San people' (derog.)
1. Data reflect N uu, unless labelled Katkop. 2. Unless otherwise indicated, Khoekhoe data reflect Namibian varieties. 3. Proposed (Güldemann 2005: 26) as Proto-Tuu *gɕu(i). 4. Proposed (Güldemann 2005: 25) as Proto-Tuu *ɕkx'a(-u). 5. A notable exception. 6. A lateral click is similarly seen in a small subset of other series (not discussed here). 7. Proposed (Güldemann 2005: 27) as Proto-Tuu *!'ā(u). 8. Diphthongisation occurred regularly in Xam and Xegwi, as well as Kora, often in association with labialisation. 9. A medial alternation n ~ r frequently occurred in Xam, probably by consecutive nasal dissimilation.						

Table 2. Pattern B (! < †): where |Xam alveolars (!) < N|uu and Khoekhoe palatals (†).

Gloss	!Ui (TUU)		Taa (TUU)	KHOE		Notes
	Xam	N uu, Katkop	!Xoon ¹	Khoekhoe	Kalahari	
Data set 2: Xam alveolar (!) < N uu and Khoekhoe palatal (†) < Khoekhoe source †						
springhare	!gō			†gō-b	jo, dyo (Shua)	
knife, blade	!goara	n†ona (~ n†una)		(†nautsi-)†nora-b ‘sword’ (Kora)		Xhosa <i>in-gcola</i> ‘short assegai’
assent, believe	!hum		†gum ‘agree’	†gom	†om (Naro)	
drag, pull	!xai, !khai	†xai (~ †xaea) (N uu), †kē (Kat)		†gae (Nama), †ae (~ †ai) (Kora)	†ee (Naro)	
Data subset 2a: Xam palatal (†) = N uu palatal (†) < Khoekhoe source † (no shift, possibly recent borrowings)						
think, know	†ē (~ †ī)	†’i	†’an-si	†’ai	†’ēe (Naro)	
want, need	†kao	†ao		†gao	†ao ‘lack’ (Naro)	
glisten, shine	†xī			†khai (Nama), †xai, †xī (Kora)		
1. Although only a few cognates are found in !Xoon, they nevertheless suggest an occasional co-patterning of N uu with Taa rather than !Ui.						

Table 3. Pattern C (t ~ c) and (! ~ †): involving |Xam alveolars (t, !) and N|uu palatals (c, †), with no KHOE sources found.

Gloss	!Ui (TUU)			Taa (TUU)	
	Xam	N uu	Xegwi ¹	!Xoon	
Data set 3: Xam alveolar ((t, d, !) ~ N uu palatal (c, j, †)), (possibly original lexis)					
ostrich ²	tōe (~ tōi)	coe		quje	
mouth ³	tu	cu	t’u		
hear, listen	tu	cuu			
rib	!āu	†’aosi			
fall (of rain)	!gāu (~ kāu, kx’āu)	†qau	cheung	dts’kx’au-dts’kx’au ‘rain lightly’	
people	!ke	†ee	kl’e ⁴		
steenbok	!koeng (~ !kuing)	†un (W), †uny (E) ⁵			
chest, front	!khātu	†qhaa (†qhâa)	†agu		
pot	!khōa	†qoa	djwaa ⁶		
wind (n.) ⁷	!khoe	†qhoe	†wee	†qhue	
dog	!khuing	†hûn (W), †hûny (E)	klhuming (pl.)	g†xui	
winter	!nā	n†aa			
1. Absence of relevant KHOE data here creates space for inclusion of Xegwi cognates (where available), so as to provide a more complete illustration of comparative series across TUU – for interested readers. 2. Proposed (Güldemann 2005: 26) as Proto-Tuu *qoc. 3. Proposed (Güldemann 2005: 25) as Proto-Tuu *thu. 4. ‘kl’ described (Lanham and Hallows 1956b: 103) as ‘a lateral affricate’. It is here ejected. 5. The letters ‘W’ and ‘E’ refer to Western and Eastern dialects. 6. ‘dj’ described (Lanham and Hallows) as ‘a voiced prepalatal affricate’. 7. Proposed (Güldemann 2005: 27) as Proto-Tuu *†(k)hue, *†(k)hoe.					

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