

WHAT IS RUKAVANGO?

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is in formulating a framework where the relationship between such units as toponyms, ethnonyms and glossonyms is established in a systematic way. This framework is better presented using Bantu languages in which toponyms, ethnonyms and glossonyms correlate through the same stems.

Keywords: toponym, ethnonym, glossonym, language, Bantu

INTRODUCTION

The Kavango is a helpful illustration of the claim that labels are more important in a discussion about linguistic diversity than is commonly realised (Lusakalalu 2001). Labels include toponyms, ethnonyms and glossonyms. Toponyms are names of places and usually of the areas surrounding them. Labels such as Rundu, Nkurenkuru, Divundu, Bagani, Nyangana and Kavango are toponyms. Ethnonyms are names of groups of people. These can have a singular as well as a plural form, the singular form denoting the belonging of individuals to the groups. Labels such as Mukwangali/Vakwangali, Mugciriku/Vagciriku, Musambyu/Vasambyu and Mumbukushu/Hambukushu are singular and plural forms of ethnonyms. Glossonyms are names of languages and varieties of languages. Labels such as Rukwangali, Rugciriku, Rusambyu and Thimbukushu are glossonyms.

In many cases there is a connection between toponyms, ethnonyms and glossonyms, as demonstrated in Lusakalalu (2001). For example, the toponym Gciriku, the ethnonyms Mugciriku/Vagciriku and the glossonym Rugciriku are formed by prefixing a morpheme to the stem *-gciriku*. The toponym is regarded as having a *zero prefix*, the ethnonyms have the prefix *mu-* in the singular and *va-* in the plural, while the glossonym has the prefix *ru-*.

This toponym-ethnonym-glossonym correlation does not, however, imply a perfect correlation of the realities they label. It cannot be said, for example, that a Mugciriku is always a Rugciriku-speaking person living in the area referred to as Gciriku. In other words, the correlation is mainly – probably only – in the labels. The reality is that a glossonym label is a glossonymic unit (Lusakalalu 2001). The glossonymic unit Rugciriku does not necessarily correspond to the ethnonymic unit labelled by the ethnonyms Mugciriku/Vagciriku or to the

toponymic unit labelled with the toponym Gciriku. This idea needs to be pursued in detail, starting with what the label Kavango represents.

1. WHAT IS THE KAVANGO?

The Kavango can refer to the river Kavango. The name of a river, or hydronym, is a type of toponym. The same toponym can also refer to the region where the river flows. However, this is not at all clearcut, because it cannot be said how far from the river banks the Kavango area goes. The political-administrative division of Namibia called Kavango region is a well-delimited geographic territory, as traced on a map, but it does not always correspond to the toponymic unit Kavango. This is mainly due to the toponym-ethnonym correlation Kavango-Vakavango. Because the ethnonymic unit Vakavango includes the Vakwangali, the Vagciriku, the Vasambyu and the Hambukushu of Angola, the toponymic unit Kavango necessarily extends to the area where the villages of those people are situated. The toponymic unit Kavango also extends to the swampy river delta inside Botswana.

This means at least three important issues. First, the geographic limits of the toponymic unit Kavango can no longer be assessed. In the more bushy parts of Angola there is no telling which tree belongs to the Kavango and which belongs further north. Second, this idea beats any perception that toponymic, ethnonymic and glossonymic units can depend on official recognition. There is no area officially recognised as Kavango in Angola. The Portuguese having been masters in the europeanisation of local names, the river is called Cubango and the Angolan political-administrative division the province of Cuando-Cubango. The second part of this compound toponym denotes another river, the Cuando (or Kwandu if a more appropriate orthographic representation is used), which is regarded as an important hydrographic mark in that province.

The third important aspect is that two or more toponyms, even in different languages, can label the same toponymic unit. For example, the toponym Kavango labels the same toponymic unit as Cubango, when they label the river. By analogy two or more ethnonyms can label the same ethnonymic unit. Similarly two or more glossonyms can label the same glossonymic unit (see Lusakalalu 2001). It will be argued below that the glossonym Rukavango labels a glossonymic unit that the Hambukushu would refer to as Thikavango.

Following this argument, the toponym Kavango, not the river but the geographic area on the river banks and the delta swamps, must be considered as labelling two different toponymic units, one larger than and including the other. The smaller one is the political-administrative region in the North-east of Namibia. The larger one includes the area on the other bank of the river inside Angola where the Vakwangali, the Vagciriku, the Vasambyu and the Hambukushu of Angola are concentrated, as well as the Kavango delta swamps in Botswana. It is in Angola that the Portuguese based toponyms Cuangar (for

Kwangali), Dirico (for Gciriku) and Mucusso (for Mbukusu) label small towns not far from the riverbank.

2. WHO ARE THE KAVANGOS?

Citing the categorisation used by the South African administration, the Kavangos are one of the five Bantu-speaking groups of Namibia, the other four being the Owambos, the Hereros, the Tswanas and the Caprivians. The labels of two of the five groups, 'Kavangos' and 'Caprivians', are, as Maho (1998: 13) notes, "actually geographic terms covering several Bantu-speaking groups". This remark is important because these labels are meant to be ethnonyms. It is demonstrated in Lusakalalu (2001) that the ethnonym *Owambos*, for example, although with an uncertain etymological origin, must have started as an ethnonym. The related toponym and glossonym stemmed from the ethnonym. In the case of *Kavangos*, the toponym produced the ethnonym.

Although the word Kavango is not Europeanised, it must be noted that the phrase 'the Kavango' is an English phrase. In English, names of rivers and of some regions take the definite article 'the' as in the Thames, the Mississippi and the Middle East. So, the toponym 'the Kavango' lends itself to English syntactic analysis. This is the same with the phrase 'the Kavangos', syntactically as well as morphologically. For example, the morpheme -s indicating that this is the plural form of the ethnonym is part of the structure in English. Terms like 'Hereros' and 'Tswanas' have been used above on purpose in order to be consistent with 'Kavangos'. They are English ethnonyms. Their African equivalents are Ovaherero, Batswana and Vakavango. The plural morpheme is prefixed in the structure of the languages where these words are found.

It is also argued in Lusakalalu (2001) that Owambos (or Ovambos) as an ethnonym is an English ethnonym. To conform to the morphology of the local languages, the local ethnonym, though a coined word, must be *Aawambo* in some varieties and *Ovawambo* in others. *Owambo* must be a toponym. A morphological discussion of the ethnonym 'Caprivians' is not so relevant, as the stem of that word is a European anthroponym anyway.

Coming back to the Kavangos, a relevant question would be whether the ethnonym, being a geographic term, is suitable for labelling one of the Bantu-speaking groups of Namibia, as the South African administration did, rather than all the inhabitants of the geographic space known as Kavango. This is what Gibson et al. (1981: 1)¹ says: the ethnonym 'Kavangos' refers to all the inhabitants of the Kavango, including the Ovakwanyama living in the western part of the region, Khoesaa speakers like the Kxoe and the Ju/'hoan, Afrikaans speakers and descendants of Angolan immigrants to the region from further north, referred to as the Vanyemba.

¹ Taken up again in Maho (1998: 36).

Maho (1998: 18) is right to point out that “the sub-grouping of Namibians is not as clear as the use of labels might suggest”. If the Kavangos are one group and the Owambos another, can it be said that some Ovakwanyama, who are surely part of a subgroup of Owambos, must be classified as Kavangos because they live in western Kavango? This question actually suggests that any official proclamation can be questioned. This paper will come back to this aspect in the question whether a language is a glossonymic unit that has been officially declared ‘a language’.

The fact that the ethnonym ‘Kavangos’ derives from the toponym Kavango could therefore lead to a common sense perception that it should refer to all the inhabitants of the Kavango, especially on the Namibian bank of the river. This would mean that the ethnonymic unit labelled with the ethnonym ‘Kavangos’ cannot always be quite the same as that labelled with the ethnonym Vakavango. The ethnonym Vakavango labels two ethnonymic units. First, it is the cover term for the Vakwangali, Vagciriku, Vasambyu and Hambukushu, who all speak languages of the Bantu family. This is illustrated in Table 1, which also shows the correlation between toponyms, ethnonyms and glossonyms. Second, since there must be a way for these Bantu-speaking people to also refer to the inhabitants of the Kavango in general, it also means the same as the English ethnonym ‘Kavangos’.

Toponyms	Ethnonyms		Glossonyms
	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
Kwangali	Mukwangali	Vakwangali	Rukwangali
Gciriku	Mugciriku	Vagciriku	Rugciriku
Sambyu	Musambyu	Vasambyu	Rusambyu
Mbukushu	Mumbukushu	Hambukushu	Thimbukushu
Kavango	Mukavango	Vakavango	Rukavango

Table 1.

The words in each row of Table 1 have the same stem. Each row therefore shows the toponym-ethnonym-glossonym correlation through the stem. In each column of the table the word in the bottom row is the cover term for those in the upper rows. So Kavango includes Kwangali, Gciriku, Sambyu and Mbukusu. A Mukavango refers to a Mukwangali, a Mugciriku, a Musambyu or a Mumbukushu, etc.

The difference in the prefix in the plural form of the ethnonym *Hambukushu* and that of the glossonym *Thimbukushu* implies that the Hambukushu will say Hakavango and Thikavango to refer respectively to the plural cover ethnonym and the cover glossonym. Hakavango and Vakavango are therefore the same ethnonymic unit. Rukavango and Thikavango also refer to the same glossonymic unit. Similarly, a Mukwangali, a Mugciriku and a Musambyu can refer to Thimbukushu as Rumbukushu. These two glossonyms label the same glossonymic unit.

The consistent toponym-ethnonym-glossonym correlation present in Table 1 represents a situation where the ethnonymic unit Vakavango does not mean anybody living in the Kavango area, but the Vakwangali, the Vagciriku, the Vasambyu and the Hambukushu, because the glossonym Rukavango represents a glossonymic unit that covers Rukwangali, Rugciriku, Rusambyu and Thimbukushu, all Bantu glossonyms.

At this point, an attempt at defining the coverage of the ethnonym *Kavangos* and its supposedly Bantu counterpart *Vakavango* could lead to the following reflections:

The Vakwangali, the Vagciriku, the Vasambyu and the Hambukushu of Namibia are 'Kavangos'. They are also Vakavango. Their Angolan relatives are also Vakavango, but it is not certain whether the English ethnonym 'Kavangos' can apply to Angolans.

The Namibian Khoesaaan speaking groups in the Kavango region in Namibia (the Kxoe and the Ju/'hoan) are 'Kavangos' and the Bantu speakers can also use the ethnonym Vakavango to refer to them, as argued earlier. However, the Khoesaaan speaking groups living inside Angola close to the Vakwangali and other Vakavango are neither 'Kavangos' nor Vakavango. It is hard to say on what basis these ethnonyms would refer to them.

What about the Ovakwanyama living in the western part of the Kavango region and other descendants of Oshiwambo-speaking groups living anywhere in the Kavango? Are they Owambos and Kavangos at the same time?

Although for purposes of official registration and census the Vanyemba living in Namibia can be labelled 'Kavangos', research must be done to find out whether the Vakwangali and other Bantu-speaking groups of the Kavango would be prepared to refer to them as Vakavango. Do the Vanyemba in fact use the ethnonym Vakavango to refer to themselves?

Finally these reflections lead to the hypothesis that there may grow a difference in the shade of meaning between the singular form Mukavango and the plural form Vakavango. While, by extension, the ethnonym Vakavango can refer to any groups living in the Kavango, as said earlier, it is uncertain whether a German-speaking Namibian living in the Kavango is a Mukavango. In other words, the use of the ethnonym Mukavango may be more than just the singular form of Vakavango.

Incidentally, there is a difference between the phrases 'the Kavango' and 'the Kavangos', which, as argued earlier, are English phrases, and the phrase 'a Mukavango'. The latter, although modified by the English indefinite article 'a', does not lend itself to English morphological analysis. Its plural cannot be formed by adding an English plural morpheme, which is suffixed, but a prefix as in a Bantu language.

3. IS RUKAVANGO A LANGUAGE?

A dialectometric study reported by Möhlig (1997) led to the conclusion that Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu are languages rather than varieties of the same language. One of the reasons why such a study might have been considered is the level of mutual intelligibility between the three languages, and the study proved that mutual intelligibility is not a criterion for telling a language from a variety of a language. It is no doubt on the ground of mutual intelligibility, however, that the news on the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) television in the slot named Rukavango are read by a Rukwangali, a Rugciriku, a Rusambyu or a Thimbukushu speaking newsreader. The treatment of Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu as three languages is also in agreement with Haugen's functional view of classifying languages as opposed to dialects.² Haugen (1972) considers two 'distinct dimensions involved in' the distinction between a language and a variety of a language: a structural dimension which looks into the structure of the language itself and a functional view that is 'descriptive of its social uses in communication'. The functional view includes the fact that a language may be a codified and standardised set of forms, and therefore be accorded an official status.

Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu are codified with a body of literature; they are used as mediums of instruction at lower primary level and taught as subjects at schools in Kavango Region up to senior secondary level. These languages are also taught at the Rundu teacher training college. In accordance to the functional view, the number of languages in Namibia can be said to be about thirteen. Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu are three of these 13 languages.

If Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu are languages, then the glossonymic unit Rukavango does not correspond to a language, but to a cluster of languages. The phrase 'Kavango languages' used by Möhlig (1997) could be more appropriate. However, the fact that a dialectometric study was carried out means that the study might have led to a different conclusion. Had the dialectometric tools shown that Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu were varieties of a language and not three different languages, a glossonym might have been needed to label that language. Rukavango might have been high on the list. Why? Because the glossonym is already there. It represents a certain reality. It exists thanks to the possibilities offered in the language or languages. The term glossonym productivity can be used to refer to these possibilities. It has been demonstrated in Lusakalalu (2001) that some languages have zero glossonym productivity.

Another question needs to be asked. Why does a dialectometric study lead to the conclusion that Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu are *three* languages and not *two* or *four*? In other words, why does the study find out that the languages coincide with existing/possible glossonymic units? The answer is

² Haugen (1972) cited by Maho (1998).

that a language must be a glossonymic unit. Since a study is needed to declare certain glossonymic units languages, then not all glossonymic units correspond to languages. Some are varieties of languages. The study did not say whether Rusambyu was a language or a variety of a language. If declared a variety of a language, or a dialect, the next question might have been: a variety of what language?

In the year 2000 the Rugciriku Curriculum Committee of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) became the Rumanyo Curriculum Committee. This was the first step in a process that would change the official name of a language. However, the glossonym Rumanyo is not a replacement for Rugciriku, but a representation of the idea that Rugciriku and Rusambyu are varieties of the same language. This means that two of the rows in Table 1 have become one. Table 2 represents the current correlation.

Toponyms	Ethnonyms		Glossonyms
	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
Kwangali	Mukwangali	Vakwangali	Rukwangali
Manyo	Mumanyo	Vamanyo	Rumanyo
Mbukushu	Mumbukushu	Hambukushu	Thimbukushu
Kavango	Mukavango	Vakavango	Rukavango

Table 2.

It is not possible to have Rumanyo and also Rugciriku and Rusambyu together in Table 2. A tree diagram representing only glossonyms, without its correlation with ethnonyms and toponyms will have them.

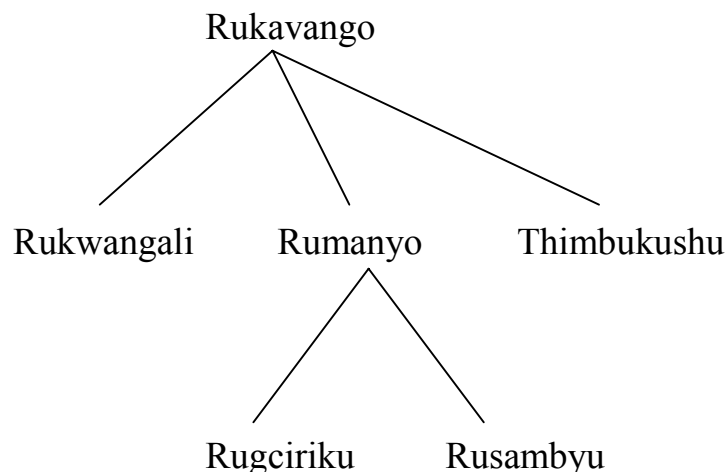


Diagram 1. Relation between glossonyms in Rukavango.

Diagram 1 shows that Rugciriku and Rusambyu are varieties of Rumanyo. The term *variety* is safer than the more technical term *dialect*, which should be used to indicate that a dialectological study has been conducted. Likwala (2000) points out that one of the most noticeable differences is the dental fricative

sibilant *s* sound in Rusambyu that tends to be the palatal *sh* sound in Rugciriku. Therefore Rusambyu is Rushambyu in Rugciriku. Mbukushu will be Mbukusu in Rusambyu. Maho (1998: 41) reports that there are also lexical differences between Rugciriku and Rusambyu, calling the latter *Shisambyu*, citing reliable sources in his study. If the autoglossonym, i.e., the name used by the Vasambyu, is Shisambyu, then the glossonym Rusambyu is used by the Vagciriku to refer to the glossonymic unit of the Vasambyu.

Diagram 1 also suggests that the glossonymic unit Rugciriku is not at the same level as the glossonymic units Rukwangali and Thimbukushu. Taking it as the name of a language is saying that the standard variety of a language is the language. That is what happens in category 2 languages. In Lusakalalu (2001) languages were placed in three categories. Category 1 languages have a glossonym labelling the language and glossonyms labelling the varieties. An example is the language Kikoongo whose varieties are called Kizoombo, Kinsooso, Kisolongo, etc. Category 2 languages do not have particular glossonyms labelling the varieties. The labels of the varieties all carry the same glossonym that labels the language, specifying where the variety is spoken. An example of Category 2 is Umbundu whose varieties are Umbundu from Mbalundu, Umbundu from Viye, Umbundu from Kakonda, etc. If one of the varieties is codified or standardised, it does not matter which one it is, because the language will still be Umbundu. If there are two or more standard varieties, there is no confusion about which glossonymic unit is the language, because there is only one. English is also a category 2 language and its standard varieties are called British English, American English, Australian English, etc. The glossonym is still the same, so that the varieties are not glossonymic units.

It was proposed in Lusakalalu (2001) that, where various glossonymic units can lay claim to the status of language, the glossonymic unit, which stands alone at a certain level, should probably be the language. This is category 3, the case of Oshiwambo, Otjiherero and Olunyaneka-Nkhumbi. It was also mentioned that even this particular glossonym was likely to still be contested in the language position, either because it was a more recently coined word (e.g. Oshiwambo) or it stood at two different levels (e.g. Otjiherero). Rukavango is an example of category 3, but one where the cover glossonym is derived from a toponym. Diagram 1 shows that Rukavango is alone at a certain level. It is contested as the language, namely when a scientific study, like the one by Möhlig (1997), concludes that the languages stand at a different level.

It would then appear that the problem has been resolved when Rukwangali, Rumanyo and Thimbukushu are declared languages, while Rugciriku and Rusambyu are varieties of Rumanyo, and Rukavango is just a glossonymic unit which involves all these glossonymic units. The glossonymic unit Rukavango is of course not the equivalent of the phrase Kavango languages used in linguistic literature, as the phrase should include non-Bantu languages. However, the language issue should not be resolved by looking at glossonyms alone. A diagram should be drawn containing toponyms rather than glossonyms, because the toponyms coincide with the stems from which the glossonyms are formed. A

possible difference between the glossonym diagram and the toponym diagram could then be discussed.

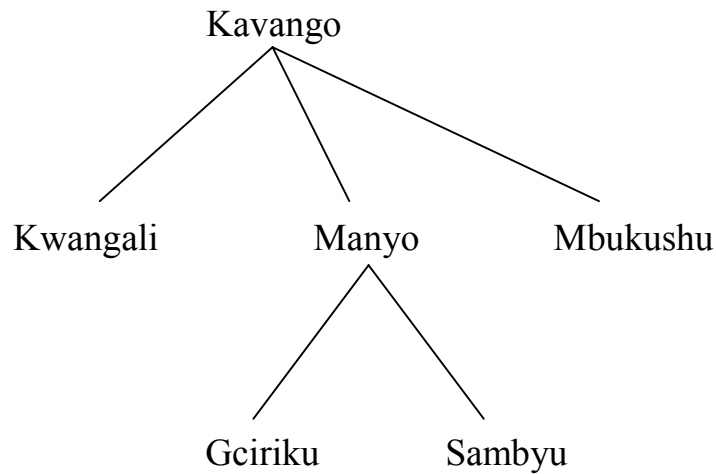


Diagram 2. Possible relation between toponyms in Rukavango.

Diagram 2 is meant to correlate with Diagram 1, but the correlation misses. The former suggests that the area where the Vagciriku and the Vasambyu are concentrated should be known as Manyo. That is not true. The stem *-manyo* does not correspond to any toponym. The reason for this is that the ethnonym *Vamanyo* and its counterpart glossonym *Rumanyo* have been brought back from the past. The Vagciriku and the Vasambyu were Vamanyo before they moved to the Kavango. No record shows that any place where the Vamanyo had passed through in their history was ever called Manyo. In other words, *-manyo* is the only stem in the group that is not geographic. Looking for the meaning of the stem *-manyo* would be an etymological exercise, that is, a diachronic study, while all the other labels in the group, toponyms, ethnonyms and glossonyms, correlate almost perfectly in synchronic analysis.

If a realistic diagram with the toponyms is drawn, it should look like Diagram 3.

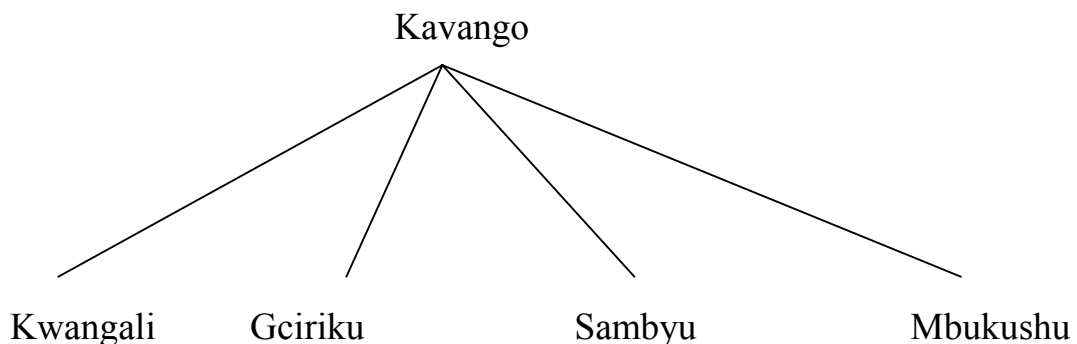


Diagram 3. Toponyms in the Kavango.

As Diagram 3 displays there is no intermediate toponym between Kavango, which is the whole area, and the individual areas where the four subgroups are concentrated. However, this diagram does not imply that the ethnonyms and

glossonyms deriving from the stems should relate at the same level. Diagram 1 has already suggested that Rukwangali, Rugciriku, Rusambyu and Thimbukushu are not at the same level.

Perhaps the correlation is closer between ethnonymic units and glossonymic units than it is between these and toponymic units. Diagram 4 shows a possibility of the relation between ethnonymic units. It tries to correlate with diagrams 1 and 2.

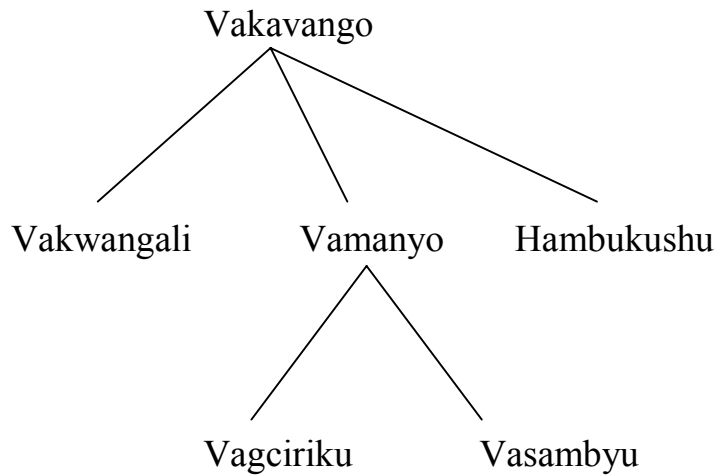


Diagram 4. Possibility of ethnonym relations in Rukavango.

Diagram 4 looks acceptable and correlates with the glossonym diagram. However, an ethnonym is missing from it. This ethnonym is Vambundza. It has been omitted from the discussion so far in this paper right from Table 1, because it does not correspond to a glossonymic unit. Although it is possible to say Rumbundza, i.e., the production of the glossonym is possible, it is a fact that there is no glossonymic unit labelled by this glossonym. The Vambundza speak Rukwangali. With the Vambundza in it, Table 1 might have looked like Table 3.

Toponyms	Ethnonyms		Glossonyms
	<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
Kwangali	Mukwangali	Vakwangali	Rukwangali
Mbundza	Mumbundza	Vambundza	—————
Gciriku	Mugciriku	Vagciriku	Rugciriku
Sambyu	Musambyu	Vasambyu	Rusambyu
Mbukushu	Mumbukushu	Hambukushu	Thimbukushu
Kavango	Mukavango	Vakavango	Rukavango

Table 3.

The fact that the glossonym Rumbundza sounds plausible is only the instinct that a glossonym can correlate with the ethnonym with the same stem. Oral tradition has it that there may have been in the past a Rumbundza glossonymic unit, corresponding to different language forms from Rukwangali, which have

been lost. Gibson et al (1981) also records this. That is another call for a diachronic study that cannot be plotted in a diagram, as it is remarked for Manyo above. However, the ethnonym Vambundza can be inserted in Diagram 4. At what level should it stand – beside Vakwangali and Vamanyo or beside Vagciriku and Vasambyu? This is not easy, because the ethnonym Vambundza, not corresponding to any glossonymic unit, should probably be below the ethnonyms Vagciriku and Vasambyu, which correspond to glossonymic units which are at least varieties of a language, Rumanyo. Diagram 5 presents a possibility.

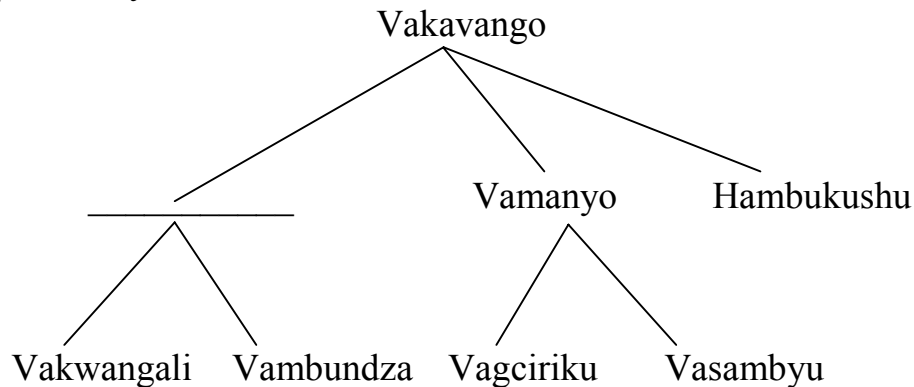


Diagram 5. Possibility of ethnonym relations in Rukavango, including Vambundza.

Diagram 5 is just a hypothesis, but it shows that the name Vamanyo, having been brought from the past through the slogan ‘Tuvamanyo kushakare’ or ‘We were Vamanyo in the past’ (Likuwa 2000), reminds of the fact that the Vakwangali and the Vambundza were also together in the past before they split. Only there is no ethnonym to refer to both of them together, as it happens with *Vamanyo* for the Vagciriku and the Vasambyu.

The complications do not end there if we go back in history and bring back memories of possible cover ethnonyms. Although there would still be no cover name for both the Vakwangali and the Vambundza, the relations would certainly become more complex, as Diagram 6 suggests.

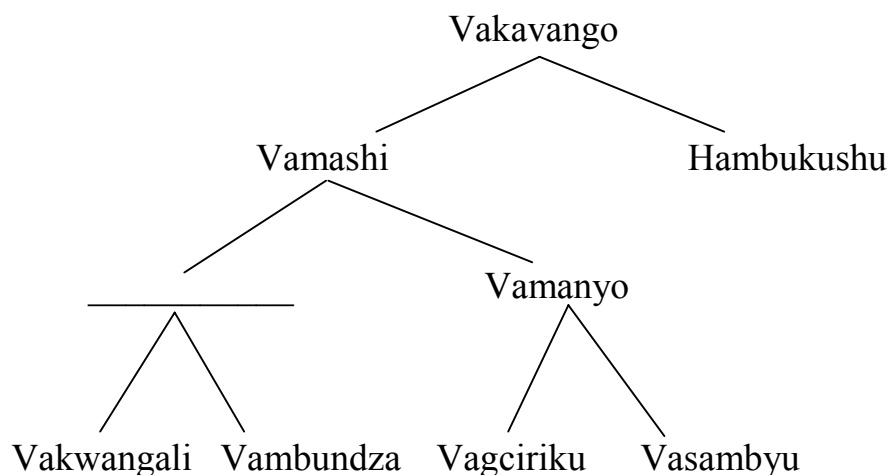


Diagram 6. Possibility of ethnonym relations in Rukavango, back to the Vamashi.

Diagram 6 reflects the account in Gibson et al (1981) that the Vakwangali, the Vambundza, the Vagciriku and the Vasambyu had been Vamasi or Vamashi, before they split into two groups, each of which subsequently split further into two. Likuwa (2000) also mentions the Mashi area in western Zambia, but only in connection with the Vamanyo. At least Mashi is a toponym, unlike Manyo, that does not seem to be one. However, even Mashi would not make it in a toponymic diagram, because it is not an area in present-day Kavango.

Diagram 6 also suggests that the Vakwangali, the Vambundza, the Vagciriku and the Vasambyu are at the same level, grouped in twos. It also suggests a way of reflecting the fact that these four groups are closer to each other, through the reconstructed ethnonym Vamashi, than they are to the Hambukushu. This is consistent with the historic hypotheses cited in Maho (1998). This degree of closeness and distance is confirmed in the dialectometric study by Möhlig (1997), who finds out that Rukwangali and Rugciriku are closer to each other than they both are to Thimbukushu. This can also account for the fact that the prefixes tagged to the stem *-mbukusu* are different in the plural form of the ethnonym *Hambukushu* and in the glossonym *Thimbukushu*. Diagram 7 shows what happens if a correlation is attempted between the ethnonymic relations shown in Diagram 6 and the glossonyms.

What may not be resolved by Diagram 7 is the level at which Thimbukushu stands in relation to Rukwangali and other glossonymic units. It may never be resolved whether Rukwangali should stand at the same level as Rumanyo or as Rugciriku. Whatever happens, the various possibilities demonstrate that Rukavango is indeed a Category 3 situation, and accepting that the glossonymic Rukavango could correspond to the language level may be the best option, on the grounds, as suggested in Lusakalalu (2001), that it stands on its own at a certain level and includes all.

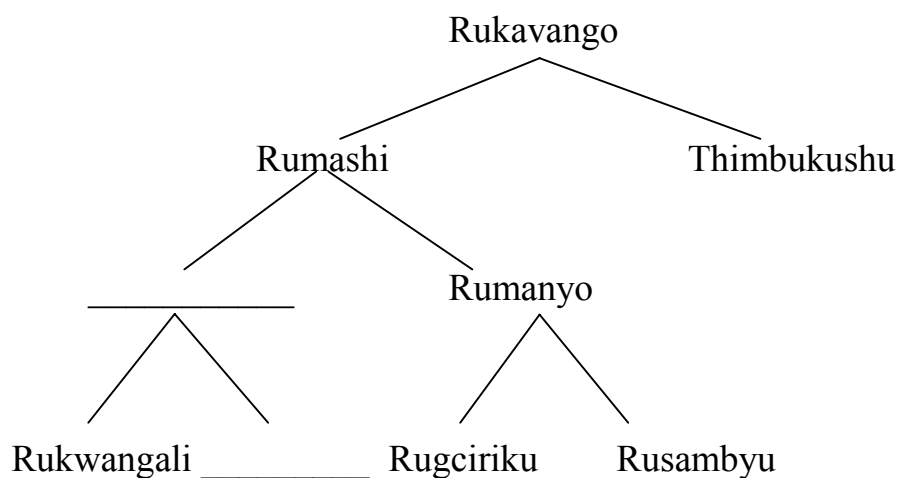


Diagram 7. Possibility of glossonym relations in Rukavango, correlating with ethnonyms.

Diagram 7, like Diagram 6, is a blend of synchronic and diachronic elements. This is possible with ethnonyms and glossonyms, although it would be absurd

with toponyms. The hypothetical reconstruction of Rumashi, to correlate with Vamashi, stands between Rumanyo, which has successfully been brought back from history, and Rukavango, which is a present-day possibility.

4. CONCLUSION

A discussion about language in the Kavango is bound to be centred around the Bantu component, with a small Khoesaaan element. The focus is in confirming a framework of study that claims that when counting languages what is counted is in fact glossonymic units. This framework is better presented using Bantu languages in which toponyms, ethnonyms and glossonyms correlate through the same stems.

The paper has demonstrated that, unless the glossonymic unit labelled Rukavango, which is alone at a certain level, is considered as a language, it is not easy to determine which other glossonymic units should be languages. Rukwangali, Rugciriku and Thimbukushu, which a dialectometric study like that by Möhlig (1997) has proven to be languages, do not seem to be unequivocally at the same level.

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