

Chapter 9

A Multi-purpose Orthography for Kxoe: Development and Challenges¹

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1. Introduction

The Kxoe language (*Kxóédam*, ‘Kxoe-tongue’ in their own words) is classified as a member of the NON-KHOEKHOE-subgroup of the Khoe languages. The total number of Kxoe – according to the census carried out by Brenzinger in 1996 and additional estimates – is approximately 8,000. Roughly 4,000 of them live more or less permanently in Namibia, 400 in East Caprivi and 3,600 in West Caprivi (Brenzinger 1998). While most of the major settlements of the Kxoe are in Namibia, Kxoe is also a Botswanan language, with approximately 2,000 Kxoe living there. In 1989 about 1,600 Kxoe left the then Southwest Africa together with the South African army to the Republic of South Africa and became citizens of that country. Only small pockets of Kxoe still exist in Angola and Zambia.

The Kxoe language seems to be made up of the following dialects: Búmàkxòè, ǁXóm̄kxòè, ǁXókxòè, and Búgàkxòè. Whereas the first three dialects are spoken in the Caprivi, and language data is available, this is not the case with Búgàkxòè, the dialect spoken in Botswana.

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