The Impacts of Resettlement on Funeral Custom among the San in New Xade, Botswana

Yuriko Sugiyama

I. Summary

The number of the population in Botswana is 2,262,000, which represents an increase of 42,000 people compared to 2014 (United Nations, 2015). The increase ratio of the population is not high among Africa. One of the reasons which makes population growth low is HIV. The prevalence rate of adults aged 15 to 49 is about 25.2% and the number of deaths due to AIDS is about 5,100 (UNAIDS, 2014). The increase of deaths pushes the number of occasions for funerals. In another word, funerals are too common with the advent of AIDS. Business among funeral parlor grows and people in Botswana face the considerable number of funerals. There are some reports about funerals in Botswana but most of them are too focusing on AIDS and urban area. Further research is necessary to analyze funerals in Botswana from an anthropological perspective.

Recently, an increasing number of foragers has been resettled or displaced from their ancestral land. Such a pressure from the outside world has affected the elements of the foraging societies, which have made hunting and gathering life persist for centuries or even millennia (Maruyama, 2003). The San in Botswana are no exception. It has been reported that many San have been relocated from the nature reserves, commercial ranches or war zones (Cashdan, 1985; Gordon, 1992; Lee & Hitchcock, 2001; Biesele & Hitchcock, 2000; Ikeya, 2001; Good, 2001; WIMSA, 2002).

This paper describes funerals in New Xade among the San, Ghanzi district, Botswana. The study is two-pronged; (i) to explore the indigenous/traditional and present funerals in New Xade and (ii) to analyze how funerals influence social reorganization.

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To protect the rights of the San who is the indigenous people, many researchers and NGOs have reported about the difficulties of living in the settlement and severely criticized the program. However, little research has been undertaken on the actual impacts of the program and settlement on the San people’s life and their response to it. Many reposts of NGO and researchers not only show the difficult situation among the San but also describe the San as weak people. Therefore, the purposes of this research are two points as follows; firstly, this research describes the fact that the San’s ritual has been influenced by various demographic and socioeconomic conditions, such as increased access to cash income, and a concentrated residential pattern that was promoted by a government. Secondly, based on the description above, this research will explain the reorganization of the San society by themselves showing their strength to act independently. This will contribute to improving the perception of the San showing their modified funeral customs as the case of re-establishing the San’s moral ideals. This research will explain how the San have adjusted their society and culture under the resettlement program.

Japanese research title
定住化に伴う葬儀の変化について―ボツワナ、ニューカデ村に生きるサンを事例に―

Japanese Summary
本論文では、ボツワナ・ニューカデに生きるサンが、どのように国家のマジョリティであるツワナの葬儀を変化させながら取り入れ、再定住化によって起きている様々なわだかまりを解消しようとしているか、またその結果がサンにおいてどのように経験されているのかを検討していく。

ボツワナ、ニューカデに生きるサンの生活は、政府による政策の影響を受け、伝統的な遊動・狩猟採集生活から、定住・集住生活へと大きく変化している。1979年、政府による遠隔地開発計画により、サンは政府の定めた定住地（カデ／Xade）で暮らし始めた。さらに1997年には、それまで狩猟採集を営んできたセントラル・カラハリ動物保護区（以下CKGR）外への再定住計画が実行され、ニューカデ／New Xadeへの移住を余儀なくされた。これまで、生業や分配を取り上げることによってサンの社会変容を扱う研究は多くなされてきた。本研究ではこれまで断片的に語られてきたサンの葬儀に注目する。また葬儀を切り口として、社会変容について考察する。そして再定住化による影響に対し、彼らがどのようにに対応しているのかを明らかにしていくことを目的とする。
II. Research Activity

1. Introduction

The Gǀui and Gǀana San were relocated in 1997 from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) by the Botswana government. The CKGR was established in 1961 as a means of protecting the traditional lifestyle of local people, including the Gǀui / Gǀana (Silberbauer, 1981). Until the 1970s, the Gǀui / Gǀana in CKGR relied mainly on hunting and gathering (Tanaka, 1980; Silberbauer, 1981). They traveled widely from place to place in search of food and good company (Maruyama, 2003). In 1997, the relocation program started. Approximately 1,000 people were relocated from CKGR to New Xade (Ikeya, 2001).

This paper describes continuities and changes observed among the Central Kalahari San in their transition to post-foraging society under the resettlement program. The first aim of this paper is to clarify the impacts of the resettlement on the funeral customs. The second aim is to analyze how funerals influence social reorganization among the Gǀui / Gǀana. In this paper, I will describe how the people in New Xade modify the impacts of the resettlement. This research will show the reorganization of San society by their own, acting independently, and their strength.

Fig 1. Map of Botswana
2. Study Area

My study areas are the capital city, Gaborone and at New Xade, one of the resettlement sites in Ghanzi District, Republic of Botswana. The population of New Xade is about 1,500 (Maruyama, 2003) and consist mainly of the Gǀui and Gǁana.

3. Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using anthropological and sociological methods like interviews, participant observation, and review of the literature materials especially relating to funerals among the San in New Xade and Gaborone. The interviews in New Xade were conducted in the San language. A local research assistant who knows New Xade well was hired to serve as an interpreter to cover researcher’s language limitation. I interviewed him about funeral custom among the San and interview to 50 people in New Xade with him. Written documents on the resettlement, development program and funeral customs among the San were obtained from University of Botswana library and Botswana collections were carefully examined.

4. Research Findings

(1) Research finding 1: Funerals before and after sedentarization

Because of sedentarization, funeral practices among the San have been changing for several decades.

a. Before the Resettlement

The burials in a nomadic lifestyle (cf. Tanaka 198014; Sugawara 199415; Imamura 201016): When the family of a deceased had a hut and a kraal of goats, a dead man was buried in the kraal of the goats and a dead woman or child inside the hut. When the family of a deceased had only a hut, all dead people were buried inside or outside the hut. When the family of a deceased didn’t have a hut, others buried the dead body in the burrow of a large animal (e.g., aardvark). The dead body was usually wrapped in a blanket. After the burial, people put the plate or digging stick on the gravesite.

Within a few days, the remaining camp residents moved to a different location. One of the interviewees (Gǀui, 58 years old) said, “When I was young, I saw the remains were buried in aardvarks’s
burrow.” And many people who up to 80 years old in New Xade told me that they had to leave elderly relatives who could no longer walk or who were disabled at the game reserve.

![Fig 2. A burying scene (Tanaka, 1972)](image)

**b. After the Resettlement**

Well-attended funerals have become increasingly popular in New Xade. The Christian churches in New Xade have had major effects on these practices. However, attendance at these churches was not widespread. Only about 50 affluent individuals were the members of the churches. The churches actually functioned as meeting places for the acquaintances (e.g. the same ethnic group or residents of the same area before relocation), and even the church members were not very religious. In other words, the influence of Christianity was restricted to the superficial level of funeral rituals.

Flow of Funeral Practices is followed,

i. When an individual in New Xade dies, his/her close relatives first confirm the death and then report it to the administrative office at New Xade.

ii. The administrative office transports the dead body to a mortuary in Ghanzi. It is usually kept there for about 1 week, depending on the cost the relatives can afford. It costs 150 pula ($15) to keep for a day.

![Fig. a mortuary in Ghanzi](image)
iii. The relatives gather at the household where the funeral to be held. A vigil known as a “memorial service” is held on a weekday evening.

iv. Funerals usually start on Friday evening and last until noon on Saturday. Reflecting the grassroots ecumenism of Botswana, people from different churches often co-participate in the funerals in New Xade.

v. The relatives place the dead body in the coffin, which price varies from free to P 9000. The relatives then bring the coffin to the household where the funeral is to be held. The coffins are made in Qabo. Qabo is a settlement in the Ghanzi District of Botswana. The Naro people relocated from Kuke to Qabo in 1995 and the Botswana government rolled out the Poverty Education Programme to the settlements. In 2009, the Ghanzi District Council-through the Poverty Education Programme-provided some villagers and their team with 20000 pula ($2,000) to start a coffin carpentry business called “Botshelo (life) Carpentry”- (Daily News 2015). Usually, coffins are made in South Africa and distributed in Botswana, but coffins produced by Botshelo (life) Carpentry in Qabo are brought to the mortuary in Ghanzi and people in New Xade use them.

vi. The relatives and friends gather around the household and spend the entire night singing popular hymns. At dawn, people view the deceased’s face.

vii. All participants go to the graveyard located at the outskirts of the residential area. Although the graves with shade, which shows respect to the dignity of the deceased in the Tswana (Werbner, 201518), are appreciated, most of cheap graves do not have it.

viii. Before re-entering the hut, people must wash their hands. Men and women must sit on the left and right sides (opposite to the side occupied before the burial) of the hut, respectively.

ix. The relatives are introduced to the funeral attendees, and a meal is served after money is collected from the participants. When the meal, as the feast for the deceased, is finished, attendees individually leave the hut, and the funeral ends.
(2) Research finding 2: Today’s funerals in New Xade

Today’s funerals in New Xade are more complex. Specifically, the length of time that the body is kept in the mortuary, the elaborateness of the coffin, and the food served at funerals shows the financial strength of the family. Table 1 shows types of tomb at New Xade. Type of tomb surrounded by stones is most popular (85), but according to interviewees type of tomb with a roof is getting common. If a bereaved family doesn’t buy tomb and holds a simple and traditional funeral, a representative of the church will criticize the family severely at the funeral.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tomb type</th>
<th>Number (n=216)</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tomb with roof to make shadow showing respect for ancestors. (Tswana style)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomb made of concrete</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomb surrounded by stones</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old type tomb with token</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old type tomb without token</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) Research finding 3: How do the San choose Place for Funeral?

To analyze what ideal funeral is for today’s the San, I interviewed people about what a good place is for funerals. Figure 3 shows home of remains and funeral place. According to this figure, they chose place for the funeral with following points.
- In the resettlement site, not outside
- In the same ethnic group or home village area
- In a wider place so that many people can get together
Similar to the configurations of the reallocated residential plots and outside camps, the configuration of graves reflects the social relationships of the residents in the new settlement (Fig. 5 - 7 - 8). I interviewed 43 people and their relatives. I asked (i) where they (#1-#43) lived when they were alive and (ii) where they buried. Figure 4 shows residential plots of #1-#43 when they were alive and figure 4 shows the configuration of graves in the graveyard. I focus on the family of #5, #9-#14 and #23 - #24 to analyze how they chose their place for graves in the graveyard. Figure 6 shows family tree of #5, #9-#14 and #23 - #24 and figure 7 shows the process of the configuration of graves.
Fig. 5 Residential plots of #1–#43 when they were alive
Fig. 6 Configuration of graves in the graveyard

Fig. 7 Family tree of #5, #9–#14 and #23–#24
Fig. 8 The process of the configuration of graves (#5, #9–#14 and #23–#24)
5. **Discussion / The Resolution of Grief and Identifying Group Members**

One of the interviewees said that “I wanted to bury my mother next to father’s tomb, but there was no space. So we decided to bury her next to her cousin’s tomb”. In the process of choosing the area for tomb and funerals, the San have allowed them to identify potential coalition members who are more likely to cooperate. Because funerals are group-specific, socially stipulated actions, they are an extremely effective means of demonstrating phenotypic similarity and thus allow individuals to determine potential cooperators in extended networks. Funeral in New Xade identify the members of the group that can be trusted in future interactions and provide opportunity to fix the social relationships.

After the funeral, the bereaved often move for reasons such as the following: to live with relatives who will help them in their daily lives, to escape from noisy neighbors or to take care of the field. Such changes provide opportunities to reconfigure social relationships among the remaining individuals and to walk for the resolution of grief as they used to in CKGR. And after the funeral, men gather and talk about who visited the funeral and who didn’t come. Such activities provide not only opportunity to cope with grief in the society but also provide opportunity to reconfigure social relationships among the remaining individuals.

6. **Conclusion / Creating New Moral**

It can be said that funerals have become occasions for recognizing how resettled people should live in New Xade. One of the interviewees (Glui/ 58 years old) told me that “We hold ‘good funeral’ for an ancestor to live well in the other world. So, we should choose not ‘bush life’ but ‘good live’ to hold ‘good funeral’. In CKGR, we couldn’t hold ‘good funeral’ because we couldn’t find water. We couldn’t find water because our ancestor couldn’t get good life at the other world because of ‘bad funeral’.” When they lived in CKGR, they believed their ancestors go back to sand (Anderson, 1989). But in present-day, they explain that the more you cost for a funeral, the better life ancestor will get. It looks like that they try to convince themselves of the new environment by denying life in CKGR.

People in San societies are changing from hunter-gatherers to settlers and classless society to the large disparity in wealth. The process of funerals shows the financial power of the family. The San is struggling whether they accept new funerals and new life in New Xade. They try to convince themselves of the new environment by the reason for making their ancestor happy. In New Xade, funerals provide the justification of the actual world. In other words, the San introduce new moral in funerals in order to justify their presence
and make it fit their reality. Funerals trigger some of the fundamental issues for the survival of the San as a society. Funerals form responsible moral action. It can be said that funeral custom among the San in New Xade plays a role as justification and explanation of the actual world.

In September 2015, the 194 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). My study will contribute to the target of SDG 4.7 on human right and cultural diversity. To protect the rights of the San, many researchers and NGOs have reported on the difficulties of living in the settlement and severely criticized the program. Many reports of NGO’s not only show the difficult situation among the San but also describe the San as a fragile community. Therefore, the conclusion of this research are two folds; firstly, this research described the fact that the San’s ritual has been influenced by various demographic and socio-economic conditions, such as increased access to cash income, and a concentrated residential pattern that was promoted by a government. Secondly, based on the description above, this research explained the reorganization of the San society by themselves showing their strength to act independently. This will contribute to improving the perception of the San people by showing their modified funeral customs as a means of re-establishing their moral ideals. This research explained how the San have adjusted their society and culture under the resettlement program.

III. Reflection to the GLTP in Africa

I appreciate all members who supported my studying research in Botswana. Even my topic “funeral” is sensitive topic, peoples in New Xade cooperated with my research. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to professors Mr. Batibo, Ms. Seloma, Ms. Mogara, Ms. Borane and Mr. Hiri, at Botswana University who supervised and supported me. I could not find my misread in my research and new perspective without them and conduct research safely. And I appreciate United Nations University which organizes Global Leadership Training Programme in Africa. Without receiving their support, I could not implement this research.

(1) Motivation to participate in the GLTP

To protect the rights of the San who are the indigenous people, many researchers and NGOs have reported about the difficulties of living in the settlement and severely criticized the program. However, I wanted to describe the actual impacts of the program and settlement on the San people’s life and their response to it. Many reports of NGO’s and researchers not only show the difficult situation among the San but also describe the San as a fragile community.
Therefore, the motivations to participate in the GLTP are two folds; firstly, this research describes the fact that the San’s ritual have been influenced by various demographic and socio-economic conditions, such as increased access to cash income, and a concentrated residential pattern that was promoted by a government. Secondly, based on the description above, this research explains the reorganization of the San society by themselves showing their strength to act independently.

This research contributes to improving the perception of the San people by showing their modified funeral customs as a means of re-establishing their moral ideals. This research will explain how the San have adjusted their society and culture under the resettlement program.

(2) Field experiences

In Botswana, according to UN, the number of the population in Botswana is 2,262,000, which represents an increase of 42,000 people compared to 2014 (United Nations, 2015). The increase ratio of the population is not high among Africa. One of the reasons which make population growth low is HIV. The prevalence rate of adults aged 15 to 49 is about 25.2% and the number of deaths due to AIDS is about 5,100 (UNAIDS, 2016). The increase of deaths pushes the number of occasions for funerals. In another word, funerals are too common with the advent of AIDS. Business among funeral parlor grows and people in Botswana face considerable number of funerals to attend.

In my first research plan, one of objectives is to understand the changing process in funerals along ethnic lines, the San and the Tswana. People in San societies are changing from hunter-gatherers to settlers engaged in collective living because of the influences of sedentarization, modernization and Tswana. I thought I could analyze how the San have modified the Tswana style funerals considerably in the process of accommodating them into their own practices by comparing the San and the Tswana funeral. In my field experiences, I could realize that I cannot compare the San and the Tswana. There are many ethnic under the San, for example G/\ui, G/\ana, Nama, Shua, Danisi, /Xaise, Cua, Buga, //Ani, !Goro, Ju’hoan, !Xoo, !Xun, Kx’au//’ei, Danisi, Naro, Sasi, Tsa’si, Deti . And there are also many ethnic under
the Tswana, for example, Bakwena, Bangwato, Batawana, Bangwaketse, Batlokwa, Barolog, Bakgatlha, Balete, Bahurutshe, Bakhurutshe and Batlhoro. I could realize that I should analyze funerals along ethnic lines not “the San” and “the Tswana”. I appreciate professors, friends and research assistants who made me realized about it.

(3) Challenges

My topic “funeral” is sensitive topic and I needed to get along with interviewees and open interviewee’s mind to interview. I visited many times to communicate with interviewees again and again. Consideration for interviewees is needed. All of interviewees understood my research and accept interviewing. Peoples in New Xade cooperated with my research. I really appreciate people in New Xade and research assistants who cooperated with my research and teachers in UB and New Xade who gave me advices for interviewing.

(4) How to make use of this experience to your future career development

I would like to continue to research and describe strength of the indigenous people. Through this GLTP experience, I was convinced that the indigenous people have strength to act independently.
To protect the indigenous people, many researchers and NGOs have reported about the difficulties of living in the settlement and severely criticized the program. However, I want to describe the actual impacts of the modernization on the indigenous people. I will continue to research about not the difficult situation and fragile community among the indigenous people but describe the indigenous people as strong community. I would like to be one of the leading scientists in the academic field of the area studies and contribute to the local society and to the globalizing world.

(5) Encouragement to other students

Field experience in Africa is not just a matter of acquiring information from research, it is a matter of learning to analyze and read the text of African community and our lives. Field research is not merely an academic experience but a way of reflecting on our own. Studying Africa and reflecting upon our lives are essentially the same intellectual process. GLTP will help you to research in Africa and reflect on your own from field experience in Africa.

Acknowledgement

This work would not have been possible without supports from GLTP and professors Mr. Batibo, Ms. Seloma, Ms. Mogara, Ms. Borane and Mr. Hiri, at Botswana University. I am especially indebted to Mr. Batibo, Ms. Seloma and Mr. Kari who have supervised me and families and friends in New Xade and Gaborone who have supported me.
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