

# Stories of war and restitution

Curating the narratives of the !xun storyteller Kapilolo Mahongo (1952 – 2018)

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University of Cape Town  
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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this thesis from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Signed by candidate

Date:

30 January 2020

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## Contents

Declaration & acknowledgements	2
Definition and explanation of terms	4
Preface	8
Abstract	10
Figures 1 – 26	12
Figure 27	105
Introduction	27
Chapter one	35
A literary background	
Chapter two	75
Approaching Kapilolo Mahongo’s memoir	
Chapter three	91
Background to Kapilolo Mahongo’s memoir – an autoethnographic account	
Chapter four	128
Kapilolo Mahongo’s narrative of his childhood in Angola	
Chapter five	163
Kapilolo Mahongo’s narrative of war in Angola	
Chapter six,	184
Kapilolo Mahongo’s narrative of emigrating to South Africa	
Chapter seven	197
Kapilolo Mahongo’s narrative of restitution and reconciliation	
Chapter eight	207
The biography of a !xun story: Dima and Owl	
Conclusion	221
Afterword	233
Appendix	235
References	290

## Definitions and Explanation of Terms

### Indigenous

The United Nations defines Indigenous People as inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct people (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>. 30 September 2020).

### Language

I acknowledge the change in the conventional spelling of the language name !Kun (also known as !Kung) to !Xun, made during the Penduka Conference in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2001, by representatives of the Angolan, Namibian and immigrant South African !xun speakers and their language advisors and committees, where representatives of 26 different regional San language dialects were represented (<https://www.scribd.com/document/399104143/Penduka-on-Standardization-of-San-and-Khoe-Languages-Windhoek-Namibia-2001>. 30 September 2020).

I use the academic convention for the spelling of the word !xun, which takes the click as the first letter of the name and therefore does not capitalise the second letter. However, when referring to the !kun boys in the Bleek and Lloyd collection I have, for the sake of consistency, used Lucy Lloyd's spelling of the language name, namely !kun.

!xun is classified by linguists as part of the northern branch of the Khoisan family of languages in Southern Africa. It consists of a wide range of linguistic varieties, with one branch being spoken in north-west and north-east Namibia, the latter being referred to as Ju|'hoan (Biesele 1993).

In their study of the !xun languages used in Namibia and Angola, Christa König and Berndt Heine (2010) describe the language as an L-complex, that is, as a cluster of speech forms that are connected by a chain of mutual intelligibility, with speakers at the extreme ends of the chain not understanding each other. They report that no clear-cut language boundary that separates the various !xun dialects has been identified, but rather that the language consist of a range of dialects. The authors suggest that there is no appropriate information on what a !xun dialect is, how it should be separated from other dialects, or on how many dialects there are. Thus far, scholars have identified eleven dialects spoken across the region.

Furthermore, I have limited the use of the words *Bushman* and *Bushmen* and have tried as far as possible, to refer to Khoisan speakers of southern Africa by their own group and language name, as is the preferences with the communities I have worked with. I was advised that the constellation of people that speak different languages and live in widely

separate areas of southern Africa, have agreed to the terms 'San' or Khoisan' because most people cannot pronounce the click sounds in their names.

## Translation

The interviews with Mahongo were conducted in Afrikaans. These resources are in the Manyeka Arts Trust's archive ([www.manyeka.co.za](http://www.manyeka.co.za)). Other interviews with storytellers and artists were done in !xun, with a !xun speaking, Afrikaans translator present (Winberg: 2002). Mahongo translated the !xun material into Afrikaans. The Afrikaans versions were all read/translated back to the original storytellers orally, to confirm that the translations were indeed close enough to the storyteller's own words. The English versions in this thesis are the author's translations. Mahongo's ethnographic chapters have been edited in Afrikaans and several bound copies were given to his family and community members.

“If stories are archives of collective pain, suffering and resistance, then to speak to them is to heal; to believe in them is to reimagine the world”

(Sium & Ritskes 2013:v).

## Preface

### ‘My heart stands in the hill’

These are the words of ||kabbo’s fellow storyteller, the |xam man |han #kass’o, in which he places himself in the landscape of his ancestral home . It was recorded by Lucy Lloyd in one of her notebooks in the nineteenth-century Bleek and Lloyd collection of |xam stories (Lloyd: VIII.31: 8773).

Janette Deacon & Craig Foster used these words as the evocative title for their poetic, visual and textual exploration of the |xam’s voices expressing their love and longing for their ancestral landscape in the Karoo (2005).

“I now have to bury my daughter without a heart. How can somebody live with my daughter’s heart, but she is dead? (Kajuba 2010)

These words, uttered by Sandra Kajuba, a distraught mother from the Platfontein !xun San community, are quoted in an article published in the *Cape Times* November 2010. It reports how Kajuba’s daughter, who was taken to the Kimberley hospital and declared brain dead upon arrival, had her heart and kidneys removed for organ transplants for three other South Africans, all of whose lives were saved as a result. Sandra Kajuba did not understand the concept of transplanting organs and remained baffled by it.

Sandra Kajuba’s words may be read as a metaphorical question – very much in the style of questions posed in the nineteenth-century |xam stories, ones that often refract and reflect

reality in the abstract world of creative expression. Instead of remaining a metaphorical passage from a story, her question becomes a metaphor for the silencing of San voices – a central theme in this study:

Whose voice has to be sought, heard, believed and respected?

## Abstract

### Stories of war and restitution: curating Kapilolo Mario Mahongo's !xun narratives (1952-2018)

What is it that we stand to gain from the Indigenous !xun storyteller, Kapilolo Mario Mahongo's personal narratives?

Southern Africa's San people have embodied the sub-human other in colonial and Apartheid historiography and has lived fractured, often traumatised lives as a result. The aftermath of dispossession, genocide and war has echoed down the generations and still manifests itself in visible and intangible ways. Previous research has not addressed the personal stories of the immigrant !xun community living on the San farm, Platfontein, near Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province. My thesis works towards filling this gap. The focus of my research was to open up a space in which the !xun leader and storyteller, Kapilolo Mario Mahongo, could actively engage the energy of storytelling in representing his personal history and for the first time, record an Indigenous !xun perspective of the regional wars during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - and their aftermath.

Kapilolo Mahongo died at the age of 66, on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2018 while working with me on curating his own and his community's stories. My thesis thus evolved to question his place in the San literary corpus (as detailed in the literature review), asking how his memoirs, and the ways in which we produced it over a period of more than twenty years, may contribute toward our knowledge – not only of his personal life, but of the !xun community's history

and southern Africa's San people as a whole.

With our colonial and apartheid background of discrimination, my role as fellow storyteller and researcher assumes a compelling resonance. I address this directly by engaging an auto-ethnographic voice to tell my story parallel to the stories by Kapilolo Mahongo and other !xun storytellers, with the intention of creating a record of coming together against the background of our otherness, showing how we lived our difference, through the expressive art and methodology of storytelling, to create new narratives of truth.



Figure 1. Kapilolo Feleciano Mario Mahongo (1952-2018)

Photo: Judith Westerveld

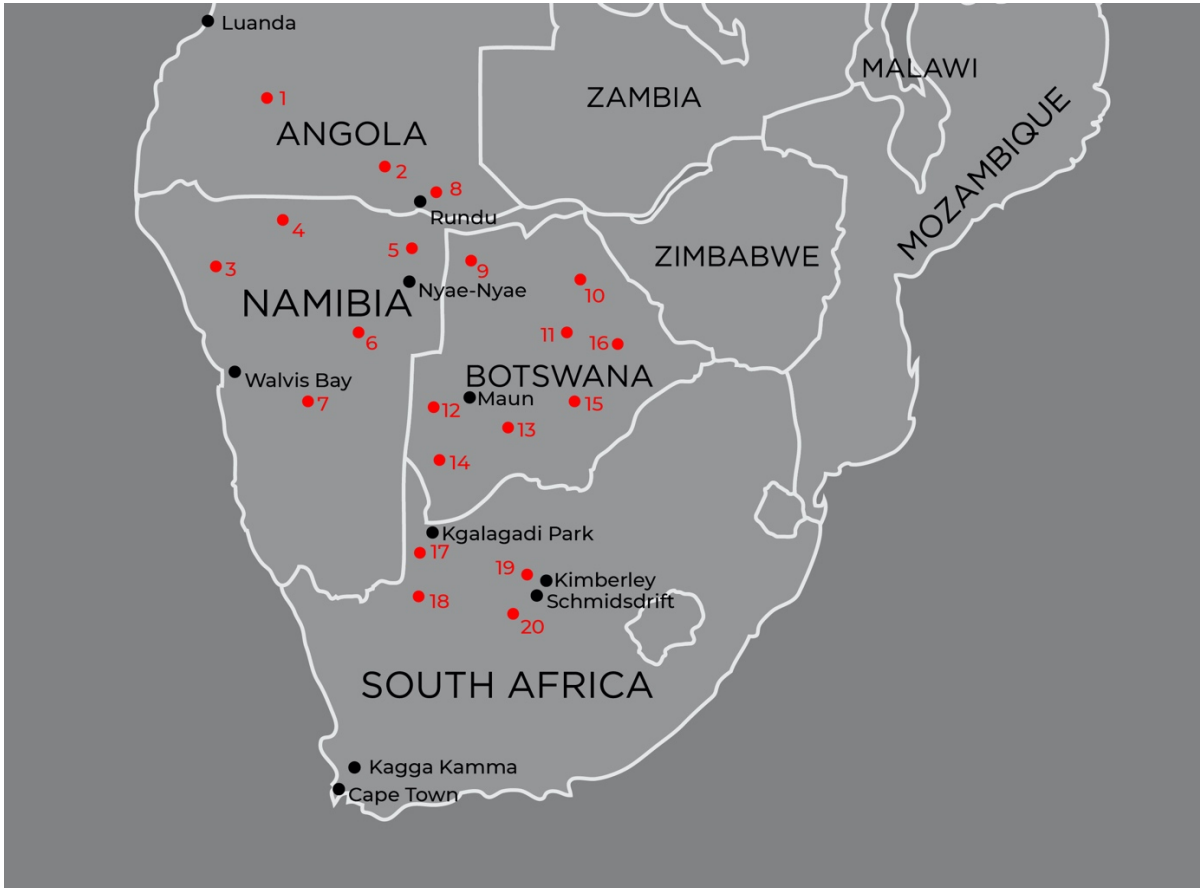


Figure 2. Map of the main places mentioned in this thesis, as well as the San language groups of southern Africa, showing the diversity of the spoken dialects (White & le Roux 2004).

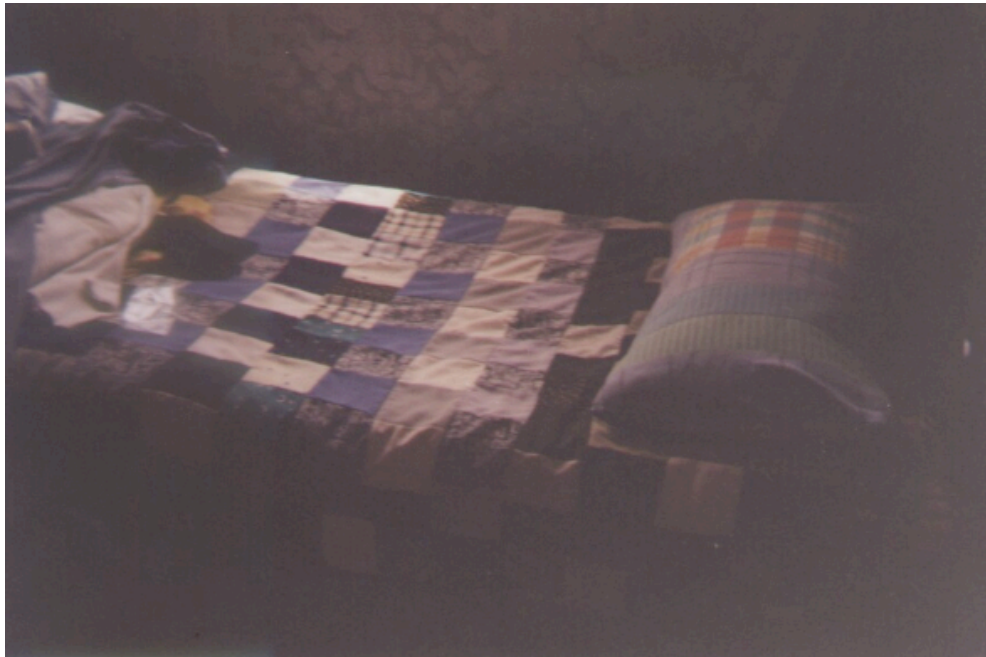
1. !xun	6. #x'ao  'aesi	11.   gana	16. Deti
2. kwhe	7. Khoekhoen	12. Naro	17. Tsila
3. hai\\om	8. Bugakhwe	13.  gui	18. #hoa
4. !xun	9.   anikhwe	14. !xoo	19. #khomani
5. Ju\`hoansi	10. Tshua	15. Khute	20. Khwe



Figures 3, 4. 1991. The !xun and Khwe families line up to board the military airplane in the Caprivi war zone on the borders between Angola, Namibia and Botswana, that would fly them to the military camp, Schmidtsdrift, in South Africa. Photos by Melissa Heckler.



Figures 5, 6. 2000. Scenes from the Schmidtsdrift tent town taken with disposable cameras, by !xun youths, who were part of an oral history project managed by Kapilolo Mahongo and Marlene Winberg. The youths documented the days before and after leaving the military Schmidtsdrift tent town for their communal farm, Platfontein, near Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, almost ten years after their arrival in South Africa. Platfontein was one of the farms the !xun and Khwe received from the democratic government, as part of their restitution package in South Africa.



Figures 7, 8. 2000. Domestic scenes from the Schmidtsdrift tent town taken with disposable cameras, by !xun youths who were part of an oral history project managed by Kapilolo Mahongo and Marlene Winberg. The youths documented the days before and after leaving the Schmidtsdrift tent town for their communal farm, Platfontein near Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa.



Figures 9, 10. 2000. Scenes from the Schmidtsdrift tent town taken with disposable cameras, by !xun youths who were part of an oral history project managed by Kapilolo Mahongo and Marlene Winberg. They documented the days before and after leaving the Schmidtsdrift tent town for their communal farm, Platfontein, near Kimberley in the northern Cape Province of South Africa.



Figures 11, 12. 2000. A grandmother steps out of the bus upon arrival in Platfontein. A family poses outside their new RDP house on Platfontein. Photos by !xun youths.



Figures 13, 14, 15. 1998. Images from the oral history workshops in Schmidtsdrift and Platfontein, where youths recorded their elders' stories. Families created handbound books with single illustrated stories for the children in their families. Photos by Satsiri Winberg.



Figures 16, 17, 18, 19. 2002. Images from the oral history workshops in Schmidtsdrift and Platfontein, where youths recorded their elders' stories. Photos by Satsiri Winberg.



Figures 20, 21. Images from the Platfontein village taken in 2012. Photos by Satsiri Winberg.



Figure 22. A rock art image of an Eland on the rock art site on Platfontein.



Figure 23. !xun healer and storyteller, Meneputo Manunga Manyeka and husband outside their house on Platfontein. Photos by Satsiri Winberg.



Figures 24, 25. Two storytellers at a storytelling festival on Platfontein in 2013. Photos by Satsiri Winberg.



Figure 26. 1995. A painting by Samcuia from the Ixun and Khwe Art Project that began in Schmidtsdrift in 1992 and continued on Platfontein until 2007.



Figures 27, 28. 1994. A painting and linoprint by Kashivi and Samcuia, from the Ixun and Khwe Art Project.



Figure 29. South Africa's coat of arms was introduced on Freedom Day 27 April 2000, signaling the official recognition of Southern Africa's San people as First People. It replaced the earlier coat of arms that had been used since 1910. The motto is written in a Khoisan language, that of the |xam people, and translates as "diverse people unite". The image of two Khoisan men is based on a San rock art painting.

## Introduction

In her introduction to the 2001 edition of *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore* by W.H.I. Bleek and L.C. Lloyd, Megan Biesele writes:

*Curiously enough, both public and academic views have long tended to confuse contemporary indigenous peoples with past human societies. This conflation has taken place through the trope of primitive simplicity. If social science has any counter to offer, it is its power to reveal the intricate complexity of both past and present systems of indigenous thought and action. Nowhere can this complexity be more compellingly understood than in the realm of religion. Understanding other cosmologies, other worldviews, is one of the most profoundly humanising activities available in all learning (Biesele 2001).*

Kapilolo Mahongo's personal narrative in this thesis speaks to the complexities and contradictions involved in being a contemporary, indigenous !xun man. His stories record indigenous thought and actions from his childhood and hunter-gatherer family in Angola during the 1950s. His narrative reveals the intricate complexities of reconciling past and present, while testifying to his struggles to retain identity, culture and language far from home. It also records the radical changes that took place during his lifetime; the bridges he crossed to try to understand different worldviews of people from different backgrounds in the post-Apartheid democracy and the international indigenous movement he became a part of. Mahongo talks about the multitude of roles he had to straddle to negotiate his way through the complex socio-political realities of the 1990s and post-millennium years in South Africa.

I have set out to understand, document and examine the Angolan-born !xun storyteller, Kapilolo Mario Mahongo's memoirs. I focussed on assisting him in recording his memories of his childhood, and for the first time from an indigenous perspective, his and his community's involvement in the independence wars against Portugal and South Africa in Angola and Namibia during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My hope was to break through myths and tropes, in search of that humanising story that would restore some sense of historical justice to Kapilolo Mahongo and his people. My agency and personal agenda was a constant mediating factor in creating this record of Mahongo's and the other !xun storytellers narratives.

Mahongo's narrative voice resonates poignantly with the 19<sup>th</sup> century |xam and !kun narratives of loss in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. I reference this collection throughout my thesis as a historical and literary backdrop for Kapilolo Mahongo's contemporary narrative, while pointing out themes of change and continuity shared between the 19<sup>th</sup> century collection and Mahongo's 21<sup>st</sup> century narrative.

An overview of this thesis

Chapter one lays the literary background for Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative, provides a historical context for his memoirs and foregrounds how it fits into the San corpus.

The literature review focusses on the issue of how official history remembers, forgets and represents San people through the colonial and apartheid lens. It highlights the complexities around the contemporary representation of San people, by !xun speakers themselves as well as others. The review offers a representative cross-section of texts to determine how San

people have been represented over the centuries in various static tropes, ranging from childlike savages to heathens, always outside of the economic, social and political processes of the place and time. It looks at how the emerging colonial discourse about the so-called Bushmen shaped the damaging assumptions that underpinned the colonial and Apartheid treatment of the Bushmen, setting the tone for the systematic wars of extermination, discriminatory laws and the dispossession of land.

I look at how representation of San history and San communities changed during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the notion of ‘first people’ and indigenous people’s rights became a part of the new democratic, national narrative. I discuss the contradictions inherent in the complex issue of newly emerging KhoiSan identities, its agency and the leverage it gave descendants to negotiate their rights to land and indigenous knowledge.

#### Chapter one

The literature review examines the work of specific folklorists who have documented stories with !xun communities over the past two centuries, and traces the genealogies of a selection of these stories that are also documented by Mahongo in his narrative. I highlight themes of change and continuity in !xun storytelling over the centuries and lay the ground for chapter eight, in which I discuss how stories change depending on teller, audience, place and context.

#### Chapter two

Chapter two explains the rationale for my theoretical and methodological choices by examining two research projects in indigenous communities in Australia and Canada. This places my research in a broader context and provides a glimpse into international, indigenous research perspectives that testifies to the relevance and reliability of my approach, which is essentially qualitative and based on storytelling in an auto-ethnographic voice. This approach allows me to comment on the ethical and philosophical considerations I faced by comparing

it to similar research in the global south. I also explain the theory that underpins narrative therapy and relate it to my narrative practice with Mahongo and his community.

The chapter concludes with a look at my position as researcher and examines the central issues of my agency in the process, taking into account how my perception and personal history might have influenced the methodology and outcomes. I explain why I settled for using auto-ethnography both as my methodological approach and as the writing tone for this narrative thesis.

### Chapter three

Chapter three builds on my methodology as it tells my back story to Mahongo's record of his memoirs. The chapter takes my auto-ethnographical voice a step further as I describe my encounters with Kapilolo Mahongo, the !xun storytellers from Platfontein, the !xun visual artists, and how my academic research (MA dissertation) into !xun history in Angola and Namibia impacted on Mahongo's narratives. Importantly, the chapter provides a fairly detailed record of how the material for this thesis was produced – which inevitably also describes the outcomes of my agency in the process, how and what it induced. The chapter reflects on how we lived our difference through the mediating presence of storytelling as I speak to how my own experience as a storyteller impacted on my relationship with the !xun storytellers.

Up until this point in the thesis, chapters one, two and three provide the context for Kapilolo Mahongo's autobiographical narrative. The thesis now turns to Mahongo's personal narrative, which I have divided into four chapters; chapters four, five, six and seven. Each chapter describes a specific time period of his life. Our numerous conversations between 1994 and 2015 culminated in a writer's workshop during which I acted as his writing coach

for these memoirs. Kapilolo Mahongo's final edit of his Afrikaans version of his memoirs took place in December 2017, four months before his death in a car accident on the road between his home on Platfontein and Kimberley. I translated his text from Afrikaans into English, a complex process that I discuss during the course of this thesis in the context of specific material.

#### Chapter four

I introduce Chapter four, *Childhood in Angola*, with a story by the !kun child, Da, as told to Lucy Lloyd in 1881. The !xun boys told Lloyd how they were kidnapped and brutally taken from their parents, sold or traded for guns and other goods in the region. Their stories frame the historical trade in !xun children that continued into Mahongo's own childhood (Winberg 2011). It resonates with his story of how he and his siblings climbed into trees to avoid being taken by people bigger than themselves; a feared and frequent event during his childhood.

The chapter continues to record Mahongo's memories as the son of hunter-gatherer parents, describing the ways in which they made a living, the natural environment he lived in, loved and feared, his father's powerful influence on his boyhood, his extended family relationships and his eventual employment on a coffee plantation as a grown teenager.

Mahongo tells a number of !xun tales passed on to him by his father in this chapter; I have provided historical or contextual details for these tales in the footnotes. I obtained this information from literature by other folklorists who have recorded different versions of these tales in Angola, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. The first written reference for one of the tales in Mahongo's repertoire (*Moon and Hare*), dates as far back as 1779 (Wikaar 1779).

#### Chapter five

Chapter five, *War in Angola and Namibia*, builds on a story from the 19<sup>th</sup> century |xam interlocutor, ||kabbo, who was captured in the Karoo and ended up in the Mowbray home of

Dr Wilhelm Bleek, who learnt his languages and recorded his stories. Poignantly, Kapilolo and ||kabbo's stories both speak of the devastating loss of land and those stories they associated with their home environment. In this chapter Mahongo describes how the three-decade-long war silenced and replaced his people's stories with narratives of that war. Mahongo explains how he and his people came to fight in all the armies on different sides in Angola before joining the SADF in 1976. His narrative chronicles this long period in his life and provides new insight into the border war – recounted in writing for the first time from an indigenous San perspective.

#### Chapter six

Chapter six, Exile and peace – moving to South Africa, records the decade in Mahongo's life after the war, between 1990 and 2000. The chapter begins with two of Mahongo's tales, *The donkey and the road* and *The chief and his cattle*, both conjuring up a sense of the humour and pathos that was a characteristic part of his people's coping mechanism during the traumatic post-war years in the tent town, Schmidtsdrift, in the Northern Cape Province. The stories' characters and actions call up the contradictions and bizarre elements of people trying to forge a civilian life after a 30-year long war - while weighing up the possibility of hope.

Mahongo describes his community's relocation from the Caprivi to South Africa after the end of the border war in 1989. Kapilolo Mahongo narrates the aftermath of war and near-collapse of many people's mental health as trauma and loss was made worse by the insecurity of being in a foreign country, living on barren land where they were forced to survive in approximately 1000 army tents for more ten years - while national post-Apartheid politics played itself out around them. Kapilolo Mahongo describes his "new world" and the challenges he faced overnight as the leader of thousands of !xun people in South Africa. He recalls what it meant to represent his people at the United Nations and other national and

international bodies, his introduction and participation in the development of the indigenous people's movement and above all, the spiritual challenges he faced and worked with during this period when land restitution was by no means a given fact.

#### Chapter seven

Chapter seven, Reconciliation and restitution, begins with Kapilolo Mahongo's story of *Chamba Chuma*; a narrative of different worlds meeting – a concept that lays the ground for the main theme of the chapter. The story employs the traditional device of juxtaposing opposites, tangible and intangible realities to resolve conflict, thus foregrounding the issues discussed in the chapter. His story also emphasises issues of leadership – a challenge that Mahongo had to face head on, in contexts as far apart as the isolated, dusty tent town in Schmidtsdrift to the United Nations in Switzerland. The chapter is Kapilolo Mahongo's account of the process of restitution; how he came into contact with a diverse range of people with whom he had to communicate and negotiate; what it meant to him and his people to settle on their new farms, Platfontein and Wildebeestkuil near Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province at the end of the 1990s. He reflects on the changes in his own faith and finds meaning in reconciling his traditional spirituality with being an African Christian. The narrative ends with a note of irony as he describes the contradictions in his communities' current status as Southern Africa's first people, indigenous knowledge 'experts' and impoverished semi-urban dwellers on the outskirts of Kimberley. This chapter concludes Mahongo's memoirs.

#### Chapter eight

Chapter eight is built on the biography of a !xun story. It presents an in-depth reading of Mahongo's story, Dima and Owl, and traces its roots in written history and literature, thus providing evidence of both change and continuity in the oral narratives belong to Mahongo and other !xun storytellers. The chapter draws on the records of other folklorists who, like

myself, have recorded San stories in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa and brings their notable scholarship to bear on this single creation story.

### Conclusion

What is it that we stand to gain from the indigenous !xun storyteller, Kapilolo Mario Mahongo's first-person narrative about his childhood, the wars in Angola and Namibia and his community's subsequent immigration to South Africa?

The conclusion mounts the main argument of this study: an analysis of the contribution that Kapilolo Mahongo's personal narrative and repertoire of stories make to the San corpus, the historical record and representation of the more or less five thousand !xun speakers and families of the ex-soldiers who now live on Platfontein.

I reflect on the energy of storytelling in shaping historiography and argue that, as research methodology, it has led to a historic narrative about Mahongo and his people's involvement in the colonial, independence and border wars in Angola and Namibia; a narrative that would have been impossible to achieve otherwise.

## Chapter one

### A literary backdrop to Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative

#### Bushmen representations

In the preface to his book *In search of the San* (1997:6) documentary photographer Paul Weinberg writes the following about Kapilolo Mahongo and the Platfontein !xun community:

*On Sunday morning, Dominee (Reverend) Mario Mahongo, a minister of the African wing of the Dutch Reformed Church, visits the community. He calls on his congregation not to sin but believe in God who will deliver them to a better world ... A few months later, a mass wedding is performed on a Sunday; no less than 36 couples are to tie the knot simultaneously. The ceremony is short and sweet. In unison, the men say 'Ja' when the dominee asks: Do you take this woman to be your lawful and wedded wife?' The wives do the same. The dominee holds two pieces of string. He pulls the one. "This can break," he says. He then puts the two strings together. "But together they will never break." The audience watch with some skepticism. The ceremony is over. The couples slowly make their way to a corrugated iron room where cool drinks and snacks form the basis of a reception. The wives' white dresses, hired in Kimberley, drag in the dust; the men sweat in their suits and ties.*

This depiction by Weinberg, of Kapilolo Mahongo, and the Angolan-born !xun community he served in South Africa, as hopeless puppets acting out a bleak Christian ritual, is one of many representations of Platfontein !xun community (Uys 1993, Robbins 2007.)

This chapter examines the ways in which San people in general, have been represented by others, ranging from those colonial views that denigrate the San and relegate them to the sewers of history, where they have been labelled as a sub-human species; or as idealised, harmless but traumatised people, to those that restore them as celebrated, indigenous First People, as recognised by the South African Coat of Arms. It represents these shifts in historiography broadly, by firstly looking at the uni-directional, colonial scholarship that regards the San as research subjects or informants during the 18<sup>th</sup> and earlier 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The literature overview proceeds to looking at a mid-twentieth century scholarship that begins to develop a more inclusive approach (Marshall 1959), as it moved towards a conversation with San communities as collaborators (Biesele 1993). Thirdly, the approaching end of Apartheid and democratisation of South Africa towards the millennium, provides another cusp in scholarship that examines the politics of representation of San people (Skotnes 1996 a), as it opens up to inviting San people to provide their own narratives (White & le Roux 2004). I will discuss this scholarship in the literature review.

The chapter concludes with an examination of San creative and expressive art as it explores narrative and visual resonances in both the stories and rock art.

This chapter is therefore a literary backdrop to Kapilolo Mahongo's voice, and my work with him and his community, that brings the issues of ethics, transformation, decolonisation, self-reflection and research practice into sharp focus. Mahongo's narrative provides us with one important indigenous perspective of his and his community's history that we would not otherwise have had access to.

Kapilolo Mahongo, and his Angolan-born !xun community have been cast in a range of images, from that of expert hunters and trackers, fearless soldiers, brave war veterans, unwelcome war refugees, spineless traitors, ruthless murderers, traumatised alcoholics and naive artists, to celebrated indigenous knowledge experts (Uys 1993, Weinberg 1997, Wessels 2001, Penn 2005). These representations are often in stark contrast to Mahongo's own representation of his involvement in several wars, and his subsequent spiritual growth, as will be shown in his personal narrative. No other indigenous narrative has yet emerged that represents and describes as comprehensively, from an indigenous perspective, the !xun people's complex involvement in the war, as well as their post-Apartheid experiences in South Africa.

As such, this thesis is in opposition to the historiography about southern Africa's indigenous San people, marked as it is, by records that are replete with colonial narratives of alterity, in which the identity of so-called Bushmen is denigrated to a sub-human species. These narratives of justified exploitation and genocide laid the groundwork for the Cape Colonial government's official policies regarding the status of the so-called Bushmen (Gordon 1992), which essentially remained the same until the mid 1990s. Prior to this, during the Apartheid and Colonial eras, genocide was justified in terms of the law.

Mahongo's voice, in first-person narrative, of the ways in which the !xun were conscripted, and eventually came to South Africa in 1990, undermines these prejudiced, superficial viewpoints of Eurocentric assumptions that have represented Mahongo and his community in the past. However, his narrative in chapters four to seven is not a 'one-size fits all' San story. On the contrary, it illuminates his individuality, his personal choices, as well as his life as a storyteller and leader among his people. As such, it actively works against the notion of 'the

San' as a generic group of people who conveniently fit under the same banner, while at the same time, lifting themes of change and continuity through examining narrative and cosmological similarities with other San groups in southern Africa, both past and present.

#### 19<sup>th</sup> century Bushmen trope

The trope of the so-called Bushmen as beings that were part animal part human, with no religion or potential for any development, and therefore easily dismissible as unworthy of hope of becoming “civilised human beings”, has been common in Eurocentric writing for centuries. In 1649, the French gem merchant and traveller, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier wrote that, “When they speak they fart with their tongues in their mouths (Tavernier in Skotnes 1996a:24). More than a century later, in 1777, Edward Terry described the language as an “inarticulate noise, rather than language, like the clucking of hens, or the gobbling of turkeys” (Ibid). White settlers took it as a given that “land was available virtually for the taking in the area they dubbed Bushmen or Baboon country” (Gordon 1992:92). The Bushmen’s fierce resistance and refusal to co-operate with the settlers further re-inforced the anger of the Europeans, whose hunger for land and self-governance was driven by their own troubled pasts. Filled with the insecurity and alienation of having left their own countries in search of better opportunities, they were often misled by colonial authorities about what they were to find in southern Africa. This dehumanizing discourse continued to develop alongside the brutal dispossession of San people, and is recorded in meticulous records, kept and deposited in archives by settlers, traders, farmers, colonial authorities and authors of the period (Skotnes 1996a, Penn 2005). For instance, in 1850, David Livingstone reflected that the “Bushmen of the Desert are perhaps the most degraded specimens of the human family (quoted in Voss 1987:26).

Charles Dickens, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1853, watched a so-called Bushmen exhibition, comprising of two living Khoisan people, who had been taken from the Cape to be exhibited publicly in England. He wrote an article titled *The Noble Savage*, published in an edition of *Household Words*, a widely-read journal of the time, that shows not only the colonial practice of enslaving and exhibiting people as specimens, as is done with wild animals, but also portrays the prevailing attitude towards these people during the three hundred years leading up to the nineteenth-century:

*To come to the point at once, I beg to say that I have not the least belief in the Nobel Savage. I consider him a prodigious nuisance, and an enormous superstition. ... It is all one to me, whether he sticks a fishbone through his visage, or bits of trees through the lobes of his ears, or birds' feathers in his head; whether he flattens his hair between two boards, or spreads his nose over the breadth of his face, or drags his lower lip down by great weights, or blackens his teeth, or knocks them out, or paints one cheek red and the other blue, or tattoos himself, or oils himself, or rubs his body with fat, or crimps it with knives. ... he is a savage—cruel, false, thievish, murderous; addicted more or less to grease, entrails, and beastly customs; ... Think of the Bushmen. Think of the two men and the two women who have been exhibited all over England for some years. Are the majority of persons—who remember the horrid little leader of that party in his festering bundle of hides, with his filth and antipathy to water, and his straddled legs, and his odious eyes shaded by his brutal hand, and his cry of 'Qu-u-u-aaa!' (Bosjesman for something desperately insulting I have no doubt)—conscious of an affectionate yearning towards that noble savage, or is it idiosyncratic of me to abhor, detest, abominate, and abjure him? (Dickens (1853:337-339), as quoted in Bregin 1998:35).*

The well-known case of Saartje Baartman tells the story of a degraded and humiliated ‘Hottentot Venus’ whose naked body was exhibited at fairs, salons and animal acts in London between 1810 and 1815 (Ferrus 2010). Saartje Baartman has become a powerful contemporary symbol of the utter humiliation suffered by indigenous Khoisan people at the hands of European colonists.

We can only but imagine the deeply imbedded notions of otherness that this kind of racist literature and the exhibitions imprinted on European people’s minds over the centuries. By the time Dr Wilhelm Bleek began his Bushmen research in 1860 in Cape Town, the notion of colonialism mourning the inevitable demise of the people it sought to conquer, was well established. Bleek wanted to study the threatened Bushmen languages and set out to find specimens for his cause (Bleek 1857,1862). In the process he provided us with what has become a vital corpus of San literature in southern Africa, studied and interpreted by scholars throughout the late twentieth century until the present, for the insight it gives us into the distant past (Hewitt 1986, Deacon 1986, Lewis-Williams 1981, Skotnes 2007). (I will provide a brief overview of the Bleek and Lloyd collection here but refer to it elsewhere in my thesis to surface themes of continuity and change, as I juxtapose narratives from this nineteenth-century collection with Mahongo’s twenty-first-century narratives.)

Bishop Colenso, the Anglican bishop of Natal, in his reply to Bleek’s request for obtaining captives for his ethnographic project in December 1870, writes:

*My dear Bleek. If once we catch a Bushman family, as you say, I do hope that I shall remember to plead your cause with the Natal Government, and if possible, get them sent down to you. ... There was a Bushwoman captured in the last expedition, who*

*died in Gaol, I believe, being perfectly innocent of any offence, and in fact sacrificed to the cause of civilisation, as our authorities wanted to get some information out of her. She would have suited your purposes very well, still such opportunities may recur*  
(Quoted in Hall 1998:147-148).

Bleek eventually found his human subjects in 1870, through a different set of circumstances, which was the release of the |xam man, ||kabbo, from the Breakwater Prison into Bleek and Lloyd's care at their home in the suburb of Mowbray, Cape Town. ||kabbo was followed by several other Bushman people who joined him over the next few years, giving rise to the famous Bleek and Lloyd collection coming into existence (Bank 2006).

#### Bleek and Lloyd collection

The Bleek and Lloyd collection was the first comprehensive collection of materials about the |xam people of southern Africa and the only one of the |xam. Bleek and Lloyd were among a handful of colonial scholars whose views of the San were far more compassionate than their colonial counterparts and indeed changed as they came to know the |xam storytellers (Bank 2006; Winberg 2011). Their contemporaries include the magistrate Louis Anthing, whose defence of the Bushmen, and appreciation of their culture, were expressed in his correspondence with friends as well as his official correspondence with the colonial government (de Prada-Samper 2012). For instance, in 1863, he noted that “over the previous ten years, the wholesale system of extermination of the Bushmen people were perpetrated by Coranna, Kaffir, Coloured and European farmers” (Skotnes 1996a:17). Anthing adds that “the killing of the Bushmen was not the avenging or punishing of thefts, but that, with or without provocation, Bushmen were killed...sometimes by hunting parties, at other times, by commandoes going out for the express purpose” (*Ibid*). The war against the Bushmen in the Greater Karoo was part of the farmers' vision for the future of their families and the growing

Merino sheep economy. Merino sheep is a breed able to survive in the extreme semi-desert Karoo climate with its limited water resources, but needed large tracts of land for grazing. As the Bushmen were confined to smaller and smaller portions of this arid land, their own resources dwindled, and they took to killing the farmers' sheep for survival (Deacon 1996: 14; de Prada-Samper 2012).

In the introduction to *The man who cursed the wind* (2016), Simon Hall and de Prada-Samper describe the Bleek and Lloyd collection's importance in the context of the |xam's relationship with the land, the rain, the people and the mythic animals of the waterholes within this expanding frontier by saying:

*Our knowledge of the importance of these places and their meanings comes from the archive gathered by the Bleek family. It provides a view of |xam life both back in time and forward. When we add bits and pieces of archaeological evidence, further insight is given to the manner in which belief anchored the |xam to their land and its resources (de Prada-Samper 2016:14).*

Hall and De Prada-Samper describe how the values and beliefs of the |xam gave structure to their landscape in ways different to that of Western science, beyond European understanding of the |xam, as vagabonds with no claim to anything, including their own lives.

We may read the aggression of the European colonisers' acts against the |xam through the words of post-colonial scholars such as Foucault (1991a,b), Spivak (1994), Said (2000), Adhikari (2010) and others, who have written extensively about the relationship between power, discourse and their mutual implications in systems of domination. These scholars

examined how subjects are produced, and not merely represented by discourse (McHoul & Grace 1993:15 in Bregin 1998). The master discourse of colonialism was geared towards a justification of its brutal rule, with their written records portraying the KhoiSan people as wild animals, lazy and stupid (Gordon 1992), in a long othering discourse: “In effect, colonial attitudes towards the Bushmen can be seen to have been determined before the colonists had even left the shores of home” (Bregin 1998:8). Bregin suggests that it is important to recognise that nineteenth-century England was undergoing a critical social and psychological readjustment. It is not in the scope of this thesis to investigate this assertion, but it is indeed helpful to gain a deeper understanding of how the problems of England’s rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, problems of urban poverty and decay, class division, coupled with the rising power of America and Germany, gave rise to the colonisers’ pursuit of the wild Edens of Africa. Bregin asserts that, “Britain’s social ills were the demon they exported with them...along with the trope of the other” (Bregin 1998: 11). Such views are helpful, because they prevent us from an oversimplified reading of colonial motivations, with their fascination with the other and the “colourful spectacles of exotica” (Low 1996:3). It helps our quest to understand human nature, the effect that socio-political, religious dogma and economic systems has on the human mind, and why the tendency towards othering is a universal trait (Levis-Strauss 1987, Low 1996; Said 2000, Foucault 1984, Spivak 1994, Adhikari 2010).

The nineteenth-century |xam collection also resulted in the first publication of the !kun children’s material, the appendix to *Specimens of Bushmen folklore (1911)*, in which the stories of four !kun children from the area around the Okavango River is represented and documented in stories and paintings, maps and drawings made by the children under Lucy Lloyd’s guidance. Lucy Lloyd embarked upon this project on her own after Bleek’s death, because of her interest in the other San languages spoken in southern Africa. This was an

unusual publication at the time, and one that took many years of labour and struggle on Lucy Lloyd's part before she found a publisher. A few years before her death in 1914, at the age of 79, she wrote: "With all its shortcomings, after many and great difficulties, this volume of Bushmen folklore is laid before the public" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: vii). This book has been an invaluable resource for scholars and has been studied and reviewed over the past century by a great number of scholars, including Michael Wessels (2010) and Andrew Bank (2006). *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore's* appendix is of great interest to this study because it is the first written and visual record we have of !kun speakers from Angola and Namibia in general, and in particular, these children who lived along the Okavango River area during the 1860s and 1870s. !nanni, Tamme, |uma and Da were brought to Cape Town on board the trading boat, the *Louis Alfred*, by Commissioner Palgrave and placed in Lucy Lloyd's home in Mowbray, Cape Town. It is here where they produced more than 570 paintings and drawings along with the narratives that Lucy Lloyd recorded in both !kun and English. In this way the children and Lucy Lloyd have left us a legacy of paintings, drawings, stories and notebooks that enabled us to read the material in the spirit of redress and justice. (Bleek & Lloyd 1911, Skotnes 2007, Winberg 2011).

This nineteenth-century narrative of !kun children being forcibly removed from their homes, by both local and European traders, foregrounds Kapilolo Mahongo's recollections of his own childhood in Angola during the 1950s. I return to this issue in chapter 7, where he vividly recalls how children climbed trees to avoid being kidnapped.

After Lucy Lloyd's death in 1914, her niece, Dorothea Bleek (Wilhelm and Jemima's daughter), continued working with her father and aunt's legacy through her translations of the texts. Her recorded journeys into the Karoo (Weintroub 2011) led to her erroneous

representation that there was not a single story left to be told, thus maintaining the trope of extinction; a vision that inspired her father to make the collection in the first place ( Hall & de Prada-Samper 2016).

Towards a post-colonial representation of San people

A shift in the scholarship representing the Bushmen towards the mid twentieth-century provides us with a cusp in the literature regarding the San. During the 1950s, empirical research on the San communities in Botswana and Namibia intensified, serving the popular concern of the time that sought to redress the damaging myths of the past and enable tangible improvement to the lives of San communities (Bregin 1998: 134). Bregin refers to Elsie Cloete's essay "Writing Around the Bushmen: The !Kung, Anthropology and Feminism" (1997) where Cloete notes that "since 1951, close on one hundred and four anthropologists, not counting development officers, agricultural extension officers, game warders etc., had all written about the three main Kalahari Bushmen groups. She points out the "singular determination by anatomists, anthropologists, and lately by exhibition curators, to re-inscribe, to preserve, to reproduce those footprints and stories scattered in the sand" (Cloete 1997: 45-59).

During this period scholars were predisposed towards a redemptive interpretation of San people's lives, with resilient opposition to the colonial views of the Bushmen as an animal-like, degraded human species (Barnard 1992, Biesele 1993, Marshall 1959, Lee 1979, Wilmsen 1996). There scholarship gave rise to new anthropological and archaeological debates and accounts for this shift in the historiography of hunter-gatherer lives.

Michael Wessels (2010) wrote about the idealisation of the San as a late twentieth-century phenomenon and refers to the work of Tony Voss (1987), who has examined the passage in South African literature of the representation of the so-called Bushmen from vermin to original human beings. “In writing such as that of Laurens van der Post (1958), the Bushmen become not only part of a common humanity; but quintessential human beings (Brown 1995: 63-64). They are closest to the origin – the pure embodiment of natural humankind” (Wessels 2010:55, Wilmsen (1989). Van der Post, for all his empathic admiration of the Kalahari people, is accused of romanticising the San, using their stories and beliefs to promote his own ideology and worldview. Andrew Bank (2006) draws a concrete example from the Bleek and Lloyd records to show how this stereotype has inadvertently been supported. The |xam storytellers did not, for example, live in a hut in the garden, but inside the house. In this way, “the worlds of the house, site of colonial culture of the Bleek household is separated from ‘the natural world, site of huts and traditional stories’” (Bank 2006: 71 in Wessels 2010:55). This representation clearly divides the interviewer and interviewee as civilized Western man and natural savage’ (Moran 1995: 31 in Wessels 2010).

Megan Biesele, herself a prominent anthropologist whose work with the Ju|’hoan in Namibia began during the 1970s, tells us that “During the course of eight expeditions between 1950 and 1961, the Marshall family and their co-workers studied the social structure of the most independent groups of Ju|’hoan and other Bushmen still living” (Biesele 1993:xxi). The Marshall family’s comprehensive research in the Kalahari contributed towards a discourse among scholars that raised strong resistance against previous generations’ denigrating attitude towards San cultural and socio-economic traditions. Their legacy includes an important collection of folklore and scrupulously documented research of the people who were still trying to survive as hunter-gatherers - as their grandparents did. The Marshalls

made invaluable recordings of the communities' ways of life, worldviews and indigenous knowledge in a prolific body of documents and publications. (Marshall 1959, 1976). As we will see later on in this chapter, Megan Biesele's ongoing collaborative research in Namibia between 1970 and the present, offered us multiple opportunities for understanding San narratives, while other anthropologists of the time, such as Lee (1979) and Wilmsen (1996), made significant contributions and provided us with robust debates about the lives of San people in the Kalahari. On the one hand, Lee proposed that the San, and specifically the Ju/'hoansi of the Dobe area, were always traditionally independent hunter-gatherers. On the other hand, the revisionist views from Wilmsen, for example, argues that they were also dependent serfs and cattle-keepers, on their at the bottom of the social hierarchy and servants, which explained their egalitarian culture of sharing. The Kalahari debate continued back and forth, with both sides presenting compelling research and arguments for their views.

Meanwhile, the Bleek and Lloyd collection lay in the archives for decades after Dorothea Bleek bequeathed it to the University of Cape Town in 1948 - silent for more than two and a half decades. In the early 1970s, the British sociolinguist, Roger Hewitt, then a doctoral student conducting research in London, came across a reference made in 1962 by librarian Otto Spohr (Spohr 1962). Hewitt tried to locate these notebooks, but in vain; he finally resorted to paying a librarian to search for the lost collection in the Jagger library. The consequent discovery of one hundred and eighteen notebooks in a corner of the library, set in motion a new wave of scholarship (Hewitt in Szalay 2002:33). Hewitt's work has been hailed as the first, most comprehensive and "perhaps the most insightful study, appreciated as "meticulously researched" by leading scholars of the collection (Wessels 2010:122). Hewitt's book, *Structure, meaning and ritual in the narratives of the southern San*, sets out to situate "individual narratives within their narrative tradition and that tradition, within a cultural

context extending from the material world to the conceptual frameworks evinced in custom and belief” (Hewitt 1986: 20). His revision and close reading of the Bleek and Lloyd collection was a pivotal part of a scholarly movement towards a different, post-colonial phase in the historiography of San lives.

A new generation of archaeologists and rock art

During the 1970s, the newly emerged |xam material, and the increasing academic interest in the San rock art on southern Africa’s cave walls, inspired a generation of archaeologists, anthropologists, artists and literary scholars to develop their discourse of respect for these exquisite, complex works of art, previously seen as the idle doodles of Bushmen. This scholarship contributed to the South African coat of arms inaugurated on Freedom Day, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2000. The coat of arms features two San figures with interlinked arms, drawn in red ochre. The motto, in the |xam language: *!ke e: /xarra //ke*, translates to “diverse people unite”.

David Lewis-Williams (1981), Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) and Janette Deacon (1986), among others, began the process of bringing the Bleek and Lloyd collection to bear on their rock art studies. Remarkably, Deacon’s skilful research placed the |xam narratives in the same geographical places from which the interlocutors came, thus enabling us to identify their homes and imagine the actual geographical context for their narratives of loss. We were now able to visit the |xam stories in the actual places that they spoke of. Deacon’s work set in motion a far greater appreciation of how the narratives were imbedded in the |xam’s home and specific places in the Karoo environment. She writes of ||kabbo and his people’s land, “between Kenhardt and Carnavon among the back roads of the Northern Cape province in

South Africa” as a “landscape full of memories” and compares it to a theatre “accumulating memories of performances over many years” (Deacon & Foster 2005:12).

Janette Deacon’s pilgrimage to take the |xam material out of the archive and into the landscape and community where it came from, resulted in consultations with local farmers and the descendants of the |xam in the Upper Karoo:

*The memory of these hardships endured in the |Xam community for many years. In 1986, when I told an old man who lived near Brandvlei, the story of the /Xam who went to Cape Town, he reacted with amazement when I mentioned the Breakwater Prison. He said, when he was a child in the early 1900s and he did something naughty, his mother would threaten to send him to the Breakwater. He never knew what it meant until I explained that it was a prison established in the dockland area in the 1860s, where the prisoners sentenced to hard labour had to quarry stone to build the foundations for a breakwater to protect the harbour (Deacon 2005:20).*

As we will see later in this study, Deacon’s ability to combine her academic research with the memories of people on the land, grew into a new tradition of scholarship that acknowledged the |xam’s intimate relationship with their environment. Ironically, more than a hundred years earlier, Heinrich Lichtenstein spoke of the relationship of the San to their land: “What had a people like the Bushmen to lose – they who are everywhere at home, who know not the value of any land (Heinrich Lichtenstein quoted in Moffat 1842:54 and in Bregin 1998:13).

While the Bleek and Lloyd collection contributed significantly towards the interpretation of rock art, scholars such as German anthropologist Mathias Guenther (1989, 1999) offered the

world a comparative study between Nharo and |xam traditions by presenting narratives from both traditions. Guenther's work with the Nharo storytellers in Botswana resulted in several publications (1989;1999), offering us his research and views of the |xam trickster, |kaggen, and the Kalahari trance practitioner, as manifestations of a single Bushmen complex (Wessels 2001:15).

#### Post-Apartheid democracy

In 1990, the year during which Nelson Mandela was released after 28 years in prison, the Bleek-Lloyd conference held at UCT celebrated the existence of the collection – scholars were now able to interpret San lives in a vastly expanded, compassionate context that embraced the values of the nineties in South Africa – democracy based on a constitution that celebrated human rights for all. This conference was followed by the publication *Voices from the past, |xam Bushmen and the Bleek and Lloyd Collection* (Deacon & Dowson 1996) that contextualized the collection in South Africa's new democracy, thus signalling a new foundation for post-Apartheid scholarship related to the |xam and !kun children's material in the collection.

The years preceding and following the millennium, gave rise to a number of artistic exhibitions and poetic works by academics, inspired by the unique 19<sup>th</sup> century collection; Alan James (2001), Stephen Watson (1991) and Antjie Krog (2004), to mention but a few. In his book, *The broken string: the last words of an extinct people* (2005), Neill Bennun's real contribution at the time was to connect the stories of the makers of the archive (Bleek and Lloyd) with those of the contributors, the |xam narrators, with remarkable effect. In parallel narratives, he connects Bleek and |kaggen's (the trickster) experiences in the landscape as if they were characters on the same stage. He offsets painful moments from Lucy Lloyd's personal background with a hunter's painful experience of killing an eland (Bennun 2005:

85-98). By treating the material in this poetic, liminal way, he brings together the shared humanity of both the European and |xam makers of the collection. It needs to be said that the title “the last words of an extinct people” is misleading because descendants of the |xam are still very much alive and telling their stories, if fractured and in another, post-colonial language – Afrikaans (De Prada-Samper 2007). Many more writers would come to examine the relationship between Bleek and Lloyd, and their |xam informants (Skotnes 2007; Bank 2006; Winberg 2011).

New curation of museum displays

Pippa Skotnes’ artist’s book *Sound from the thinking strings* (1991), followed her controversial exhibition and catalogue, *Miscast*, at the National Gallery (1996). Skotnes’ intention with staging this exhibition was to bring critical awareness to the representation of the so-called Bushman over the past three and a half centuries. This sensitively constructed and well-thought out exhibition offered new ways of looking at the dioramas with its body casts of Bushmen, inviting viewers to question its place in the representation of San bodies as objects.

It is interesting to note that the exhibition sparked a variety of passionate responses, touching as it did on volatile and sensitive issues of race, exploitation, representation and dispossession of Khoisan people and their descendants. The following extract is from a pamphlet written by the !hurikamma cultural movement, and sums up the reaction of certain viewers, while amplifying the mute, or absent voices, of living San people (Bregin 2008: 128).

*ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!*

*Statement concerning exhibitions about the Khoisan*

*We are sick and tired of naked Brown people being exposed to the curious glances of rich whites in search of dinner table conversation. At the exhibition mounted at the South African National Gallery, we were exposed to yet another attempt to treat Brown people as objects. Our shocked eyes were greeted by the spectacle of a half naked clan sitting on the steps of the Gallery. Further on a white woman was animatedly taking snapshots of Brown people who had the misfortune to pass her lens. In the hall itself indignity was heaped upon indignity, culminating in the centerpiece – mounted casts of Brown breasts and penises. The people of whom these casts were made are long dead. They cannot tell of the humiliation suffered, or the pain they felt at being manipulated in this way. We can. As the descendants of the Khoisan, we must protest at the continuing objectification and exploitation of Brown people.*

The exhibition did not succeed in reaching a non-academic audience – its intellectual, visual and textual content was presented in ways that the authors of this pamphlet and the people they represented, could not relate to. This protest, aimed at the representation of San people in museums, was one of many more to follow, as the post-Apartheid era opened a space for people who were previously classified as “Coloured”, to claim San descentance and assert an identity based on indigenous people and their rights. The radical changes that accompanied a democratic government during the nineties enabled the formation of legal indigenous people’s movements and Khoisan organisations, such as the S. A. San Institute, of which Kapilolo Mahongo was the chairperson from 2016 to 2018.

Another critical cusp occurs at this moment of scholarly representation of the San. It is no longer acceptable to represent the San - San people, like all dispossessed people in South Africa, now had a legal voice. It is no longer politically or ethically acceptable for anyone to speak on behalf of the San, unless mandated to do this. Human rights lawyer, a spokesperson for the San, Roger Chennells, is a case in point. (In the following chapter, I will focus on the implications of this in the role of the researcher and how it impacts on the methodology we use in the academy.)

*Voices of the San* (White & le Roux 2004), illustrates this shift in searching for ‘who speaks for who and how’. The editors describe the book’s beginnings in the following way:

*During a meeting of more than fifty San representatives at a WIMSA AGM in November 1997, they decided that San people should be the ones asking the questions and doing the research themselves, if they ever wanted to have a true picture...Initially eleven – and in time over thirty – San were trained to do field recordings and transcriptions. Hundreds of interviews were collected, and as the wave grew, many other San organisations joined hands in similar initiatives” (2004: vi).*

This is a visually impressive book with a vast collection of photographs depicting San people from all the different language groups across southern Africa. Commissioned by the United Nations to celebrate the UN Decade for Indigenous People (1994-2004), the book reflects the process of San-based organisations (such as the South African San Institute and WIMSA), to train San youths across the region to record and transcribe their elders’ oral history after the

end of the Border War and of Apartheid. In doing so, the indigenous researchers reflect on their own identity as a new San generation, one that no longer practices the hunter-gatherer lifestyle of their elders yet values their heritage. Hundreds of interviews were conducted in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, and these speak of the yearning for ancestral land and lost traditions. These interviews bring forth themes of trauma suffered, slavery, dispossession, unemployment and radical changes in the lives of the San, of many generations of being slaves, dispossessed workers and being marginalised, unemployed people, bringing forth themes of continuity and change. The book simultaneously portrays a passionate energy to gain control of the future as a modern people, living within a democracy. One of the Khomani elders who directed the process of producing the book, had this to say: “I want this book to be written about our history, how people lived in the old times and told the old stories, and so on [...] It has to be written in N\!u, Afrikaans and English, because there are many who cannot understand one or the other; so that we can all understand it.” (Rooi in White & le Roux 2004: vii) The book tracks the history of the many different San communities and languages, and provides information about the well-researched history of the San’s enslavement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its real achievement lies in the fact that it was developed by a large team of San youths, with the guidance of professionals in the field, resulting in an authentic resource that honours its title: *Voices of the San*. The book belongs to an emerging genre of San publications that celebrate a transition from oral to written literature. Ten years later, Belinda Kruiper co-published a book about her late husband and his paintings, adding another San voice to the short list of material coming from within San communities (Bregin & Kruiper 2014).

Heated and complex debates around the representation and ownership of San narratives and the archives have become part of our national narrative. June Bam describes this process as follows:

*The overarching current contentious heritage issue for 'contemporary' Khoisan communities appears to be the notion of 'identity' and its concomitant 'sense of belonging'. Both inform a range of contemporary campaigns: land restitution and justice; language diversity revivalism; constitutional accommodation; appropriating education and knowledge systems; occupying sacred and ancestral spaces; indigenous 'self-identification'; and returning human remains (Bam in Ntsebeza & Saunders. 2014:123-133).*

Interestingly, digital technology had given scholars the opportunity to democratise the Bleek and Lloyd collection by opening it up to the public on the world wide web. Pippa Skotnes' *Claim to the country* (2007), was accompanied by a digital Bleek and Lloyd collection - it contains scans of the notebooks, drawings and paintings, as well as informative and insightful essays by a number of scholars who had worked with the collection for a number of years prior to its publication.

The years before and after the millennium has been characterised by robust, critical intellectual debate from scholars on San thought, human rights or education - a part of the broader debate about indigenous knowledge and the curation of archives. Carolyn Hamilton (2007) describes the period as a time when Western knowledge was dismissed as tainted, and indigenous knowledge affirmed, as representing an authentic alternative, not only in South Africa, but across the globe. She describes this movement as carrying the moral weight of restitution and redress that anti-colonial struggles and indigenous people's organisations have placed on the global agenda.

*As much as Western knowledge practice is attacked for its status as authorized and dominant, institutionalised in the academies, regnant in the legal system, so too is indigenous knowledge now officialised and institutionalised in post-apartheid South Africa. The ANC government has moved decisively to promote and set up various indigenous knowledge movements, such as the National Indigenous Knowledge Systems Office (NIKSO) and the National Heritage Council (NHC) (Hamilton 2007).*

My own practice and examination of my place in facilitating indigenous knowledge projects, drew substance from prominent scholars, such as Hamilton and Njabulo Ndebele (2009). He offers this insight on the UCT Archive and Public Culture Platform's Website: "There can be no transformation of the curriculum, or indeed, of knowledge itself, without an interrogation of archive". A reading of Verne Harris' writing on archive between 1996 and 2016, offers an overview of this discourse around transformation, memory and knowledge production during this period. He writes that during the 1990s when democracy flourished, 'archives for justice' was a parallel discourse with Indigenous Knowledge; thousands of projects took off to train previously dispossessed people to record their own histories, to transform South Africa's archives and gather alternative knowledges. Harris marks 1976 (June student protests in Soweto), as the start of the broader movement we name 'archives for justice' and suggests that this tradition has several tenets (Harris 2010).

Firstly, he writes, the world of archives is an integral part of the struggles against apartheid oppression. Secondly, the archivist is not an impartial custodian – rather, the archivist is a memory activist, either for or against the oppressive system. Thirdly, that creating space for the voices and the narratives repressed or silenced by Apartheid is an ethical imperative. Fourthly, the archivist, or memory activist, could instead be countering the dominant

metanarratives of the regime and building new ones. Verne Harris' view resonates with the content of this thesis.

Verne notes that these two vibrant traditions and practices have dried up, replaced by a dull bureaucracy “tempered by the need to manage competing priorities in contexts of limited resources ... memory institutions are no longer the sexy instruments of transformation and the shapers of new metanarratives that they once were” (Harris 2010: 4) This paper, presented to the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at UCT in 2010, calls for the energy of justice and deconstruction as represented by Mandela and Derrida, as the antidote for this inertia. Harris writes that ‘archives for justice’ within the deconstructive frame is best understood as shorthand for an ethics of hospitality and relates it to those tenets of this tradition in South Africa, where impartiality is not an option. For deconstruction, he says, to be human is to be an archivist without any impartial custodian. “Every act of custodianship is implicated in acts of reconstructing, representing, accessing and disseminating what is left in custody. Every act of custody assumes an exercise of power; and every exercise of power is at once a temptation to injustice and a call to justice...custodians cannot avoid complicity. But we can work against the pull; and for deconstruction it is a moral imperative to do so.” (Harris 2010: 5) These issues, and that of justice and a moral imperative especially, inform this study.

Harris links the creation of space for voices and narratives repressed or silenced by apartheid and colonialism, with deconstruction's fundamental opening to the knocking at the door of the stranger, as the beginning and end of justice. This fundamental opening, he argues, is the experience of belonging not simply as a guest, but as a host. For Derrida and deconstruction, we begin to discern the call of justice when we turn our ears to the strangers – the other.

Deconstruction resists every metanarrative, Harris argues, while acknowledging that metanarrative cannot be avoided, opening it up to its own unravelling, or what Derrida would have called an incessant movement of re-contextualisation. This thesis is an act of resistance to the metanarrative and mainstream stories about the !xun community.

His views are expanded in *Uncertain curation* (Hamilton & Skotnes, eds 2014), where Mbongiseni Buthelezi examines his role as researcher and offers a self-reflective view to his work with a contemporary organisation of Ndwandwe descendants, based in Kwa-Zulu Natal, the Umumbano IwamaZwide (the unity of the Zwides), which seeks to organise the descendants into a supportive network that re-imagines the historic Ndwandwe identity in the present. He describes the ethics of his work and owns his discomfort at curating and archiving his oral history research in northern KwaZulu Natal with people whose first language is Xhosa (as is Buthelezi's), to whom the fact that they "look like me", is even more of a reason to be authentic and face the dilemmas of ethics in research...what does it mean to write in the way I have done about people whose practices I am interpreting? Am I turning them into dumb objects of interpretation all over again? I cannot answer these questions." (Buthelezi 2014:115). His words resonate with those of David Cohen, who writes in the same book: "...as soon as our fingers touch and rearrange, we take on responsibilities that add layers to those already entailed production and consumption. There is no settlement to the contingencies associated with acts of curation which entail ranges of responsibilities only weakly delineated and scarcely predictable" (Cohen 2014: 63). These self-reflexive observations certainly resonate with my own work with !xun storytellers and the curation of the stories, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

This publication contains sixteen essays that speaks to the heart of the uncertain, unstable process of curating archive in the present time; it is a slippery responsibility that moves in

and out of focus and cannot easily be categorized into comfortable zones of practice, nor claimed as impartial, for every record is marked by the context, researcher and recorder in some way or another.

*It is the central paradox of both curation and curatorship that they always entail appropriation of one kind or the other, often with authoritative fiat, along with care. We use [the abstract noun of action] 'curation' as a rhetorical device to keep this paradox firmly in view, to direct any attention to the changes involved in forms of archival preservation and presentation, and to invite active and critical reflection about the practices which they entail (Hamilton & Skotnes, eds. 2014:1).*

These ideas extend into the complex nature of the term 'Indigenous knowledge', and although this study is not the place for an in-depth review of the entanglements between so-called 'tainted' Western and 'authentic' Indigenous forms of knowledge, academic or on-the-ground representation, I must reference these contentious debates (Ntsebeza & Saunders, eds. 2014).

The late 1990s and early millennium years saw a range of private and organisational representations of the Indigenous, including the KhoiSan people in South Africa. In Kaggakamma, for example, Dawid Kruiper's clan of 'Khomani Bushmen' were employed by the management of this Cederberg nature reserve, as an entrepreneurial project, where they displayed themselves dressed in beaded skins, as 'traditional Bushmen' for visiting tourists. In their keen press release to the media, on the eve of the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, the owners informed the public of their grand plan to restore this group of 'Bushmen' to nature, where they could enjoy a hunter-gatherer life (through a display of guided tours

and hikes for tourists) on part of the reserve; an enthusiastic representation of the romantic myth of a lost past regained. It was an ironical display of the centuries-old Bushmen trope – unchanging, unproblematic and static. Dawid Kruiper, in a personal conversation in 1994, explained that he embraced this opportunity as a way of explaining to people how his people lived in the past, while they were enjoying the life on the farm. These tourist events certainly did not contribute to questioning the complex historical losses Dawid Kruiper’s people suffered, nor the radical departure to stereotypical representation. Nevertheless, this ‘Bushmen advertisement’ meant employment for him and his family, and contributed to the rise of cultural tourism, a legitimate activity in South Africa actively encouraged by government.

#### San Code of ethics

The South African San Council (among several other San organisations), created new forms of representation, determined to regain a sense of ownership on behalf of San communities in the region, while putting an end to exploitation by film-makers, pharmaceutical companies or other researchers. Their formulation of a code of ethics in 2017, is arguably their most valuable contribution to the representation of the San thus far. The document discusses and emphasises, as its main tenets, honesty, respect, justice, fairness and care in the research process.

At the same time, this historic document is fraught with implications that work against the San people’s interests. For example, during a personal discussion in Cape Town in July 2016, with the San council’s director, Leana Snyders, she explained to me that researchers would have to gain permission from the Council to do any form of research among San communities in the future. They would have to apply to the Council for permission to work in the communities and present themselves for a personal interview in Upington, Northern Cape,

where the Council is based. Because of the Council's limited capacity, it would not have been able to accept or read any more research applications for at least another 12 months at the time. Some of the research proposals would have to be referred to specialists with whom the Council has a trusted relationship before the Council could come to any decision. This cumbersome process effectively bars researchers, academics and organisations who have positive contributions to make to the communities, unless of course, they do so by making friends with individuals who do not necessarily abide by the Council's rules or have the capacity to influence and bypass the Council's rules. It also forbade researchers from publishing material that represents the San in a negative light. This might become problematic as it prevents, for example, identification of problem areas in health and domestic violence.

In addition to these problems of capacity, leadership conflict and internal clan-divisions have prevented many of the groundswell organisations to become affective in their campaigns for land restitution, language diversity revivalism and identity, justice, knowledge systems, education, skills training, returning human remains or acknowledgement of sacred spaces. This lack of a coherent front challenges the effectiveness of their negotiations with the relevant government bodies, who might be able to assist them in gaining access to resources, even if the political will on behalf of government was present. It also prevents constructive engagement with scientists who have valid and globally important work to contribute, as the Council has become the gateway to 'community' approval for funding proposals.

This then, concludes my discursive and broad impression of the historical literature pertaining to the San, the current debates and discourse around curation of archive, the project of documenting Indigenous knowledge in post-apartheid South Africa, and the ways in which the literature around the pertinent issues of San representation continues to evolve.

## San expressive and creative arts

Directly relevant to this study, is an examination of the significant role that storytelling played, and as will be demonstrated later in this study, still plays among many contemporary San people. Megan Bieseles work with San women and men in Namibia provided us with a remarkable body of insight and detailed analyses of the actual contexts in which narratives were told. Her gender-sensitive and ground-breaking book, *Women like meat* (1993) explains how storytelling was intimately connected to San people's social and personal identity, while being a record of the worldview of the Ju|'Huan community in Namibia where she lived and worked for long periods at a time. Bieseles begins her book with a |xam narrative from the Bleek and Lloyd collection and continues to lift themes from this opening narrative throughout her book, demonstrating how the living culture of San people across the sub-continent is part of a broader San cosmology that is eloquently expressed in creative narratives. The |xam collection had indeed become a corpus for San studies.

## Stories and rock art

In her Master's degree dissertation, Elana Bregin (1998) works with Bieseles material in a discussion of how the Bleek and Lloyd collection's stories are inextricably bound up with the hunter-gatherer way of life and can only be understood in that context. She states that their subtlety of allusion, evocative symbolism and spiritual profundity represent incontrovertible challenges to the colonial stereotypes of Bushmen as childlike savages. She asserts that Western-trained readers, with their reliance on linear, fixed systems of thought would need profound shifts in thinking and paradigm to enter the stories. For the San, the borders between real and unreal, and possible and actual are permeable, rather than fixed. Bregin

writes that the scholarship of ‘seeing’ this has been to surface the complexity and conceptual mindset necessary to read the narratives.

Of particular interest to this study, is Megan Biesele’s discussion about the work stories and storytelling do in society – not only for the Ju’|hoan, but for all human beings, now and throughout the ages. Biesele surfaced the notion of San expressive and creative arts as a holistic process, with one form feeding onto another. A similar insightful adjustment is needed to enter the domain of reading San rock art, resisting as it does, superficial analyses, a point made by rock art researchers such as Deacon and Dowson (1996) and Parkington (2000). The paintings are not simply naturalistic representation of the environment and painters’ lifestyles, but “complex mythological systems and psychic spaces” (Brown 1995:63).

Archaeologist John Parkington comments on the relationship between stories and rock art in this way:

*Even those outsiders who have unequivocally attributed the ‘art on the rocks’ to hunter-gatherers have tended to minimise its significance, reducing it to a kind of pictorial ethnography or trivialising it as the product of idle hands and oodles of time. The comments of ||kabbo and other |xam men and women, on being shown (rather poor) tracings of paintings, have put an end to that. His remarks on what is depicted reveal it to be intensely metaphorical and deeply entrenched in the religious feelings of the painters and engravers. In some ways his stories are analogous. The repeated depictions of eland on the cave walls recalls the repeated phrases of a story. The almost ubiquitous use of metaphor permeates both the written and the painted or*

*engraved documents. The fragile, even permeable, distinction between people and animals appears in each context. The stories, poems and songs do not, however, interpret the paintings, nor do engravings illustrate stories. Rather, they stand as a body of work in which the components reflect on and off one another (Parkington 2008: 89).*

David Lewis-Williams, well known for his shamanistic interpretation of rock art, describes the core of his most recent book, *Myth and meaning – San-Bushman folklore in global context* (2016): “... I am advocating a way of getting at the essentials of the ethnographic contexts of myths, as a protection against seeing other people’s myths in the light of our own contemporary interests and values”. Consequently, Williams has tried to bring his research closer to the living San and contributed significantly to ending the nineteenth-century myth of the San as a ‘species’ closer to animals than human beings, or as a race without religion, history and impossible to civilise. His work is hailed as having liberated the interpretations of rock art in South Africa.

However, other scholars, such as Ann Solomon (Solomon 2009) suggest that Lewis-Williams’ position assumes a Pan-San cultural reality exists, whereby only surface differences separate the rock art and the narratives of people of different San groups. She challenges Lewis-Williams’ now problematic interpretation concerning trance, rain animals, shamanism or entopics, through her readings of the Bleek and Lloyd collection. Lewis-Williams’ works, including *San Spirituality* (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004), suggests that the trance dance experience is mirrored by dancers of all shamanic cultures and is therefore identical with such practices elsewhere in southern Africa and indeed the world. Solomon (1995; 2000) finds this reductive and argues that it does not merely reflect another sphere of cultural or

religious experience, but constitutes a primary site of the production of signification; that narratives can produce multiple meanings and were produced for different reasons in a range of contexts (Wessels 2010: 277). Wessels suggests that, “Like Solomon, Pippa Skotnes (1996b: 234-44) contends that art does not only reflect another reality; it helps to produce reality.”

Viewed in this light, one might suggest that Lewis-Williams himself, like many well-meaning scholars, have created another myth about San paintings and narratives – a legacy of an essentially spiritual people, whose shamanic visions and experiences are the metaphysical essence of rock art.

Can rock art be viewed as narrative? Can San narratives comment on the rock art? In their book, *First people ancestors of the San* (2015) Parkington and Dlamini look at these questions and examine the archaeology of the San and devote their Chapter 5 to asking what painted rock images tell us about San painters and their communities’ life ways. While the multi-layered images go far beyond being a visual, ethnographic record of lives lived, the authors argue that there may be narrative structures imbedded in the compositions and choices the painters made, “including ‘realistic’ elements enmeshed in the complex mosaics and metaphorical networks” (Parkington & Dlamini 2015: 92). They cite the example of depictions of antelope and nets from the Cederberg region. Some archaeologists interpreted these net-like cross-hatched images as mental imagery known to be seen by ‘shamans’ in trance, referring to entoptic phenomena registered on the optic nerve. Other archaeologists thought this to be an unreasonable assumption, because a narrative structure was evident in the ways in which the steenbok, duiker or vaal rhebok were composed along with human figures, in a scene that suggested anticipation of a hunt with nets. Pieces of nets or evidence

of nets have been found in excavations - these paintings may now provide a visual context for the use of nets. Parkington and Dlamini conclude that the art is a complex mesh of real and imagined, the realistic and the manipulated, both a narrative and a worldview – sites where narrative and image may reflect on and off one another.

Wessels expands on this view by drawing on Brown (Brown 1998:27), suggesting that millennial scholarship tries to find “ways with which to engage the tangible realities of rock art and the verbal materials in the Bleek and Lloyd Collection that do not reproduce ethnographic or romanticised ways of viewing the Bushman...” Brown (Ibid). He maintains that the influence of both the idealised and the overtly racist way of thinking about the Bushmen can only be weakened if ‘the songs and stories of the |xam’ are not allowed to ‘talk back’ to modern understanding. In this way, Bushmen can begin to speak for themselves, to some extent, rather than exist as a product of the distorted representations of others” (Wessels 2010: 55).

#### Rediscovering the |xam’s stories in living storytellers

Jose De Prada-Samper (2016) began his project of inviting San descendants in the Karoo to tell their stories to him in order to document them. Subsequently, his research has identified structural and thematic similarities between the stories currently being told by |xam descendants from the Karoo. de Prada-Samper’s volume of narratives collected from San descendants, *The man who cursed the wind and other stories from the Karoo* (de Prada-Samper 2016) offers us a wider view to San orality and a poignant glimpse into the body of traditional literature that still exists among the descendants of the |xam in the northern Cape. While his book does not attempt an analysis of the meaning of the narratives, it convincingly concludes that many of the stories are indeed walking in the genealogical footsteps of the |xam. His open-ended interviewing approach has yielded a diverse range of narratives, while

his careful academic analyses link the historical |xam narratives and contemporary storytellers. In making this link, he honours the living carriers of the oral tradition and undermines the myth that the |xam's culture is extinct, as if it was a natural species and not an ever-evolving, dynamic culture. Furthermore, the book respects the first language of the storytellers, Afrikaans, by publishing the collection in both English and Afrikaans. His inclusion of the contemporary narrators' photographs provides a visual presence of these storytellers as contemporary owners of their oral literature, while the intellectual ownership in the credits page acknowledges that the stories are either traditional narratives or family and personal memories. Importantly, he emphasizes that there is no such thing as an original, authentic or complete version of a narrative, because no two renditions are the same, even when performed by the same person. Storytellers always weave themselves into their tales, and can be considered the authors of their versions, even if the story itself is traditional and known to all in the community. In this sense, each individual storyteller represented in his book is the owner of his or her story as transcribed, edited and translated by the curator and assistants.

Consequently, De Prada-Samper moves away from the notion that the Bleek and Lloyd material is a closed corpus representing all San, dead or alive, by opening this material to contemporary versions of the narratives. Indeed, the San organisations and San descendants call for a new genre in San literature, where San people themselves are the authors and tellers of their stories, as such contributing to the current post-colonial debates around indigenous identity and a sense of belonging (Bam 2014). His book acknowledges the Afrikaans-speaking communities of mixed descent in the Karoo and adjoining areas as being genetically and culturally connected with the former Khoesan inhabitants of these areas, many of whom have not been completely alienated from their traditions, and who work at preserving,

maintaining and developing these traditions. He writes that the knowledge these communities have can contribute to a better understanding of the nineteenth-century texts, yet, up until now, no one has elicited interpretations of the texts from contemporary carriers. They remain carriers of their traditional stories and assert their African identity by calling into being that nexus of all knowledge: storytelling.

José de Prada-Samper's book may be read against the background of other folklorists who, like him, have collected stories from San storytellers in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. Ansie Hoff, for example collected a large number of stories from Nama and !xam descendants in the Northern Cape Province, including a number of fascinating versions about the mythological water snake in the Orange River and surroundings (Hoff 2007, Schmidt 2013 c: 766). As a whole this literature shows the tenacity of stories to survive and adapt to the present. The stories are often profound forms of knowledge and do not get lost easily; instead they are often translated into another language when the 'original' is forgotten. Kapilolo Mahongo's narratives in this thesis shows how stories travel remarkable distances as people migrate and translate their stories as they learn the languages of others, each time adding or losing a twist to the tales yet staying faithful to the heart of the story.

Particularly relevant to this study of Mahongo's narratives, is the work of five twentieth-century female scholars, Terttu Heikkinen, Lorna Marshall, Megan Biesele, Marjorie Shostak and Sigrid Schmidt. (Lucy Lloyd is another woman whose 19<sup>th</sup> century work informed my own, but I have referenced her already and will return to her work later in this thesis.) These scholars' research material on the people in the area around the Okavango River in southern Angola, and in northern and eastern Namibia provides us with material for understanding the contemporary !xun stories from this area - in a historical and evolving context. The results of

their participatory research have been of pivotal importance in my own research as far as both biographical stories and folktales are concerned and helped me recognise the historical importance of Mahongo and other contemporary !xun storytellers' repertoire.

#### Inventory of Khoisan stories and main ethnographers

In a valuable contribution to the literature of traditional San narratives, Sigrid Schmidt, in *A catalogue of Khoisan folktales of southern Africa* (2013 a, b, c), a volume in three parts, provides us with more than just a useful research tool. Her catalogue is an inventory of almost three thousand Khoisan folktales that have been recorded across southern Africa over the past three centuries. It provides references to each known version, collector, and where possible, teller, date and place. She also notes the differences between spoken and written texts, a challenge Kapilolo Mahongo and I were conscious of in our own transcription and translation of the !xun texts.

*Folktales, however, are handed down according to rules that differ from those concerning written texts. A considerable part of most folktales consists of dialogues in direct speech with the narrator acting out these dialogues rather than just telling them. He/she represents the bragging or shy, stupid or clever, gloomy or bright characters by voice, gestures and face modulation. He/she marks the beginning or end of the direct speech by the phrase "he said", more often in the passive voice: "it was said". The way how it was said, whether it was screamed or whispered, even sung, is not expressed in words. As the reader misses these performance elements he/she will often encounter problems identifying which character is speaking at any given time (Schmidt 2011:23).*

In 2011, Sigrid Schmidt edited Terttu Heikkinen's material and published *Hai||om and !Xu stories from North Namibia – collected and translated by Terttu Heikkinen (1934-1988)*.

Heikkinen, a Finnish missionary, worked in Oshigambo in Namibia between 1960 and 1976.

Schmidt records that Heikkinen left Namibia with a wealth of data, "... mostly on the languages but also some that might be of interest in the field of folklore. The stories came to me by chance while I was recording or writing down from dictation texts for my language study." In fact, Heikkinen left a legacy of the largest written collection of stories from northern Namibia and southern Angola's !xun speakers. It contains 45 stories and an additional three variants. Of these, 24 are in Hai||om and 24 are in !xun, and all are published in both English and !xun, with extensive analyses of each tale added by Schmidt.

In *The harmless people* (Marshall 1959), the Ju|'hoan are depicted as living in an egalitarian society, one in which social harmony is cultivated by means of storytelling and an elaborate network of gift exchange. Critics have referred to this book title as a stereotyped depiction of the people, and one that is misleading (Parkington & Dlamini 2015:83), yet the work remains a pivotal reference work, and an invaluable source of information as well as a respectful observation and meticulous documentation of a specific group of people whose way of life caused little damage to the environment. The broader Marshall collection includes traditional narratives from Ju|'hoan storytellers, many of which are variants of those from the north. She documented several stories about the ambiguous trickster figure, published in 1962 and more comprehensively in 1999, showing how the figure was present in different groups. I will discuss the trickster figure in chapter 8, where Marshall's documentation of the Dima and Owl myth becomes an important reference in Mahongo's repertoire.

In this thesis, I attempt to provide a transparent, autoethographical account of the research process and my personal collaboration with Mahango and the !xun storytellers. Marjorie Shostak's book *Nisa, the life and words of a !Kung woman (1981)*, provides a literary reference for this process. Shostak (1945-1996) was an American anthropologist who lived among the Ju|'hoan in the Dobe area for two years, and like her American predecessors, learnt their language. As a feminist, Shostak examined the role of women in society, and researched the gender realities of a San woman at the time. Her book is a combination of anthropological observations and the extensive life story of one woman, Nisa. It is told in Nisa's own words that, according to Shostak, were carefully and minimally edited.

Fierce academic criticism levelled at this publication includes suggestions of academic appropriation of Nisa's story, a denial of her and the rest of the !kung's political, economic and intra-cultural history spanning many generations (Cloete 1997:52), and calls for a far greater sensitivity and transparency regarding the selectivity of the material and the process of recording. This forms part of the continuing debate that calls for a scrupulous revision of research practice, including a self-reflexive stance to research processes that acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity. Chapter three of this thesis is an extensive deconstruction of these issues in my own research process.

This book remains the only extensive life story of a San person from the twentieth century. Shostak argues that women's roles in the family and community were far more important than in Western society, mainly because of the contributions they made towards food resources. (The book and its sequel, *Return to Nisa (2002)* have become classics in feminist literature). This publication and that of the life stories of |kabbo and the !kun boys in the Bleek and Lloyd collection, are the only published, extensive auto-biographical material of

San lives we have. The material presented in this thesis, Kapilolo Mahongo's life stories, constitutes the third of this kind of autobiographical material about a San individual, albeit under very different circumstances.

Returning to Megan Bieseles research, we find the role of San women closely examined through the traditional narratives she collected in the 1970s. The title of her book, *Women like meat* (1993), is a play on women, men and hunting that hints at the central role women play in the community. Her book concentrates on six themes across gender roles: the trickster, origins and initiations, the heroine, and men and women. Interestingly, six of the variants in her book also appear in Heikkinen's collection (as numbers 5, 14, 15, 22 25 and 41), pointing to the Pan-San nature of many of the folktales. Biesele presents variants of the stories and analyses these in the context of the storytellers' lives and the setting in which they were told, while she examines the significance of storytelling in the context of a foraging ideology. Her reflections on a hunter-gatherer society's daily relationship with the natural environment emphasise the symbolic value and meaning of the stories in people's everyday lives. Her work goes a long way to raising and illuminating San women's presence in the literature. Megan Biesele specifically thanks Lorna Marshall and her family whose collection, from as early as the 1950s, was an invaluable resource in her research.

#### Contemporary San authors and translations

Biesele has published 14 traditional narratives in Ju'hoan, with English transcriptions, as recorded by Ju'hoan cultural workers in 2010. This publication marks the sustained development of her work between the 1970s and the present, as she has persisted in being as faithful as possible to the context of the stories and their keepers, so that the foreign translator (Biesele, in this case), may be replaced in the transition from an oral culture to an

alphabetically literate society where the people are able to publish written material from their own oral tradition. She trained several youths in recording and transcribing techniques – the source material for her book.

Bieseles project is a fruitful example of how a researcher can collaborate with those who before were mere ‘informants’ – only minimally acknowledged by scholars. She has trained a group of Jul’hoan youths in transcription techniques and co-produced a book (2009) of Jul’hoan folktales with them. The work of these indigenous researchers has changed our concept of how San stories are represented by others, as this publication contributes to raising the San voice from its historical silence in written literature.

Mahongo’s narratives documented in this study form an important part of the new literature that surfaces San authors, providing us with an understanding of San history from an indigenous perspective. This emerging millennium literature, rich in its rejection of the othering and skewed representation of San people, is not without ‘outsiders’ who claim to tell Mahongo’s and his people’s post-war story. Take for example, David Robbins’ book, *On the bridge of good-buy, the story of the South Africa’s San soldiers* (2007). The content of the book is, in fact, the story of a journey Robbins undertook from Kimberley to Angola with two men, Kapilolo Mahongo (!xun) and Tomsen Nore (Khwedam), to revisit their homeland. The book provides an overview of the Border War and the !xun and Khwe’s subsequent relocation to South Africa after Namibia gained independence in 1990, but is mainly a travelogue. It is written in the first-person narrative, with Robbins as the main character and the San men as his guests on a return journey to their homeland, relating their experiences rather superficially and recording some encounters with San family members who had remained in Namibia when the !xun and Khwe relocated to South Africa.

Included in the book, is an interview with Colonel Delville Linford, then a 70-year old retired military officer who had served in the South African Defence Force for most of his life, in which he reflects on the Border War and tells it from his perspective. In 1974, he was seconded to the Portuguese army as a liaison officer. It was here that his relationship began with the Bushmen trackers who, at the time, were working for the Portuguese. Linford was in charge of establishing the military camp in the Caprivi and commanded the Bushmen soldiers in a horrendous war that lasted almost thirty years. Linford and his colleagues' brutality towards the San men, women and children has a painful, yet anonymous, presence in Mahongo's personal narrative, as told in Chapter 3 of this study. Mahongo's personal story of his involvement, and that of other San soldiers, in the war is very different to that recounted by Linford (2016) and Robbins (2007). Ian Uys's book, *Bushmen Soldiers: the history of 31,201 and 203 battalions in the border war* (2014), deals specifically with the San trackers who participated in that war and refers to Kapilolo Mario Mahongo and his contemporaries throughout the book. Despite its ideological bias and patronising attitude towards the San men and women, he portrays the San soldiers as loyal and willing, a view completely contradicted by Mahongo's account of events that took place while he was a member of 31 Battalion – as recorded in this thesis.

This literature review provides the historical backdrop to a close reading of the Mahongo narratives that offers an account of his life, from his early childhood as the son of a hunter-gatherer family in Angola, throughout the 30-year long war period, and as a leader of his people on national and international stages, to his final storytelling performances before he died at the age of 66, on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2018.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology and theory: approaching Kapilolo Mahongo's story

*Story is a practice in indigenous cultures that sustains communities, validates experiences and epistemologies, express experiences of Indigenous peoples, and nurture relationships and the sharing of knowledge. Storytelling is also a central focus of Indigenous epistemologies, pedagogies, research approaches and therefore, identity building. (Judy Iseke 2013: 559)*

#### Storytelling and autoethnography as indigenous methodology

The subject of the ways in which both Kapilolo Mahongo and I have grappled with how to record his memoirs and his community's narratives, is approached by examining indigenous research on storytelling globally. I examine the work of other scholars whose work resonates with, and informs my own participatory and autoethnographic approach, while linking it with the broader, post-colonial movement in indigenous research and traditional knowledge management.

Autoethnography is a central element in indigenous research worldwide, as indigenous people and their facilitators (be it an indigenous person or not), engage in self-reflection. It may be defined as a form of qualitative research in which the author uses stories, writing or the arts to explore their personal experience, connecting the participants' autobiographical story to a wider political, social, economic or environmental context (Ellis & Ellingson 2000) This is what both Mahongo and I have done in this study. Autoethnography may straddle many fields, including psychology, anthropology, literature, history, sociology, technology or

arts education. It differs from ethnography because it foregrounds the researchers' subjectivity and declares the fact that it embraces feelings and thoughts. It engages critically with, and rethinks, the binary oppositions between the researcher and the researched, objectivity and subjectivity, self and others, personal and political, process and product, art and science (Ellis & Ellingson 2000). Social life is uncertain and emotional and therefore asks us to embrace research methods that, can accommodate this mess and chaos, uncertainty and emotion (Adams 2015).

#### Narrative concepts imbedded in autoethnography

This chapter therefore introduces the narrative concepts embedded in autoethnography as a way of using personal experience to interpret the practice of bearing witness and telling stories as a meaning-making activity. The approach and methodology employed for this study is underpinned by these concepts – and is also challenged by them. The discussion in this chapter lays the ground for the tone, structure and narrative style of this study, which is both an academic thesis and a personal testimony. An important feature of autoethnographic writing is the construction of portraits of the self; the researcher has active agency and is no longer an absent entity.

Having gained much ground since its formal beginnings in the 1980s, autoethnography is now a well-established research method that uses personal experience to describe and interpret cultural texts, beliefs and practices. It disrupts the academic approach that emphasises the researcher as independent and objective while classifying the storyteller as the subject or interviewee.

Fundamentally, autoethnographers have aimed to “show people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles” (Bochner 2006:111). In many ways, the conversations between Kapilolo Mahongo and myself that resulted in this study, were exactly that; a process of figuring. Ours was not an academic exchange to start with, it was an exchange between two storytellers that resulted in his invitation to me to help him write his memoir. My studies of using autoethnography and indigenous research over the years, helped me to find an academic voice for the empathetic approach I employed at the beginning of our work together.

In their essay entitled *Autoethnography* Adams et al (2015) explain:

*... researchers, especially qualitative, interpretive social scientists, continued to write about the importance of storytelling and personal narrative, identified the limitations of traditional research practices and illustrated how a researcher’s perspective informs and facilitates research processes, products and the creation of culture. Ethnographers, in particular, could no longer hide behind an aura of objectivity and innocence; any attempt to do so signified at best a lack of awareness and at worst an abuse of research ‘subjects’, as many of the ethnographer’s observations came to suggest more about the ethnographer and ethnographer’s agenda than about the cultural ‘others’ being studied” (Adams 2015: 2).*

Four main tenets

In order to obviate this, the authors argue that autoethnography has four main tenets. Firstly, it requires working with autobiography because it requires personal memory to reflect on experiences, talk to others about the past or consult various sources such as photographs,

recordings, books or social media related to the research or event. It respects the participants' personal stories: "Auto-ethnographers speak against, or provide alternatives to, dominant, taken-for-granted and harmful cultural scripts, stories and stereotypes." (Adams 2017: 3)

This study documents my work with Mahongo and his fellow storytellers as a constant exercise in resisting such taken-for-granted and harmful scripts and stereotypes. Mine was a search for those alternative stories that would surface beyond the !xun's identity as being merely "Bushmen soldiers", one that would assist in creating alternative visions, or values, for the future, free of victimhood and entitlement.

Secondly, the authors of this essay agree that autoethnography may articulate insider knowledge of cultural experience in ways that 'outsiders' may not be able access. A person who has direct experience of specific problems such as war and dispossession, can tell their stories in ways different from those who do not, as Kapilolo Mahongo has done in his memoir.

A third tenet of autoethnography is to show how researchers are implicated in their findings by their observations and results. It encourages auto-ethnographers to write against harmful ethnographic accounts made by others – especially 'cultural outsiders' who try to take advantage of, or irresponsibly regulate, other cultures (Crawford 1996). It is important to reveal the ways in which materials were produced, and the authors' aims. I hope that the following chapter in this thesis, my backstory, does exactly this.

A final tenet of autoethnography is to produce resources that are more easily accessible to larger audiences, including those readers outside academia. In co-operation with the !xun Traditional Council of Elders, the S.A. San Institute and other organisations, Mahongo and I

have, by way of the Manyeka Trust we founded, produced a number of resources accessible to non-academic audiences, available on the website [www.manyeka.co.za](http://www.manyeka.co.za). These consist of videos, DVDs and sound-recordings of performances at storytelling workshops and festivals. A selection of children's books containing San stories were also published (Massaka & Mahongo 2014).

#### Autoethnography, community research and education

The work of Judy Iseke, (a member of the Mentis Nation of Alberta and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous knowledge at Lakehead University), is a useful reference for this discussion: she examines the role autoethnographic storytelling plays in community education (Iseke 2016). Iseke and I both explore the work storytelling does in facilitating inter-generational communication, contributing to, and constructing indigenous identity.

Iseke endeavors to expand our understanding of indigenous storytelling as traditional knowledge, an important form of witnessing and remembering that allows engagement with ideas of the past, while supporting transformation in the present. She argues that this is a part of the process of recovering from colonisation and its effects. "In the stories we tell of who we are, what we understand, and how we belong, we make ourselves and our connections to our worlds." (Iseke 2013:573) She reports that her research collaborators, the Mentis elders, play a significant role in assisting their listeners in imagining a future in relation to a complex past, and to make new connections in their lives.

In her writing, Iseke demonstrates not only a theoretical and critical understanding of indigenous education and the central role story performs in indigenous education and research, but additionally, challenges the colonial notion of education and research. She suggests that a complex mindfulness develops through the performative and experiential act

of storytelling (Iseke 2013: 560). She investigates it as a form of witnessing that honours and reflects on the “processes of ancestors” in a modern world. Her reflections on how storytelling is an act of recovery and reconciliation in a post-colonial context, resonate with my own approach, because it identifies story and memory as vital components of transformation. Storytelling acts as a method of disassociating from the colonial matrix of power. Iseke’s book offers in-depth case studies to back up her assertion that using story as research methodology opens up possibilities for “understanding identity and life journeys, as well as creating and making meaning within pedagogical moments” (Iseke 2013: 571).

#### Storytelling and healing trauma

Another reference for thinking about how the nineteenth-century |xam from the Northern Cape, and Mahongo and the contemporary !xun community, used personal storytelling to grapple with the past and record the injustices that were perpetrated against them, is Judy Atkinson’s research on song and story in the recovery of identity and healing of trauma. Her book, *Trauma trials – recreating songlines: the transgenerational effects of trauma in indigenous Australia* (2002), offers an account of the life stories of those people who were forcibly removed and dispossessed of their country. Their song lines had become ‘trauma trials’ in their lives; testimony to the potential of storytelling to address the legacy of dispossession and war. This meaningful title of her book reflects the content as she takes the reader into the details of trauma suffered by the Australian indigenous people. She uses the concept of song lines; the creation narratives, oral and spiritual traditions that cross Aboriginal lands and give meaning to these places, as a metaphor for the trauma and loss that is now associated with their traditional song lines. Her book is partially an autoethnographic account of people’s stories, addressing the ways in which people can connect with each other through story, healing the traumatic memories associated with dispossession, recreating a

sense of authentic identity and therefore make positive changes in their lives. These are issues that resonate strongly with this study.

#### Storytelling as resistance

Interlinked with the palliative power of storytelling, is the concept and practice of storytelling as a form of resistance to power and oppression. This has deep historical roots in all societies that can be traced in the folklore, myths, legends and other forms of narrative. The writing of Aman Sium and Eric Ritskes (2013) explores the notion of indigenous storytelling as an act of living resistance in the context of decolonisation, in ways that become useful when thinking about storytelling in the South African context. This comments indirectly on the surfacing of Mahongo's difficult and uncomfortable story in the following chapters, sustained and produced by the art of storytelling.

*While dominant scholarship might push aside methods such as autoethnography or storytelling as not rigorous enough or as 'identity politics', the experiences of those who live out decolonisation are integral to the integrity of the movement, grounding it to the material realities of the people whose lives bear the scars of colonialism and the long history of resistance and triumph. There is a reason why the insurgent Indigenous movement around the globe has been sustained by poets, musicians and artists. [...] Indigenous stories place the Indigenous people at the centre of our/their research and its consequences (Sium & Ritskes 2013:III-IV).*

Storytelling consequently, has worked as a means of healing and generating collective well-being in !xun communities and provides an important discourse among people who use dialogue and story to form consensus about what is acceptable, or not, in their families and

communities, how to negotiate tensions and problems or talk about difficult or traumatic events. Stories are metaphoric and their symbolic resonance make it easier for people to address uncomfortable issues, given the psychological distance they provide. I came to understand this storytelling way of making sense over the years and observed that Mahongo's friends often used analogies to explain their lives and history. I sought to deepen my understanding of how I could assist Mahongo in telling his own story, as I became acutely aware that it was easier for him to help me to listen to his friends telling their stories. As a leader, it was part of his leadership style to listen, rather than 'indulge' in telling his own. I achieved this mainly by developing a style of open-ended questions that encouraged him to explore his personal story in greater dimensions and layers. These meaningful conversations, aided by drawing mind maps, proved to be successful techniques in eliciting memory and became part of our broader methodology in re-membering, de-constructing, re-constructing and re-imaging personal stories.

#### Narrative therapy

My reading of aspects of narrative therapy also informed the ways in which I facilitated the production of Mahongo's memoir over the years (White 1995). It helped me to grapple with the concept of 'preferred narratives' and 're-authoring identity' as ways in which people create stories about themselves that are useful to them. The narrative therapy process helps people to identify the history of values in their lives, so that they may use these values to 're-author' their stories in a way that helps shape a positive identity. The chapters in this study that contain Mahongo's memoir, offer many examples of this 're-authoring' of values in the process of writing himself. It challenges, for example, the dominant discourses that have shaped him and his people's lives in destructive ways and offers alternative ways of understanding his past and present. Narrative therapy asks that the participants focus on

separating themselves from the problems they face and see themselves as a separate entity. This 'dis-engaging' approach helped Mahongo to articulate the SADF's militarization of his people as a problem in his life, and not conflate it with his identity. By naming the problem as an external factor to himself, he was able to evaluate and articulate his history with the SADF and take a stance by 're-membering' and reconstructing his story.

This deconstruction (Derrida 1996) is harnessed to externalise the dominant 'problem-saturated' stories and to explore, or map, the influence that problems have in a person's life. (Mahongo and I constructed numerous maps of his movements in Angola and the Caprivi, in order for him to remember, and reconsider, what happened when one considers that the 'map is not the territory'.) Michael White and David Epton (1995), the pioneering minds behind narrative therapy, writes that our self-narratives, dominant cultural knowledges about ourselves, relationships and our discursive cultural practices become known through:

*...procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called 'truths' that are split off from the conditions and context of their production, those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their bases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and relationship that are subjugating of [people's] lives (White 1995:122).*

Narrative therapy consequently seeks to separate the person from the problem and deconstruct the situation that is causing pain or discomfort. In Mahongo and his community's case, this dominant map was saturated with the problems of power, the military institution, ethics, justice, poverty, post-traumatic stress and victimhood. For Mahongo, this deconstruction involved thinking through what it was that enabled him to deconstruct a

narrative (such as the SADF military narrative about the !xun), and reconstruct an alternative, affirmative narrative. In Mahongo's life, the rich tradition of !xun storytelling was a pivotal point of departure for thinking about himself beyond the war. Identifying himself as a professional and traditional storyteller, enabled him to draw on the philosophy, ethics and values imbedded in those stories, rather than the military narrative he had become so used to representing. Storytelling therefore became a way to recover identity and heal trauma.

Mahongo sketched physical maps of his life in order to provide him with visual references for the specific ways in which his story had been 'disembodied' and brought under domination, or as White puts it, 'subjugated'.

The Dulwich Centre in Adelaide, founded by Michael White, describes narrative therapy as follows:

*...the knowledges and stories that communities of persons negotiate and engage in to give meaning to their existences: and certain practices of self and of relationship that make up ways of life associated with these knowledges and stories. Narrative therapy assists people to resolve these problems by: enabling to separate their lives and relationships from those knowledges and stories that they judge to be impoverishing; assisting them to challenge the ways of life that they find subjugating; and, encouraging persons to re-author their own lives according to alternative and preferred stories of identity, and according to preferred ways of life*  
([http://www.massey.ac.nz/\\_Alock/virtual/narrativ.htm](http://www.massey.ac.nz/_Alock/virtual/narrativ.htm)).

Narrative therapy speaks about ‘unique outcomes’ as being intrinsic to the process of positively narrating the self, because it helps people to focus on what they think is possible and true for themselves, rather than what others think about their lives and possibilities.

These narrative outcomes are inevitably unique to the person who is telling their story. The ‘re-membering’ practice tends to think about identity as social achievements, skills and values. It emphasises those people who are able to support a person’s preferred story about themselves, while leaving behind those who do not support the person’s preferred story.

Mahongo’s community of storytellers became part of a process of recording oral histories, stories and songs from thirty elders that was eventually published (Winberg 2002; Mahongo 2005). Mahongo’s participation in these publications encouraged him to delve into his own past and remember his own repertoire of stories, seeing it as a resource that has value to the outside world.

#### Translation

As assumptions of scientific methods prove limiting in understanding the human condition, scholars across disciplines have turned to narrative as an organising framework for showing how meaning is performed and negotiated (Charon 2006: 112, Jones 2010). In this context San language debates arise as an ongoing issue. For the purposes of this study, I navigated several directions of communication, verbal and non-verbal, to create a framework for communication. The individuals involved in this research study (chosen by the !xun council of elders) did not always have a common language in which to communicate as many participants could only speak !xun and Portuguese, not English or Afrikaans. My co-researchers and I developed a method of translating the translated Afrikaans text back into !xun orally, so that the elders could give us permission to use the translation to stand in for their spoken words. We understood this to be respectful and ethical conduct in the context of the sensitive translation and indigenous languages debates. This methodology allowed for

participants to take the challenges of communication seriously and had the effect of keeping everyone on board during the process of gathering aspects of Mahongo's community's oral literature.

Taking into account the historical oppression and marginalisation against San languages, this painstaking language methodology was in line with our commitment to reverse the extinction of the San languages by helping to re-enforce its value within the community. Similar projects were initiated and run in Namibia and Botswana and published in *Voices of the San* (White & le Roux 2004).

In this way, people recognised themselves in the publications and both oral and written authors could claim ownership of the publications made from the storytellers' paintings and stories, which essentially gave expression to the aspects of the storytellers' own process of autoethnography (Massaka & Mahongo 2014).

Stories and storytelling, therefore, are useful: Ellis (2004) suggests that we judge autoethnographic writing on the effectiveness of the story, rather than only on accuracy, since events are narrated by individuals who draw from different personal references to interpret any given story. She argues that the real question is to ask what narratives do, what consequences they have and to what uses they can be put. Bochner (2006) builds on this idea and expands on how narrative is the way we remember the past, turn life into language, and disclose to ourselves and others the truth of our experiences.

## Narrative methodology

My narrative methodology is based on the concept that people are essentially storytellers and approach their social world in a narrative mode. In this thesis, Mahongo and I used traditional narrative practices, as well as those I brought to the conversation, such as the maps and mind mapping discussed in chapter three. We explored his story's multiple layers in order to break through the single narrative of the Bushman soldier and find those stories that have not been spoken about beyond his own intimate circle of friends and family.

In many ways, this thesis is a testimony, and a conversation, that focuses on the value of narrative sensibilities for reconstructing identity, understanding and performing healing. Scholars across disciplines have increasingly turned to narrative as an organising framework for studying and showing how meaning is performed and negotiated (Bochner 2006, Ellis 2004, Ellingson 1995). Healthcare providers too, are realising how narrative capabilities such as imagining and plotting offer advantages in recalling traumatic events and treatment processes, and in bearing witness to the suffering of others (Sharon 2006). In this sense, the deconstruction of a dominant narrative is accompanied by the narrative therapy model of separating the person from the problem. This, in itself, becomes a debriefing from the trauma of recalling stories of war, as the narrator is actively involved in healing his or her story by reconstructing it into a story of recovery and resistance. The !xun's tradition of dancing in a circle and clapping hands introduced and concluded every communal narrative session where more than two or three people were involved – in itself a powerful indigenous method of debriefing. The organising framework and methodology for my research were based on these narrative concepts and as such, underpins the theoretical principles for this thesis.

## Ethnographic “I”

In my attempt to relate the truth of my experience with the !xun storytellers, I have chosen to use the ethnographic ‘I’, as I believe it to be the most transparent, self-reflective and sensitive way in which this research can be presented. The following chapter, on how the documenting of the Mahongo memoir came about, further explains my methodology, how my approach to working with stories of trauma developed and changed over more than two decades and culminated in the end product which I hoped would become a ‘useful story’. My backstory forms a parallel narrative to the one related by Kapilolo Mario Mahongo and the !xun storytellers, although it sometimes merges and becomes integrated.

Table of songs, interviews, stories and narratives referred to in this thesis

NAME & PLACE of interactions	DESCRIPTION of interactions recorded by hand in notebooks/records in digital format	DATES of interactions	REFERENCE
Kapilolo Mahongo Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	49 Interviews	1994-2017	Personal notebooks/ records in digital format
Kapilolo Mahongo Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein/Cape Town/Johannesburg/Spain	17 Stories recorded by hand in notebooks/records in digital format	1994-2013	PhD thesis appendix 1-9,15,17 & 18
Kapilolo Mahongo Kimberley	Mahongo edited his autobiography in Afrikaans	2017	PhD chapters 4-7
Pensa Limunga Schmidtsdrift	13 Songs/bow Records in digital format	2002	K. Mahongo. 2004. Kulimatji Nge. Cape Town: Doublestory books.
Likua Kambembe Schmidtsdrift/Platfonetin Kimberley	7 Songs/bow Story. Records in digital format	2002 2013	K. Mahongo. 2004. Kulimatji Nge. Cape Town: Double Storey Books.

Meneputo Manunga Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	Trance songs Records in digital format	2002	K. Mahongo. 2004. Kulimatji Nge. Cape Town: Double Storey books.
	Stories:	Versions:	
	The Mud Baby	2002/5/7/13	PhD appendix 12
	Two sisters and ogre	2002/5/7/13	PhD appendix 14
	The Elephant Wife	2002/5	PhD appendix 10
	The sisters and ogre	2002/5	PhD appendix 14
Musuva Fulai Schmidtsdrift	7 Songs	2002	K. Mahongo. 2004. Kulimatji Nge. Cape Town: Doublestory books.
Andry Kashivi Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	Interview/ Short bibliography/ Portrait/ photographs/ photographs of paintings/linoprints, recorded by hand in notebooks/records in digital format	1999/2002	Personal notebooks. Digital recordings. Photographic collection of paintings. M.Winberg. 2002. My Eland's Heart. Cape Town: David Phillips
Bongi Kasiki Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1998	As above
Madena Kasanga Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1997	As above
Emelia Muhinda Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1998	As above
Kasiku Donna Rumao Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1999	As above
Joao Wenne Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1998	As above
Zurietta Dikuanga Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1997	As above
Freciano Ndala Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1997	As above
Manuel Maseka Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1998	As above

Alouis Sijaja Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1998	As above
Monto Masako Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1997	As above
Luhepu Kaheke Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1997	As above
/tuoi Samcuia Schmidtsdrift	As above	1997	As above
Flai Shipipa Schmidtsdrift	As above	1997	As above
Katunga Carimbwe Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1997	As above
Julietta Carimbwe Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1998	As above
Kunyanda Shikamo Schmidtsdrift/Platfontein Kimberley	As above	1998	As above
/thaaalu Rumao	As above	1998	As above
Community/ Schmidtsdrift and Platfontein villages	Collection of photographs	1994–2013	Manyeka Arts Trust <a href="http://www.manyeka.co.za">www.manyeka.co.za</a>

## Chapter three

### My backstory - an autoethnographic account

This chapter accounts for the events that led up to more than 20 years of co-operation between the !xun storytellers and myself. It is the backstory that led to the creation of Kapilolo Mahongo's memoirs and the narratives presented in this study.

#### Multiple narratives

The emphasis here is on multiple narratives because, as the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie warned (2009), the danger of a single story is that it represents a fragment of an individual life. She said that our lives and cultures consist of many overlapping stories and if we hear only a single story about another person or culture, we risk a critical misunderstanding. If we start Kapilolo Mahongo's personal story with '*a Bushman hunter who was an excellent tracker during the war*' and not as he has done in chapter three of this thesis, '*... as a child I learnt to interpret the world around me through the spirit of stories*', you have an entirely different story. Add my agency to the process and the picture complicates even further. Consequently, this chapter examines aspects of the problematic and manifold layers of Kapilolo Mahongo's personal story as it emerged over many years.

I began my journey in listening deeply to how people remember and tell their stories during the early 1980s, shortly after graduating from the University of Cape Town Drama Department, where an essentially Eurocentric version of the dramatic arts were being taught. My search for authentic African storytelling was fueled by my Afrikaner rural roots, my fascination with storytelling and my research in using the arts as a teaching methodology at the time. This was

during the height of Apartheid, when millions of people's personal stories continued to be silenced and punished by law because it spoke of resistance to brutal injustices, while simultaneously documenting personal stories of loss, survival and the struggle out of silence (Ngcobo 1990). By its very nature, our stories also framed the individuals who perpetrated crimes against humanity. Indeed, the security police kept many of us in detention without trial during the 1980s, when interrogators tried to force us to write our personal stories of resistance down as statement that could be used against in their courts of law. The police attempted to manipulate or force us to declare our stories of illegal activities and become witnesses against each other and ourselves. Thousands of political prisoners did not live to tell their stories.

#### Illegal stories

In 1994, during that historic year when our underground stories became legal and the world euphoric at the story of our victory, Nelson Mandela's voice crystalised into an iconic symbol of how one person's story could embody millions of people's aspirations. Ironically, I was imprisoned on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1990, five days after Nelson Mandela's release from jail. The right-wing security police in the Apartheid-created homeland of Gazankulu, supported by fearful black puppet homeland leaders whose power was now threatened, were desperate to stop the tide of democracy. Hundreds of activists were arrested across the region along the banks of the Limpopo River – the land of water and elephants. As a young, white woman in an Apartheid-created homeland, where I was conducting research on storytelling as pedagogical methodology and working the Head of the Drama Department of the Giyani College of Education, the policemen assumed I was an underground terrorist and therefore a communist. Why else, they said, would a white woman live and teach in a black homeland? For what reason was I visiting my students' families and villages? What was my story?

On the eve of my 34<sup>th</sup> birthday, the notorious security police raided my home in Giyani, confiscated my bedside journal with my private memoirs, and read them. I was taken to a rural prison cell in Levubu in Venda where the white, Afrikaans-speaking policemen put me in solitary confinement for four months. They kept my journal in a file on the desk in the office where they interrogated me, ironically in Afrikaans, the mother tongue we shared, but I was not allowed access to my journal. My stories had now become their property, had turned evidence against me, to be retold, interpreted and reframed from their perspective to serve the need of their story. Stories take on different forms depending on who tells, who listens and how, where and when they are told. Like a chameleon, a story changes colour depending on the context within which it exists.

#### Stories and land claims in a new South Africa

Not long after my release from prison, I embarked on documenting another story that had been systematically erased and silenced for centuries – the narratives of southern Africa’s dispossessed San communities. I was working with the Centre for Land Reform and the soon-to-be Minister of Land Affairs of the first democratic government in 1994, Derek Hanekom, in obtaining the stories of dispossessed families in order to start the process of filing evidence for land reform claims (Weinberg & Winberg 1997). During the mid-nineties, the documentation of personal and historical stories had begun to flourish in South Africa and the lid of a boiling pot had been lifted with thousands of urgent stories spilling out. Stories of forced removals and wars became pivotal to millions of people’s right to reclaim their ancestors’ land in the new Land and Restitution Court. This court considered claims as far back as 1913 when the Natives Land Act was passed in the South African Parliament of the time. Personal, communal and indigenous stories of loss now had the power to be exchanged for land (Wilson 2013).

One of these outpourings came from Kapilolo Mahongo, who in 1994, asked me to help him write his memoirs. He was my house guest in Johannesburg at the time, because the documentary photographer, Paul Weinberg, had asked me to host him for a week. Mahongo was opening an exhibition about the San of southern Africa that Weinberg held at the Market Theatre. We swapped stories during this time and were excited about each other's capacity for storytelling. This was the start of a long co-operation around storytelling and documenting his community's oral histories, that endured until his death in 2018. This event forced me to change my research focus as his passing then entrusted me with curating his legacy.

#### Stories and identity

The passage of time that has passed between 1994, when Kapilolo Mahongo and I first started swapping stories and now, has changed my understanding of how a narrative is moulded in the ears of the listener, the storyteller, translator and the context in which it is being told. Stories are fluid, mercurial processes that shift easily. I have indeed come to understand that my own identity and agency in Kapilolo Mahongo's personal narrative recorded in the following four chapters, has had profound influences on the way in which he told it. I facilitated his writing process, influenced his telling by way of my own interest in creating alternative narratives. I assisted him in revealing those different stories that would claim his own history, rather than the dominant, military narrative he had become used to telling. I was interested in his 'preferred narrative', to use a term borrowed from narrative therapy (White 1989).

The narratives of the 'Bushmen of the border war' surfaced in 1990, when the story of the immigrant !xun and Khwe San soldiers from Angola and Namibia who had been conscripted by the Apartheid regime's Defense Force first hit the news. Millions of us in South Africa were deeply moved by the compelling story of roughly 3 500 war-ravaged !xun and Khwe

‘Bushman’ soldiers. (Weinberg 1997:19). The SADF had flown the displaced families from the military camps in the Caprivi in Namibia to a refugee tent camp in the Army’s experimental battleground above the upper Karoo region of the Northern Cape Province, with very little means to survive in the barren environment. Their story was being told by the media, politicians, academics and development workers with a plot line that quickly became their means of survival in the new South Africa; that they were southern Africa’s first people, oppressed by centuries of colonial rule, Apartheid wars and most recently, forced into conscription into the region’s various armies. This version of their story became their powerful claim to identity documents and land ownership in the new, democratic South Africa. On the other hand, the African National Congress saw them as traitors who had fought on the side of the Apartheid regime and asked why should they be entitled to land in the Northern Cape Province (Mail & Guardian 1997). Much negotiation would be needed to resolve this; Kapilolo Mahongo was the representative of his people and led these negotiations with the help of human rights lawyers and development workers. Kapilolo Mahongo’s story was indeed multi-layered and complex.

It was a challenge to break through the structure of that well-honed ‘hunter-gatherer-victim-soldier-indigenous-first-people’ post-Apartheid story. At that stage, Kapilolo Mahongo and my story of relating to each other was still bound by post-colonial and Apartheid realities as we were scratching at the images of the other that had been shaped since long before we were born. In this sense, my thesis testifies to the journey Kapilolo Mahongo and I have made to dismantle each other’s otherness, as we learnt to illuminate the shadows of those imaginary representations of the other that had taken centuries of domination to manifest, while learning to live our differences in creative alternative narratives of truth.

On my first visit to Schmidtsdrift, Kapilolo Mahongo showed me his treasured archive in the small caravan he and his family lived in. This was a large box full of dusty scraps, photos, pamphlets and books, written mainly by the military and including newspaper articles he had cut out and meticulously stored underneath a fold-up seat opposite the small television set he had installed for his children. His library included *Bushmen Soldiers: their alpha and omega* (Uys 1993), a book that had been written about ‘them’ by the commander who controlled their lives in the Caprivi. These clippings and pictures were other people’s versions of his story, but I was eager to hear his personal history and looked forward to listening to him imagining a different future identity, free of being an embodiment of the brutally colonized ‘Bushman’ soldier. (In many ways, this desire reflected my own need for a reimagined story of personal freedom and belonging in the post-Apartheid reality we were shaping at the time.)

I wanted to know exactly what had happened in his past to make him wear the South African Defence Force’s (SADF) uniform with such obvious personal pride. His shoes were always polished and shining in the dust, his uniform meticulously ironed. I abhorred that uniform, given the brutality it represented to me at that time. He was the leader of Bushman Battalion 31, once deployed in Angola to act as a buffer between the SADF regular forces and its enemies. Mario Mahongo was, to all who spoke languages other than !xun, the celebrated, literate Bushman leader of a fully-fledged battle battalion whose leadership now extended to representing the thousands of San people who looked to him to translate their splintered identities to the world, in search of a future story that would include post-war security of tenure in South Africa (Gordon 1992). It was only many years later that I learnt the story behind Kapilolo’s traditional name and the different associations he had with it, a story he recounts in chapter 4. Significantly, this was shortly after the SADF disbanded their Bushmen Battalion 31 during the late nineties and the San soldiers took off their uniforms.

## Battalion 31 – the end of a military story

This was an emotional event for the ex-soldiers, as it had become part of their history and economy. Battalion 31 was founded in 1974 as an infantry battalion in the South African Army, consisting of men recruited from the !xun and Khwedam communities in Namibia, Botswana and Zambia, trained to engage in counter-insurgency during the border war. Its commander between 1974 and the early 1980s at Serpa Pinto, Colonel Linford, wrote a book called *As the crow flies: my Bushmen experience with Battalion 31* (2016). I considered Linford's descriptions of Kapilolo and skewed and superficial his representation was, considering the man I got to know. Much later, when I asked Kapilolo for his opinion of how he was represented in this book, he told me that his own story did not matter at that stage.

I quickly realised that it was a near impossible task for me to help fulfil Kapilolo's wish for me to help write his biography and, instead, glimpsed the extent to which his own story was entwined with the life of his community. His personal story had long since become displaced in his own ruptured past and it would take time, focus and energy to recall even fragments from that history. I realized that I would have to get to know the people with whom he lived and actively shared his life. How else could I assist him in mindfully remembering his difficult history? I witnessed how he divided his time between his people, It seemed as if his sense of himself was made up of those different people he felt responsible for, which was close to four thousand souls at the time. We abandoned his desire to write his biography and instead, he introduced me to the people around him. He was by no means ready to tell me his truth and I had little interest in the militarised stories. And thus our oral history project began in the tent town in 1995, supported by the South African San Institute with funds sourced from the local government's Indigenous Knowledge project, which was part of a national focus on indigenous knowledge in many communities (Green 2012).

## Visual storytellers

Integral to this process was the visual artists and their creation of visual narratives. Kapilolo Mahongo introduced me to the artists who belonged to the !xun and Khwe Art Project that artist Catharina Meyer and Hennie Swart had established in the wind-blown tent town at Schmidtsdrift shortly after their arrival in South Africa in 1990. The artists' visual stories on canvas were vivid, bright, vibrant and colourful. They were filled with images of hunter-gatherer memories, such as tools, gathering bags, and weapons like bows and arrows. These stories also included images of animals, insects, birds and eggs and snakes. Also included were different foods, bulbs, seeds, plants and trees as well as bead jewelry, patterns and symbols. These rich images were a far cry from the drab khaki colours of their army tents, the arid environment, the rags they wore on their thin bodies and the sad, somewhat shell-shocked look on their lined faces. Their images were indeed colourful cries of memory and longing for a past that they had left behind in pre-war Angola and Namibia. Yet, the artists also had the future in mind and consciously created a legacy where each artist wanted to make a visual memoir of their family history for their own children who had been born in the war camp in the Caprivi. I recorded these words from the late !xun artist, |tuoi Sam Samcuia, in 1998: "I cannot read or write, my painting is my book to tell my children where I have walked." (Winberg 2002: 90).

Indeed, the artists' engagement with their materials called into visual presence those memories and ideas that sustained their families for countless generations. In this new medium, the artists framed images of their lives within the confined edges of the canvas, often squeezing in a last little image against the side of the frame as if to push open the boundaries. Sometimes they would turn the canvas on the table around to work on the edge closest to them, with no regard for the logic of alphabetical literacy patterns that demand images to work in one direction.

Witnessing the artists at work was to become a very important lesson in understanding the lateral, fluid and transformative elements of the !xun storytellers' orality. Their storytelling was by no means a linear process with Western notions of beginnings, middles and endings. During one of many visits to the Northern Cape Province, I spent several months with the artists in their Schmidtsdrift tent town interviewing, documenting and observing to write a documentary book about their art making (Winberg 2002). To my surprise, their personal stories were infused with traditional narratives, or folk tales, explaining life situations or natural phenomena, drawing comparisons, illustrating a point, recounting history or venturing into complex philosophies of life and death, although they never 'illustrated' any particular story in the tradition of Western story books. As a storyteller, I was enthralled by this way of incorporating story into the flow of speech, thus contextualizing its meaning without any dramatisation or actual performance of the oral text, doing what Havelock, way back in the 1970s, called drawing on "encyclopedias of conduct" (1978a). I was witnessing one of the wonders of orality which had its own rules of signification, different to the logic and patterns of written literature, rich in mental imagery. The western concept of Aristotelean linearity in a well-rounded narrative is not universal. San stories are often told in sequences, in fragments or in bits and pieces, because everyone knows the whole story. What is important, are these dynamic units, or sequences that make up the whole – a reality which can change depending on the teller, situation, or the progression of action in any given context or situation until it reaches a climax or conclusion. It is also important to note that units of a longer story can stand on its own in a performance, depending on the time, place and context in which it is told. These patterns of isolating episodes are also found in indigenous stories elsewhere in the world (Jose de prada-Samper, 2017:32).

Quite clearly, all the visual artists from Kapilolo's generation were also carriers of the traditional repertoire the !xun storytellers shared. The artists have since died, all at relatively young ages, due to the toll of war and poverty, but not before they produced a meaningful body of work and a legacy of paintings and linocut prints that went on to become collectors' items, exhibited in galleries and held in private collections. Their visual images were part of how the storytellers framed their recollections of the landscape in which they grew up and the ways in which they experienced their present. These images interact with one another, much as the stories do in conversation, floating in and out of focus in a landscape where human beings are trees, or where hunters marry elephants. In other words, the images captured that transformation between place and time, humans, animals, nature and the cosmos, were commonly possible.

I found myself enchanted by the visual narratives and literary treasures of the !xun artists and storytellers. Kapilolo and his friends became my storytelling mentors and taught me their extensive repertoire while I helped to document it and indeed helped them to remember stories. The storyteller in Kapilolo came alive during these storytelling encounters and this process freed him of having to relate his militarised story to me. I became a scholar of San oral literature and visual art as a result of this passionate relationship. This led me to return to the University of Cape Town as a mature student in my early fifties, searching for new knowledge, ways of thinking and seeing the traditions of Kapilolo and the millions of San people who came before him. I had the privilege of working with the !kun children's part in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bleek and Lloyd collection in the archives of the University of Cape Town, Iziko Museums and the South African Library's Special Collections. What followed was a Master's degree and a long meditation on world archives, the radical change in the lives of southern African San

communities and their descendants, entwined as it has become with that of all other people in our diverse population (Winberg 2011).

!xun ancestors

It did not take much research to establish that the !kun (!xun) children whose stories were recorded and stored in the Bleek and Lloyd archive had grown up around the Okavango river in Angola and Namibia (Skotnes 2007: 236). This was the same broad territory as that of many of the storytellers from Kapilolo's community, more than 120 years later. The children from the archive were indeed an important part of Kapilolo's personal history. The personal narratives that the children told to Lucy Lloyd, were in many ways achingly similar to those I have recorded from the contemporary !xun communities. Both contained !xun narratives of loss and trauma that accentuate the abundance of memory associated with the dispossession of land. Both employed storytelling and visual representation to map memories and provide us with threads between the past and present. I introduced this archive to Kapilolo Mahongo - it became a historical reference and source of truthful storytelling between us, as I will explain in the following pages. The children's narratives moved Kapilolo Mahongo profoundly and encouraged him to talk honestly about his own childhood in Angola. It therefore became part of my methodology in working with Kapilolo Mahongo.

On 1 September 1879, the two oldest boys, !nanni and Tamme, were placed in the Mowbray home of linguist and ethnographer, Lucy Lloyd (Winberg 2011). The younger boys, Da and |uma followed a year later on 25 March 1880. Lloyd learnt the children's language, recorded their stories in !kun and translated their words into English in 17 notebooks. The boys transformed their memories of the Namibian landscape into more than 520 watercolours and drawings, in sketchbooks, on loose scraps of paper and in clay sculptures. The four children were brought to Lucy Lloyd as language 'specimens' by colonial authorities. During the time

they spent with her, Lucy Lloyd had indeed been a sensitive witness to the children's stories of loss - she allowed them to tell their stories without changing the subject or redirecting their thoughts, while they identified themselves as the abducted children of hunter-gatherers from the Okavango River. My research into her own personal history revealed a childhood scarred by abuse at the hands of her father. This may have contributed to her ability to be a sensitive listener and witness.

The children's material complements a larger collection of |xam stories Lucy Lloyd and her brother-in-law, Dr Wilhelm Bleek, had made between 1870 and 1881 (Winberg 2011). The |xam were hunter-gatherers and storytellers from the Karoo who had been prisoners at the Breakwater Prison in Cape Town – San men who had been hunted down by the authorities for crimes against the Cape Colony. Although the now famous collection was entered into the UNESCO Register for the World's Memory in 1997, the !kun children's part had remained a taciturn part of it.

While researching !nanni, the oldest !kun boy's personal story, I uncovered the details of many children who were abducted from their homes in Namibia and taken to Cape Town to become labourers on farms and servants in colonial homes (Winberg 2011). The children's testimonies and germane archival records mapped a story that was close to those told to me by Kapilolo and his community of their own childhood fears of abduction; they own memories of hiding in a tree for fear of being taken when strangers arrived at their parent's camps in northern Namibia and Angola. It was indeed my study of Kapilolo and other contemporary San narratives, storytelling and visual images that enabled me to read this 19<sup>th</sup> century !kun children's material more closely.

On 15 September 1881, !nanni sat at the drawing table in Charlton House next to the 44-year-old Lucy Lloyd. With pen and pencil in hand, the two of them focused on a small sheet of paper on which they were constructing a map of !nanni's home (Winberg 2011: 45).

!nanni had made symbols on the paper in small circles, dots and lines to represent the centre of the world he had been taken from – his 'Bushman country' and family home in what is now known as northern Namibia. Lucy Lloyd had also made marks on the paper while they talked, with corresponding annotations. They were constructing a map of !nanni's home, in the same area around the Okavango River, where many of Kapilolo's people lived and spoke the !xun language, before Namibia and Angola were separated by colonial borders. The map, alongside other drawings and paintings contained stories of how their childhoods were dramatically interrupted when the local Makoba, with whom the families had previously traded elephant meat and tusks, abducted them from their homes. Despite efforts by their families to secure their safety, they were tragically unable to rescue them and the children were given to other traders in the region (Winberg 2011).

Lucy Lloyd's notebooks and the children's drawings tell us that the children followed a succession of masters by foot and ox-wagon across the vast Namib Desert to Walvis Bay, where they were made to board the *Louis Alfred*, with promises of food. With its cargo of ostrich feathers and ivory the schooner then set sail for the Cape (Johannson 2007).

I encountered members of Kapilolo Mahongo's ancestry, or ethnicity, in the Bleek and Lloyd collection in the form of children who lived 135 years ago and had experienced the same marginalisation and brutality at the hands of both the indigenous people of Angola and Namibia, and those colonisers whose hunting and trading missions changed the social,

economic and political landscape in that region. Kapilolo Mahongo and I studied many of the drawings and pages together at the University of Cape Town where he visited me at the Centre for Curating the Archive. He could translate many of the words the children and Lucy Lloyd had documented and helped me interpret the drawings and paintings the children had made, alongside their narratives. I will discuss one of these ‘discoveries’ in the following paragraphs.

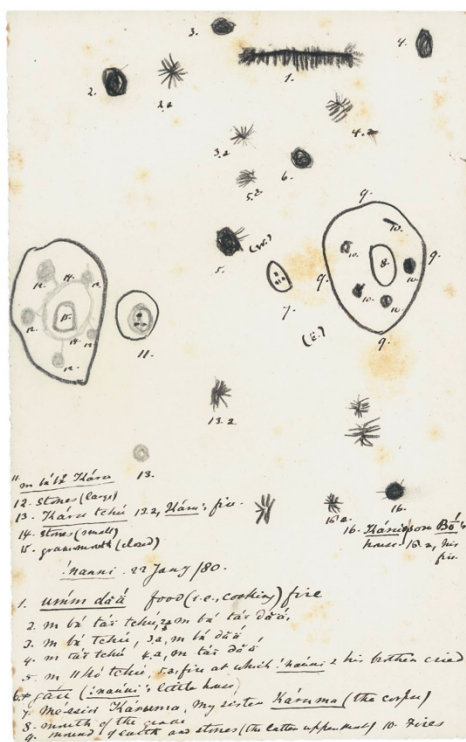
Each one of Kapilolo Mahongo and his community’s traditional stories we have recorded over the years has its own biography. Dima and Owl, for example, portrays the very same hero, |*xue*, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century children’s stories, if by a different name. The story identifies both Kapilolo Mahongo and the boy, !nanni, as carriers of a closely related tradition of oral literature. In 1879, !nanni had explained to Lucy Lloyd that |*xue*’s other name was ‘Huwe’ and meant ‘The first Bushman’, member of the early race. Lucy Lloyd recorded many fragments of stories about this enigmatic shape-shifter that goes by different names in the region today, including ‘Haiseb’ in the Nama and Hai//om tradition, and ‘Dima’ in Mahongo’s !xun tradition (Winberg 2011: 43).

Kapilolo Mahongo identified the word ‘|*xue*’ as meaning ‘hunter’ in an old !xun dialect; he described |*xue* as the quintessential hunter, able to transform his human form in order to blend into the environment while hunting his prey, giving us a welcome insight into this character from the 19<sup>th</sup> century archives. I will discuss this creation myth in detail in Chapter 8.

I heard Kapilolo Mahongo and his friends tell many reconstructed versions of this tale over the years. When Kapilolo had a particularly engaged audience, he would lay the story out slowly and in detail. A less engaged audience would get only one episode – the theft of the sun.

Another one of the drawings by the !kun children consists of a series of symbols, dots, circles

and crosses in charcoal, with annotations by Lucy Lloyd that indicate a scene between a healer and a sick man (Winberg 2011: 44). It turns out that this seemingly obscure sketch is one of our earliest paper records of the San’s famous healing, or trance, dance. A close reading of this visual document reveals that the dots in the sketch are in fact the footsteps of the healer as he, or she, danced around the sick person lying among a series of small fires while ‘pulling out’ the sickness from the body – a healing process and dance still practised in Kapilolo’s community by the contemporary healer, ritual specialist, Meneputo Manyeka. (Manyeka can also enter a state of trance through the singing of songs without dancing.) The 19<sup>th</sup> century child !nanni had explained to Lucy Lloyd that clapping, drumming, dancing and singing were part of the healing performed by doctors and his community. He specifically referred to the illness and death of his little sister, Karuma, who’s grave he sketched (Figure 27 )in a round circle with another circle inside, surrounded by five small fires. He indicated how he sat next to a little fire and cried when she died (Winberg 2011: 48).



I have given only two among many specific examples of how the contemporary !xun orality I

had encountered through Kapilolo Mahongo and other San storytellers intersect with historical and archival records. Kapilolo Mahongo's stories and meaningful insights into this part of the Bleek and Lloyd collection, enabled me to open up that 'closed' 19<sup>th</sup> century !kun archive in order to refigure it, reassess it and reconstruct the children's lives, honour their legacy and declare an end to their neglected status in the archive. By providing us with keys to unlock aspects of that archive, Kapilolo Mahongo has helped identify a unique 19<sup>th</sup> century collection recording and documenting trauma, loss and memory during childhood in pre-colonial northern Namibia, before its colonial borders with Angola were drawn – a time and place we know very little about. We hope that researchers will pinpoint the exact places of the children's origins someday. There are several specific pointers in the collection.

By rediscovering the !kun children's stories, we have brought an end to the marginalisation and academic neglect of the children's voices in an archive that was previously deemed unworthy of closer reading. We have hopefully invited future researchers to explore the material in more depth. My MA dissertation benefitted a great deal from Kapilolo Mahongo's insights into the language Lucy Lloyd recorded and the stories the children told her; he had indeed provided me with clues to decipher some of the material – as well as identify a chapter in his own people's history in Angola and around the Okavango river, before the borders of Namibia and Angola were drawn.

#### Indigenous knowledge

During the time that had passed since our first meeting in 1994, Kapilolo Mahongo and I have assisted his extended family and thousands of southern African San people to document their stories during numerous workshops over a period of two decades – in visual images, exhibitions, photography, writing, publication, on the World Wide Web and on community radio programmes. One person's personal story became a family story and a family's story

became a community's story and a people's historical experience. We tapped into the wealth of the !xun oral tradition and helped the tragically dispossessed and traumatised storytellers to rekindle a sense of common identity through storytelling and the documentation of their Indigenous Knowledge.

#### Stories float in the wind

Since those early pre-millennium years, Kapilolo and I have travelled far and wide to tell the stories that otherwise may have remained largely silent had it not been for his desire to record his memoirs. In this process, we have tried to resonate with the |xam saying, *stories float in the wind*, through our website, where these !xun stories now float in cyberspace, connecting us with a global community of story lovers across language, time and space, allowing Kapilolo Mahongo's traditional repertoire to be available across the globe ([www.manyeka.co.za](http://www.manyeka.co.za)).

Our first overseas storytelling journey took place in 2008, when the Spanish folklorist José de Prada-Samper (whose work I discuss elsewhere in this thesis), and organizer, Blanco Calvo, invited us to participate in the Guadalajara Storytelling Festival in Spain and helped to set us on a new road of discovery (Valdelvira 2013). It certainly marked a change in my relationship with Kapilolo Mahongo because we now became storytelling partners, rather than me being an enchanted listener, his scribe or the community's facilitator. These storytelling performances encouraged him to dig into his memory, recall stories he never told back home, and perform it with great relish. Like all storytellers, he responded to a captive audience. De Prada-Samper describes our cooperation as follows:

*The foundation for my friendship with Kapilolo Mahongo was laid on a sunny day in October 2006, when I met Marlene Winberg in front of the National*

*Gallery in Cape Town. A common friend, American storyteller Melissa Heckler, had facilitated by e-mail the encounter from her New York home. I already knew of Kapilolo and Marlene's work with the !xun and Khwe artists at Schmidtsdrift through their book *My Eland's Heart* (Winberg 2002), which I had read some time before and which had impressed me with its bold combination of images and stories.*

*Soon after we started talking, Marlene updated me on the history of the !xun and Khwe communities near Kimberley. We spoke with passion about stories and storytellers, and at some point I told Marlene about the Guadalajara Storytelling Marathon, a major Spanish festival that takes place each June in that little town close to Madrid. Wouldn't it be great if a storyteller from Platfontein could be brought there?*

*In due course the invitation was made and enthusiastically accepted, and this is how, in June 2008, I came to meet Kapilolo Mahongo, when both he and Marlene came to stay with me in Spain to participate in the Marathon. Many people in the storytelling and Africanist circles of Spain have indelible memories of Kapilolo. When he and Marlene returned to Spain in 2009 to participate at a conference in Barcelona, he was asked to perform in different venues, such as the Harlem Jazz Club of Barcelona and the Museo Etnográfico de Castilla y León, in Zamora. They returned to Spain again in 2013, in the context of the "Stories from Cave to Cave" project (conceived by Blanca Calvo and sponsored by the European Union), in which other South African storytellers and scholars, such as Sindiwe Magona, Madosini Latozi Mpahleni,*

*Levona Lebruin and Professor John Parkington participated. Since then the three of us have been involved in different storytelling projects in Europe and South Africa (de Prada 2018: 10)*

Kapilolo Mahongo continued to be inspired by the appreciation of foreign audiences - his repertoire had escaped the low voices in the dusty tent town and became amplified on European stages, appreciated by international audiences from India, America, Australia and elsewhere in Africa. These experiences made us both value the stories differently – we understood how they held meaning for people beyond his own community (I will expand on this later in this chapter). These events set in motion more invitations for us to perform and participate in storytelling festivals and conferences both overseas and in southern Africa. Kapilolo Mahongo and I had become storytelling partners with a unique repertoire of heritage stories – he transported his stories beyond his community and into the world, while I rediscovered my voice as a storyteller alongside my role as listener, scribe and translator. We had finally escaped the military story.

Kapilolo Mahongo told the tale of a jealous husband and an ogre in Spain and it soon became one of his favourite performance pieces as we discovered its appeal to a diverse range of audiences, regardless of age, gender, nationality or economic status. In response to the warm reception, Kapilolo increased the performance aspect and rhythmical structure of the story more and more as he realized how it thrilled old and young audiences who could not understand either English or !xun. Gone was the serious, upright, dapper and uniformed ex-soldier from the SADF's Battalion 31.

*There was this man whose name was Tshengu. He married a beautiful woman and brought her back to his mother's house. Her name was Teria Mengu.*

*On arrival, he looked around his village and thought to himself, “No, no, there are too many men here.” And so Tshengu decided to take Mengu away to another place. They moved far away from the village.*

*After only one day in their new home next to a river, the husband said to his wife, “Wait here while I fetch our clothes and other things.” Mengu waited and waited, but Tshengu did not return soon. She wondered if he had another wife somewhere, but thought to herself, “No, I cannot survive in this way. I must make my own garden.” And so she did. She planted maize and tobacco. She used stones to grind the dry maize she had brought with her. She made porridge from the maize flour.*

*Mengu stayed alone in the house at the river’s edge. But one day, at sunset, she heard a strange sound: kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...*

*It was a giant! He was rowing across the river in a canoe. Leaving his canoe at the water’s edge, he walked over to Mengu’s place. He knocked at the door and said, “May I come in?”*

*Mengu was afraid and replied, “Yes, you may.”*

*The giant asked her for a chair and she gave him one.*

*“Where is the porridge,” he asked. She gave him bowl of porridge.*

*He ate it and asked, “Where is a pipe?” And Mengu gave him a pipe.*

*The giant asked, “Where is the tobacco?” And Mengu gave him tobacco.*

*When the giant had eaten and smoked, he asked for a drink. When Mengu gave him the drink, he asked if he could sleep.*

*“No,” said Mengu, “The sun is about to rise.” The giant saw the sun rising, so he got into his canoe and went back to where he came from.*

*Kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...*

*When the sun began to set the following day, the giant returned. And again, he asked,*

*“Where is my chair?”*

*“There it is,” replied Mengu.*

*“Where is my porridge?”*

*“There it is.”*

*“Where is my pipe?”*

*“There it is.”*

*“Where is my drink?”*

*“There it is.” calmed her fears and put out the chair, the porridge, the pipe and the drink. The same happened as before. Each morning after the giant left, Mengu set about her chores. At night, she put out the giant’s food.*

*Then, one evening, her husband came back. He saw the food she had put out and asked,*

*“You are alone here! How can you put out all that food for yourself? Who are you doing this for? Is there another man?”*

*While Tshengu was raging at his wife, she said, “Keep quiet and listen to what I have to say. I am in big trouble, but I have a plan.”*

*She took her husband and painted his head black with river mud and charcoal from her fire. She dug a hole next to her bed and told her husband to get into it. She closed the hole up to his neck so that only his head was visible.*

*“You told me that I was cooking for another man. Now do not be afraid when you see the one you call ‘my other man’.”*

*Then they heard that sound.*

*Kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...*

*Mengu whispered, “Remember what I told you. You must keep very quiet and just watch what happens.”*

*The giant knocked at the door. "Open up so that I can come in!" He did not ask his usual questions. He simply looked at the painted head and said, "What is that and why does this place smell different?"*

*"It is only a tree stump that I carved and painted," replied Mengu.*

*Soon afterwards, the giant again remarked, "This house is not as it usually is, what is that?"*

*"It is only a tree stump that I carved and painted," Mengu replied. "Eat your food now."*

*When the giant had finished eating and drinking, he asked if he could sleep, but she said, "No, the sun is already rising." The giant left and crossed the river on his canoe. Kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...*

*When the giant had disappeared, Mengu dug her husband out of his hole and asked, "Did you see what that man looked like?"*

*Tshengu was very frightened. "Let us get out of here quickly!" he said. And the husband and wife ran from that place.*

*When the giant came knocking on the door the next day, there was no reply. "That carving was another man," he said to himself. "Now I am too late. If I had known it was another man, I'd have eaten them both!" (Appendix number 20)*

### Storytelling and gender

This !xun story is one of many that negotiate gender balance and portray woman as powerful figures. My first recording of this story took place in 1998 when storyteller Emelia Kuvangu Muhinda told it to a gathering of friends in her Schmidtsdrift camp in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, where Kapilolo Mahongo was present as translator. He had 'relearnt' the story from her while translating it to me and explained to me that it was one of

the many forgotten stories from his earlier life. Emelia's friends nodded their heads frequently while she was telling, and tried twice to 'correct' her version of it by disagreeing with the sequence of events. Emelia responded with annoyance, saying in an irritated aside that this was her story and not theirs. Her listeners respected her wish and continued to be an attentive, engaged audience. !xun stories are communal, yet every teller gives her or his own version of the tale, influenced by the body language, comments and general response from the audience.

In other versions of this tale the theme of a jealous husband receives much more detailed attention; he is portrayed as a polygamist who visits his wives in different places. In this way, the female protagonist in the story reigns supreme in the comic moment where the husband soils himself in a hilarious portrait of a ridiculous husband who suspects his wife, while he is indeed the one who committed adultery. When I asked folklorist, Jose de Prada-Samper, about this story, he told me that it is a borrowing from a Bantu-speaking group, but it has been adapted to !xun ethos in many subtle ways (de Prada-Samper. 2008. Personal Communication. 13 March.)

Sigrid Schmidt has assigned this story number KH 874 in her Catalogue of Khoisan tales of southern Africa Part 11; it belongs to a complex of San stories that scholars classify as ogre tales. The confrontation of people with a fearful otherworld is a common thread across the world of storytelling and so it is with San storytellers; the creatures have distinct traits that set them apart from humans and are sometime portrayed as gross creatures who rape women or force them to eat human excrement. They are sometimes called ghosts and associated with the spirit world, other times they are gigantic in size or have more than one head, an eye in the neck, on the foot and so on. These ogres often try to trick girls (or mature women), into accompanying them, as it is in this story, where the ogre clearly wants to have sex with her.

She cleverly decoys him by feeding him and telling him that the sun is about to rise – ogres find it hard to operate in light as they are creatures of darkness. In other tales, a woman marries an ogre without knowing it and battles with the threatening forces that presents itself to her in the story. *The Singing Sack* is one such story where an ogre disguises himself and tries to trick an innocent girl, but as in this story, she outwits him and becomes the heroine (Schmidt 2007: p. 470.).

Kapilolo Mahongo told his audiences that no people in the world can survive without telling their stories. At an international conference in 2009 in Guadalajara in Spain, he told us:

*“...to tell your story makes you human, because your humanity comes from your story and your background. The old people had a deeply spiritual life that was not published in books. During those earlier times, people knew the spiritual life inside of them and carried it with them in stories. Today it is the other way around. People work with books to know God. In the past, however, God lived in people’s imagination and in their thoughts. God worked in different ways with people then, because we did not read. This changed as we learnt to read and write.” (Mahongo 2004)*

|xam Rock paintings and !xun stories

In 2013, during the European Union’s Cave-to-Cave storytelling project, Kapilolo Mahongo and I gathered in the Cederberg Mountains in the Western Cape Province of South Africa with a local rock art specialist and archaeologist, John Parkington, as well as European and African storytellers. Kapilolo Mahongo told his stories next to the ancient rock art paintings on the walls of rocky overhangs and small caves in this rugged countryside. He claimed no knowledge about the rock art itself but told stories he thought connected with the themes on the rocks.

The power of this huge, majestic Cederberg mountain range had attracted pilgrims, artists and writers for centuries. Before his death in 2012, Stephen Watson, who was such a pilgrim, wrote movingly of these mountains and the spell it cast. He said that no one who has ever visited the Cederberg could escape awareness of the fact that this is an area of the world that has a special, indeed unique, power to compel the mind and imagination. He called to mind Plato, who once spoke of place itself as ‘a veritable matrix of energies’ and was reminded of D H Lawrence who, in recognition of the singular influence and character that certain parts of the world exert, spoke of “the spirit of place” (Watson 2012: 298).

I was struck by how Kapilolo Mahongo’s seemingly endless reserve of stories found new life in the spirit of this awe-inspiring place as he recalled his !xun ancestors’ tales in front of textured, red ochre images of eland on the rock face, painted by |xam artists hundreds of years ago. In this rocky landscape Kapilolo Mahongo’s voice gave an almost tangible presence to centuries of San thought, binding together the images on the rocks and his words in a transcendence of time and space. His story, *The Eland Man*, part of his narrative in chapter three, seemed to me to have its script written on the rocks, with visual images of therianthropes, men and eland presented as one being, reflecting the motives in Kapilolo Mahongo’s initiation story of the eland and hunter.

Kapilolo Mahongo’s stories connected us with the world of the rock art painter, while fuelling our imaginations to reconstruct visions of what might have happened here and what purpose these paintings may have served for the people who painted, or witnessed, the images we were looking at. He helped us to contemplate those complex images as he translated it in the context of his own cultural inheritance, connecting the diverse groups of San people in southern Africa

through the act of storytelling. (This by no means suggests that the rock art images could be reduced to the motives in a single story.)

Archaeologist John Parkington was leading our explorations of the storied caves, dated as having been painted roughly 2000 years ago (Parkington 2003). His interpretations of the images resonated profoundly with Kapilolo's stories, bringing together science, art and oral literature in the vast expanse of the mountains. John Parkington expanded on Kapilolo's eland story by informing us that the eland is the most frequently painted animal species in this mountain. To make the transition from boy to man in his teens, a young San apprentice would have to kill an eland or some other equivalent sized game species. A San girl, on the other hand, is also drawn into the eland metaphor as she participates in the ritual eland dance after her seclusion upon the occasion of her first menstruation (Parkington 2014).

I listened to John Parkington explain to the group of international storytellers how the elephants on these rocks had a special meaning for the San hunters, as no hunter would attempt to kill this huge animal with its thick skin with a little bow and arrow. Rather, he suggested, archaeologists see the significance of this creature as being its great resemblance to people, epitomized in its own life-span, life history, intelligence, communication skills and complex but human-like set of social and interpersonal relations. Young elephant calves are far more frequently painted than the young of any other species. The procession of elephants includes individuals of all sizes, suggesting the painter's awareness of elephants' social group and interpersonal bonds. John Parkington thought that San families probably encountered specific elephant individuals and families over a life span in the wild. Given the matriarchal structure of elephant herds, their relationships and social bonds probably struck an especially strong chord with women (Biesele 1993; Parkington 2003).

I was conscious of how Parkington's words called forth meaningful San stories that spoke to the very heart of human-elephant relationships, while weaving metaphors together that connected hunting, sex, gender roles, adultery, matriarchy, marriage, parenthood and ritual transformation. What follows is a narrative I recorded from Kapilolo's friends, the Rumao family in 1999. A hunter marries an elephant and has a child with her; one of its complex and tragic threads is to warn of the dire consequences of confusing animals with humans – in spirit or flesh.

*There was a man who lived far away from his family. In this different place, he married an elephant. They had a baby boy and the man named him after his brother, Dimo, who still lived with his family.*

*The man went home to his family to tell them of the baby's birth. He told them that he had named the baby after his brother, Dimo. His family was very happy. "This is good," they said, and promised to visit him and his family.*

*The man's brother, Dimo, went home with him. While they were walking, Dimo saw the footprints of many elephant on the ground. Close by laid the footprints of a baby elephant. Dimo said: "But there are only the spoor of elephant here! Is this place filled with elephant?" But his brother said it did not matter, they should just continue walking.*

*When they arrived at the man's home, they made a fire and waited for his family to arrive. The man's wife was still out in the veld, looking for fruit and vegetables, as a woman does. When a man is unsuccessful in hunting for the pot, the woman brings home veld foods. This way, the family always has something to eat.*

*Ho! And while they were sitting at the fireside, the elephant wife and baby came out of the bush. The mother was talking to the baby in a loud voice, as he was still little and could not walk the whole day. She encouraged the baby elephant to walk the last bit. "Come, come, pick up your feet, let us walk, let us go home!"*

*Dimo was afraid of the elephant's loud voice. Was this the elephant whose spoor they had seen? Why were they coming in this direction? His brother said nothing because he knew it was his wife and child. But his brother, Dimo exclaimed, "Oh! May I die today!"*

*The elephant wife had no problem. She simply came to greet him, knowing that Dimo was her husband's family who had come to visit him.*

*Dimo was concerned and thought to himself, has my brother gone mad or what? We are people, how can he marry an animal and such a large one? He looked at the elephant. No, he did not understand. And he said to his brother: "But the old people, I heard them say, this here, this animal, is meat." But his brother simply said: "This is my wife."*

*That night, Dimo kept peeping at the couple. While sleeping, the elephant opened her ear and the man lay on it. Dimo thought: "No! Look at him, look at my brother! He is lying on an elephant's ear!" Dimo looked at this and thought his brother had gone mad.*

*Dimo did not sleep well that night. He peeped and peeped at his brother and the elephants, slept a little and peeped and slept a little, peeping all the while.*

*On the second day, the man and his elephant family went into the bush together to find food. Dimo was hungry, but stayed behind, thinking, I see my brother has married flesh. He married food. Dimo started preparing everything he would need to kill the elephant and her calf, a knife, spear, bow and arrows. He did this because he knew that this was*

*not a person, not a wife. It was meat. So he gathered everything together he would need to kill the elephant.*

*Now, when they all came home that night, Dimo noticed that the elephant was limping and had a sore place on her foot. This place had been there for a while because it was rotten and had a strong smell. That night when they went to sleep, the elephant put her foot close to the healing heat of the fire. The foot had a hole in it, big enough for Dimo to see the fat inside her, next to the bone.*

*Dimo kept looking at the foot and the fat the whole night long. He was hungry. He smelled the meat and listened to the fat dripping slowly from the foot.*

*And so, he took the veld food, onion and root he had gathered that day from his bag and dipped it into the boiling fat in the foot. The elephant woke up with a loud groan, asking: "Oh! What is going on now?" Then she went back to sleep. Again, Dimo dipped his food into the hot fat to eat, and again the elephant woke up with a groan. "Oh! What is going on now?"*

*Then came the third day. The brother went hunting, the elephant and calf went gathering food and Dimo stayed behind, making plans. He saw his brother going this way and the elephants going that way. He said to himself, I must go and hunt that elephant. He took his weapons and tracked the large elephant's spoor on the ground. When he found her and her calf, he first shot the big elephant and then the small elephant. He slaughtered the mother, cut up her white meat and then slaughtered the calf. He chose the best meat and carried it home to his brother's place.*

*Dimo made a big fire. He roasted the meat. It made a delicious smell in the air. He ate a piece and put some away for his brother. On returning home, his brother was worried about his wife and baby, why are they not back yet? Why were they staying in the bush so long? She should be home as the sun is already dying for the day.*

*Dimo said: "Leave this story now and eat first." His brother agreed and asked where the meat came from. Dimo replied saying: "Eat first, we'll talk later." The brother ate and asked, "Why is this meat so good?"*

*After supper, Dimo said: "My brother, you are a big man. You know that the small elephant is not your child. It is an elephant child. The big elephant is not your wife. It is an elephant. Animals are meat. Why do you think meat is wife?"*

*After they had eaten, Dimo asked, "What shall we do now? Shall we go to our parents and bring all our family here to come and eat in this place of plenty elephant? You say this is your wife, but this is not your wife, it is meat. You must not say this is your family. You gave this small elephant a name, Dimo, but it is not my brother, it is an animal. These are animals and we are people, we eat meat, not marry it."*

*"Yes," said his brother, still chewing the meat, "It is very good, very tasty. Yes, we can go and fetch our family."*

*Dimo and his brother argued about who should fetch the family and who should stay with the supply of meat. "You must go alone," said Dimo, "I must stay here and eat this good meat and look after it."*

*"No, you can't stay here alone, we must go together to fetch our people," replied his brother. "No," said Dimo, "We cannot leave this good meat here."*

*The man walked off by himself and left Dimo behind with all the meat. It was then that the animal spirit came and swallowed Dimo whole. Yes, swallowed him up!*

*When the man came back with the family, they found Dimo missing. But they said: "No, no, no, something else has taken our brother away; a spirit monster has swallowed him!"*

*Dimo's family then made a fire, they sang and clapped and danced so that the thing, the spirit thing, could hear their song and feel their dance. "The spirit thing likes it when people sing; the singing makes him come," the elders said.*

Head on this side

Body on this side

We must kill the spirit thing

We must save the man inside

There are snakes and things

With the man inside.

*And when the spirit monster came as a result of the singing, they chopped off its head. The sun was now rising. The brother emerged from the spirit monster with all the snakes inside. First, poisonous things came out in front. The brother was alive and came out last because the poison things were now dead.*

*Dimo was alive again. Then they all ate well and the elephants' place became their home. The family stayed there, it was now their place. (Appendix number 11.)*

I first heard this version of the *Elephant Wife* story from Donna Katitu Romao who told it to me in 1999 outside her new brick house on the farm Platfontein near Kimberley in South Africa. Her husband, Bernardo Rumao, sat close to her and slowly translated it for me, passage after passage, into Afrikaans, while I wrote it down as carefully as possible. I preferred doing written translations on the spot because of the intimate co-operation between the storytelling group at that moment, and because the teller was present to help with the challenges and details of translation. We would all listen to the recording after the telling, and

the tellers would embroider upon the details; giving the process a second round of investigation for the sake of accuracy. Donna learnt the elephant wife story from her mother, Lalilu, who was also present at the time, nodding her grey head continuously, as if confirming that this really happened.

Sigrid Schmidt (2013c. p. 346) has assigned this tale number KH 209 of her catalogue, where she references the various versions recorded by Thomas (1959), van der Post (1971) Marshall (1955) Biesele (1975), Jantunen (1976), Heikkinen/Schmidt (2011), Guenther (1989), Fourie (1994), Winberg (2001) and Solomon (1994). The story comes from the early time when humans and animals could talk to each other. It tells of how the hunter leaves his family on an extended hunting trip and ends up marrying an elephant but is then forced to accept that elephant is a wild animal and should therefore be hunted and eaten instead of being treated like human family.

The *Elephant Wife's* meaning is intricately tied up with complex metaphors of sexuality, hunting and gender roles. The story links hunting and sex, birth and death, women, men and animals in an ongoing, interdependent cycle. In the hunter's mind, hunting and having sex is linked. One can eat both. Both can bleed. Eating meat and drinking hot fat is a common metaphor for having sex. The words for having sex with more than one woman may be translated into "eat-sharing" (Biesele 1993: 152).

This tale complex has several episodes I have not recounted here, where the elephant heroine reigns supreme at the end by means of a trail of blood that is captured in a calabash and incubated until the elephant girl grows again. She therefore escapes her demise through this magical transformation and then has her own family avenge the hunters' attack on her, thus

commenting on gender roles, marking and balancing, the power women have in relationships in this metaphoric way.

The storytellers list a host of reasons why many people chose not to eat elephant meat when they could have. They describe the meat as being the same as human meat and say that elephant cows have breasts like woman that shrivels up when they get old; the heavy, large elephant bull penis is likened to a man's penis. Traditional San families observed the elephant herd's close family relationships and linked it to human behaviour; elephants were reported to bury men by putting logs over the body after it had killed the man. San storytellers say that elephant mothers play with their children like human mothers and when the elephant herd is running in full swing, it dances like human beings (Bieseke 1993). Elephants loomed large in the traditional San storyteller's landscape. It was respected, feared and often featured as a hugely destructive force in their lives, killing people, destroying camps and forests. Clearly, human and elephant power and behaviour assumed roles that were contemplated, explored and used as 'thinking tools' in stories (Bieseke 1993:). Read in this way, these stories become important historical documents that talk to Kapilolo Mahongo's history and has helped to flesh out his personal background and biography far beyond the uniformed SADF 'Bushman soldier' I met in 1994.

I marveled at how this sojourn in the Cederberg Mountains provoked yet more stories in Kapilolo's repertoire. The same group of diverse storytellers from the Cave to Cave project gathered in France, Italy, Spain and Africa and told the same stories in the larger, deeper, darker and infinitely mysterious European caves, each with its own unmistakable evocation of the world's memory. Kapilolo had encountered and joined the professional world of international storytelling.

Storytellers perform stories differently

In 1994, when I first heard Kapilolo tell a story, I did not know he was performing a traditional tale. Not only because I did not understand a word of !xun at that stage, but because he and many of the other !xun storytellers I got to know since then, are experts in incorporating story seamlessly into the flow of a conversation, weaving it in and out of reality as if time and space were suspended for those moments. As if in real life, the drama happened to that woman over there (a finger points in a neighbour's direction), this child hid from that pursuing hyena in that tree on that hill and the rumbling weather snake passed by underneath this specific house last night – and caused this terrible storm. At the same time, a few of the !xun storytellers I encountered perform tales dramatically when they choose to, with individual expressions and nuance, large gestures and movement, songs, chants and facial expressions – depending on the story, the occasion and the audience. (There are as many oral versions of one traditional short story as there may be storytellers and audiences; the interpretive mind of the listener, or reader, also reframes the images of the story in her or his own imagination; even when the references and metaphors are well known to the audience.)

During our storytelling sojourns, both abroad and to San communities across the southern African region, my appreciation for Kapilolo's gift and capacity to tell stories continued to grow. He never repeated a story in the same way. To my great frustration (since my !xun is limited and I relied on prior rehearsal to assist me in translating him), he would not rehearse or prepare for a performance. It was always an on-the-spot interaction between himself and his audience, where he recreated a story, finding a different emphasis in the ears of his listeners. It is also a fact that he insisted every year that he knew no more stories, yet kept remembering another fantastic story I had never heard before. This happened when something triggered a memory that gave rise to another. Sometimes I thought that it was his sheer joy in the act of

oral performance that made him remember ‘forgotten’ stories so spontaneously. There were times when a fellow !xun storyteller remembered fragments that Kapilolo was able to extend, also having temporarily forgotten it until that very moment.

#### Restoring stories

At other times, Kapilolo took the fragments of stories I found elsewhere in Botswana and together they added it to the fragments, discussing and restoring the stories until they were satisfied that it was the tale they once knew. (Dima and Owl is one example.) I witnessed how the power of his audience’s appreciation made more stories come alive in a memory that even the most violent history could not bury. “Write”, Kapilolo would often instruct me. “Did you get that part?” He, too, feared that stories might get lost if not recorded.

I have illustrated how Kapilolo’s story repertoire belongs to the !xun oral tradition, yet they are also Kapilolo’s translations of his own family stories into Afrikaans, his fluent second language – the one he learnt in the South African Defence Force camp during the 1960s, and has refined since then. I have translated his live performances in !xun and Afrikaans into English many times over during the past two decades. The translated versions in this thesis and our digital collection, follow that rhythm and pattern closely as Kapilolo translated his !xun stories into Afrikaans (orally) while I wrote them down in Afrikaans and then did the English translations.

#### Language and translation

The process of translation has distilled each tale into its own literary essence, each one having survived for many generations and through different dialects and languages, to finally transmute onto these pages. To us, their translation sometimes required a search for words that

would resonate with the almost extinct dialects and the multiple contexts in which they have been told over the centuries. The word for ‘fire’, for example, in !xun takes on a different meaning depending on the context in which it is used – it could mean healing, energy, home or actual fire. A traditional healer could mean a doctor, a wise person with knowledge or sometimes translated as King or Chief when the story encountered other groups in Angola, Zambia or elsewhere. This multiple resonance is often lost in the act of writing a story down, taking it out of its living context, or translating it into other languages. Indeed, the symbolic ‘gathering bag’ of traditional lifestyles sometimes becomes a plastic shopping bag in a story being retold by a younger teller, as the intricate symbolism surrounding the animal skin bag is lost. (I have heard female storytellers in Shakawe on the banks of the Delta in Botswana refer to bags as shopping plastics.) The gathering bag had its own special meaning for a gatherer; it remained a part of the power of the animal even when it was transformed into a bag; its value was increased by the story of the animal it represented, the metaphoric meaning of that animal in the community, where it came from, how it was hunted and by whom (Biesele 1993). Details such as these are lost to a new generation who no longer gather and hunt, yet the tenacious story lives on, changing and accumulating new meanings. It also illustrates the complexity of translating these old oral stories into contemporary written forms – much is lost, yet contemporary storytellers infuse the story with modern elements and as such, make it meaningful to their personal contexts.

My thesis does not intend to offer word-by-word English translations of the traditional !xun stories woven into Kapilolo’s narrative; they are retold in the spirit of the live storytelling and try to be faithful to the flow, mood and texture of the oral performance, where songs create mood and poetic comment; repetition and rhythm are used to add tension and enhance aspects of the plot or characters. I have tried to reconcile the two different mediums of oral and written

storytelling by respecting its differences. I think of translation as shaping one language into another, as expressing the sense of the story in another language, converting it into another form or medium; moving from one place or condition to another and carrying it across time and place. When the !xun storytellers transmitted parts of their intangible oral tradition to me, their hope was that I would translate and document this literature for posterity. In the process I have become a carrier of the !xun stories – a gift of considerable dimension. In the end, it was these stories and their wondrous power that helped me to get to know Kapilolo Mahongo, watch him open and reach for those different stories I was hoping for twenty-six years ago. That Kapilolo Mahongo and my love of storytelling would come to allow us to cross our boundaries, dismantle our othering and witness each other so that we could share the privilege of walking a journey impossible to accomplish alone, was the unexpected outcome.

#### A final writing workshop

It is against this background that I was finally able to assist Kapilolo Mahongo to fulfill his long-standing wish to write his memoirs. We set up a three-week writing workshop on the !khwa Ttu San Farm's Heritage Centre on the West Coast to facilitate the process of finishing the manuscript. In 2016, we asked an experienced archaeologist and heritage activist to read the manuscript for us, and her suggestions to incorporate his stories (compiled in an appendix at the end of his memoir), into the actual context of his personal life story, proved to be an enlightening experience for him, and he did so without hesitation. Kapilolo's last edit of his Afrikaans memoir took place in December 2017, five months before his death in a car accident on the seriously pot-holed road between Platfontein and Kimberley at about 6.30 pm on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2018. The following chapters take us to Mahongo's memoirs.

## Chapter four

### Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative of his childhood in Angola

The following two stories are set apart by one hundred and thirty seven years. Both reflect the historical practice of trade in !xun children. Both capture the fears of the two narrators, of being abducted by people more powerful than themselves.

Kapilolo Mahongo told me the following story in 2002.

*You see, children were never safe. Other people, black and white, would take advantage of us because we were smaller in figure and we did not have powerful armies or guns. You will see how people just took our children in this story that has been around for a long time, I remember it even from my childhood: One day there was this !xun family. The father had shot one of the Ovambo man's cattle in the north. Then this man found the !xun family and told them that he was going to take one of their children to work for him as payment for the animal the father had shot. His parents were afraid of the big man and could not do anything.*

*A long time passed. Then one day, another !xun family came travelling down from the north. They said that they had seen the child, who was now a man. The families celebrated as they thought their child had long since died. They also decided to go and find their child.*

*They walked and walked, passing the trees and the rivers that the other family gave them as landmarks. Finally, they found their child with the black people. They told the Ovambo man that their debt was now paid off and that they wanted their child back. Well, he agreed to this.*

*In the meantime, the !xun boy had learnt to hunt and the Ovambo man had shown him how to plant gadolo. So, the boy asked the man for a few seeds because he liked to eat gadolo.*

*When the !xun family arrived back in their place, the boy planted the seeds and this was how they started farming with the gadolo plant. (Appendix number 22.)*

The same practice, of children being forcibly taken away, is described in a story recorded by Lucy Lloyd in 1881, that of the !kun child, Da, who came from the general area around the Okavango River, then barely six or seven years old, said that they were afraid of strangers and that the children would run away and hide when strangers came. Despite this, Da was abducted by the Makoba from his family home in a place called ||noma. When his mother tried to wrestle him away from the Makoba men, she was beaten. His father tried to shoot the attackers, but he was murdered. The Makoba then “put” his siblings in the water. They drowned. Da told Lucy Lloyd that they were eaten by the crocodiles. He added, “... they did not put me into the water” (Winberg 2011: 79).

Da was passed on, or sold, to other traders. He eventually met another !kun boy, |uma, while in the service of a Mr Karo. |uma had a similar story. One day that the boy remembered well, the neighbouring Makoba arrived and grabbed both him and his brother. His parents pleaded with the Makoba man to let them go, but in vain. Both boys eventually boarded the *Louis Alfred*, a boat belonging to the Swedish trader, Eriksson, at Walvis Bay, along with several other children and adults, who were to become indentured labourers in the Cape colony (Winberg 2011).

Both Mahongo and the !kun children’s stories speak of childhoods lived in fear of being kidnapped, but also record the abundant resources of their natural environment and the stories

they learnt from their elders.

The rest of this chapter comprises of Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative of his childhood memories that emerged from several writer's workshops I facilitated with him over a period of about five years, in order to produce his memoir. He told his story in Afrikaans, which I then translated into English. His final edit of my transcription took place in December 2017, five months before his death. It was an oral edit, as I read the English text to him; he understood English well but was not proficient in reading and writing English. The text is not verbatim, but a minimalistic edit in order to facilitate the flow of the text.

#### *Kapilolo's kulimatji*<sup>1</sup>

Ever since I was a small child I learnt to interpret the world around me through the spirit of stories. All stories come from somewhere – even my name has a story. My grandfather was a Kapilolo and there was a Kapilolo before him. We come from the *!tui* forest in the north of Angola; it is like the upside down baobab tree with nutritious, red fruits, small like beans. Yes, it tastes good in the mouth, sweet and sour at the same time.

Kapilolo is also a whistle made from a strong *sala* bush leaf. We rolled it around a little stick, pulled it out and squeezed it flat on one end, so we could blow into it. This was our hunting whistle, one with a high-pitched, breathy sound. We imitated the duiker's child's cry with this little whistle, so that the mother would come to us. The Kapilolos are hunters.

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<sup>1</sup> *Kulimatji* is the !xun phrase for "we tell our old stories", a neologism created by the storytellers in Schmidtsdrift..

My surname, Mahongo, means reed in !xun<sup>2</sup>. If you were thirsty in the veld, you would look for these reeds and dig into the earth underneath it to find a spring of fresh water. The Mahongos are finders of water.

My other names are Feleciano Mario and have a different story. These are names the Portuguese gave me at that time of our lives when our traditional life in Angola gave way to war. I was given an identity book in this name, Feleciano Mario Mahongo. The Kapilolo name nearly died out in the war. This story is my *kulimatji*, where I tell many of my old stories and explain how they helped me to hold on to my name.

I was born in 1952, near the Lasinga River. The lush riverside was an important place to us, to my brothers and my sister, Wihangu. Her name came from my grandmother and means a nutritious wild vegetable, much like a cob of mealie. Then there was Kapita, my younger brother, and my youngest sister Masosie, who never played with us. She died at the age of four from an illness that no healer could cure.

When it rained, my youngest brother, Chamba and I took a piece of hollow *kundzu* tree bark and sealed it with bees' wax. This became our toy canoe. Our imaginations were free. We walked down to that river every day and made ourselves mud people and animals. We built little huts with sticks and grass. We played like this for hours, imitating our parents with our mud families. When the water sank low the fish would gather in water holes, making it possible for us children to catch them.

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<sup>2</sup> Mahongo told me that his surname was the translation into a Bantu language for the !xun word for reed: //nwa, a word also used by the !kun boys for describing a reed.

Most importantly, we were taught to respect the river. We knew that although it was a source of life, the river was also a dangerous place. This great water with its crocodiles, snakes and fish was a powerful presence in my life. We were told there was a big snake, Chingongi, inside the water that would come and grab you if you went too close without asking permission. The river had its own spirit, with an invisible life inside. Like every life-giving place around me, it had its own stories. Many of these were funny – we laughed a lot when I was a child. Listen to this one about the hare and Elephant.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kapilolo Mahongo, like the other storytellers, would weave folktales, or traditional narratives, into their ordinary speech rather seamlessly. He told this story to different audiences who enjoyed its high entertainment value. He sometimes performed it as a comedy with expressive gestures, different character voices, rhythm and sound effects. The trickster Hare is once again at work to fool his fellow beings, this time bringing two giants face to face with each other. Versions of Hare's trickery is abundant in African lore and includes motifs such as throwing hot stones into Lion's mouth, tying his tail to the roof while building his house, letting Kudu burn in a deceptive game, frightening Hyena by wearing Lion's skin, tricking Jackal into rescuing him from a well, stealing eyes from bats, to name but a few (Schmidt 2013b: 134).

This story is not included in the latest edition of Sigrid Schmidt's catalogue. José de Prada-Samper suggests the number KH \*\*499, "Hare tricks Elephant and Hippopotamus into a tug-of-war".

<sup>3</sup> I have heard many oral versions of this famous old story in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, where the storytellers say it has been handed down for many generations, it being among the oldest of the San stories; it explains how death was created. The first written evidence we have was recorded in the eighteenth century, where the author notes the taboo on men eating a hare's meat (Wikar 1779). The moon (or God) sent the hare to humankind to tell them that after death they would not really die, but, like the moon, would rise again. But hare got the message wrong and told humans that they had to die and remain dead forever. This myth explained why men should not eat a hare's meat. It was good for boys to eat it, but once initiated into adulthood, a man would lose his rights to being an adult upon eating hare meat. This story was also used during an initiation ritual, when a boy would be transformed from his childhood and become part of a group of adult men. Like stories about human ownership of fire, this story signifies a transformation from the primeval time to the present time, where new laws took root among humankind and animals, and humans were finally separated from each other (Biesele 1993:136-137). We find the Moon and Hare story in the !xun children's part of the Bleek and Lloyd collection (D. F. Bleek 1935: 262-266), while we owe the first written recording of this myth, dated 1779, to Hendrik Wikar, a Swedish "deserter" of the Dutch East India Company

*You see, Hare and Elephant met in the forest one day. Hare said to Elephant, 'Come on, let me pull you into the river!'*

*Elephant said, 'Are you mad?'*

*'No, I can do it. I am telling you!'*

*'You? Never! Look at you, you are small and weak. Look at my strength!'*

*'Just you wait,' said Hare, 'I will show you tomorrow.'*

*Hare went to the river and told Hippo the same thing. Of course Hippo laughed at Hare and told him he was crazy.*

*Then Hare went into the forest and found a long, strong rope. Off he went to Elephant. 'Okay, let's try now. I am going to pull you all the way into the river.'*

*Elephant laughed. Hare tied the rope around Elephant's leg and around his own ankle.*

*'When you feel the rope tighten around your leg, Elephant, you must pull!'*

*Hare ran down to the river and told Hippo the same story.*

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(Mossop 1935: 138-141). Sigrid Schmidt has assigned the version recorded in this study number KH 197E in the *Catalogue of Khoisan folktales of southern Africa* (2013). Schmidt adds another interesting story to this complex of tales about transformation from the primeval world to the present world, one that is rarely heard today, but still exists among storytellers in various forms (Schmidt 2011:28). She says that in the adult world where men had to die to live (die as a child to become an adult), a man also had to recreate himself. Hearing highly humorous and meaningful stories about how to carry out the sex act were part of this change to a new, adult life. In the old days, the trickster was not capable of having sex because his overly long penis killed his wife. He had to cut off the surplus parts and they turned into present-day snakes. Sex education was a powerful part of the initiation of both boys and girls, and this sex story is one of many that still does the rounds. In another story, the narrator tells of how men would spread out a skin for a young woman and show the young initiate how to have sex, how to "eat" women and make them "die" metaphorically, while at the same time, making them stay alive and well. In another, a woman would seduce a man and takes him to his hut to feed him delicious foods, separating him from other men while they laugh at him. When he finally emerges from the spell, the other men remind him mockingly that he is a hunter.

*'Remember to pull when you feel the rope tighten, Hippo,' called Hare as he ran back into the forest.*

*Hare then pulled and pulled before he untied the end of the rope from around his ankle. Both Hippo and Elephant felt the rope tighten and they both started pulling. They were both strong guys and pulled each other along.*

*After some heavy pulling the two of them looked up and saw each other right in front of their noses!*

*Of course Hare laughed until his stomach ached as ran off into the forest.*

(Appendix number 8.)

Yes, sometimes you think you have to be devious to win in a situation, or sometimes you watch someone else win because they lied and cheated. But in the end the truth always comes out.

The hare was a mischievous person in many stories; he even knew how to invent death and mortality! Listen carefully, that story goes like this:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kapilolo Mahongo, like the other storytellers, would weave folktales, or traditional narratives, into their ordinary speech rather seamlessly. He told this story to different audiences who enjoyed its high entertainment value. He sometimes performed it as a comedy with expressive gestures, different character voices, rhythm and sound effects. The trickster Hare is once again at work to fool his fellow beings, this time bringing two giants face to face with each other. Versions of Hare's trickery is abundant in African lore and includes motifs such as throwing hot stones into Lion's mouth, tying his tail to the roof while building his house, letting Kudu burn in a deceptive game, frightening Hyena by wearing Lion's skin, tricking Jackal into rescuing him from a well, stealing eyes from bats, to name but a few (Schmidt 2013b: 134).

This story is not included in the latest edition of Sigrid Schmidt's catalogue. José de Prada-Samper suggests the number KH \*\*499, "Hare tricks Elephant and Hippopotamus into a tug-of-war".

<sup>4</sup> I have heard many oral versions of this famous old story in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, where the storytellers say it has been handed down for many generations, it being among the oldest of the San stories; it explains how death was created. The first written evidence we have was recorded in the eighteenth century, where the author notes the taboo on men eating a hare's meat (Wikar 1779). The moon (or God) sent the hare to

*Long, long ago, in the beginning, when people were created, Moon and Hare lived together as friends.*

*Moon said to Hare, 'You must go down to Earth and take this message to the people. You must ask them, do you want to die forever when you breathe your last, or do you want to rise again after dying?'*

*Hare went to Earth and asked the people, 'Do you want to live again after you die and rise again?' He spoke quite softly while the people continued talking to each other. When he*

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humankind to tell them that after death they would not really die, but, like the moon, would rise again. But hare got the message wrong and told humans that they had to die and remain dead forever. This myth explained why men should not eat a hare's meat. It was good for boys to eat it, but once initiated into adulthood, a man would lose his rights to being an adult upon eating hare meat. This story was also used during an initiation ritual, when a boy would be transformed from his childhood and become part of a group of adult men. Like stories about human ownership of fire, this story signifies a transformation from the primeval time to the present time, where new laws took root among humankind and animals, and humans were finally separated from each other (Biesele 1993:136-137). We find the Moon and Hare story in the !xun children's part of the Bleek and Lloyd collection (D. F. Bleek 1935: 262-266), while we owe the first written recording of this myth, dated 1779, to Hendrik Wikar, a Swedish "deserter" of the Dutch East India Company (Mossop 1935: 138-141). Sigrid Schmidt has assigned the version recorded in this study number KH 197E in the *Catalogue of Khoisan folktales of southern Africa* (2013). Schmidt adds another interesting story to this complex of tales about transformation from the primeval world to the present world, one that is rarely heard today, but still exists among storytellers in various forms (Schmidt 2011:28). She says that in the adult world where men had to die to live (die as a child to become an adult), a man also had to recreate himself. Hearing highly humorous and meaningful stories about how to carry out the sex act were part of this change to a new, adult life. In the old days, the trickster was not capable of having sex because his overly long penis killed his wife. He had to cut off the surplus parts and they turned into present-day snakes. Sex education was a powerful part of the initiation of both boys and girls, and this sex story is one of many that still does the rounds. In another story, the narrator tells of how men would spread out a skin for a young woman and show the young initiate how to have sex, how to "eat" women and make them "die" metaphorically, while at the same time, making them stay alive and well. In another, a woman would seduce a man and takes him to his hut to feed him delicious foods, separating him from other men while they laugh at him. When he finally emerges from the spell, the other men remind him mockingly that he is a hunter.

*realised that the people were not listening to him, Hare became impatient and angry. 'Listen here,' he said, 'when you die, you will then die forever!'*

*Hare walked back to Moon. He walked and walked and walked and finally reached Moon. Hare told Moon the story and that the people did not pay attention to him and said, 'And I told them that if they die they would die forever! Now it is too late!'*

*Moon was furious. 'I did not tell you to tell the people this! I told you to ask them if they want to rise again after dying!'*

*Moon was so angry that he swung a wooden club high into the air and hit Hare in his face. And that is why Hare still has a cleft nose to this day, and we humans die instead of rising again – like the moon! (Appendix number 7.)*

The night held mysterious stories, often about the danger of the wilderness around us. At sunset we were tired from our playing and joined our parents at the fire. We were afraid of the dark and the wild animals. That was my only early childhood fear then: elephants, lions, snakes and leopards. The night fire was our protection and we sat close together every night. Our parents told us to go to sleep in our huts early so that the animals would not come and carry us off into the wilderness. Our parents told us stories to distract us from the dangers of the night and also just to pass the time. Today firewood is so scarce that fireside stories have become something of the past.

There was a time when fire was the very thing that separated us humans from animals. The fire story I will tell now is an ancient one about that time when the world was still dark and people ate raw food. This is the story that has walked through countless generations:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I first heard a version of this creation story from Katunga Carimbwe, in 2003, while he was busy painting on a canvas. He said that the story has many episodes, some of which he had forgotten. His elders told the story to him during his childhood in Mavinga, Angola, where he

*This story starts in the old times when animals and people lived together. In those days people did not have the right to fire. They ate their food raw. Only Lion had the power of fire.*

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was born in 1958. I went in search of the rest of the story and found several episodes told by different tellers; Kapilolo Mahongo told his own pieced-together, reconstructed version here. The owl in the story is very likely the scops owl (*Otus senegalensis*), which lives in dry, open woodland and bushveld areas and which has feathers on its head that look like horns. The name Dima, used to refer to the trickster-god, appears to be specific to the communities of Angolan !xun that live, or used to live, around the area of Serpa Pinto. (The name relates to the Tswana term for ancestor, *badimo*.)

Most of the episodes in the Dima and Owl myth have a wide distribution in the area of southern Africa and the Kalahari whose original inhabitants speak !Xun and other closely related languages, although the names and identities of the trickster divinity, Dima, and his adversary change from area to area. In the version of the myth collected by Lorna Marshall in the 1950s among the Ju|'hoan of northern Namibia and western Botswana, several hundred kilometres from where the !Xun storyteller lived, he is called Huwe, and his adversary's name is |Ka |Kani, which can be translated as "fire sticks". At the end of the story, |Ka |Kani becomes a bird called ≠ore. The "clapping game" mentioned in Kapilolo Mahongo's version of *Dima and Owl*, is still current among the !Xun, the Nharo, and possibly other communities who live in the Kalahari Desert.

This story depicts Dima as a culture hero and transformer of the primeval world into the present world. He achieves this with words, "From now on people will be able to make a fire with each tree on earth." This concept of the transformation of the primeval world into the present one is central to the stories of the theft of fire, stolen for the good of humanity. In the primeval times, only animals kept fire. In Almeida's version of how Dima had stolen the fire from his friend, "he could create the African country, trees, rivers and finally men" (Almeida 1957:554 in Schmidt 2011). The character and so-called trickster, |kaggen of the |xam speakers of Northern Cape in South Africa, stole fire from the ticks and then real men used it. The former owners had to live as animals because they lost fire (Bleek 1923: 32-33). The possession of fire meant the separation of animals and humans and therefore, the birth of human culture. Dima goes by many names; in Namibia among Damara, Nama and Hai| |om speakers, he is called Haiseb. The !kun children from the nineteenth-century Bleek and Lloyd collection called him |Xue and Huwe (D. F. Bleek 1934: 262). They also described him as 'the first Bushman' (Schmidt 2013: 414, 425).

Sigrid Schmidt has assigned number KH 267 to this narrative.

*The people and the animals came together to make a plan. 'What can we do to get the fire from Lion so that we can cook our food?' they asked. They decided to wait until evening and started singing and singing, clapping and clapping, calling everyone together.*

*Come dance with us*

*Come dance with us*

*Come dance with us.*

*Many animals came from the bush to join in the dancing and singing. Lion brought his fire sticks. He rubbed the sticks, rubbed and rubbed. Soon a little smoke appeared beneath the sticks. Lion blew on the smoke; he scraped some dry grass into the smoke. A little flame appeared and everyone brought a piece of wood. Soon everyone was dancing around a fire.*

*Hare was a cunning and fast animal. The people said to him, 'While we are singing here and while Lion is dancing with us, you must take his fire sticks and run. When he chases you, we will kill his fire.'*

*Hare grabbed Lion's fire sticks and ran. He did not make it because Lion caught up with him and brought the fire sticks back. Lion sang a boastful song:*

*To me it does not matter,*

*I don't have a problem.*

*I will eat you – with hair*

*Or without hair!*

*I don't have a problem,*

*All of you are food to me.*

*Springbok could run very fast and jump high. The people said to him, 'While Lion is dancing and singing here with us, you must grab his fire sticks and run.'*

*When they were dancing and singing, Springbok grabbed the fire sticks and jumped away into the veld.*

*But Lion said, 'Why do I not hear the clip-clop-clip-clop of Springbok's hooves behind me?'*

*Lion turned and saw Springbok running into the veld with his fire sticks. So he ran after Springbok, caught him and came back with his fire sticks.*

*Again, Lion sang his boastful song.*

*Then the people whispered to each other. They said, 'Let us ask Duiker. He is small and very fast. 'Duiker', they said, while Lion is dancing and singing here with us, you must grab his fire sticks and run away.'*

*When they were dancing around the fire, Duiker grabbed Lion's fire sticks and ran into the veld.*

*But Lion said, 'Why do I not hear Duiker snorting behind me as before?'*

*He turned around and chased after little Duiker who was darting into the veld. Lion caught up with him and returned to the fire with his sticks.*

*Again, Lion sang his boastful song:*

*To me it does not matter,*

*I don't have a problem.*

*I will eat you – with hair*

*Or without hair!*

*I don't have a problem,*

*All of you are food to me.*

*'Oh,' sighed the people. 'Which animal can help us now? Ostrich has the longest legs of all, let us ask him.'* They explained the plan to Ostrich and he grabbed Lion's fire sticks this time. Lion said, *'Why do I not hear Ostrich's high singing voice behind me anymore?'* He looked around, saw Ostrich running away and chased after him. After a long time Lion returned, with a tired face, for Ostrich ran too fast for him. *'From this day forward,' he said, 'I will not leave any of you in peace. I will hunt you all and chase you and eat you!'* And this is how Lion came to be everyone's enemy and how people got the power of fire. (Appendix number 16.)

### The lion season

During my childhood, the lion, leopard and elephant were the most dangerous animals. Elephants would stomp on your house and if you made them angry or came in their way, they could crush your bones. But we learned how to avoid them and look after ourselves. The leopards lay in the trees and could take you from above without any warning. But we learnt to live with these animals, watch out for them. Of course, our old stories helped us to live with them and understand them.

One season, when I was about eleven or twelve years old, four prides of lions moved into our area. I recall this season of the lions very clearly and people spoke about it for a long time afterwards. Even today. It was a time when we were scared all the time and always on the lookout. When we walked to the water it was always in groups. Us children and the women would carry the water back while the men were keeping watch armed with bows and arrows, ready to shoot.

A family member, who lived about two kilometres away from us in the bush, was caught by a lion inside his own hut. His name was Sakulanda. We heard the shouting and roaring that night. In the morning, we went over to their village. The man lay there, with his eye out, badly wounded. His son, Baka, heard the lion from within his own hut and ran out. The lion had just picked up his father and threw him outside the hut. Then the lion came out and that was when Baka was upon him, hitting him with a stick. Baka was very strong and managed to chase the lion away. There were three lions that night. They took Sakulanda and Baka's duiker that was hanging in a tree to dry. If it were not for Baka, the old man would have died that night. He lived on for many years, with one eye missing.

Throughout that time, it must have been around three months, we were told to go into our huts by five o'clock, as this was the time when the lions started prowling. Scared stiff, we'd look through the slits between the grasses and saw them running through our place. We'd scream and shout to try and chase them away. Our people told many lion stories, like the one I will tell now:

*There was once a man who quarrelled and disagreed with his wife. He did nothing to help resolve their problems. Finally, the woman decided to return to her parents' place.*

*She walked and walked for a long time, collecting the ripe berries from the bush and putting them in her gathering skin. Towards evening, she found a tree with honey, made a fire and used a smoking log to chase the bees away. She filled her calabash with honey and decided to camp there for the night. She gathered more wood for the fire, to protect her from the wild animals and keep her warm.*

*Darkness fell and the woman lay down next to her fire. It was not long before a terrifying roar woke her from her sleep. A lion was standing over her with his horrible mouth wide open. In*

*the moonlight, she could see into his mouth! Oh, she thought, am I going to die tonight? Is this lion going to swallow me? But then, the woman reached for her honey calabash that was standing next to the fire. By now it had melted and was very hot. She poured it down the lion's open mouth and then thrust her digging stick deep into his throat. The lion groaned and fell down dead.*

*When the sun rose, she walked to her parents' place. She told them how she had killed a lion at her fire with her digging stick and honey. They would not believe her.*

*'Since when can a woman kill a lion?' they exclaimed. 'Take us to this lion that you say you killed.'*

*When the family came upon the dead lion, they called out in surprise. 'How can a woman kill a lion? You are indeed a strong woman.'*

*They slaughtered the lion and the woman cured its hide. Now she had the best blanket to sleep on. Everyone respected the woman.*

*In the meantime, her husband decided to look for her. When he arrived at her parents' place and heard the lion story, he said, 'Oh! My wife can kill a lion!'*

*The man went back home to fetch their children. He became a good husband and helped her by bringing home food to eat. (Appendix number 18.)*

Later on, when we started planting some mealies in the season, we struggled with the elephants. They sometimes came and ruined all our crops. But they also brought something valuable with them. Inside their dung were seeds they carried from up north. These grew into calabashes and became valuable water pots and containers for us.

We were taught how to respect Nature and look after our natural resources. This story tells about the respect the hunter of old had for trees:

*A hunter went out into the bush to look for a good tree. He wanted to cut branches from which to make arrows for his bow. He found a good tree and cut the top branches off.*

*Suddenly, he noticed that the tree's heart had started bleeding. The tree bled from its branches.*

*The tree grew feet and hands and they too started bleeding. The blood flowed on to the ground.*

*Then, the hunter's fingers grew into branches. He grew another arm, which looked like a wooden club.*

*Then the hunter started to fade. His soul left him. His spirit flew up.*

*Then another hunter appeared from this spirit.*

*The spirit hunter became the greatest of all hunters. He knew which arrows to cut from which tree for hunting. (Appendix number 23.)*

My father, Chinyengo Mahongo, was a great storyteller and had one for every place in the land. He was a peaceful man and never looked for a fight. He did not hunt big game; he preferred setting traps for smaller animals. He was known for his great honey gathering, and later on, for his farming skills. People came to swop meat for his honey. He enjoyed this story about the hunter and the aardvark.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kapilolo Mahongo first told this story to me while we were in Spain, in June 2008. He explained that the man listened to the aardvark instead of killing him and therefore had the good provenance of earning compassion in return for his kindness. Kapilolo said that "this is how stories and nature work together, hand in hand, with the one not being able to walk in a separate direction from the other."

In the opening episode, Aardvark's flagrant disregard for his own nocturnal nature and the laws of day and night, sets a series of episodes in action. Our supporting hero gets involved in a moral dispute and legal settlement in the human world. Aardvark has a long history in San lore regarding proclaiming or breaking laws of justice. This goes back to the early time, when Aardvark made a law and proclaimed that each animal had to marry within its own species and had to eat the food prescribed for its kind. This played a central role in the folklore, separating humans and animals from each other. 'The Anteater's Laws' is a story told in detail by the |xam teller, ||kabbo, to linguist Wilhelm Bleek, in 1875. ||kabbo explained that when Anteater and Lynx had cursed each other to become animals and the Lynx had turned into a real lynx, he becomes nothing else but a beast of prey. Now, in the

*One day long ago an aardvark and a hunter lived close to each other. One could say they were neighbours. The hunter's lover was a beautiful woman who lived in the same village. The only problem was she was married to the chief of the village. The hunter and the women always met each other in secret.*

*One fine day the hunter went into the bush to find a good animal to shoot for the pot. He was unlucky and at the end of a long and tiring day, he found a tree to lean against and rest his tired feet. All of a sudden, he noticed a big hole next to the tree. What? An aardvark was lying there! The hunter at once prepared to shoot it with his bow and arrow, but the aardvark spoke up saying,*

*'Please do not kill me!'*

*'But you are lying on top of the ground and it is broad daylight! It is your fault that I did not shoot a single thing today. It is because you are out in the day while you are an animal of the night and supposed to be underground. Look how you have made things go wrong in this place today! Che-Che!'*

*'Well,' replied the aardvark, 'the sun came up for me today. Tomorrow the sun will come up for you.'*

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new era, each animal had to marry within its own species; Lynx a Lynx, Springbok a Springbok, Jackal a Jackal. ||kabbo went on to the topic of another law that was proclaimed to regulate life in the present world, where animals are no longer people but animals, and where people should behave like people: Schmidt catalogued this story as number KH 904. The anteater/aardvark, a nocturnal animal that resembles a pig and lives underground in deeply burrowed tunnels, and is sometimes portrayed as a bad character, or an evil woman who lures and steals children from their parents, as another |Xam storyteller, |Han\kasso, told Wilhelm Bleek in 1875, in his elaborate story about Springbok mothers and their children. (Schmidt 2013a: 588)

*The hunter shook his head and thought about these words for a while. Confused, he decided to leave the aardvark and go away.*

*In the meantime, back in the village, the chief was suspicious of his beautiful wife. He could not understand why she always went into the bush by herself, when all the other women went gathering food together in a group. The chief decided to spy on her and told her that he was going to go away for three days. The beautiful wife wasted no time and told her lover of her husband going away. She invited him to her hut that very evening.*

*The chief had no intention of staying away for that long. He was just fooling his wife so that he could spy on her. When it was pitch dark that night he silently crept up to the door of the hut. He heard her voice and the hunter's voice whispering inside the hut.*

*The chief roared in anger and jealousy. 'I can hear you both in there! You are deceiving me.'*  
*The chief sealed the door tightly so that the couple could not get out. He woke all the villagers and called them over.*

*'Bring wood! Come! Let us dance! Tomorrow we will kill the man who stole my wife! We will kill the woman who has deceived me!'*

*Inside the hut the wife and the hunter were trembling in fear. What could they do now?*

*Meanwhile, the aardvark had heard this story. He started digging and digging. Just before sunrise the next morning, aardvark had reached their hut. He scratched away at the dirt and popped his head up into the centre of the hut.*

*'Do you remember yesterday? Do you remember me telling you that the sun came up for me and that tomorrow the sun would come up for you? I have a plan for you. Come! Come into the underground tunnel with me. The woman must close up the hole I have made with wood and as soon as we are both out at the other end of the tunnel, she must make a fire. Come now!'*

*The hunter followed the aardvark down the tunnel, crawled through and out at the other end.*

*He went into the bush and shot a fat duiker. He slung it over his shoulder and went home to the village just as the sun was rising. He threw the duiker over the branch of a tree, sat down next to it and took out his smoking things.*

*Puff, puff, puff, puff...*

*The hunter leaned back against the tree and casually smoked his pipe.*

*What a commotion he caused! The villagers and the chief were preparing to kill him and there he was – sitting next to a tree with a fresh duiker hanging on the tree! Oy-yoi-yoi!*

*The people were confused. They were getting worried. The man could not possibly be inside the hut and under the tree at the same time. 'Look there, he had shot a duiker!'*

*'Open the door!' they called to the chief. 'Let us see this man whom you say is inside with your wife!'*

*When the chief opened the door, he found the woman sitting there alone with no sign of any hunter.*

*The woman was crying. 'You have accused me falsely in front of the whole village! I will not be married to you any longer!'*

*The chief hung his head in shame. His marriage was destroyed and on top of that he had to pay the hunter and the woman a large sum of money to compensate them for his accusation.*

*(Appendix number 3.)*

There were big trees where we lived. The *kundzu* and the *chelle* make good trees for beehives. My father cut the thick bark away and dug a hollow inside the stem, a good nest for the bees. We'd even take a burning log and burn it a little on the inside to make the nest into good shape. Then he'd cut into the back of the tree and make a small door by placing a piece of wood that he cut out to fit snugly in the hole. Then we'd leave it like that and for sure, the bees would

come and there was our honey farm! We'd chase them away with fire smoke and open the trap door at the back of the nest! Other people knew it was our hive and they did not steal our honey.

The honey season was also the beer season. My father made the yeast from certain roots. He roasted it and stamped it fine and placed it in the calabash with a little *mahango* flour. Then he'd add the honey and warm water and just let it sit like that for a few days. At the beginning of the season the beer was not strong but as the season progressed and the beer sat, it became strong. The only time I ever saw my parents fight was when he had had too much of the strong beer. He wanted to hit my mother, but people stopped him. Then she took my brothers and sisters and left. I stayed with him because I loved him so much. But after a few days, when she had worked through the anger, she returned. The beer made other people fight with each other too, or draw their bows and arrows, but there were always neighbours to stop them from hurting each other. So alcohol has already created trouble between people since those early days.

I walked everywhere with my beloved father. It would be like this: he walked in front, my mother behind and all of us behind them. She would carry a skin bag, a baby on the hip, and the water. He would carry his bow and arrows and a stick over his shoulders with bundles on both sides. We were naked and they wore skin clothes. This is how we moved. In the midday heat he would tell us to sit in the shade under a tree. We talked to the animals, to the trees. The veld was quiet. We heard the birds sing, the small wind blow. Days came and went, without me ever hearing the sound of a car or a gun. In the evening we'd hear the lions roar. In the elephants' areas, we heard their trumpeting. These were the sounds I grew up with.

Our elders taught us how to read Nature's signs. For instance, if we saw a flock of large birds circling in the sky, sit down on a tree and fly up again, we walked there. We knew that it was

a lion that had killed an animal. The birds could not yet settle down on the prey because the lion was not finished. Then the group of adults would spread out and talk to the lion in loud voices. 'We see the food is good; the meat is strong. Finish up now and give us some, the rest is for us.' When he started swinging his tail we knew he had had enough and it was time to chase him away. But we were careful, just in case he came back.

My father explained Nature to us, he told us how it worked and what to do and what not to do. Stories were our father's way of teaching and our way of learning. He taught me the names of every tree, he showed me how to identify bush medicines, where to find the various seasonal fruits, and bulbs and roots under the ground.

There was a lesson at hand wherever we walked, a story for everything. If he set a trap for a small animal, he would show me how. If I became tired from walking in the veld, he would pick me up and carry me. I watched his every move and learnt through observation. As soon as he noticed that I became competent in something, like setting a string trap for birds, he'd let me do it by myself.

One morning, when I was about ten years old, we woke up and went to play as usual while our parents went walking in the veld to collect food. Our grandparents and aunt stayed to look after us. Suddenly, it was dark! We ran back to the huts. We were so afraid. It only became light again at about lunchtime.

The older people danced and scattered ochre powder in the fire. The healers spoke to the old people in the heavens, asking them to speak to God. Perhaps God was angry with the people

and spoke to us in this way, we thought. It was such a powerful experience that we all remember it until this day. Of course, today we know it was a rare eclipse of the sun.

My father did what he always did. He gathered us around the *kiaat* (wild teak) stump, like today's altar. This was a large round stump cut from the tree. It has red blood, red sap, this tree. When you moved you planted a new one in your enclosure. Some of these took root and then when people passed by the area years later, they would say, 'Hey, look, there are our trees!' You will see them all around Angola today.

Anyway, he gathered us around him. Then he would put the finely stamped white mud powder from the Lusinga River on his palm and blow it to the west so that the trouble could go to sleep with the sun. Then he'd put a stripe of the white powder paint between our eyes. My mother painted his face because there were no mirrors in those days. And then he'd pray. We always did the same ritual again the following morning.

My father prayed to God then as I pray to God now. We even call God the same name, G||aoan, today. But his understanding of God was not one that came from the letters of the alphabet. No, there was no Bible and no one could read. The old people just knew God, they saw God's work in the veld and heard God's voice through Nature's silence. God's signs were everywhere.

The same God that carried me through my parents and whom I grew up with, received food from, and love, is the same God as today who carries me through unhappiness, stands by me, consoles me, calms me, comforts me. The same God. In the Bible, it says that each one is judged according to his knowledge. That was our knowledge. When we spoke to the ancestors, it was to ask them to speak to God on our behalf.

We gathered and prayed around our *kiaat* altars when we had not had enough food for a while. My father would gather us around after supper and he would pray and ask why. He prayed for healing when we were sick. He knew that we could do nothing without God.

This is how he taught us. Stories were part of the education my father shared with me, alongside the lessons of how to sip water from tree hollows with reed straws, how to read the signs in Nature for underground water and then dig for it. He taught me how to survive in Nature, not only with food, but in spirit as well. At that time, people led a deeply spiritual life. To us God was a reality.

It was my father's spiritual survival skills, however, that really stood by me throughout my life. Of course, I did not know it then, but by the time I was in my thirties, we would eat from tins and survive on army food. My beloved bush, where I was free and where every tree had something to offer us, changed for me. Behind every bush there could now be an enemy hiding, with a gun in his hands, ready to shoot me, or someone I love.

The veld and its resources were our home, our food source, our medicines, our everything. Every area was different and people adapted to the local resources. Even the different !xun dialects were particular to a particular area. As a child, I came to know a great variety of foods. My favourite root was called *matundu*. It was red inside, like sweet potato and its roots were a good medicine. The *mangelik* was a tall bush with red fruits, small sweet pips inside that you could chew. *Thawa* looked like grapes and grew close to water on a small, low-growing bush. There was *nduli* in the autumn, much like oranges. We made juice from these, squeezed them and added a little water.

During the rainy season, we harvested a variety of wild mushrooms. They were not poisonous, but certain kinds made you vomit if you did not cook them. Others could be eaten raw from the ground. Some were delicious when grilled on the fire. Others were dried and eaten later.

Later on, when we acquired salt by swapping honey or meat with the black Angolans, we learnt to wrap certain sour leaves, like the *tsola*, *jamabara* and *hoo-hoo* around the salt and eat it on the hunt. It gave you so much energy that you could go on for hours.

We also harvested caterpillars (we called them *ghum*) from trees at the beginning of the rainy season. We knew that certain trees, the *ndzamba*, *kadzendze* and *dkamba*, had a lot of caterpillars and others took a rest and gave caterpillars the following year. This was a good source of nutrition at that particular time of year. Like this, every month had its own food to give us.

I will now tell you a story about a spoilt child who complained when his parents did not return from the veld with enough food to eat:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This story, as told by Kapilolo Mahongo, is not in Sigrid Schmidt's latest revision of her catalogue. We suggest assigning it number KH 1811, "Disobedient boy is taken by Hyena from his parent's camp. He manages to climb a tree and is rescued."

My first encounter with this story was a fragment told to me by Khwedam speaker, Rena Cambimbe, a young broadcaster at the XKFM community radio station on Platfontein farm, in 2000. She said it was one of the many tales her elders still tell in her family.

This story talks about the tragic consequences of disrespecting the parents, who could not find enough food for the day. The boy in the story suffers his impudence, as is often the case with boy culprits in tales. His song provokes his sisters' attention; they save him from death and take him home. The opposite gender scenario happens in many of these boy/girl hero/heroine stories, always culminating in that satisfying moment when a sister or brother brings the other home. Coming home to the community is an important ending to

*There was once a boy who waited for his father to return home from a hunting trip. He was hungry and when his mother offered him some roots, he refused, saying, 'I don't want that little bit of food. I want meat.'*

*When his father came home that night, he told his family that he had not found any meat for the family to eat. The boy cried and cried. His parents went to sleep, but the boy sat next to the fire, tired, cross, stubborn and hungry. Why did you not bring me any food, he thought, while his worn-out father was trying to sleep.*

*A hyena came along in the darkness of the night. He put his head close to the fire and offered it to the boy to play with.*

*The boy shouted, 'Mother and Father, come and look, here is food for us to eat! Come and shoot it!'*

*His sleepy mother and father said, 'Oh, eat it then if that is what you are waiting for at that fire!'*

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numerous San and other African stories, unlike many European tales where a good ending could be the hero and heroine coming together in love.

This story is related to the tragic |xam tale where a hyena carries an old woman away. Lucy Lloyd summarised the reason for this: "The old woman, who was unable to walk, lay in an old, deserted hut. Before her sons left her, they had closed the circle [sides] of the hut, as well as the door opening, with sticks from the other huts, leaving the top of the hut open, so that she should feel the sun's warmth. They had lit a fire for her, and had fetched more dry wood. They were obliged to leave her behind, as they were all starving, and she was too weak to go with them to seek food at some other place (Bleek/Lloyd 1911: 228-229).

We see that this tale type addresses several of the terrible human dilemmas that traditional San societies faced during their lives in the bush and is, as such, an important document that testifies to the social history of hunter-gatherer life styles. *The Boy and Hyena* is still being told in different versions and communities throughout the southern African region - in different San languages (Schmidt 2011:103; Winberg 2009).

*The boy grabbed the hyena's head, but the cunning hyena flung the boy across his shoulder and ran away with him.*

*The hyena trotted to his cave. He wanted to take the boy inside to his cubs, so that they could play with his prey. On the way, the boy saw a tree with large roots protruding from the ground.*

*The clever little boy grabbed hold of the sturdy roots with his hands and held on very tight.*

*The hyena pulled and pulled, but no matter how hard he tugged, he could not pull the boy away from the strong tree roots.*

*The hyena decided to fetch his cubs from the cave and bring them to the boy. While the hyena was away, the boy ran away. He climbed into a tall tree at the foot of a hill and tried to hide in its branches.*

*The hyena tracked the boy's footsteps to the base of this tree where it stopped. The hyena looked up and saw the boy in the tree. He tried to climb up, but without any success. The sun later set and the hyena went hunting.*

*The boy stayed up in the tree all night and when the sun came up, he started singing a song. Meanwhile, the boy's sisters passed close to this tree on their way to gather nuts and fruits in the veld.*

*His sisters asked, 'What bird is this that sings like a human being?' They said, 'There is no such bird that sings in this way!'*

*Quie-quie,*

*Look up here,*

*I am in danger.*

*Quie-quie,*

*Look up here.*

*One sister said, 'Come, let us go and find this strange singing bird.'*

*When they found the tree from where the singing came, they saw their brother up in the tree.*

*They saw the hyena approach and once again try to climb up to grab the boy.*

*The girls chased the hyena away and freed their brother. They carried him home.*

*The boy never stayed up late at night next to the fire again. He understood that people do not play with food. He never cried again when his father did not bring home meat to eat. He understood that men could not find an animal to shoot every day and that danger lurked in the veld, and at night. (Appendix number 4.)*

My father took great care to teach us how to respect Nature and its resources so that there could be enough for all. Listen carefully to this story:

*Pensa was the best hunter in the whole Kalahari Desert. He brought home fat animals and fed his family well.*

*Pensa wished he could catch the Pam-Pam bird. This bird's tail feathers were perfect for his arrows. The problem was, he could never manage to trap or shoot a Pam-Pam. Pensa's arrows would fly through the air just like a bird – if only he could catch Pam-Pam and pull out his tail feathers.*

*Pensa went to the wise man, their healer. He asked for help. 'Please tell me how to catch a Pam-Pam bird! I need his feathers for my arrows. What must I do to catch him?'*

*The wise healer replied, 'Go and make a fire. When all the insects run away from your fire, you must catch the smallest of them. Make a trap and place this little insect inside your trap.*

*It will tempt the Pam-Pam bird.'*

*Pensa did not know that the healer and the Pam-Pam bird were friends. The Pam-Pam often visited the healer. They exchanged stories.*

*'I warn you,' said the healer when the Pam-Pam bird visited him, 'I have told the hunter how to catch you. When you see a fire in the veld, you must fly far away. I want to see which one of you will win.'*

*In the meantime, Pensa started his hunt for the Pam-Pam bird. He sat in the veld and rubbed and rubbed his fire sticks. When the smoke appeared, he blew into the fine grass around his fire sticks, until the little flame appeared and became a fire. The insects flew away from the heat and smoke, but Pensa managed to catch a young grasshopper. He put it into his trap.*

*The Pam-Pam bird could not resist the juicy young grasshopper in Pensa's trap. He decided to fly down and grab it quickly with his sharp beak.*

*Pensa heard Pam-Pam cry, 'Pam-Pam, Pam-Pam, Pam-Pam.' Pensa ran to his trap. The bird was trapped!*

*Pam-Pam begged Pensa to set him free. 'Oh no,' said Pensa, 'I have wanted to catch you for a very long time. Today you are mine! Your feathers will make my arrow fly well through the air, just like you.'*

*Pam-Pam screeched, 'If you kill me you will have no more feathers for your arrow when these are worn out, because I will be dead. Set me free and I promise to give you new feathers with each full moon.'*

*Pensa thought about Pam-Pam's words. Yes, he decided, it is true what Pam-Pam says, 'If I kill him now he will not grow any more feathers.' Pensa agreed to the bargain. But first he pulled out a few beautiful feathers from the bird's tail.*

*Pam-Pam flew straight to the healer's place and told him what had happened.*

*'Che-che,' chuckled the wise old healer, 'I see you both won this round. Pensa got his feathers and you, your freedom. Now you are both well.'*

*Pensa went home and made new arrows. When the people saw his new arrows, they exclaimed, 'Oo-hoo, look at this hunter! He carries the Pam-Pam bird's feathers in his arrows!' That*

*night, the healer led the people in a fire dance to celebrate the hunter's success and the Pam-Pam bird's freedom. (Appendix number 1.)*

Perhaps the happiest times of my childhood were when the men occasionally arrived with an eland. This was the most delicious meat and its skin was soft. We celebrated and danced on these occasions. We mostly ate fruit, vegetables and honey, so when a big game animal was found we were happy and had meat, fat and skin for a long time. The eland's fat is nutritious and also medicinal. When melted and hot, it can cure a raw wound. Say there were twenty people around, then each one would get a piece of fat with his meat, neatly divided up. As a young man, you could shoot a duiker, a gemsbok, a sable antelope, a wildebeest, but when you shot an eland! Well, then you were a true man. I will tell you a good eland story just now.

Our clothes and bags were made from their skins. I only started wearing Western clothing when I was about twelve or so. That was the time when we started swopping things with other people more frequently than before. I tasted meat with salt then for the first time too. I still wonder how we ever ate meat without salt.

When my voice broke my father started to take me on hunting trips with him. For the women, there were hut rituals with their first menstruation, but for us boys, becoming a man was about providing food. Once, I remember, my father left me alone in the veld and I had to find my way home. Again, there were stories to go with the change from childhood to adulthood, like this one about the eland man: <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sigrid Schmidt has assigned this tale number KH \*1854 in her catalogue. I first heard this story from the !Xun painter, Manuel Massaka, in 1998. Massaka had learnt it from his father and grandfather in Angola, where he grew up next to the Longo River.

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*The Eland Man* is the tale of a young hunter's remorse at killing the beautiful eland. *The Eland Man* is a symbolic story that talks about the act of transformation, hunting, sharing and initiation into manhood.

Chenga lies down to rest after shooting the antelope and waits for the poison to take effect. This is partly because he could do no more at this point and had to wait, but it also expresses the traditional San hunter's close and sympathetic identification with his prey. A hunter would not eat certain foods at that moment in a hunt. For example, eating springbok meat at that point might cause the animal to jump up and sprint away like a fleet of springbok.

Scholars such as Lewis-Williams and Biesele whose rock art studies have been central to our understanding and knowledge of this southern African San heritage, explains that at one time, the !Xam observed a complex set of rules when hunting eland; "... shooting eland with a bow and arrow entailed a very close self-identification between hunter and prey while the poison was taking effect, and killing the animal ... created with special care by the deity, |kaggen ... the hunter suffered temporary castigation." (Vinnicombe 1972:198).

The transformation of the eland into a man conjures up images of the therianthropes, men with animal heads, that the San artists painted on numerous rock faces in the landscape. This concept of transformation runs throughout San thought and manifests itself in all aspects of the San's expressive and dramatic art. During the healing trance dance ritual for example, the healer 'becomes' the eland, the giraffe, the gemsbok. People derived power from animals and made them living metaphors that became part of the community's cognitive technology. Almost every folk tale is based, in some way or another, upon the power of animals. Anthropologist Megan Biesele, working with Levi-Strauss' idea, describes this eloquently when she says that animals are "goods to think with".

"Animals are used as metaphoric operators to mediate away from undesirable states towards desired ones of well-being, safety and hunting and gathering success ... animals are a special kind of 'goods to think with'." (Biesele 1993: 93)

What happens next in *The Eland Man* illustrates the high social value placed on sharing goods in the traditional context where this story comes from. Chenga's friend, Ngu, did not share in the hunt, nor did he share Chenga's emotional and psychological distress after the kill, and he turned away from him in his moment of need. He therefore could not share the meat at the end of the story when the smells of the roasting eland attract him to Chenga's fire.

Instead, his family came to support him and participate in the ritual of slaughtering, and of distributing of the meat. This episode in the story symbolises the important role that sharing meat played in social relationships in traditional hunter-gatherer groups. Chenga's father 'reclaims' his son and his hunting abilities, while the family praises him. A dance ritual follows the kill and the family celebrates Chenga's coming of age. He hunted and killed the valued eland, he became a man and could now take a wife and provide for a family. In this sense, the story signifies a rite of passage and becomes an oral ritual of becoming.

Although the transformation of people into animals is a common theme in San stories, this story is the only record we have where an antelope turns into a man, rather than the other way around (Schmidt 2013 c).

*This story is about two friends, Chenga and Ngu. They understood each other, played together, hunted together and shared their food. Chenga left his own family and went to stay with Ngu's family.*

*Early one morning while Ngu was sleeping Chenga left to hunt in the veld. After searching for some time, the young hunter found the spoor of an antelope on the ground. It belonged to an eland, the most beautiful of all antelope. Quietly, he followed the eland's spoor. Careful not to step on any dry, noisy grass, he walked, crawled and stalked all day long until he finally found the eland. It was grazing on a hill.*

*Chenga set his arrow in the bow and pulled until the string was tight and ready. He aimed at the eland's heart. Chenga released the poison arrow and it flew through the air. Ching! The arrow hit the eland's heart. Chenga's heart was afraid because he had shot the beautiful eland. He lay down quietly in the veld, resting and waiting for the poison arrow to do its work. The sky and the air around Chenga rippled from the midday heat while the hunter waited for the eland to die.*

*Suddenly the eland turned into a person! Chenga's heart was now even more afraid, for he did not mean to kill a person. What would the people say if they found that he had killed a human being?*

*Chenga walked to his friend Ngu, to tell him what had happened. When he found his friend and told him the news, he said, 'I am in big trouble. I hunted an eland and after I shot it, it became a person. Please, you must help me now so that I can bury it before the people see what I have done.'*

*Ngu said, 'Oh no! You are not my family. I cannot make your problems my problem!'*

*With a sore heart the young hunter returned to his own people. Chenga told them his story.*

*Without saying much, his father told him, 'Come, let us go and have a look.'*

*When the family got to the hunting ground where Chenga had shot the eland, they did not find a dead person there. The father said, 'Did you lie to me?'*

*'No Father,' said the boy, 'I told you about my hunt and the eland man exactly as I saw it.'*

*His mother said, 'Look, you did not kill a person. This is meat, it is an animal and we must eat it because we are hungry. We need its skin to make clothes. That is why you shot the eland.'*

*From now on you must understand that people are people and animals are animals.'*

*The family carried the eland back home. They made a fire and roasted the meat hunted by the young hunter. While the smell of roasting meat was in the wind, the boy's friend, Ngu, came to ask for a piece of the meat. The boy said, 'Do you remember when you told me that my problems are not your problem? Now we can never be friends again. You must go to your family and I will stay with mine.'*

*Chenga's father said to him, 'Now you have learnt a great lesson. You cannot leave your own people and adopt another. When you are in serious trouble, it is your own people who will help you and not your friends.'*

*Chenga's family made more fire. His father divided the meat up, gave everyone a piece of eland fat and they celebrated the food that the hunter had brought home. They danced all night.*

*Chenga was now a man. He was now able to support a family and could take a wife. (Appendix number 2.)*

It was about this time I saw my first white person. He was riding on a black man's shoulders. The black man was singing and the white one was having a good ride! There were other black men behind them, carrying boxes. I remember asking my mother what that was and she told me it was a white man!

This was also the time of the road. In fact, I can say that this road marked the end of an era for me. It was the beginning of the Western way of life. My father and small groups of other !xun took turns to go and work to make this road through the bush. The Portuguese sent the black Angolan people to all the little !xun villages and they took one or two men from each village. The payment was salt, food, clothes and tobacco.

Later on, this road also became the slave hunters' road. It was a road of fear. We were hunted and caught. Many of our people were shipped off to Portugal. Others were kept as slaves inside Angola, or went somewhere else. I still want to go to Portugal one day to see if any of the people there look like us.

Our parents hid us away when they saw people come. One day we needed to cross that road. My parents carried the little ones on their backs. My father had a tuft of grass and we swept-swept our own footprints away so that no one could find our tracks. After crossing the road, we hid in the bush because a group of Portuguese and Ovambo saw our swept tracks and stopped their truck. They were shouting and pointing in our direction. A few of the Ovambo got off the truck and ran after us. But they did not find us. We hid and ran, hid and ran – like little duikers. Our smaller bodies and knowledge of the bush were such that we could stay hidden from them.

We were taken as slaves by other African people long before the Europeans arrived in Angola. You can imagine someone two or three times your size standing in front of you, like a giant. How do you resist? We had no guns at that time. One day – I was about eight or ten – we visited our family. They were devastated because my young cousin had been taken as a slave by

Portuguese and African men. The old people talked for days about how they could get him back. After this, we ran away whenever we heard noises in the bush.

That old story told by the grandparents of the !xun people, the *gadolo* seed, tells of our slavery. It also shows how the merging of cultures and food developed and how we interacted with other people. The food plant in the story, the green *gadolo*, is still one of our favourite foods and stomach medicines today. When we could carry almost nothing with us from the Caprivi to South Africa after the war but the bundles on our backs, the *gadolo* seeds were some of our most treasured possessions.

By this time there was more and more talk of war and we were told by the Portuguese to move closer to the town, because of the war in the bush. It became harder and harder to find food as our movements were restricted to the town surroundings. Our camp was about ten kilometres from town.

During 1965 I went to visit my aunt Malassa in the small town of Kuchivinda near the Kalanda River. Her husband had been caught by a lion and she asked my parents if I could help her for a while. Here I went to church for the first time. It was a Catholic church called the Ubuntu Congregation. I enjoyed the singing and entertaining stories. When I went home I told my family the stories about Jesus and his life. I told them that in a church the people prayed to Jesus and his father, God. It was a good story. They understood Jesus to be an ancestor. But life went on and I forgot about the story of Jesus.

It was during one of those visits home that my life changed forever. I went with my father to harvest honey from one of our trees. He climbed high up. All of a sudden, my agile father came

tumbling down and fell, hitting the ground hard. He was in trouble. We rushed to find help, but it was of no use. My father was paralysed from the hips down. My peaceful, resourceful father who provided for us in everything was suddenly helpless. I was the oldest. I was fifteen years old and overnight became the breadwinner. It was now up to me to support my family. I had become a man.

It was 1967 and I applied for work in the new coffee plantations up north. I joined the labourers' team along with several members of our extended family and !xun community members near the town of Lembu in northern Angola. We looked forward to becoming a family with a salary, with earnings made up of a little bit of money, food and clothes.

When we arrived at the coffee plantation the Portuguese man in charge said, 'No, your name is no good, I will call you Feleciano Mario.' And that was that.

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This then concludes Mahongo's narrative about his childhood in the Angolan bush and his entry into formal employment with the Portuguese owners of the coffee plantations.

## Chapter five

### Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative of his and his community's involvement in the war in Angola and Namibia

The 19<sup>th</sup> century storytellers, ||kabbo and his family, were hunter-gatherers who lived in the arid Karoo region some 500 km north-east of Cape Town during the mid-nineteenth-century. Like other |xam men, ||kabbo had been arrested, sent to Cape Town and sentenced to work on the Breakwater. Their offences ranged from theft of domestic stock, to so-called acts of violence against the colonial farmers who challenged ownership of the land and water sources where ||kabbo and his people had lived for generations. The sentence was not only based on inaccurate reports of events, but also symbolic of the brutal alienation of the |xam men from their land, families and all that it meant to them (Anthing ).

In 1871, Wilhelm Bleek recorded the following narrative from the captured ||kabbo, who spoke about the loss of stories in the face of his exile from his home, Bitterpits, explaining to Bleek that he needed to return home because he missed hearing the stories that floated across the landscape.

*Thou knowest that I sit waiting for the moon to turn back for me that I may return to my place. That I may listen to all my people's stories, when I visit them; that I may listen to their ( ) stories, that which they tell; they listen to the Flat Bushmen's stories from the other side of the place. They are those which they thus tell...that I may ( ) sitting, listen to the stories which yonder come (?), which are stories which come from a distance (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 299-317).*

Lucy Lloyd made a footnote to this transcription, noting that ||kabbo explained that a story is “like the wind, it comes from a far-off quarter, and we feel it.”

||kabbo’s words resonate poignantly with Kapilolo Mahongo’s more than a century later. It lifts themes of continuity between the two men’s worlds, despite the changes that took place during this passage of time. In Kapilolo Mahongo’s words:

*The stories went silent during the war. When you leave your place, you leave your stories. That is why people forget them. How do you remember a story about a tree if you have not seen it for so many years? We must remember what those trees taught us. Otherwise we go around like restless ghosts (Mahongo, 1999. Conversation. 17 February.).*

Both men speak of the loss of stories as a result of war and dispossession, stories that were imbedded in the landscapes where they lived and existed because of those specific environments, the bush, medicinal and edible plants they could name, animals they encountered and studied, the weather they observed, water sources they found and respected, the atmosphere of dawn and dusk, the night sky and the fires around which they told stories and protected themselves from the dangers of night.

Kapilolo Mahongo’s narrative recalls the period of his life between 1968 and 1990, that was scarred by wars in Angola and Namibia:

## The War

It was 1968 and the war was already in full swing, but I took another year's contract on the Portuguese coffee plantation. I did not want to fight.

A devastating experience changed my mind when more than 380 of our !xun people were brutally murdered near the small town of Mavinga by soldiers of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). We did not know why. No one lived to tell the tale. We thought that the !xun may have refused to join their army and that they were afraid our people would tell the Portuguese how to find them, given our knowledge of the bush. Our hearts were sore and bitter. We wanted revenge for our people. Our lifelong slavery and humiliation at the hands of too many black Angolans had reached boiling point. They took our children as slaves and now there was this mass murder of our people. They had become our enemy.<sup>9</sup>

The Portuguese seized the moment. They told us that they would protect us. They said, let's stand together against them. It was only later that we realised that the Portuguese were simply using us in their colonial war to keep Angola. We were so ignorant. They really could not take care of our safety. To them we were useful soldiers, good at reading the veld and tracking. After all, this was entirely a bush war and who was better at reading the bush than us? They saw the longing in our hearts to be powerful against the black Angolans. We did not know the outside world and history like the black and white people did, we had just come out of the bush. We did not read or write. Illiterate as we were, we joined the Portuguese army. They were now our employers. We were the *Flechas* – the Portuguese word for arrows.

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<sup>9</sup> By the late 1960s the !xun men were working as trackers for the Portuguese military and called *Flechas* – Portuguese for arrows.

It was no longer safe in the veld. Before the war we were not afraid of the bush, but did take care when gathering food. When the war story started it became more and more dangerous. You could still stand up against the lions, make fire, chase them or run away. But now there was fear. This bush that always gave you food, that tree where you searched for shelter in its shade, now had an enemy hiding in it, waiting to kill you. Perhaps up in the tall branches or on the ground or behind it. This was one big reason why we had to seek another shade, another form of shelter. The military became our shade and shelter. I joined the Portuguese army in August 1969 at Serpa Pinto and became a company commander.

#### Military shade and shelter

During our training period, we learnt military discipline and a range of skills – how to use a gun, to shoot, how to negotiate with different people, how to talk with visitors. A few of us even learnt to drive. I travelled widely as part of our military explorations and even saw Namibia. We, the !xun, started understanding more of the world around us, beyond the distance that our feet could travel. For the first time in our history the !xun were introduced to Western ways, to war, to reading and writing, to different kinds of food. I was in my twenties. To me, this was a new form of power and at first it made me feel strong.

My childhood fear of black people disappeared. I was now armed. I felt that I could stand up against them and defend my people and myself. They were not going to kill us or take our children away from us again. As a corporal, I even learnt to arrest them when ordered to do so by my army superiors. There was no way any one of them could threaten to take one of our children away. With a gun we could hurt them. This is how we felt at the time.

We were now called the 'Fletchas' we were a special unit of 'Bushman' soldiers. In the military camp, there was security. There were guards. At first, I trusted that my people were safe where I left them in the camps to go and fight or track. We men also felt safer because it was not so easy to be attacked when you were armed and in a group. Little did we know the abuse that our families would still suffer in our absence.

We gained a new kind of security and we lost our freedom. We had no more privacy, no free choices. You simply had to follow their orders. I did not know that politics had more power than human beings. At first, we thought we were fighting for freedom in our land, as we were children of Angola, but we were confused – the war and the enemy were not as simple as that. If you did not give your co-operation to the military you would get into very serious trouble. We suffered a new kind of slavery. It was the start of a serious breakdown of our old way of life.

One great thing happened to me during this time: I met Muvanga Anna Maria in 1973. She was beautiful and it was high time I took a wife. It was easy to love her and we were married in a ceremony near Balombo. I knew that she would follow me to the ends of the Earth. But in those years, I had no idea what loneliness my life and leadership of our people would cause her.

### [Longing for our spiritual life](#)

I became friends with a black Christian, an Angolan man who was the driver of one of the army trucks. I often went with him on trips and always listened to his musical voice. He sang hymns and I wished I could sing like him. He had a divine voice. The sound of it spoke to me and moved me deeply. I was drawn to the songs, to the hymns of Christianity. This is how God spoke to me, through this man's beautiful voice, this man whose people we had come to treat

as our enemy. The story about Jesus's life touched me deeply and I wanted to know more about this story.

We had developed a deep longing for our spiritual life. Gone were our trees, our talking to Nature, our deep connection with Nature's sacred life. The lives of our family were broken up by the war and our natural lifestyle fell apart.

I am not talking positively of my involvement in the war, but I think my calling was to become my people's leader in this war so that I could be their spiritual guide through the horrors. This is how I see it. We are just people living in this difficult world with God's path in front of us. Every step is guided – when we decide to see it that way. There was only one way to make sense of this difficult, painful life of war, this life that seemed so meaningless. I vowed to read to those of my people who could not read, so that they could also come into the new world. I took the few skills I had as a reader and writer and taught my children the same. I was desperate to lead them out of the dangerous bush and into a world where they could learn to find dignity in relation to other human beings. I did not want them to be slaves.

Although we changed our ancient religion to fit into the new world around us, it was still easy to combine our traditional spirituality with Christianity at this stage. We did not feel as if we were exchanging the one for the other. It was like growing into the new world, changing from being bush people to modern people. We still believed in the same God. Even God's name, G||aoan, was the same as the one always used before in our language.

One war ends and another begins

The tables turned unexpectedly late in 1974. It was August to be exact. There was a coup in Portugal and the Portuguese army was recalled from Angola. It was chaos, thousands were fleeing, to South Africa, Namibia, Zaire, Zambia. Many left for Portugal. The Portuguese military left us to face our enemy, the black Angolans, without their protection, ammunition and money.

We were full of fear. We looked around us. What now? The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) told this story: First they were going to fight with the big lions, they said, and then later, they would see to the small lions. We were supposed to be the small lions and the Portuguese were the big ones. In other words, they did not even worry about us because they knew we had no ammunition or power against them. Besides, we were half their physical size, so they were simply first going to chase the big lions, the Portuguese, from the country and then squash us. Fear makes people aggressive.

We were trapped. It was no longer possible for us to go back to survival in the bush. We had to be part of something or we'd be killed. We could not join all three armies. We were faced with a choice. Join one and defend yourself, or die in the bush. The question was: 'Which one?'

The South African Defence Force

During our time with the Portuguese military, we made contact with the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the 1970s. We met a few of the officials when they visited the Portuguese to

establish co-operative relationships between the two armies. All the choppers, the helicopters and other army equipment came from South Africa.

I was already a Captain in the Portuguese army and a leader of my people, so in this capacity the SADF came to me and said, 'How do you feel about joining us on the Namibian border?' They knew about our knowledge of the veld and tracking skills.

They were very friendly and polite to us and promised us security. They said, 'You help us, we help you.' But we had no business going to Namibia to defend South Africa. We wanted to stay in our country.

In the meantime, The National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) came to us and offered us their protection in return for our skills. They did not wish to have us as part of their enemy, The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). They recognised that we were also Angolans, they said. I mobilised my people, about 2 500 of us !xun.

We joined the FNLA in September 1974. They were fighting up further north near Zambia and Zaire and we hadn't had much to do with them prior to this. We did not really know them, so it seemed the best choice out of the three black armies, FNLA, MPLA and UNITA (Union for the Total Independence of Angola). We really did not know what the various groups stood for at the time. Our choices centred on the survival of our people.

Now there was a civil war in the bush, between the Angolan people. Earlier the FNLA, MPLA and UNITA had a common enemy in the Portuguese, now they were fighting against each other for power. Blood flowed. It was brutal. No one's hands were clean. We were treated worse than

insects, than ants, humiliated and assaulted when we complained. We became extremely unhappy. The war made no sense to us. We did not care about power in government. We did not come from a background of being ruled by kings or chiefs.

When war broke out in Luanda in 1975, I was called to go and work there with a battalion. Luanda was chaos. In the meantime, my people had been told that I had died fighting in Luanda. Having lost their leader, their only thoughts were to flee. Their fear and humiliation, the fact that they were always treated as lesser beings and told what to do, got the better of them. Without me, they felt they would have no negotiating power. They gathered their few weapons and began the long walk to Namibia. They planned to join the SADF in the Caprivi army camps. They knew that the SADF had earlier made us an offer. There were about 1600 !xun people who started negotiating the dangerous bush to travel thousands of kilometres down to the south.

#### Fleeing from Angola

Upon my return, I found my people gone. I had to make quick decisions. They would kill me if I stayed, that I knew. I stole a Landrover and started a frantic search for my wife. Was she still alive? Would I find her and my children? Anna was six months pregnant. She would never survive the journey on her own.

I found my family and we drove until the Landrover's diesel ran out about 50 km from the border and we continued on foot to Nkurenkuru. We travelled far away from any known tracks, hid whenever we sensed danger or heard shooting. Our night fires were small, but of course we had to make fire to protect us from lions. We continued as soon as the morning star was in the sky. We prayed every night; we remembered our forefathers and we prayed to God to

protect us from death, to give us the opportunity to live for more years. We wanted to survive this bush war.

#### Camp Caprivi in Namibia

Finally, after weeks of walking, we arrived at the Namibian border, at the Nkurenkuru gate. We were beside ourselves with relief to find many of our people already there. The rest of them arrived within a few days. We did not lose one single person on the way. It was June 1975.

My pregnant wife was weak and we were concerned about her and the baby's safety. But the army considered war more important than family, so I had to leave her alone for days and sometimes weeks on end. There were many times when we were given only fifteen minutes to get ready to go into the bush, to go to keep The South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) away at the Luiana River, or Sifuma or Singalamwe or Bambwata. We'd stay away without contact with our families for two to six weeks at a time.

Anna then gave birth to Vasco Mahongo, a sick baby who survived by grace alone. When he was barely a year old, she and my cousin made a 120-kilometre journey by foot to take the baby to hospital in Rundu in the hope of finding a cure.

Our traditional health system had pretty much fallen apart by this time. The healers were at war and we were thousands of kilometres away from our known medicinal plants. My wife's suffering was a constant pain in my heart.

We insisted that the army help us to fetch some of our people up north at Revungu Merikine and a few other places. They did not want to help us at first, but after much arguing they agreed. Upon our return, we enlarged the clearing in the bush and pitched more tents.

There were Portuguese, German, Afrikaans, !xun and other dialects spoken at the camp. They called this confusion the Tower of Babel. Soon everyone was learning Afrikaans and a language called Fanagalo. The army's language teachers, who were especially flown into Caprivi, taught us and our children to speak Afrikaans.

#### Bushmen or Bossies

They'd called us their 'Bossies' (small bushes). We told them that we were !xun people and that bushes grew in the ground. They did not care. We soon discovered that they were like jackals hiding in soft sheepskins. This is why, up to this day, we do not like that word 'Bushman'.

The SADF treated us extremely harshly from the start. Gone was the friendliness with which they recruited us. What happened inside our tents was everybody's business. They would come and do inspections all the time, without any warning. There were times when the SADF men used our women. Powerless to defend them, we were threatened and beaten. We had completely lost our privacy and independence. Our ancient rituals were forbidden. I was always arguing with the commander, with complaint after complaint.

There were so many times when I felt alone and worried about the future. What would happen tonight? Would we live, would we be attacked? Out there in the bush, not knowing if my wife

and children were happy or sad. I was far away from them with no communication, no certainty about their safety, for weeks on end. I found comfort in Bible stories – the Bible was the first book I ever owned. I read about how God led His people through the desert, because He knew they were His children and without Him they could not go on. I desperately wanted to survive this war in my spiritual life as well as my physical life because I knew that a person has these two lives that walk hand in hand.

During the following two years I started a Bible study group in my wooden hut, my *kimbo*. We put up a makeshift timber school, a church, a shop and a liquor store. I started spending most of my time teaching at the school and ministering to my people's spiritual needs.

Our lives became utterly militarised and we were not allowed outside the camp's fence. Our children grew up like this, as if in a prison – the bush education my father passed on to me, as his father had passed on to him, came to an abrupt end. Every now and then when we were deployed in a familiar area in Angola, we'd find some bush food or a little honey and bring it home to say to our kids – here, look, this is what we ate. Fenced in, our kids became children of war as a whole new generation grew up in this camp.

We were losing people in the fighting. Our brothers were dying in ambushes, through landmines or direct confrontations. Many of our brothers died when trucks overturned on the treacherous roads. Several were killed by wild animals. Known as 31 Battalion, we became the army's 'Bushmen soldiers'. We were treated as the lowest of the low, yet, when they received visitors, they bragged about us, with what they were doing for us and they put us on show. But in truth we were treated like slaves and animals.

I came upon the story in the Bible where Jesus was abused and beaten like an animal by those who wanted to ridicule his beliefs. I began to understand that the Bible was full of ancient stories of abused people and of how they kept their faith in the face of humiliation. I realised that nothing will ever go smoothly in life, that we have to accept that people will come on to our path with different views, understanding or education, people who will try to abuse us in whatever way they could so that they could feel powerful. The challenge was how to respond to this, how to survive this abuse. I drew strength from those Bible stories.

Young white men came from South Africa to do their military service in the Caprivi. Young boys, twice our physical size, got out of helicopters or army trucks and started treating us, mature !xun men and elders, like dogs. Bible in one hand, booze in the other. It is also true that there were exceptions to the rule. Many of those young boys never returned home. They were shot dead. They too suffered because of a senseless war.

It was only many years later that I learnt that young men were forced to come and fight after finishing their schooling. I learnt that they were put in prison if they refused. At the time, I never imagined that other people too were being forced into this war with us. I heard that hundreds of the young white men fled their country rather than join the army. They too suffered. They had to leave their families, their homes and had to find refuge in foreign countries.

Khwe soldiers

In the meantime, the SADF had recruited Khwe communities to join us in Caprivi. We did not know them, but we were placed together under the same banner by the SADF who called them 'Bushmen' as well. We were now more than 6 000 people living in Caprivi,

our families included. This was a highly unusual situation for us who had been used to small family groups of no more than 20 or 40 people at a time. At this point we spoke more than 20 different dialects in the camp. The atmosphere became increasingly tense and often, hopelessness just lingered in people's hearts.

#### Unbearable pain of war

I wanted to leave. I could not take it anymore. This time, we did not care whether or not we would survive in the bush. Death was preferable, I felt, to this continued humiliation and cruelty. It was possible that I would be shot during operations in the bush. My family and I discussed this. If I were to die, my family wanted to die with me, then not one of us would be left on this Earth. We wanted to leave, all of us !xun.

The reason why we came to Caprivi in the first place was not because of anger or revenge. We searched for a better life and for security. We discovered that coming to Caprivi was not worth it. The same that had happened in Angola was happening in Caprivi now. We were treated like slaves. The Defence Force we had believed would protect us was now our enemy. They killed our people when we said we did not want to make war anymore. Point blank. You are here to make war, they said, you are not allowed to refuse! Good hope turned into bitterness inside our hearts.

My people looked up to me as their leader to negotiate with the SADF on their behalf. I talked to the commander and told him that we, the !xun, were finished with this war. But he said that he was a man and I was a man and let's talk man to man: that he was sure that if I took my family and people into the bush, they would die. He said let us try again, let us make a plan.

But this was his plan, yes, he was going to show us what would happen to those who dared to leave. He was furious. More than 140 of our people were told to get into a couple of trucks. They said they would drive them to Bushman land in Namibia, seeing that we wanted to leave. They drove towards the Okavango River and stopped at Asgat, about six kilometres from the border of Omega, one of the camps in the Caprivi. The white soldiers started assaulting our people. They shot four men point blank. Their families were told to dig their graves with their bare hands and bury them. Many others were hurt. They left the traumatised women and children there in the bush without anything. Just like that.

What made this even worse was the fact that the murders were never officially recorded. The families received no compensation or pensions, despite the fact that their husbands had worked for years for the SADF. It was December 1979. We were deeply shocked. Those of us who had survived had that feeling that it would have been better if we had all died together, rather than watch one's brother die in this way.

A turning point

Once, one of us went insane from the trauma of war. He walked down to the river with his gun, having gone mad in his head. The soldiers shot him and took his gun. Like an animal they shot him.

We could not stand quietly while this was happening to us. I was my people's leader. If I walked, I would have led thousands of people into the bush, into a very dangerous bush. That

day was a turning point for me. The Captain called everyone together. We were surrounded, all of us, at gunpoint by young SADF soldiers while the superiors stood on a platform.

I was blind with fury. I had loaded my weapon in my tent. I was going to gun down the commander and kill as many of them as I could before they could shoot us. I wanted to take revenge, to do to them what had been done to us.

God had protected me that day. The commander-in-chief was late and we were told to go back to our tents and wait. I fell asleep and was woken up much later that afternoon when it was all over. My family told me that they had asked them if there were any other people who wanted to leave. The trucks were ready, they said, we could get on. This threat silenced us. It silenced us completely. We submitted.

God's mercy pulled me out of the mud that day and gave me my spiritual ointment. When it was all over, I knew I had been wrong. I had been poisoned by anger. I felt that God still wanted to use me; that I had been saved from committing murder and thereby causing mass murder and suicide in turn.

War is a human being's greatest enemy. It betrays everything in you that is true to your humanity. You betray yourself by doing what you think is right, defending yourself, but then it turns against you and in the end, you have betrayed yourself. War is a destructive cycle.

I read from the book of Matthew the next day, in search of wisdom to ease my aching heart. I found the ancient story of Judas. How he betrayed Jesus. It encouraged me to understand that it was not only my people and I who had been betrayed, but Jesus had been too; that at another

time and place he had come before us on this road we were now walking. He had been betrayed by his disciples for things he had not done. So, we can be betrayed on this Earth by the people we know and share our Earth with. I learnt that day that betrayal is one of those feelings and experiences we have to learn lessons from in order to survive spiritually. We need to find the medicine for the wound that betrayal makes in our heart.

The army removed me from action in the bush after this incident, as I was seen as an instigator, as I had refused to accept the abusive ways in which my people and I were being treated. I was already teaching and preaching by this time, so this was an opportunity to devote myself to spiritual study. I believe this was another way in which God led me and helped me to give my people spiritual guidance. I was determined to choose the path of love; however difficult it was.

In the Book of Matthew, I read that we should put the sword away, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword. In Mark Jesus said that you know the commandments: thou shalt not kill. In John, Jesus said, 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you...' My challenge was great, almost too great.

My devotion to reading Bible stories gave me the opportunity to leave the Caprivi for a little while and visit Stellenbosch in South Africa, in September 1979. I realised then that people were expecting a 'Bushman' to be someone with a big stomach and huge backside. They did not realise that we San, like other people, were different and were also changing. To them, a 'Bushman' was still a wild creature dressed in skins.

The same God

My Bible education guided me to overcome the anger and bitterness I felt, because the stories were balm for healing my wounds. I begged my people to help find love in our hearts to banish the hatred we felt, to heal, to survive. I spoke to them of our old religion, as well as of the words of Jesus and how the stories had the same spiritual gift of engendering love and compassion.

By God's grace I now had the opportunity to study theology. My small world turned around as I flew to Windhoek and later again, to Stellenbosch in South Africa, to work with people who were educated in the Bible and the Christian religion. I embraced every opportunity and did my utmost best. My writing and reading skills improved. I felt that I was growing a new skin, with new textures and new smells. My studies qualified me as a minister of the Church. This was a sign that we were entering the new world. I was now Reverend Mahongo, *Dominee* Mahongo. My people and my family were proud of me.

In the Alpha and Omega military camps in Caprivi our old spiritual ways changed. We were no longer allowed to practise our rituals, our dancing and healing. We were told that these were heathen things and not to make a noise. A great silence came over our old ways and our *kulimatji* was no longer our guide. I had to marry our people in Christian ceremonies and baptise the children in the military church. We learnt their hymns in Afrikaans and sang them. But this in no way took away from the fact that we still felt our ancient God in our hearts. The same God as my father had felt in his heart. I was no longer kneeling with him next to the *kiaat* tree stump in the veld. No, now I was kneeling in my military uniform in the army camp, but my God was the same God. I was no longer reading the veld for signs of God – I was now

reading the veld for signs of the enemy. Instead of reading the veld for signs of God, I now learnt to read the Bible.

War brought confusion. We did not know what was right or wrong anymore. We became involved in things that make no sense to us today. It sent us in a direction we did not choose to go. Confusion is a very big story. And a difficult one because with confusion everything is in disarray. Like in the story of the Tower of Babel. People may have thought we were confused, we San people, but sometimes you have to be confused first in order to make choices to do the right thing. Like choosing to walk with God, instead of taking the path of confusion.

Do not be afraid, it is said in the book of Joshua. "I am with you. I am your shelter." I said this out loud every time a challenge came my way. I called loudly for spiritual strength so that I would not collapse. I would lift up my head and feel proud because the challenge came to me. I would find a Bible story and its spiritual ointment for these wounds of war. I came to understand it like that. I have no physical scars from war wounds, but yes, we all carry internal scars from our wounds in the form of hatred, feelings of revenge or hopelessness.

All I can say is that if you allow anger and resentment to remain inside you, you will always expect that from others. If you want to take revenge, you will expect others to take revenge on you. And so the whole vicious cycle of war will repeat itself. This is not the answer. The answer is always to choose the right path. For me this is the spiritual path, to follow the same God who has existed since time immemorial. I prayed to God to lead me in the spirit of love, so that confusion, bitterness and revenge would not fill my heart.

The end of war

Thirteen years of being SADF soldiers in a senseless war came to an end with the democratic elections in Namibia. The date for Independence was set for March 1990. The SADF had to withdraw from the Namibian people's country. We did not know what to expect next.

I attended many negotiations on behalf of my people with the United Nations and a host of other parties in Namibia who had a stake in the transition period, such as The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) peacekeepers and SWAPO. I saw how confused everything was. People were trying to mop up after a war. Everybody had a wounded heart. Again, we faced a choice: Do we go to South Africa with the SADF, or do we stay behind in Tsumkwe, the San reserve in Namibia? Would the new SWAPO government keep their promise and not prosecute us for fighting on the side of their South African enemy?

At a ceremony in the Caprivi on 14 February 1990 we were gathered in military style and told to step to the left if we wanted to go to South Africa after the war. If we wanted to stay in Namibia, we had to step to the right. I told them that this was a big decision and needed thought. The SADF promised us our own land, houses and running water in South Africa. There was at least this hope of security. Of course, as members of the army, every family had an employed man with a salary. In Tsumkwe there was hardly enough space for the existing Jul'hoan people, let alone another few thousand !xun. Many people also feared the new SWAPO government.

Again, we had to make choices. We did not know at the time that the SADF was in no position to promise us anything at all in post-apartheid South Africa.

Anna and I wanted to stay near Angola and Namibia. I was tired of this war. I looked forward to shedding my SADF uniform and being a free man. I was offered a post at the Tsumkhwe church and was hopeful about a peaceful future in civilian life. But it was not to be.

My people put a great deal of pressure on me. I was their leader and they did not want to walk into the unknown without me. Our two young sons, Vasco and Fransisco, aged sixteen and eighteen, decided to go to South Africa. They wanted adventure and they wanted to seek a better life, with new opportunities. Anna would not let them go on their own, as she simply could not leave them in the hands of others.

In the end, we both felt that we could not part from our sons whom we had worked so hard to raise. Anna said that she would never be able to sleep without them nearby. By now we also had our daughter Zelita and our youngest son Kapilolo Mario, both of whom were born in the Omega military camp in Namibia. We decided to stay together as a family – in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa.

## Chapter six

Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative of immigrating to South Africa and living in Schmidtsdrift for a decade

The following story, *The lion tricks the cattle*, conjures up the sense of betrayal and powerlessness Kapilolo Mahongo's and his community experienced during the post-war years in the make-shift tent town in Schmidtsdrift in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, where they lived for almost a decade after their arrival in 1990, while waiting for a permanent home.

*There was once a powerful lion that moved from place to place. One day, he met a herd of cattle and said to them, 'Listen, if you come and make a garden for me, I will give you gifts.'*

*The cattle came from their place and created a garden for the lion. When their job was done, the Hare arrived and said to the lion, 'You took the cattle from their place and told them that if they make you a garden, you would give them gifts.'*

*The lion replied, 'I do not have gifts to give them. There is a garden now with vegetables and mealies. They can harvest some of it and take it to the market to sell. With that money, they can return to their own place.'*

*When the cattle heard this, they went to the garden to harvest the crops. The leader of the cattle walked behind them and when the lion saw him, he waited. When the cattle were not looking, the lion grabbed him from behind and killed him. Frightened, the cattle ran away.*

*While they were running and crying, the Hare came to them and said, 'Listen here, that killer was the lion, he is not friendly, he is a devil. You made a mistake to trust him.'*

*The cattle returned to their place, still crying. (Appendix number 24.)*

The rest of this chapter comprises of Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative of their arrival and subsequent stay in the tent town in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa between 1991 and 2000, when the move to Platfontein happened over a period of a year.

### South Africa

The SADF had shown us so much negative propaganda about the ANC and Nelson Mandela that we had confused ideas about them. We thought they were vicious terrorists and ruthless killers; communists without any religion, as we were taught at the time. Not that we knew what communist meant. Our only communication with the outside world up until then had been through the Portuguese and then, the white SADF personnel and their families in Caprivi – and of course, through my few trips to the outside world. In 1990, The African National Congress (ANC) was unbanned in South Africa and Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years. The apartheid war was over.

The 'big silver birds' as many of our people called the military airplanes, were ready and waiting for us in the bush. People stood in long queues that day, mothers with their babies on their backs, with bundles under their arms and here and there an old suitcase or two. Well, what could we do? Many people cried. Many were afraid of the unknown world in another country. At least we had in our minds the promises of housing, running water, toilets and security. The army said it would take eighteen months to organise all this.

Upon arrival in South Africa we found hundreds of army tents waiting on a vast, flat plain of land. We soon realised that no one knew anything of the local plants and that hunting was out of the question – there was nothing to hunt. The harsh weather was strange to us. We had become used to living in wooden houses in Caprivi and now found ourselves in a barren environment without the trees and bush we knew in our homeland.

What did the army think of us? How did they think we were to survive here? Did they think we were animals that could be dumped like this?

We lost many children and old people during that first, icy and wet winter without homes. We were not used to the extremes in the weather. Shortly after sunset one evening, three of our people were struck by lightning inside their tents. They died like that, charred black, like coal, in front of our eyes. We were shocked. No-one had ever seen anything like that. Morale was low from the start, but this way of dying was not part of our knowledge of how Nature works.

One night, about two weeks after I arrived, a wild storm came from nowhere. The wind blew madly and it poured hard with rain. Within minutes, the wind had blown tents off the pegs, people were shouting and crying, running for shelter inside those tents that were still standing. My big tent collapsed and we ran to the smaller one. We got on to the bed, as the ground was already drenched. I stood on the bed in the middle and held on to the centre pole with all my might, my family holding on to my legs and the children screaming.

My spiritual life came alive in this storm and I prayed aloud, calling on our ancestors and God to hold on to us in this new land we did not know. I prayed loudly for forgiveness in that tent; I prayed to be forgiven for our terrible sins. We had death on our hands from the war. A while

later the storm stopped. The next morning the tent town was in a state of devastation. Most people had lost the little shelter they had and with it, their courage. Thousands of hungry people were now stranded in this flat, dusty place without trees. Hope was not easy to find or keep. We were just waiting for news. We were kilometres away from any town, without transport and entirely dependent on the military for food and news of any kind. We could not hunt and there was barely anything to gather.

Again, we felt betrayed. We had no power; we were Angolan citizens. We were told that the South African government was talking to the ANC and other liberation parties to organise the transition from apartheid to democracy, while we, the San, were sitting, waiting for news about our future. We were told that we were not on their list of priorities; after all, we had fought against their SWAPO brothers. We heard the story that they were going to send us back to Angola. What now? We could not see the future.<sup>10</sup>

#### In search of faith

One year after arriving in South Africa I received another invitation to work for a church in Namibia. I wanted to go. My older son was to stay and the rest of my family and I decided to leave. Upon arrival, I was informed by that church that the Namibian government was considering repatriation of all Angolans. I was still an Angolan. We decided that the only option was to wait until the Namibian authorities had decided. I returned to Schmidtsdrift.

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<sup>10</sup> During the early 1990s, the Northern Cape's ANC government-in-waiting saw the !xun and Khwe as traitors who fought with the SADF against their Namibian comrades during the liberation war. The Schmidtsdrift land on which they lived was taken from the BaThlaping clan by the SADF, in 1974, where they then established a military training base. At the time, the BaThlaping was preparing their restitution claim for their ancestral land; hostility against the !xun and Khwe were escalating. Rumours that the !xun and Khwe would be deported was rife. 560 BaThlaping families registered a formal and eventually successful land claim.

In the meantime, the Schmidtsdrift land we were promised by the army was claimed by the BaTlhaping Tswana community. They had been forcibly removed from their ancestral lands by the SADF during 1968. The new restitution laws of South Africa provided for them to get their land back. 560 families registered their land claim in 2004. Another blow for us. No land, no security.

Our confidence was at an extremely low point. We felt betrayed like the cattle in this next story because we were once again losing. We felt then that we had made the wrong decision – once again.

This was a feeling our people had, this feeling that the !xun were like the cattle in the story, making bargains with the lion. The SADF had used us and they had no power to make promises or keep them. They were just speaking false words.

#### No more Bushmen Battalion

Then, in 1992, 31 Bushman Battalion was suddenly disbanded at an official ceremony in the tent town. It was a sad day. This simply meant that our pensions were withdrawn and most military structures were removed and activities were stopped. We were regrouped as the San Battalion of Schmidtsdrift and only a few of us were employed. All our pensions were now calculated as from that day onwards. We were in shock. What would happen to us now? When the colours of the flag were laid down at that ceremony marking the end of the battalion, people cried because the military employment was our only source of income.

Men received small pay-outs of money from the army at their dismissal, after many years of dangerous work. A few people bought cars with these so-called 'pensions'. This became a great source of entertainment and laughter in the tent town, but also of misery. The cars broke down and no one knew how to fix them; people could not drive well and died in road crashes on bad roads. Here is one of the car stories that did the rounds at the time<sup>11</sup>:

*According to this story, the car paid for the road with its third-party license. The donkey, the dog and the goat do not have this third party.*

*The car saw that the donkey, the dog and the goat kept on using the road and said, 'Come, let us hold a meeting.'*

*'Why?' asked the others.*

*'I paid for the road,' said the car, 'but now all of you are using this road. Is this right?'*

*'No,' said the dog, the goat and the donkey, 'It is not right.'*

*'Everyone must pay,' said the car.*

*'But how much?' asked the donkey.*

*They all agreed on the right amount and said that everyone must pay in full.*

*The dog said to the car, 'I do not have the right amount. You must give me change.'*

*The goat said, 'I will go and fetch my money.'*

*But he did not, he ran away instead.*

*The donkey gave the car the right amount.*

*Then the car drove away.*

*And this is why today we see the donkey lying dead on the road. He insisted that he had the right to lie there and then the car drove over him. The dog is always chasing the car because*

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<sup>11</sup> This story, with its far-reaching symbolic implications, is entered in Sigrid Schmidt's catalogue as KH 618 \*B (vol. 2, p. 512-13), where she reports Damara variants from Namibia: the story has also been recorded in West Africa and in a refugee camp in Rwanda.

*he still owes him money. And the goat? Well, whenever he sees the car, he runs away into the veld. (Appendix number 25.)*

So, there we were. All promises of security collapsed. Aggression, ill health, hopelessness and crime increased. !xun and Khwe turned on each other. Rumours of witchcraft were rife in the camp. Feelings of despair became like a thick fog in the air. Men were powerless to provide for their families and women had few resources with which to feed their children. We felt that if we had houses, we would not have been so desperate. We waited and waited. Our children suffered in this desert with no vision of a better future. They too turned on us. Why did we allow this to happen, they asked?

Blowing in the wind

The minute when things are too difficult for human beings we get that hopeless feeling of loss. We felt then that every decision we had made had landed us in a place of despair. We felt that our lives were cheap in comparison to others. We felt powerless. Being without power is when you feel weak because you think you can do nothing – you feel you don't have any meaning. The decades of war ripped our roots from the Earth. So, when the Schmidtsdrift wind came up and blew, the people blew around with it, because their roots were gone. We were now standing with one foot in the bush, in our memories, and the other foot in the military culture in a strange land among tents.

We, the San, were never fully human in other people's eyes. Our indigenous values were banned and our culture was made to look inferior in this new world. Instead, our children were

schooled in a new way and told that the old ways of their parents were not good for anything in the new world.

I asked myself how we could change this and use our new lives for bettering ourselves. I grew up knowing that we had always looked to something bigger than ourselves when we had a crisis, to Nature, to God. We did not know this depression of spirit when I was a child. This memory inspired me. It told me that this condition was temporary, that deep down we were worth more than this. In this chaos, we had to search for a feeling of eternal life; for the wide-open space in our hearts; for the place in my heart where love lived, the place that only God could fill. We had to build a bridge over our circumstances to a spiritual place. I hung on to faith as if it were a pole in the ground while the wind blew like a mad animal.

Weeks and months went by in the tent town with no news, nothing to ease the youth's boredom and hunger. A broken spirit is when you feel no motivation, when you feel that your soul is busy dying, with no power to carry on. This was the feeling in the tent town.

I had to be very strong on the monthly pension pay out day. Cash in this environment was dangerous because it could buy families enough liquor to ease their pain for a day or two. It was painful, very painful, to see your people like this. People you had known all your life, whom before were strong and useful in the community.

I felt determined to find meaning in this life we now lived. I continued to create sermons in that tent town and found stories to tell us where to find courage. Our feeling of unity as San people was the only source of strength that we could count on.

## Jesus, the storyteller

Jesus was a storyteller. He healed with stories. I found stories in the Bible that matched the feelings in our hearts. The broken spirit among the men was reflected in the Old Testament, in Joshua 33, which tells us God is our shepherd, and will give us strength and new energy if we ask. This was so beautiful to me when I read it. I was touched every time I read it. I continued to read the Bible to see if I could find spiritual lessons and strength in its stories. And I did, every time. I remembered how my father would find stories for us when times were tough, how he gathered us around and how we stayed close in the face of danger with our stories. We survived then and I wanted to draw on this spirit of survival that our people were so good at.

The army could no longer censor me. I began to tell our own traditional stories along with the Bible stories and discovered how they went hand in hand. When one feels powerless you must search for something bigger than yourself, something more powerful than just being human. This is how I survived these difficult times. This was the most difficult time of my life.

## Truth and reconciliation<sup>12</sup>

In July 1998, we testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Committee hearings. We told in detail of the murders of our people that had been committed by the white military during the war years, to force us to remain soldiers. We testified to Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his team. It was a good thing that we told those stories of the atrocities, how the SADF had murdered our people, but not much came of it. I felt that people like these, did not have feelings of regret,

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<sup>12</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a restorative body of justice founded in S.A. in 1995. Witnesses who were victims and survivors of human rights violations during Apartheid were invited to give statements about their experiences.

mercy and forgiveness. I learnt then, that there is too much anger in the world and in people's hearts and therefore people want to hurt each other.

My people elected me to represent them officially in the newly formed Khwe and !xun Trust, soon to develop into the Communal Property Association. As chairperson, I now had many new duties and once again my people became my priority.

#### A new world

A new world dawned in front of me. Suddenly, I was called upon to represent the San in government, civil society and all kinds of meetings. I met different kinds of people. I had to adapt very quickly. I learned about a new idea called human rights.

I flew to Tanzania to represent indigenous people at an African human rights conference and learnt of another new idea, that of the rights of indigenous people. I told my people about this upon my return and there was much debate about this thing called 'rights'. Our old people had had rights, those were the rights that God had given to all people, but now it was called a different thing. It was something you had to fight for. Or buy.

It felt good to mean something to my people. I felt a renewed energy, as I understood the faith my people placed in me. They had the confidence to elect me as their leader and I was determined to be deserving of their trust.

Human Rights lawyer Roger Chennells received an invitation to attend the United Nations Conference for Indigenous People in Geneva in 1994, the year when Nelson Mandela became

President. By now he was advising us and came to the tent town to explain our rights to us. It was decided that I should go to this conference.

I was one of the few people who were still employed by the army. They made me sign all kinds of papers to swear that I would not say anything bad about them before I went overseas. They said there would be consequences if I did.

I had no idea how far Switzerland was from South Africa. I was shocked by the white snow and freezing weather. Everything was strange to me. I had no idea how to behave myself as a San person, how to walk, what to say, but I watched very carefully what was happening around me and how other people behaved. Dawid Kruiper, a *ǀkhomani* San leader, also came with us. We were both overwhelmed by this experience. We found the Swiss food tasteless. We followed our hosts around and even tried to ski. We saw this neat and tidy country. I could not understand how anyone could live in such an organised way.

In the end, I did not speak from my notes. I made my speech to the assembly of four thousand people in Portuguese. I told them of the San people's plight.

It was unbelievable to see all the different peoples of the world in Switzerland. Nations dressing differently and looking different – Masai people, Japanese and Sami people. Different television stations and newspapers interviewed me. It was an extraordinary experience for me, although it was very difficult to understand what was going on in such a large gathering.

After this experience, I flew to many different places and eventually learnt how to behave myself, what to pack and how to find my way around an airport. By then, I understood the

importance of a toiletry bag, with deodorants and shaving accessories. My shoes were always polished and my meticulous clothes became a matter of pride to me. I represented the San people and I was determined to stand as proudly as I could. My family washed and ironed my shirts and pants and made sure I did not have to be ashamed of the way I looked. I was not going to have anyone look down on me as a 'person of the bush'. I felt ready for us to take our place in the world, to do what I could to change our image of being those hopeless 'Bushman' soldiers in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Upon returning to the tent camp in Schmidtsdrift from these places and meetings I was always struck by the gap between us and the rest of the world. We had only just stepped into the new world; it was all still strange to us. The Angolan bush and our wooden huts in the Caprivi had been our only homes until now. Most of our people could not even read or write.

#### Democratic elections in South Africa

After the democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 we started a new round of negotiations. We were the San trackers from the war and black people in government were not comfortable with us. Their attitude was that, after all, we had fought against their brothers in Namibia. They did not understand our history and we did not understand theirs. But we did understand that we had to learn new ways of thinking to survive here in South Africa.

During this time, we had quite a lot of media coverage as journalists visited us to report on what they called 'the aftermath' of the war. Suddenly, the army could not stop people from entering the camp. The media portrayed us as a pathetic lot of ex-soldiers, drunk, destitute and in despair. Well, this was part of the story, but these people could not see beyond what met their eyes. They did not see the spirit of solidarity and communal love that we share despite all

the helplessness, the powerful striving for spiritual survival among so many of us. If there is one thing the San people have always been good at, it is survival. Even though these media people meant well, their cameras could not photograph that spirit; it only portrayed what the eye could see.

At the same time, it had become clear to me that there were many other people in this world who held the San's history and humanity in great esteem. I made personal friends with individual white people and people from other cultures in the world, many of whom came to visit me in the tent town and even stayed with my family, often in great discomfort in freezing cold weather or blistering heat.

To love another person who is not of your own kind and who has a white skin, was a new experience for me. This was another one of the blessings that came to me during this time. We now had white brothers and sisters who were fighting with us, not to keep us backward as men of the bush, 'Bushmen', as people in skins who could only hunt and gather, but to help us to stand up and determine our own destiny.

We learnt about the history of the San people in southern Africa, that we were the first people who had lived here since many thousands of years ago. This gave us confidence and showed us that we had the right to claim our share of land.

This meant hope.

## Chapter seven

### Kapilolo Mahongo's narrative of reconciling past and present on their new communal farm, Platfontein

In 2015, during the *World Appreciative Inquiry Conference in Africa* held at the University of Johannesburg during September, a diverse audience of professionals from across the globe gathered to further their inquiry. Kapilolo Mahongo transformed his story, *Chamba Chuma*, into a tale fit for analysis by modern psychologists from America, India and Europe. He raised the timeless, universal themes of this story by emphasising its sub-themes; the unity of intellect and emotion, heart and mind. The gaps between traditional wisdom and contemporary psychology Africa and the West, disappeared for a few moments while I had the privilege to translate this great storyteller. This is what he said to his audience:

*It is an honour to welcome you to South Africa, the cradle of humankind, where our common ancestors come from. I trust that you already feel at home with us, because we are glad to host you from all your different countries; India, Spain, America, Canada, France, Germany, Holland and many more. I believe this conference will be successful and that each of you will play a special role in this process. I think we are on this earth to make a difference through our actions, whether or not we come from the same place, or can read or write.*

*In the past, we, the San people did not have schools. Through the mercy of nature we learnt other skills and used other patterns to survey our world, to care for ourselves*

*and protect our families. Stories played an important spiritual role. No person can survive without telling your stories because it confirms your humanity and where you come from. Our dancing, our songs and stories helped us to understand that our spiritual and intellectual parts need each other to survive in our home, our natural world. We did not know the word 'psychology', but this is the best way in which I can explain to you how we stayed well in our hearts. I hope the spirit of this conference will bring together these two parts of ourselves, so that we can all work together and form a unity, even though we come from different places.*

*I will tell you a traditional tale that I learnt from my father to illustrate my wish for this conference. The story is called Chamba Chuma and it tells you about differences, wisdom and cooperation<sup>13</sup>.*

*One day, two boys went fishing in the river. They caught a number of fish, but the one boy pulled a really strange, different-looking fish from the water. It was a Chamba Chumu, a flat fish with only one eye and only one mouth. The boy felt, no, something is wrong here. He wanted to throw it back into the water, but the other boy said no, this is a fish, it must be eaten.*

*In the meantime, there was a whole school of Chamba Chumu fish under the water who were crying for their friend who was caught by the human children. They went to their wise man, their king, to complain about the humans who had caught their friend and were going to kill a Chamba Chumu.*

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<sup>13</sup> I have not yet come across another documented version of the Chamba Chuma story.

*The wise man said no, above ground, the humans also have a wise man and king. He was sure that the two children would go to their king to ask for his advice. That king is a judge. You will see, said the Chamba Chumu king, the human king would tell the children to bring the Chamba Chumu back to the river. You will see, he said to them.*

*Above ground, the boys went to show the fish to their parents. What kind of a fish is this? How can he have only one eye? No, this is a wrong kind of fish, we cannot eat it.*

*They went to their own wise man, their king and requested a meeting. The king listened nicely to the boys and also to their parents' story.*

*The king replied by saying that this story really worries him. There was only one solution. The boys must take the fish and put it back in exactly the same spot where they pulled it out.*

*The parents accompanied the boys to the river and they threw the fish back exactly where they found it.*

*Underground, in the river, the Chamba Chumu were rejoicing. See, here is Chamba Chumu, back in the water! We have a wise king! He even knows what is happening above the river!*

*Everyone clapped and danced in the fire light.*

*Tja! tja! tja!*

*A tja tjatjatja!*

*Tje tje tje tje*

*A tja tja tja tja!*

*That is where the story ends for now. Chamba, the fish, gave rise to this story because he was different. All of us at this conference come from different places and want to work together on the theme of how to appreciate our world and share our differences with each other. The different worlds in the story, above and below the ground, did not stand in the way of making the two communities happy. The wisdom of the underwater fish helped his people not to panic and explained that they could trust the people above ground to do the right thing. The wisdom of the chief above the water lay in his respectful, compassionate way of thinking. It is in this spirit that I want to welcome you. I hope you will find the wisdom to unite your spiritual and intellectual lives to bring together a unity that is bigger than our differences. (Appendix number 5.)*

#### Our own land

Hope finally arrived in 1998. It came in the form of our own land. After long negotiations, over more than eight years, the new government finally bought us the farms Platfontein, Wildebeestkuil and Droogfontein, near Kimberley in the Northern Cape, for a sum of R 7.5 million. Nelson Mandela came to greet us on 18 May 1999 and handed us the title deeds. He promised us a fine new school. He kept his promise. Many of our youth finished school here, and those who had the vision began to look forward to a future of being an educated person in South Africa.

We had made a 2 500-kilometre journey over a period of 30 years. We now had land security, which meant a new beginning was possible, one where we as a people could renew our hope. History will speak of this moment because it was the first time the !xun San people had ever legally owned land.

We felt for our brothers and sisters who had chosen to stay in Namibia and Angola because we knew that their lives were worse than ours. We felt glad, finally, that we had made the decision to come to South Africa. The last group of our people finally moved into new little brick houses during December 2003 to start a new life as a community of South Africans living in a subsidised township, twenty kilometres away from a big town, Kimberley.

Our San children above the age of thirty were born in the military and that military culture was all they learnt. Those born today will not grow up in the hand of the military but will grow into a civilian life on Platfontein, close to Kimberley. They will integrate with other people; slowly but surely, they will. Looking back now, our life during the war seems like a dream, a nightmare, we had to survive. It came about so quickly, this change in our way of life – in three generations and in my lifetime<sup>14</sup>.

And here ends a chapter in the lives of the !xun people. It was now up to individuals, to each family, to make a success of life. There is a new chapter to tell about our integration into South African society as semi-urban people, but I will leave that for the future. Maybe my children will tell that story.

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<sup>14</sup> See van Wyk, A. 2001. The militarisation of the Platfontein San (!Xun and Khwe): The initial years 1966-1974. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, vol.10, no.3, 2014, pp. 133-151. Van Wyk describes the resettlement of 372 San soldiers with dependents from 31/201 and 203 battalions in Namibia to Schmidtsdrift during March 1990, as the last chapter in the process of militarisation of the !xun and khwe communities. He emphasizes that this process did not begin with the SADF, but with the Portuguese Security Police (PIDE) in 1966, when !xun people were first recruited to fight against the Angolan liberation movements, MPLA, FNLA and UNITA. He tries to trace this period of the !xun's lives and their subsequent 'rise' to the status of "fletcher fighters", retrained when they sought refuge with the SADF in 1994.

## An African Cristian

I believe everyone is tested on his or her journey on our Earth. The war was our great test. We moved through the desert of fear, we came through the desert of war. We came through the desert of abuse and we walked through the desert of despair. We are still here as a people, through the mercy of God.

I realised that one could say that I had become an African Christian – a new idea to me, but one I like because of the freedom it gives me. In 2007, I attended a World Council of Churches conference in Brazil with my late Christian brother, Braam le Roux, from Botswana. This international conference was called to discuss how Christianity worked among indigenous cultures and explore ways in which Christians like myself could root ourselves in an indigenous experience of Christianity. I was pleased to find myself among indigenous people from all over the world who was trying to reconcile their past spiritual traditions with Christianity. This was a wonderful surprise to me. I was not alone.

When I left the conference in Brazil I felt free to think new thoughts. I realised that decades of censorship had come to an end. In the army, the thought of combining indigenous religious practices and Christianity would have been called heathenism. Now it was suddenly welcomed by a world body of Christians!

I remember how difficult it was at the beginning for us to live in the Christian faith at the exclusion of our traditional beliefs and practices. We did not at that time stop to think that if our forefather's religion was so bad, how did they get to where they were? How did they manage to raise us with so much love and belief?

My father heard the voice of God in the veld. His God is an eternal God. I know that the God who supported my parents is the same God who carried me through all this unhappiness, who calmed me and comforted me. Yes, we did not think that Jesus is the son of that God. The only difference between then and now, is that today I see God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I see this powerful trinity and I feel the truth of that story.

At this conference in Brazil, we, from New Zealand, Brazil, Australia, Europe and Scandinavia, spoke together and called for the freedom to practice the religion we had been practicing when the Church found us in the first place. We said that it should be allowed inside our churches so that we could practice it. Even the old songs, the dances, my father's *kiaat* altar; these were our things. I know that our ritual of clapping hands was much more than childish clapping, as it may have seemed to the army chaplains who forbade us to do this. Our clapping was a form of togetherness, of being human in harmony with that rhythm. Many of the rhythms we clapped came from the earth's creatures. Like the sound that the black *Tok-tokkie*<sup>15</sup> beetle makes for example. Our songs and clapping were a calling to God for the energy to rise above ourselves, to strive for something bigger than ourselves. How could that be wrong?

For the first time I asked myself what it meant to be an African Christian, or for that matter a !xun Christian. How was it different from being a Chinese or an Australian Christian? The difference lies in your culture, in your history. A nation without a past has no stories to tell. It is your story that makes you human. Knowing where you come from can root you; it can help to heal you. If the Church wants to help people rebuild their self-worth, it is important to recognise people's stories in the Church. How can you be proud of your past when you are

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<sup>15</sup> Tok-tokkie is the common name for a beetle that creates a 'tok-tok' sound. It taps its rear end onto the ground to attract a mate. They are common in arid geographical conditions and belong to the Tenebrionid family of beetles.

taught that your parents' way of practicing religion was a heathen one? Perhaps this was another one of the reasons why our people broke down so badly<sup>16</sup>. It was not only the trauma of the war. It was also the loss of faith<sup>17</sup>.

### Making new tracks

In this way, I am making new tracks. The history I now know, tells me that the San people once lived all over southern Africa, not just in Angola. I have had the opportunity to travel to new and exciting places in the world and this makes my heart glad. Our San tracks will now mingle with the tracks of the people of the world.

Yes, during these years I have felt much anger. But it is a great lesson to feel anger and then to learn afterwards that love is the cure for your fury. As you grow and your ego grows smaller you become more humble; you grow as a person. But if you want love, you must give love. In this way, it comes back to you spontaneously.

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<sup>16</sup> In his book, *Radical Hope* (2006), Jonathan Lear offers a global perspective in his discourse on the destruction of indigenous communities' lives. His work resonates with Kapilolo Mahongo's observation of the breakdown and trauma suffered by his people.

<sup>17</sup> In his book, *Indigenous responses to Western Christianity*, Kaplan (1995) offers a broader perspective on the Africanisation of Christianity in Africa, Thailand, Japan and in the East. Reports from the recent World Council of Churches' Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples (2018), includes perspectives on how to embody the full reality and authority of indigenous life within the WCC and the ecumenical movement. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples> (Last accessed 27 June 2019.)

## Reading and writing

I had thought deeply about what would happen if we just sat around and did nothing to preserve our stories in this modern and Western way of life our children are now leading. The stories will get lost.

This is why, in 1994, I asked Marlene Winberg to help us document our oral traditions<sup>18</sup>. Over the past twenty-five years she has worked hand in hand with us to find ways to translate and create new lives for our oral traditions; in books, biographies, paintings and drawings, music, radio and television broadcasts, as well as workshops and festivals. In the process, we have lifted them from the silence that came over them during the war.

We have taught our children the stories that had almost died. This helped us to heal because we could connect with our ancestors, our memories, our fathers and mothers who told them to us, and with the traditional wisdom that each story carries. Our storytelling sessions offered us a tool to relieve the depression in the tent camp. Stories became the best way to explain to our children what had happened to us in the war they were born into. It helped them to understand that there was a different life outside the war camps before their birth. Our storytelling also helped us to break tensions between ourselves, because we talked about the cultural ways of the past and that brought with it healing memories.

It is only during recent years that we have begun to write and read in !xun and other San languages. In South Africa, Namibia and Botswana we have small groups of San linguists who

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<sup>18</sup> The Indigenous knowledge policy formalized in 2004, remains prominent in the national discourse as people try to come to grips with the paradoxes and difficulties attending the notion of indigenous knowledge. See Green: 2012.

are working to write our stories down in Ju|'hoan, Khwedam, #khomani, Nharo, Khugurab and !xun, as we work towards bringing our ancient languages and oral lore into this modern world<sup>19</sup>.

My memoir is the result of many years of conversations and finally, a three-week long writers' workshop with Marlene, who helped me to record my life by drawing maps, writing stories down and dictating parts to her. She recorded my words on a digital recorder, transcribed it in the evenings and then read it back to me in the mornings, so that I could listen to what she wrote from my dictation. It is still not easy for me to write many pages at a time because I come from an oral background. The result of this workshop was the fulfilment of my long-standing desire to leave behind a written record of my life, my *kulimatji*, for my people.

This chapter concludes Mahongo's memoir. In the following chapter I will take an in-depth look at one story in Mahongo's repertoire, asking what it is that this story contributes to our knowledge about about !xun thought and oral literature.

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<sup>19</sup> Megan Biesele (2009) documented the history and work of one such regional project in her book, *Ju|'hoan Folktales: Transcriptions and English Translations* - a literacy primer by and for Youth and Adults of the Ju|'hoan Community.

## Chapter 8

### The biography of a traditional !xun story: Dima and Owl

Chapter eight is built on the biography of one single !xun story. It presents an in-depth reading of Mahongo's story, Dima and Owl, and traces its roots in written history and literature. By doing so, it provides evidence of the historical wealth of Mahongo's repertoire of stories, and responds to the research question: What does Mahongo's stories contribute to our knowledge of !xun narratives? The chapter highlights themes of language, translation, change and continuity in the oral literature belonging to !xun storytellers. The chapter draws on the records of other folklorists who, like myself, have recorded San stories in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa and brings their notable scholarship to bear on this single creation story.

My first introduction to this story was from the visual artist, Katunga Carimbwe, in 2003. He told it to me in fragments while he was busy painting on a canvas during a workshop on the farm Platfontein. He said that the story has many episodes, some of which he had forgotten. His !xun elders told it to him during his childhood in Mavinga, Angola, where he was born in 1958. He said it was a story about the first !xun man, Dima (Carimbwe., 2003. Personal Communication. 15 February.).

I went in search of the rest of Katunga's interesting story and found more fragmented, scantily told episodes by different !xun tellers, who also said it was a very old story they had mostly forgotten. Kapilolo Mahongo reconstructed the version in this chapter by stringing together the various episodes he had researched with tellers in his community. He eventually added it to his repertoire, although he told me that this was not his childhood story because different families have different stories, suggesting that some stories moved in families or perhaps was more popular in certain geographical areas than others.

While looking for traces of this story in the historical literature, I came across several references to Dima and discovered that he went by many names in the southern African region and indeed, has a wide-spread network of relatives across the southern African region that forms part of a cluster of stories in the pan-San oral tradition. The following story is Mahongo's reconstruction.

*In the old days there were two people, Dima and Owl. Owl owned the sun, moon, water and fire. Dima did not have any of these things and lived in darkness with his family.*

*Dima tried to make a garden, but he could not grow vegetables because there was no sun. Everybody suffered because there was no sun. When they hunted animals to eat, they hung the meat in the trees to dry, but it rotted because there was no sun.*

*One day Dima decided to visit Owl. When they served food, Dima wondered why Owl's food tasted so good. He wondered if it was because the food grew in the sun and it was cooked on a fire.*

*Secretly Dima made a plan. He decided to dance. He wanted everyone at Owl's place to gather around him and see him dance. Dima was a good dancer. Owl and his family admired the*

*beautiful dancing. When it grew dark Owl decided to fetch the sun from his house so that he could see Dima's dancing better. Dima continued to chant while dancing.*

*Hum-na hum*

*Hum-na hum*

*Hum-na hum*

*Chi-i-chu*

*Chi-ichu*

*Chi-ichu...*

*Owl kept the sun in an animal skin bag inside his hut. He carried the sun out of his house and held it high up above his shoulders. Now it was light. Everyone could see far into the distance.*

*The dancing was clear for all to see and soon everyone was dancing in the light of the sun.*

*Dima crept closer to the sun while he was dancing. Owl kept the sun away from him. After a while, Owl forgot about the sun because he enjoyed the dancing so much. He saw how beautifully Dima danced and he too wanted to dance like this.*

*Dima took his stick, his knobkerrie, and hit the sun into the air like a ball. Ka-tja! The sun travelled so far that it remained forever in the sky. It gave everyone light.*

*Dima ran away so fast that Owl could not find him. He stayed far away for a long time. After a while he disguised himself so that he looked like another person. He went back to Owl's place. The children recognised him and said,*

*'There is the man who stole our sun!'*

*The adults did not agree with the children and said,*

*'No, this is not the man who stole our sun.'*

*They saw that this man was an old dancer. He wore a lot of beads around his body. They were dancing beads. They were magic beads because they made people dance. It was not long before everyone began to dance. They danced the whole afternoon, until the sun began to set and it became too dark to see Dima, the magic dancer.*

*Owl said to his wife, 'Go and look in my bag and fetch the moon.'*

*The moon lit up the darkness for all to see the dance. While they were dancing Dima moved closer and closer to the moon, for he had a plan.*

*He took his knobkerrie and hit the moon high up into the air. Ka-cha! Once again, he ran away from Owl.*

*This time he stayed away for a very long time, until Owl's people forgot all about him.*

*Dima disguised himself again and returned to Owl's place. This time he wanted Owl's fire. He was after Owl's fire sticks, which were hanging around his neck.*

*He joined Owl under a tree and the two men started playing an old clapping game called 'gi'. They clapped and clapped and as they clapped some more, Owl's fire sticks started jumping around on his chest with the rhythm of the clapping.*

*Clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap ...*

*Dima tried to grab the fire sticks, but Owl threw them over his shoulder so that they hung over his back. They clapped the whole day. The rhythm of the clapping made Owl forget all about the fire sticks. When they swung around on to his chest once more, Dima grabbed the fire sticks and ran away.*

*Owl and his family ran after Dima, but he had made a clever plan. He had a bag full of thorns over his shoulder and threw it on to the ground behind him. This stopped Owl and his family from chasing him. They returned to their place, as they could not cross the thorns on the path.*

*Dima could not wait to make fire. He rubbed and rubbed the sticks. He blew and blew the ember in a little dry grass until a tiny flame appeared. He lit the whole veld and each time fire reached a tree, Dima said,*

*'From now on people will be able to make a fire with each tree on earth.'*

*A long time passed. When Dima finally returned to Owl's place, he found only a little boy playing with wooden animals. Dima asked the boy to show him where they kept their water. The boy led him to the place of water. Dima saw the big dzaba, the huge clay pot in which the family stored water.*

*Dima pretended to leave for his home, but he secretly turned around to the water place. He turned the huge pot over so that the water started flowing on the ground. Dima quickly jumped over the flowing water to the other side.*

*Then he was safely across the river of water where Owl could not find him.*

*Therefore, the whole Earth has rivers full of water today. Therefore, we now have the sun, moon and fire. All because of the magician Dima.*

*And this story walks till here. (Appendix number 9.)*

My reading of the !kun children's narratives from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bleek and Lloyd collection, led me to recognize this character as |xue, or alternatively called Huwe (D. F. Bleek 1934: 262). I realized then, that Dima and Owl has a long ancestry - with the first written versions recorded by Lucy Lloyd in 1879. !nanni, the oldest of the four children in the !kun part of this collection, had told Lloyd he learnt about Huwe from his grandfather, Karu, who was a Hai||om speaker. Grandfather Karu described Huwe, or |xue, as the first Bushman (Schmidt 2013:414, 425).

!nanni explained that Huwe was the name they gave to a person who could work with many things and was capable of multiple transformations. He told Lucy Lloyd that "My father's

father feared to speak of |xue at night; he spoke to me about |xue and I was afraid of |xue until I cried...” (Winberg 2011: 43). As the first Bushman, Huwe was the quintessential hunter; he could even transform himself into water so that he could silently stalk a nearby pigeon and then transform into a lizard lying under the dead leaves on the ground. When the pigeon settled at the water’s edge to drink, he quickly grabbed hold of it (Winberg 2011: 43). Huwe has a strong presence in !nanni’s narratives, as this character seemingly accompanied his family all the time. For example, when grandfather Karu experienced great grief at the murder of one of his sons, it was Huwe who ran crying from the family home. !nanni made several drawings of Huwe’s transforming into an elephant or plant, of his little house, with his family, pots and household belongings.

In the version of this myth collected by Lorna Marshall in the 1950s among the Ju|’hoansi of Northern Namibia and western Botswana, several hundred kilometres from where the !xun artist Katunga Carimbwe lived as a child and first heard the story, he is called Huwe and his adversary’s name is |Ka |Kani, which can be translated as “fire sticks”. (Such as ones carried by Owl in Mahongo’s version above.) At the end of the story, |Ka |Kani becomes a bird called ≠ore. The “clapping game” mentioned in our version, Dima and Owl, is still being played among the !xun and Nharo people, and possibly other communities who live in the Kalahari Desert – mentioned also by Lorna Marshall (Marshall 1976).

In Almeida’s Portuguese version of how Dima had stolen the fire from his friend, we are informed that “he could create the African country, trees, rivers and finally men.” (Almeida 1957:554 in Schmidt 2011). Dima orders elephants to stop building houses and scatter into the woods and eat camel-thorn trees pods; from that day on elephants no longer lived in shelters

like humans do. This is exactly what Dima does in Mahongo and the contemporary tellers' version of this story.

Between 1969 and 1981, a century after !nanni described this character's multi-faceted life to Lucy Lloyd, the missionary and scholar, Terttu Heiniken, recorded several stories in this complex about among the Damara, Nama and Hai||om speakers she worked with in Namibia. She informed us that the character also goes by the name Haiseb. (As noted earlier, grandfather Karu was a Hai||om speaker.) Heiniken's notes and collection of stories give us insightful information about this character - the first person and representative of the primeval world.

“When I left [Namibia] I had a wealth of data with me, mostly on the languages but also some that may be of interest in the field of folklore. The stories came to me by chance while I was recording or writing down from dictation texts for my language study, though I never collected them seriously.” (Heiniken in Schmidt 2011:45)

We have very few resources from the specific area in Namibia where Heiniken collected in eastern Ovamboland and West Kavango; her work is therefore of special importance to folklore studies.

Schmidt tells us that in Heiniken's collection, our hero is surrounded by an odd assortment of characters, humans with animal names, males and strong female figures; difficult to grasp because of the multitude of aspects to his character. On the one hand, he is a fool who tricks, fools others, cheats, steals, transforms, behaves perversely. Yet, in another cycle of stories, he becomes the great liberator of humankind or performs acts of great bravery. Indeed, he seems to represent and personify every aspect of humanity's complex characteristics.

Heiniken collected a story from a !xun man called |xae in Namibia during the 1970s, that closely resembles the story as presented in the preface (Schmidt 2011:73). The hero in Heiniken's record also steals fire from the selfish man who kept it to himself, hidden in the crown of his head. It is also obtained by means of a game and at the end, the hero commands that fire will be kept in trees from that day on. In another version where the theft of fire is the central motif, Haiseb steals it from the armpit of an ostrich (Schmidt 2011).

Another one of the tales in the Heiniken collection tells the story of how Huwe, or Haiseb, rescued humanity from the pit of darkness in a story dictated by |hoekub and Tabos, two storytellers in Namibia (Schmidt 2011:56). I summarise the story below:

*There was once a woman who owned a pit [water] hole. She had two servants who sat in tree and warned her when people were coming. Then she would climb out of her pit and wait for them with a stick in her hand. That path was the only route for people to pass. She pushed the people into the hole.*

*One day, Haiseb heard about her. He took his cows and drove them along that way. When he arrived, Haiseb stopped his cows and made them sit down. Then he went and had a pushing contest with the woman. She shoved him into the dark pit, but he used words to command roots to grow in the pit and then climbed out. They wrestled for a long time but finally Haiseb won and pushed her into the pit. He covered it up and commanded his cows to pass over while he walked along, singing.*

*From that day on, people could use the path to the water without fear of the pit hole woman.* (Appendix number 25.)

*Dima and Owl* should be read in the context of a cycle of creation stories that depicts a world completely unlike the present one, far back in time when the world was completely different, topographically and otherwise (Schmidt 2011:24). Animals were still like human beings, could speak and act like us, although they already had the characteristics of present day animals. That was during the time of eternal life, when different laws for existence governed. Huwe, Dima, Haiseb or |xue, represents this old world order (Schmidt 2001:203). The story depicts Dima as a culture hero and transformer of the primeval world into the present world. Interestingly, he achieves this with a command of words, and not a magic trick. “From now on people will be able to make a fire with each tree on earth.”

The transformation of the primeval world into the present one is central to the many stories of the theft of fire, stolen for the good of humanity. In the primeval times, only animals kept fire. Fire stands for much more than cooked food and warmth on cold nights. It was central to change from the old world to the present.

It is interesting to note that the character, |kaggen of the northern Cape |xam stories in the Bleek and Lloyd collection, stole fire from the ticks before humans used it. These former owners of fire also had to live as animals after losing fire to human beings (Bleek 1923: 32-33). The possession of fire meant the separation of animals and humans and therefore, the birth of human culture.

Sigrid Schmidt offers a thorough examination of the |kaggen cluster of stories told to Bleek and draws many parallels between |kaggen and Dima, while placing these figures in the larger context of San thought. She demonstrates how these character/s represent San cosmology and cautions us against a simple classification as tricksters. Schmidt draws parallels between |kaggen, Heiseb, Dima and Huwe:

*In Namibia, |kaggen's cousins, particularly Haiseb of the Nama, Damara and Hai||om, secretly also raised a little antelope out in the veld. [|kaggen secretly kept a eland in the veld.] A Nama from Gideon told me that Haiseb kept a little female oryx calf in a pit in the veld. A Damara from Windhoek that Heiseb kept a little steenbok calf in an aardvark burrow. According to !xun of the West-Kavango it was a roan-antelope. If we compare the details of the variants we discover an amazing amount of correspondence with the |xam texts. Honey, and the jealousy of his family trigger off the drama. In the Damara version KH 208,8 Haiseb not only feeds the little animal with honey but even rubs it with honey, like |kaggen did. And in most of the versions he weeps when he learns about the death of his beloved animal (Schmidt 2013: 76).*

Jose de Prada-Samper offers us evidence of contemporary versions told him by descendants of the |xam in the Northern Cape Province, in a cluster he calls the Master Outlaw - “old Trickster-figure of the |xam people namely |kaggen or Mantis” (De Prada-Samper 2016:38). He explains that this figure goes by many names; in the Cederberg, the Tankwa Karoo and Hantam, he is Dirk Ligter; In Namakwaland, he is Jantjie Rooiklaas; in most of Bushmanland, he is Jan Thomas; in Nuweveld and Beaufort-West his name is Kapokkie Davids. (At least two of these names are those of historical characters. It is not clear about the other names, but the storytellers insist that the stories are true – as storytellers often do.)

*The fact that in some narratives the Master Outlaw is an unbeatable sheep thief, is testimony to the harsh circumstances that, for a long time, forced these communities to prey on the farmers' flocks in order to survive. Yet, some aspects of this meat-loving rascal go back to the old |kaggen or Mantis, who is the creator and protector of the antelope and nemesis of the hunters, yet is also a protector and benefactor of the community (de Prada-Samper 2017:38).*

Our concept of trickster studies started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in North America when American Indian story heroes came to light and made Western researchers uncomfortable because of their 'fascinating, but perplexing' characters. At the time, they were visualised either as human or animal creatures, or animal as well as human creatures and said to have lived in a "mythical age without being bound to present-day laws of nature." (Schmidt 2001:205)

Schmidt observes that the model for a trickster figure was defined some decades ago as a "rather inflationary use of the trickster concept" (Schmidt 2001:205). Any clever person or animal, even an ogre or the helper of a hero, she tells us, can be forced into this category. She makes a distinction between a mythological trickster and an animal trickster and points out how the older Haiseb/Huwe/Dima hero is a spiritual being that is imagined as a man and escapes the confines of the trickster figure. She suggests that Western researchers get confused between the many-sided features of this figure, who sometimes behaves similarly to the present-day animal trickster, thus complicating our notion of what a trickster is.

In Namibia, Haiseb is also referred to as God and unanimously regarded as the supreme deity in the present world. The foolish trickster (jackal being a popular present day trickster), is often

the center of ridicule, much enjoyed with raucous laughter by audiences, whereas the deity, or trickster, of the old world, such as Dima, is treated with respect and awe. Schmidt asks from us to distinguish between folktale and folk belief to understand this complex figure and not reduce its significance in our pursuit to understand San cosmology or categorise narratives.

Therefore, an examination of the biography of *Dima and Owl* adds value to Kapilolo Mahongo's restoration of this myth and highlights the contemporary !xun storytellers' status as carriers of oral traditions. This analysis shows that this story, like all the others in Kapilolo Mahongo's repertoire, did not simply grow out of a small community, but forms part of a widespread San tradition. It describes the life of this story over a period of time, but goes beyond basic facts such as when it was recorded, by whom and where. It portrays a sense of continuity, of the time and space through which this story has moved and locates it in Kapilolo Mahongo's legacy. (It is possible to do this form of analysis with several of Mahongo's stories in this thesis, but space does not allow it.) By comparing one version with others, our appreciation of the story deepens. As we have seen, the plot of the story might be known to many people, but its geographical, cultural setting, and even its protagonist's name, is always specific - further enhanced by the individual storyteller's ability.

The analysis in this chapter illustrates how the !xun stories have travelled remarkable distances, changing form and shape according to socio-political conditions, historical period and the tellers themselves. The theme of change and continuity finds further expression as we encounter the contemporary story and learn about its meaning in a historical context. The many intricate versions and varieties of the story seem to be lost, yet its central figure, Dima, still holds a central place in the world view that the story represents. It is important to note that we,

as researchers, sometimes declare a tradition “lost”, only to be proved wrong by unexpected encounters or further research.

My English translation of *Dima and Owl* aimed at staying as faithful as possible to the actual performances I witnessed and listened to. However, stories are passed on by word of mouth according to rules that differ from written text. Kapilolo Mahongo told the story with a great sense of emotionally performed dialogue, facial expressions, voices switching from one character to the other, with clapping rhythms for the clapping game, chants for the dancing and a variety of hand gestures. This written text is therefore a stilted document that remains a shadow translation of the spoken text. The spoken text also differed quite a lot between the different tellers, most of whom were alphabetically illiterate. I recorded a sung version in Schmidtsdrift during the late 1990s, before the community moved to Platfontein. Pensa Limunga, the musician, sang the story accompanied by his handmade string and wooden instrument, the *!kogga*. It was only years later, when I first heard the story told in 2003, that I realised the significance of Pensa’s traditional story-song and how it was a beautifully rendered version of Dima and Owl.

“Dima was the one who caught the moon; it is because of Dima that we have the light of the moon. Dima is the one who threw the moon into the sky.” (Limunga in Mahongo 2004). He repeated several phrases and added a hypnotic quality to the circular structure of the story. Sometimes he just plucked away on the strings, allowing us to appreciate the atmosphere of the story and perhaps imagine the landscape in which it played out – this after all, was the primary location of the story. It is not possible to represent the intricate forms of non-verbal patterning and structure adequately in translation.

The focus of this thesis is on a !xun man's life story and repertoire, but the epilogue highlights the fact that women in this community, were, and remain, the guardians of a great deal of oral literature, often different to the stories men tell.

## Conclusion

### Speaking truth to power

*Stories in Indigenous epistemologies are disruptive, sustaining, knowledge producing, and theory-in-action. Stories are decolonization in its most natural form.*

(A. Sium & E. Ritskes 2013:11)

In the previous chapters I have illustrated how !xun stories are knowledge producing, and how the performance of these resist, and sometimes reverse, the cultural erasure that took place during the thirty year war in Angola and Namibia. On a micro level this illustrates how the research and restoration of a single story, by Kapilolo Mahongo, his friends and myself, had the potential to bring people together in an act of de-colonisation and Indigenous research, while restoring a sense of historical identity.

As we have seen, the recording and performance of the stories on Schmidtsdrift and Platfontein, became events and experiences that worked against the trauma of the post-war era and bleak years of uncertainty suffered by the !xun who emigrated to South Africa. Working with their stories in this compassionate way acknowledged and reclaimed the value of their Indigenous voices and sustained belief in traditional and spiritual values. These observations resonate on a larger scale with the voices of international and indigenous scholars worldwide, notably in Canada, as illustrated and discussed in chapter 1, the literature review.

In conclusion then, let us return to this study's research question: What is it that we stand to gain from the indigenous !xun storyteller, Kapilolo Mario Mahongo's narratives, and the production of his memoir?

The literature review in chapter 1 examined representations of San people from colonial times to the present, and investigated how misrepresentations by others have contributed towards the skewed historiography and tragic circumstances of San individuals and communities. The review demonstrates how alterity discourses have constructed a false identity of San people, as justification for the historically brutal treatment of the San.

This study has focussed on how Mahongo's memoir and repertoire of !xun stories in chapter 4 – 7 make a significant contribution to the San corpus, the historical record, and the representation of the more or less five thousand !xun speakers who now live at Platfontein. It has shown how Mahongo's story disrupts the stereotypical and mainstream narratives about the 'Bushmen' soldiers and instead, presents a complex, dynamic, layered narrative that often reveals contradictory identities. No other detailed indigenous accounts of this war exist, with which to compare Mahongo's version, but several representations of Mahongo, as written by others, do exist. Among these are accounts of the !xun's involvement in the Border War, notably by ex-SADF Commanders Uys and Linford who portrayed Mahongo and his community in an array of distorted observations and described the !xun soldiers and their families as primitive, pagan, superstitious, stone-age hunters whom they, the SADF, had turned into 'modern soldiers' (Uys 1993:1).

Mahongo's memoir has exposed the racist, xenophobic and one-sided stories of his people and given us an alternative account of the events related, and published, by military personnel and the media in general. The act of telling and writing his history to the best of his ability,

became a form of personal witness-bearing on Mahongo's part. His memoir tells the story he was not yet able to tell when he testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission during the mid-1990s. In this context, his memoir in chapters 4 – 7 becomes a powerful story of resistance and an act of justice.

In Chapter 6, Mahongo described how the !xun youth are becoming urban township dwellers integrating into the social fabric of the world around them, as they become the 'modern people' they strived to be. For most people of the Platfontein community, this longed-for modern life they had hoped would offer better lives, unfortunately, continues to condemn the community to the underworld of poverty. Where they are now living on the outskirts of Kimberley they are faced with unemployment and hunger on a daily basis. Their lives are increasingly marked by integration with local people, and foreign nationals, in a process where their community's carefully curated identity as 'the San – the 'First People' is uncertain. This identity is no longer the basis upon which various forms of restitution or redress are delivered. The post-apartheid 'First People' discourse no longer carries the same weight as it once did when it comes to the distribution of government resources. At the same time, the local S.A. San Council remains the gate keeper to international resources, requiring the Council's approval, despite the fact that, by its own admission, it does not have the capacity to communicate efficiently or work through applications received for various research and development projects (Leana Snyders, personal communication, July 2006, Cape Town). The challenges of continued poverty and the resulting social ills, despite development and educational initiatives, job creation programmes, indigenous conferences and festivals, remain great.

Mahongo's highly articulate account of his life and his community's involvement in the regional wars and their consequent emigration to South Africa, paints a picture of a man who straddles many roles: that of a San intellectual, a development worker, an advocate for human

rights, a historian, an elder with considerable indigenous knowledge, a religious leader, and an internationally acclaimed storyteller. His distinctive individual voice works against the notion of the typical generic pan-San view of his people.

A complex picture of a twenty-first century !xun leader has emerged – that of a man who, unlike the nineteenth-century San storyteller, ||kabbo, has had to take his place on the post-war stage of national and regional politics in a constantly, rapidly changing socio-political environment. Through his participation in United Nations forums and international indigenous organisations he worked towards a common goal of redress, restitution and self-expression. His honest account of wearing a multitude of hats in order to represent his people in rapidly changing times, allows reflection on the contradictions inherent in being a !xun person at this moment in history. His story is reminiscent of Kapoor’s statement that, “Anticolonial positions and the prospects for decolonization are embodied in specific and multiple histories and cannot be collapsed into some pure monolithic and homogenized oppositional essence” (Kapoor 2009:4).

Mahongo’s story of his involvement with the international Indigenous Christian movement during the early 2000s clearly valued the collective strength and support of indigenous people from countries all over the world, as he met and talked to people who had undergone similar processes of being forced to abandon their indigenous beliefs and religious ceremonies. This helped him to free his mind of the indoctrination he was subjected to during his years as a SADF chaplain of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Caprivi district. It also helped him to accommodate the near fatal onslaught on his ancestral creation stories, songs and ways of worship, and to find a way of combining Christian and !xun stories in the more recent tradition of Indigenous Christianity.

Mahongo's story offers us insight into how he had struggled to reconcile his traditional religion with Christianity, after having been forced to abandon their traditional ways of worship by military officers, who were in control of the !xun people's lives while they were employed as SADF soldiers. Mahongo's accounts find an echo in the words of musician Bob Marley's call to: "...emancipate ourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds..." (Marley 1980). In this context, Mahongo's memoir becomes a narrative of resistance, as he no longer has to suffer the SADF's distorted version of his story.

This study has made a contribution to folklore studies, one that has added a body of newly documented, written records of !xun oral stories to the literature, as compiled in the appendix. A number of Mahongo's stories have already been classified and catalogued by Sigrid Schmidt, and included in her inventory, in the latest publication of *A Catalogue of Khoisan Folktales of Southern Africa* (2013b, 2013c). More specifically, Mahongo has set his own family stories in the context of his life and by doing so, provided us with specific examples, and meaningful insights, into how he has negotiated these stories with his contemporary realities. The many examples in the body of his memoir show how stories evolve and survive over time, depending on the context, the teller and the audience.

Mahongo's memoir demonstrates how he has integrated his repertoire of stories into telling and reflecting the story of his own life. His fluent contextualisation and incorporation of the old !xun stories into his memoir, are expressions of how deeply metaphor is imbedded in San thought – how stories are “thinking tools”, to use the words of Megan Biesele (Biesele, personal communication, Aug 2018. Cape Town). She writes that the oral performer uses cultural materials as any artist uses elements of his art.

*The relation of dramatized, imaginary events to practical reality and their role in facilitating social and economic survival is therefore far from easily perceived. Instead of 'reflecting' nature or even social values in any literal way, folklore comments on both, with great obliqueness, often seeming bizarre and incomprehensible in its fracturing of the normal order of reality...Yet somehow, from this kaleidoscope of contradictory views of the human condition, vital information and rules for conduct are extracted by audiences ( Biesele 1993:188-189).*

Mahongo did exactly this when he applied the story of Chamba Chumu to the conference attended by psychologists (chapter 7), by suspending the rules of one kind of logic and invoking another, storied logic that made this old story work for an international, academic audience.

In this sense, Mahongo's narratives become a valuable resource for contemporary folklorists, as it expands our knowledge of !xun stories, and its use in both the past and in the present.

The research we have done on the story *Dima and Owl* in Chapter 8, leads to a better understanding of how adaptable and protean these stories are; how storytellers find continuity and change in story structures. Their culture was severely damaged and wounded with traumatic results, but this story shatters the myth, held by some, that San people have forgotten their stories and puts an end to the mistaken belief that the traditional !xun storytellers have disappeared.

This study has demonstrated how Mahongo's repertoire of folktales, (notably *Dima and Owl*), and his personal narratives, resonate with themes from the Bleek and Lloyd collection – despite their geographical and temporal differences. The cultural roots of these tales run

deep and, as such, have profound relevance to our understanding of the deeper past of the sub-continent. In their introduction to *The man who cursed the wind*, Hall and de Prada-Samper (2016) describe this sense of continuity and change in the oral tradition belonging to descendants of !xam communities in the Karoo in the following words, equally true to the present !xun community:

*The collective experiences of the !xam throughout the nineteenth century were marked by loss, disruption and their efforts to cope with the consequences of the new. Yet, as the narratives demonstrate [...], persistence, resilience and continuity, rather than complete cultural and physical extinction, are the key concepts that explain the present reality of the Karoo communities. Adaptation and transformation, the creation of new ideas and practices from a combination of the old and new, are among the essential traits of contemporary Karoo culture. This culture is not a 'relic' of the past, but the living heritage of communities whose ancestry goes back to the First Peoples of South[ern] Africa, and is an important part of the cultural mosaic that makes South[ern] Africa so unique (Hall & de Prada-Samper 2016:24).*

Hall and De Prada go on to tell us that the comparison between the nineteenth-century Bleek and Lloyd ethnography and contemporary stories offers a rare opportunity to learn more about the role storytelling played, and still plays, in times of deep crisis and change. Despite the crisis of dispossession, the stories have persisted, and have connected people to one another, and to their past and their present. This area holds great potential for further, detailed research.

Mahongo's personal narrative emerged as a result of the collective storytelling abilities of his !xun community, and the qualitative and creative methodologies employed in this study. This thesis would have been impossible to achieve without the actual practice of storytelling. This methodological approach was adopted because it was necessary to build a relationship of deep trust between Kapilolo Mahongo and myself – and storytelling was our common ground. He needed to tell his stories in the context of his community, and needed his friends' and family's active participation to break through that version of his life as a soldier, the story he first told me in 1994. The results of our autoethnographic, narrative methodology culminated during the writer's workshop I facilitated with him in 2017, six months before he passed away. This writing workshop enabled him to bring his personal stories together in a cohesive narrative that speaks truth to power – the initial aim and final result of this research. As such, our collaborative work testifies to the role that storytelling plays in Indigenous knowledge production, disrupting as it does, Western colonial norms of knowledge. Our research explored specific knowledges, histories and memories that worked against the grain of general stereotypes and labels, while at the same time questioning the role of the researcher in bearing witness to the complex and ever-changing articulations of being Indigenous.

By focussing on storytelling, the study became a testimony to what it means to value the personal as the political, and indigenous storytelling as an active component of decolonisation and recovery of identity. The study disrupts, chapter by chapter, the imagined realities of the !xun's involvement in the regional wars, and their struggles to find new identities, on a personal and collective scale, once they have settled in South Africa. Re-imagining contemporary history demands specific, personal voices that speak to the

immediate, rational and spiritual underpinnings of indigenous thought (Sium & Ritskes 2013: I-X). This study has achieved this through the richness and creativity that storytelling offers.

This study has been undertaken with the understanding that no research, or story, is ever impartial. Storytelling, as research methodology, inevitably disrupts the dominant ideas of academic precision and validity as it redefines scholarship as a process that starts with the self. Seen in this light, social science is not neutral. Through a process of autoethnography, it has been demonstrated how my own history as a storyteller, and my political views and agency in the process of curating !xun narratives, have influenced its outcomes. The study has shown how Mahongo and I addressed our historical 'otherness' and negotiated our differences through the art of storytelling. When viewing this micro interaction between two storytellers from a higher perspective, it offers value for the larger project of healing in our country, one that requires deep listening and solidarity between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Mahongo's reflection at the end of his narrative illuminates how the act of storytelling helped him and his community to heal during the post-war years. It shows how storytelling has assisted them to reimagine, reconstruct and retell their layered history, while discovering preferred narratives.

"People are as healthy or sick as the stories they tell themselves," African novelist Ben Okri wrote (Okri in Parkinson 2009:31). Mahongo's narratives are in sharp contrast to the mainstream stories told by the media in general, and by a surprisingly large number of authors who have told their versions of events during the Border War, such as Uys (1993). Mahongo's personal story is far from being the mythical story of a loyal soldier and excellent tracker, or a kind of verbal exhibition of a longed-for unchanging and ideal past, or a reenactment of stereotyped 'Bushman' culture with music, stories and trance dances. "If

stories are archives of collective pain, suffering and resistance, then to speak to them is to heal; to believe in them is to reimagine the world” (Sium & Ritskes 2013:V). Mahongo has re-imagined and re-membered his world in his narrative. By writing his memoir, Mahongo organically resisted colonial and Apartheid-era erasure of !xun voices. In his own words (as recorded in Chapter 5) he broke the “silence that came over our stories during the war”.

In chapter 1 of this study, Iseke is cited saying that, “Indigenous elders are the educators, storytellers, historians, language keepers, and healers of our communities” (2014:36). They ensure the continuance of Indigenous epistemic traditions through storytelling. During times of extremely radical changes and war, storytelling becomes a site and a tool for connectivity and therefore, emotional and psychological survival. Storytelling goes well beyond oral history as a form of modern literature, because it carries Indigenous philosophies, epistemologies and theories within the narratives – being more than a lesson, a teaching, or a historical account or mere personal narrative. Mahongo’s narrative and literary legacy claim this responsible tradition of eldership – one of the outcomes of this research.

Mahongo’s story follows in the tradition of books such as *Trauma trials – recreating songlines: the transgenerational effects of trauma in indigenous Australia* (Atkinson 2002), as discussed in chapter 1. Like the elders in Atkinson’s story, he described the losses and trauma against the background of his country of birth, where his stories traced the geography of the landscape he remembers, before war ravaged their lives and left landmines in the ‘songlines’. One might wonder how many landmines are still left in the places where the !xun stories were told in Angola.

When first setting out to facilitate Mahongo in writing his memoir in 1994, the wealth and the extent of the material, passed down by word of mouth for generations, could not be foreseen.

The eventual result went far beyond any expectations, and brought to light not only a body of knowledge, but also a multitude of insights. This study, however, stops short of examining the complex contradictions and problems that Mahongo's children and grandchildren, and their contemporaries, face at the Platfontein settlement at present.

This may provide a fruitful area of investigation for future research, as members of this !xun community become semi-urban dwellers and integrate with people from different social, geographical and cultural backgrounds. This thesis was not the place to focus on !xun women as storytellers in this community, but this is a rich area for future research. What stories exist within the current repertoire of the more or less 2, 500 !xun women on Platfontein? Why and when do they tell these stories? What are the histories of these stories, why did they endure and how might they have changed from earlier, recorded versions of the stories? How widespread are these stories in the southern African region? What are the dominant plotlines, symbols and metaphors? How do these stories portray !xun women? What do they tell us about women's lives and status in the !xun community? What stories do woman tell that men do not, and why? Do men and women tell a more or less equal number of stories, or not?

Against this backdrop, I argue that this study fills a gap in our knowledge of contemporary San lives; it challenges the general stereotypical representations of San people on the African continent, and specifically, the immigrant !xun community in South Africa. The research points out the inherent contradictions contained in the !xun community's multiple stories – the irony of being both icons of an unchanging past, and indigenous First People, now impoverished and living in the shadows of the many tropes of 'Sanness'.

In conclusion, Megan Biesele's quote from the introduction to this thesis, finds new resonance:

*Curiously enough, both public and academic views have long tended to confuse contemporary indigenous peoples with past human societies. This conflation has taken place through the trope of primitive simplicity. If social science has any counter to offer, it is its power to reveal the intricate complexity of both past and present systems of indigenous thought and action. Nowhere can this complexity be more compellingly understood than in the realm of religion. Understanding other cosmologies, other worldviews, is one of the most profoundly humanizing activities available in all learning (Biesele 2011:I).*

## Afterword

### A memorial tribute to Kapilolo Mahongo

I gave a memorial presentation at *Kwha Ttu*, the San Heritage Centre on the West Coast on National Heritage Day, 24 September 2019 in honour of Kapilolo Mahongo. A !xun woman in her late thirties stood up to pay homage to him. Duminga Ndala told us that Mahongo was her *Meneer* (teacher) in the Caprivi camp during the war and taught her how to read and write. She said that he told them !xun stories and translated these for her and her classmates, so that they could learn the Afrikaans language the SADF personnel insisted upon. She left the Caprivi in 1990 when she was ten years old and continued her education at the Schmidtsdrift school. To my surprise, she launched into a !xun story, *The duiker wife*, a beautiful rendering of a story belonging to the animal wife complex of stories.

Shortly before his death, Mahongo had recommended Duminga Dala for a newly created post at *Khwa Ttu*, based on her storytelling abilities and knowledge of !xun traditions. She was professionally trained as a field guide and now works at this Heritage Centre near Cape Town, where she communicates and shares her knowledge with tourists and visitors. I sat with her in the Heritage Centre after our memorial to document her story, and was moved by the depth of her repertoire, mindful of how it must have been consciously passed on to her by an older generation. I named six stories in my own oral !xun repertoire, mostly about powerful women who act as heroines in the stories, and she knew every single one of them.

It struck me how her empowered voice is in contrast to many of the silent women on Platfontein, like Sandra Kajuba whose story about her daughter's heart I told in the preface. Duminga represents a generation of newly empowered !xun people; one of her peers, Zuletta Mahongo, Kapilolo's 27-year old daughter, holds a full time position as broadcasting journalist at the SABC in Kimberley. She too, is a carrier of her father's repertoire of stories.

Duminga Ndala said that her story, *The Duiker Wife*, spoke about how gathering food was central to the old ways of life, that people could survive from eating plants in the veld, even when there was no meat. She emphasized the women's traditional role in providing food for the family. She joked about this being a vegetarian story with a vegetarian wife. These days, she said, children eat junk food. They get sick because they no longer have healthy vegetables or bush medicines. In her rendering of *The Duiker Wife*, a story belonging to the category of 'animal wives', she took great care to name many species of edible plants, one by one, in a repetitive pattern. I was not able to write all these names down because they were not familiar to me and we had no skilled translator to assist us. I include a rendering of the story in the appendix and have suggested a catalogue number for it.

I hope that future researchers will embrace the modern !xun woman and her untold stories, women like Duminga Ndala, who walks in the tradition of her elders, yet lives the 'modern life' she and her peers dreamt of.

## Appendix

This appendix includes twenty five of the stories that Kapilolo Mahongo translated from !xun into Afrikaans and which I translated into English. Although many other !xun storytellers tell these stories, these particular written versions are stories from Kapilolo Mahongo's repertoire, as told by him. (Two exceptions are *The Duiker Wife*, told by Duminga Dala and *The Mud Baby*, a woman's healing story told to me in an old !xun dialect by Meneputo Manyeka, and translated into Afrikaans by Eva Kambembe.)

I include the Sigrid Schmidt (2013 a,b,c) catalogue numbers for different versions of these stories, collected elsewhere and told across the southern African region, as they appear in her *Catalogue of Khoisan Folktales*. This appendice therefore contributes to this existing catalogue that distinguishes between the international folklore type system by using the prefix KH (Khoisan), followed by its number. It includes 2 399 stories: KH 1- 2399. Schmidt notes:

*Comparative studies have proved that there must have been a continuous exchange with and influence by neighbouring peoples from time immemorial. A number of tales which Khoisan peoples share with Bantu-speaking Africa can be found already in early 19<sup>th</sup> century sources, others appear only in later collections of the northern border region. The same can be said of tales originating from European or Asian traditions. Many have been adjusted to Khoisan life and are regarded as own ancient traditions because they were orally handed on in the family. Cinderella and a great number of internationally known stories have been fostered in Khoisan families for at least 200 years (Schmidt 2013 b).*

Schmidt's catalogue represents oral traditions in a very broad sense: Not only myths, trickster, animal and fairy tales are listed but also anecdotes and legends, including ghost stories, contemporary legends and tales which explain place names.

I include the stories that are in Mahongo's memoir in this thesis in order to make this appendix an independent catalogue of our collection. They are verbatim translations.

1. The Pam-Pam Bird. Suggested type KH **1857. (Hunter agrees to set free the pam-pam bird he has captured in exchange for some of its feathers.)
2. The Eland Man. KH 1854. (Young hunter kills his first eland. He confuses the dead eland with a living man. His family arrives at the scene and celebrates his kill, warning him not to confuse people with animals. An initiation dance follows and the young hunter becomes a man who is allowed to marry.)
3. The Aardvark and the Hunter. Suggested type KH **1856. (Hunter spares nocturnal aardvark who he has seen in daylight. Aardvark repays him by taking him out of the hut in which he was laying with the chief's wife, whose husband intended to burn him.)
4. The Boy and the Hyena. KH 1811. (A hungry boy finds himself confronted by a hyena at the fireside, because he refused to listen to his

parents call to come inside and go to sleep. The hyena takes him but the boy escapes by climbing a tree. His sisters rescue him.)

5. Chamba Chuma. I did not find a sympathetic story in Schmidt's catalogue for this tale. (Two boys go fishing and catches a flat fish with two eyes showing on one side of its face. The boys take the strange fish to their families and leader who tells them to return it to the river where it has its own family and leader.)

6. Man and King. Suggested type KH\*\*1019. (Man frees the king's prisoners; Lion, Snake and another man. Lion rewards hero by bringing to him the King's daughter; he lives happily with her, but is betrayed by the other man and sentenced to die. Snake bites king and instructs princess to tell people only hero can save her father. After being cured, king acknowledges him as son-in-law punishes his betrayer.)

7. Moon and Hare. KH 197e. (The moon gives a message to hare to take to earth's people. Do they want to live forever when they die, or do they want to rise again like the moon? Hare gets it wrong and sets into motion human mortality. Moon hits him on his nose with a stick.)

8. Hare, Elephant and Hippo. Suggested catalogue number: KH \*\*499. (Hare tricks Elephant and Hippo to engage in a tug-of-war game by pretending he is the only one pulling.)

9. Dima and Owl.

10. Katitu Mamombo, the Brave Little Girl.

<p>11. The Elephant Wife. KH 935 / KH 209. (A man marries an elephant. His brother hunts her and gives him the meat to eat. They conclude that elephant are not people and therefore their meat is for eating and not for marriage.)</p>
<p>12. Beautiful Zebra Girl. KH*492. (The Zebra go to the river to drink and crocodile tries to court a pretty young zebra. She refuses, he follows her on dry land and nearly dies from thirst.)</p>
<p>13. The Mud Baby. KH 987. (A woman longs to have a baby and consults the healer. She is told to fetch mud from beneath the river. The healer shapes a baby form the mu and instructs the woman how to care for the baby. The woman disobeys and the baby returns to mud.)</p>
<p>14. The Python and Little child. KH 1790. (Women go into the veld to gather berries. One woman leaves her baby on the ground and it is swallowed by a python. The other woman come to her aid and the baby is rescued.)</p>
<p>15. The Sisters and the Ogre. KH 803. (Two sisters go gathering and discover a crying baby in the ground. It turns out to be an monster who wants to have sex with them. They trick the monster and escape.)</p>
<p>16. Lion's Fire Sticks. KH 268B. ( People and animals invite Lion, the owner of the fire sticks, to dance with them. They devise plans to steal his firesticks and go on to become the new owners of fire, declaring the separation of animals and humans, who will no longer understand each other's languages.)</p>

17. The Duiker Wife. Suggested type KH \*\*774. (Man marries a beautiful woman and brings her to his family. Since she only eat berries/plants and often goes on her own, her mother-in-law follows her and watches as she becomes duiker. Discovered, the wife runs away.)

18. The Lion Woman. Suggested type KH \*\*1313. (Woman travelling alone kills a lion with hot honey and a digging stick. Her family does not believe her until she takes them to where the body of the lion is.)

19. Jackal and the Sun. KH 373. (Jackal tries to court the sun. He carries her home on his back and gets burnt.)

20. The Water Women. Suggested number: KH \*1722. (A girl is lured into the river by a luminous flower. She emerges later as a healer and informs her people that she will be their healer. She asks them to accept her river family and allow her to visit them often.)

21. Kulungu-Kulungu. A husband takes his wife to another place to live. He disappears and leaves her to face a giant, who she feeds to keep him at bay. The husband re-appears; he becomes afraid of the giant and is humiliated by his wife's bravery. They leave and find another place to live together.

22. The Gadolo plant. A !xun boy is taken by a Bantu man and works for him. His family finds him many years later and asks for his freedom. The boy who is now a man, asks the Bantu man for a piece of the gadolo plant he has learnt to grow and harvest during his captivity. He grows the nutritious and medicinal plant for his family back home.

23. The Spirit Tree. A hunter cuts a branch from a tree for his bow and arrows. The tree bleeds every time the man cuts from it. Then the man becomes a tree in sympathy with the tree he has cut from.

24. Hare, People and Lion's Cattle. The people work for the lion by herding his cows. The lion promises them a share in the cows but he breaks his word. Hare appears and asks the people why they did not know the lion was a trickster.

25. The Road. I did not find a sympathetic story in Schmidt's catalogue for this tale. (A donkey, car and a dog meet one another along the road, argue about the car's licence. The dog runs away and donkey ends up wounded next to the road.)

## 1. The Pam-Pam Bird

Pensa was the best hunter in the whole of the land. He brought home fat animals and fed his family well.

Pensa wished he could catch the Pam-Pam bird. This bird's tail feathers were perfect for his arrows. The problem was, he could never manage to trap or shoot Pam-Pam. If only he had Pam-Pam's feathers, Pensa's arrows would fly through the air just like a bird. He wished he could catch Pam-Pam and pull out his tail feathers.

Pensa went to the wise man, their healer. He asked for help. "Please tell me how to catch the Pam-Pam bird! I need his feathers for my bow and arrows. What must I do to catch him?"

The wise healer replied, “Go and make a fire. When all the insects run away from your fire, you must catch the smallest of them. Make a trap and place this little insect inside your trap. It will tempt the Pam-Pam bird.”

Pensa did not know that the healer and the Pam-Pam bird were friends. Pam-Pam often visited the healer. They exchanged stories.

“I warn you,” said the healer when Pam-Pam bird visited him, “I have told the hunter how to catch you. When you see a fire in the bush, you must fly far away. I want to see which one of you will win.”

In the meantime, Pensa started his hunt for the Pam-Pam bird. He sat in the veld and rubbed and rubbed his fire sticks. When the smoke appeared, he blew into the fine grass around his fire sticks, until the little flame appeared and became a fire. The insects flew away from the heat and smoke, but Pensa managed to catch a young grasshopper. He put it into his trap.

The Pam-Pam bird could not resist the juicy young grasshopper in Pensa’s trap. He decided to fly down and grab it quickly with his sharp beak.

Pensa heard Pam-Pam bird’s cry, “Pam-Pam, Pam-Pam, Pam-Pam.” Pensa ran to his trap. The bird was in his trap!

Pam-Pam bird begged Pensa to set him free. “Oh no,” said Pensa, “I’ve wanted to catch you for a very long time. Today you are mine! Your feathers will make my arrow fly through the air - just like you.”

Pam-Pam bird screeched, “If you kill me you will have no more feathers for your arrow when these are worn out, because I will be dead. Set me free and I promise to give you new feathers with each full moon.”

Pensa thought about Pam-Pam bird's words. Yes, he decided, it is true what the Pam-Pam says, "If I kill him now, he will not grow any more feathers." Pensa agreed to the bargain.

But first, he pulled out a few beautiful feathers from the bird's tail!

Pam-Pam bird flew straight to the healer's place and told him what happened.

"Tje-tje," chuckled the wise old healer, "I see you both won this round. Pensa got his feathers and you, your freedom. Now you are both well."

Pensa went home and made new arrows. When the people saw his new arrows, they exclaimed: "O-o, look at this hunter! He carries the Pam-Pam bird's feathers in his arrows!"

That night, the healer led the people in a fire dance to celebrate the hunter's success and Pam-Pam bird's freedom.

## 2. The Eland Man

This story is about two friends, Tjenga and Ngu. They understood each other. They played together, hunted together, shared their food and so, Tjenga left his family and went to stay with Ngu's family.

Early one morning, Tjenga woke Ngu up, but Ngu told him to go hunt on his own. He wanted to sleep.

After searching for some time, the young hunter found the footprint of an antelope on the ground. It belonged to an eland, the most beautiful of all antelopes. Quietly, he followed the eland's footprints. Careful not to step on any dry, noisy grass, he walked, crawled and crept all day long until he finally found the eland.

It was grazing on a hill. Tjenga set his arrow in the bow and pulled until the string was tight and ready. He aimed at the eland's heart. Tjenga released the poison arrow and it flew.

Tjing!

The arrow hit the eland's heart. Tjenga's heart was afraid because he had shot the beautiful eland. He lay down silently in the bush, resting and waiting for the poison arrow to do its work. The sky and the air around Tjenga shivered from the midday heat while the hunter waited for the eland to die.

Suddenly, the eland turned into a person. Tjenga's heart was even more afraid, for he did not mean to kill a person. What would the people say if they found that he had killed a human being?

Tjenga walked to his friend Ngu, to tell him what had happened. When he found his friend and told him the news, he said, "I am in big trouble. I hunted an eland and after I shot it, it became a person. Please, you must help me now so that I can bury it before the people see what I have done."

Ngu said, "Oh no! You are not my own family. I cannot make your problem my problem!"

With a sore heart, the young hunter returned to his own people. Tjenga told them his story. Without saying much, his father told him, "Come, let us go and have a look."

When the family got to the hunting ground where Tjenga had shot the eland, they did not find a dead person there. The father said, "Did you lie to me?"

"No," said the boy, "I told you about my hunt and the eland man just as I saw it."

His mother said, "You did not kill a person. This is meat, it is an animal and we must eat it because we are hungry. We need its skin to make clothes. That is why you shot the eland. From now on you must understand that people are people and animals are animals." The family carried the eland back home. They made fire and roasted the meat caught by the young hunter.

While the smell of delicious, roasting meat was in the wind, the boy's friend, Ngu, came to ask for a piece of the meat. The boy said, "Do you remember when you told me that my

problems are not your problems? Now we will never be friends again. You must go to your family and I will stay with mine.”

Tjenga’s father said to him, “Now you have learnt a great lesson. You cannot leave your own people and adopt another. When you are in serious trouble, it is your own people who will help you.”

Tjenga’s family made more fire. His father divided the meat up, gave everyone a piece of eland fat and they celebrated the food that the hunter had brought home. They danced all night.

Tjenga was now a man, he could take a wife and support a family.

### 3. The Aardvark and Hunter

One day long ago, an aardvark and a hunter lived close to each other. One could say they were neighbours. The hunter was in love with a beautiful woman and lived in the same village. The only problem was this - she was married to the chief of the village. The hunter and the women always met each other in secret.

One fine day, the hunter went into the bush to find a good animal to shoot for the pot. He was unlucky, but at the end of a long and tiring day, he found a tree to lean against and rest his feet. All of a sudden, he noticed a big hole next to the tree. What? An aardvark was lying there! The hunter at once prepared to shoot it with his bow and arrow, but the aardvark spoke up.

“Please do not kill me!”

“But you are lying on top of the ground and it is daylight! It is your fault that I did not shoot a thing today. It is because you are out in the day while you are an animal of the night and supposed to be underground. Look how you have made things go wrong in this place today! Upside down! Tja-tja!”

“Well,” replied the aardvark, “The sun came up for me today. Tomorrow the sun will come up for you.”

The hunter shook his head and thought about these words for a while. Confused, he decided to leave the aardvark and go away.

In the meantime, back in the village, the chief was suspicious of his beautiful wife. He could not understand why she always went into the bush by herself, when all the other women went gathering food together, in a group. The chief decided to spy on her. He told her that he was going to go away for three days. The beautiful wife wasted no time and told her lover. She invited him to her hut that very evening.

The chief had no intention of staying away for that long. He was just fooling his wife so that he could spy on her. When it was pitch dark that night, he silently crept up to the door of the hut. He heard her voice and the hunter’s voice whispering inside the hut.

The chief roared in anger and jealousy. “I can hear you both in there! You are deceiving me.” The chief tied the door up tightly so that the couple could not get out. He woke all the villagers and called them over.

“Bring wood! Come! Let us dance! Tomorrow we will assassinate the man who stole my wife! We will kill the woman who has deceived me!”

Inside the hut the wife and the hunter were shivering with fear. What could they do now? Meanwhile, the aardvark had heard this story. He started digging and digging. Just before sunset the next morning, aardvark had reached their hut. He scratched away at the dirt and popped his head up into the centre of the hut.

“Do you remember yesterday? Do you remember me telling you that the sun came up for me and that tomorrow the sun will come up for you? I have a plan for you. Come, come into the underground tunnel with me. The woman must close up the hole I have made with wood

and as soon as we are both out at the other side of the tunnel, she must cover the ground and make a fire. Come now.”

The hunter followed the aardvark down the tunnel, crawled through and out on the other side.

He went into the bush and shot a fat duiker as soon as the sun was up. He slung it over his shoulder and went home to the village. He threw the duiker over the branch of a tree, sat down next to it and took out his smoking things.

Puff, puff, puff, puff...

Yes, the hunter leaned against the tree and casually smoked his pipe.

What a commotion he caused! The villagers and the chief were preparing to assassinate him and there he was sitting next to a tree with a fresh duiker hanging on the tree! Oi-joi-joi!

The people were confused. They were getting worried. The man could not possibly be inside the hut and under the tree at the same time. Look, he shot a duiker!

“Open the door!” they called to the chief. “Let us see this man whom you say is inside with your wife!”

When the chief opened the door, he found the woman sitting there alone with no sign of any hunter.

The woman was crying. “You have accused me falsely in front of everybody and I will never marry you again.”

The chief hung his head in shame. His marriage was destroyed and he had to pay both the hunter and the woman a large sum of money to compensate them for his accusation.

#### 4. The Boy and Hyena

There was once a boy who waited for his father to return home from a hunting trip. He was hungry and when his mother offered him berries and roots, he refused, saying, “I don’t want that little bit of food. I want meat.”

When his father came home that night, he told his family that he had not found any animals to hunt – no meat for the family to eat. The boy cried and cried. His parents went to sleep, but the boy sat next to the fire, tired, cross, stubborn and hungry, while his worn-out father was trying to sleep. Why did you not bring me food, the boy thought.

A hyena came along in the darkness of the night. He put his head close to the fire and offered it to the boy to play with.

The boy shouted: ”Nde-de, Mba-ba, mother and father, come and look, here is food for us to eat! Come and shoot it!

His sleepy mother and father said:” Oh, eat it then if that is what you are waiting for at that fire!”

The boy grabbed the hyena’s head, but the cunning hyena flung the boy across his shoulder and ran away with him.

The hyena trotted to his cave. He wanted to take the boy inside to his cubs, so that they could play with his prey. On the way, the boy saw a tree with large roots protruding from the ground. The clever little boy grabbed hold of the sturdy roots with his hands and held on very tight. The hyena pulled and pulled, but no matter how hard he tugged, he could not pull the boy away from the strong tree roots. Hyena decided to fetch his cubs from the cave and bring them to the boy.

The boy ran away. He climbed into a high tree at the foot of a hill and tried to hide in its branches.

The hyena was not fooled and tracked the boy's footsteps to the bottom of this tree. The hyena looked up and saw the boy in the tree. He tried to climb up, but without success. The sun set and the hungry hyena went hunting.

The boy stayed up in the tree all night and when the sun came up, he started singing a song.

*Quie quie*

*look up in the tree*

*I am in danger*

*Quie Quie*

*look up in the tree*

Meanwhile, the boy's sisters passed by close to this tree, because they were on their way to gather nuts and fruits in the bush.

His sisters said: "What bird is this that sings like a human being? There is no such bird that sings in this way!"

*Quie quie*

*look up in the tree*

*I am in danger*

*Quie Quie*

*look up in the tree*

One sister said: "Come, let us go and find that strange singing bird." When they found the tree from where the singing came, they saw their brother up in the tree's branches.

They also saw the hyena approach and it once again tried to climb up the tree to grab the boy.

The sisters chased the hyena away and freed their brother. They carried him home to his parents, who rejoiced in seeing their son again.

The boy never again stayed up late at night next to the fire. He understood that people do not play with food or animals. He never cried again when his father did not bring home meat to eat.

He understood that men could not find an animal to shoot every single day and that the bush, and night, was a dangerous place.

## 5. Chamba Chumu

One day, two boys went fishing in the river. They caught a lot of small fish, but the one boy pulled a really strange looking one from the water. It was a Chamba Chumu, a flat fish with only one eye and one mouth. The boy felt that something was wrong. How can a fish look like that? He wanted to throw it back into the water, but the other boy said no, this is a fish, it must be eaten.

In the meantime, there was a whole school of Chamba Chumu fish under the water who were crying for their friend. They went to their wise man to complain about the human children who had caught their friend and were going to kill their Chamba Chumu.

The wise man said no, no-no, listen, above on the ground, yes, above the water, the humans also have a wise man. He was sure that the two children would go to him to ask for his advice. The human's wise man is a good judge. You will see, said the Chamba Chumu wise man, the human wise man would tell the children to bring the Chamba Chumu back to the river.

Above ground, the boys went to show the fish to their parents. What kind of a fish is this? How can he have only one eye? No, this is a wrong kind of fish, we cannot eat it.

They went to their wise man and requested a meeting. He listened nicely to the boys and their parents.

He replied by saying that this story really worries him. There was only one solution. The boys must take the fish and put it back in exactly the same spot where they pulled it out. It belonged there.

The parents accompanied the boys to the river and they threw the fish back exactly where they found it.

Underground, in the river, the Chamba Chumu were rejoicing. See, here is our Chamba Chumu, back in the water! We have a wise man, he is our king!

From that day on, the boys understood that there was another village underneath the water, where the Chamba Chuma families lived with each other and their own king.

## 6. The Man and the King

Long ago, there lived a man called Tiewhe. He lived alone in the bush. He had no family and lived far away from other people. He was a hermit.

One day, the King decided to build a prison close to Tiewhe's place. The King imprisoned a lion, a snake and another man in this prison.

Tiewhe discovered this prison while he walked in the bush collecting food one day. He heard the prisoners' cry for help.

"Please, open the doors and let us out! We promise to help you in return one day!"

Tiewhe felt sorry for them. He opened all the doors and set the inmates free. They quickly disappeared into the bush and went their separate ways. After some time had passed, the lion decided to visit Tiewhe. When he saw that Tiewhe was alone with no family and no animals.

He decided to make a plan. He went to the King's palace and kidnapped his daughter. He took the princess to Tiewhe's place!

"I have brought you a princess," said the lion. "Take her as your wife. You will never be lonely again."

The princess was angry and afraid of the lion. She cried out: "How can you steal me from my father and bring me to this man?"

She fell silent when she saw Tiewhe. He was beautiful. They fell in love and decided to stay together as man and wife.

The lion ran into the bush and brought back a herd of goats for Tiewhe. The princess and Tiewhe became wealthy with lots of animals. They ate well and were happy.

In the meantime, the other prisoner that Tiewhe had set free, thought about him. "What is he up to?" wondered the man. "I should go and see if he is alive or dead."

When the man arrived at Tiewhe's place, he recognised the King's daughter. He remembered hearing from other people that a lion had carried the princess off. He decided not to say anything to Tiewhe or the princess. When he saw the herd of goats, he remembered that not too long ago, a rich man in the village lost a herd of goats.

The man did not say anything. He just greeted the princess and her husband and wished them well. He sat around their fire and ate their food. Then he went on his way.

This man went straight to the King and the rich villager. He told them the story. The King was relieved to hear that his daughter was alive, but he was furious. He ordered his soldiers to capture Tiewhe alive.

When the soldiers brought Tiewhe before the King, he cried: "You will be executed at dawn! Put this man in prison!"

In the meantime, the King went to the toilet in the veld, as they did not have toilets in those days. When he crouched down, the snake, which Tiewhe had freed from the prison, came along and bit the King in the backside. He stumbled and became very ill.

The snake went to the princess' place and told her the story. "This is what you must do now." He whispered his plan into the princess' ear.

All the village healers were called to cure the King from the snakebite, but no-one could help him. The King's council did not know what to do. They were confused. How could they execute Tiewhe at dawn while the King was dying? What if the King died before they could execute him?

That evening, the princess arrived at the King's palace. "Let my husband free," she said, "I am sure he will cure my father."

The council replied: "How can you be sure of this?"

"I know that my husband will cure my father," the King's daughter said simply.

In the meantime, the snake slithered into the prison where Tiewhe was kept captive. The snake told him what was happening. Then the snake spat some of his poison into a little wooden container and gave it to the man.

"Here," he said, "When the King's council come to release you, take this container of poison with you. You must give it to the King to drink. It will cure him."

Just before sunrise, the King's council came to fetch Tiewhe.

They said: "You must cure the King or else he will die and so will you."

Tiewhe held the little container with the snake poison close to the King's lips and as the King drank it, he vomited. All the poison came out of the king's stomach and he was cured.

Then the King declared: "This man saved my life. He is a good son-in-law. He had looked after my daughter all this time and now he has looked after me. Bring me that man who told me about him. He is the one who should pay!"

## 7. Moon and Hare

Long, long ago, in the beginning, when people were created, Moon and Hare lived together as friends.

Moon said to Hare: “You must go down to earth and take this message to the people. You must ask them, do you want to die forever when you breathe your last, or do you want to rise again after dying?”

Hare went to earth and asked the people’ “Do you want to live again after you die and come up again?” He spoke quite softly while the people were talking to each other. When he realized that the people were not listening to him, Hare became impatient and angry.

“Listen,” he said, “when you die, you will die forever!”

A few people heard Hare talking so and said to their friends’ “Hey! Why do you not listen to this voice?”

Hare walked back to the Moon. He walked and walked and walked and finally reached the Moon. Hare told Moon the story and said” “And I told them that they die they would die forever!”

Moon was furious. “I did not tell you to tell the people this! I told you to ask them if they want to rise again after dying!”

Moon was so angry that she lifted a knob kerie high into the air. She hit Hare on his face and for this reason Hare still has a cleft nose.”

## 8. Hare, Elephant and Hippo

Hare and Elephant met in the forest one day. Hare said to Elephant, ‘Come on, let me pull you into the river!’

Elephant said, ‘Are you mad?’

‘No, I can do it. I am telling you!’

‘You? Never! Look at you, you are small and weak. Look at my size and strength!’

‘Just you wait,’ said Hare, ‘I will show you tomorrow.’

Hare went to the river and told Hippo the same thing. Of course Hippo laughed at Hare and told him he was crazy.

Then Hare went into the forest and cut a long, strong rope from an old tree. Off he went to Elephant. ‘Okay, let’s try now. I am going to pull you all the way into the river.’

Elephant laughed. Hare tied the rope around Elephant’s leg and around his own ankle.

‘When you feel the rope tighten around your leg, Elephant, you must pull!’

Hare ran down to the river and told Hippo the same story.

‘Remember to pull when you feel the rope tighten, Hippo,’ called Hare as he ran back.

Hare then pulled and pulled before he untied the end of the rope from around his ankle. Both Hippo and Elephant felt the rope tighten and they both started pulling. They were both strong guys and pulled each other along.

After some heavy pulling the two of them looked up and saw each other right in front of their noses, while Hare laughed until his stomach ached and ran off into the forest.

## 9. Dima and Owl

In the old days there were two people, Dima and Owl. Owl owned the sun, moon, water and fire. Dima did not have any of these things and lived in darkness with his family.

Dima tried to make a garden, but he could not grow vegetables because there was no sun. Everybody suffered because there was no sun. When they hunted animals to eat, they hung the meat in the trees to dry, but it rotted because there was no sun.

One day Dima decided to visit Owl. He spied on him for a while, hoping to see the secret to his fire-making. He saw him rubbing sticks, making sparks and wondered how this fire-making worked. Dima went closer and greeted Owl. Owl invited him to eat with him and his family. When they served food, Dima wondered why Owl's food tasted so good. He wondered if it was because the food grew in the sun and it was cooked on a fire.

Dima made a secret plan. He decided to dance. He wanted everyone at Owl's place to gather around him and see him dance. Dima was a good dancer, he brought the spirits out with his dancing. Owl and his family admired the beautiful dancing. When it grew dark, Owl decided to fetch the sun from his house so that he could see Dima's dancing better.

Owl kept the sun in an animal skin bag inside his hut. He carried the sun out of his house and held it high up above his shoulders. Now it was light. Everyone could see far into the distance. The dancing was clear for all to see and soon everyone was dancing in the light of the sun.

Dima crept closer to the Owl's sun while Owl was dancing. Owl kept the sun away from him, but after a while, Owl forgot about the sun because he enjoyed the dancing so much. He saw how beautifully Dima danced and he too wanted to dance like this.

Dima took his stick, his knobkerrie, and hit the sun into the air like a ball. The sun travelled so far that it remained forever in the sky. It gave everyone light.

Dima ran away so fast that Owl could not find him. He stayed far away for a long time. After a while he disguised himself so that he looked like another person. He put braids on his hair, rubbed his skin with ochre and wore different skins and beads on his body. He went back to Owl's place. The children recognised him and said,

'There is the man who stole our sun!'

The adults did not agree with the children and said,

‘No, this is not the man who stole our sun.’

They saw that this man was an old dancer. He wore a lot of beads around his body. They were dancing beads. They were magic beads because they made people dance. It was not long before everyone began to dance. They danced the whole afternoon, until the sun began to set and it became too dark to see Dima, the magic dancer.

Owl said to his wife, ‘Go and look in my bag and fetch the moon.’

The moon lit up the darkness for all to see the dance. While they were dancing Dima moved closer and closer to the moon - he had a plan.

He took his knobkerrie and hit the moon high up into the air. Once again, he ran away from Owl.

This time he stayed away for a very long time, until Owl’s people forgot all about him.

Dima disguised himself again and returned to Owl’s place. This time he wanted Owl’s fire. He was after Owl’s fire sticks, which were hanging around his neck. Dima wanted everyone to have fire and eat cooked food.

He joined Owl under a tree and the two men started playing an old clapping game called *gi*. They clapped and clapped and as they clapped some more, Owl’s fire sticks started jumping around on his chest with the rhythm of the clapping.

Clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap, clap-clap

Dima tried to grab the fire sticks, but Owl threw them over his shoulder so that they hung over his back. They clapped the whole day. The rhythm of the clapping made Owl forget all about the fire sticks. When they swung around on to his chest once more, Dima grabbed the fire sticks and ran away.

Owl and his family ran after Dima, but he had made a clever plan. He had a bag full of thorns over his shoulder and threw it on to the ground behind him. This stopped Owl and his family from chasing him. They returned to their place, because they could not cross the thorns on the path.

Dima could not wait to make fire. He rubbed and rubbed the sticks. He blew and blew the ember in a little dry grass until a tiny flame appeared. He lit the whole veld and each time fire reached a tree, Dima said,

‘From now on people will be able to make a fire with each tree on Earth.’

A long, long time passed. When Dima finally returned to Owl’s place, he found no one but a little boy playing with wooden animals. Dima asked the boy to show him where they kept their water. The boy led him to the place of water. Dima saw the big *dzaba*, the huge clay pot in which the family stored water.

Dima greeted the boy and pretended to leave for his home, but he secretly turned around to the water. He turned the huge pot over so that the water started flowing on the ground and became a river. Dima quickly jumped over the running water to the other side.

Then he was safely across the river of water where Owl could not find him. This is why the whole Earth has rivers full of water today. This is why we now have the sun, moon and fire.

All because of the magician *Dima*.

## 10. Katitu Mamombo

Once upon a time there were four girls who lived in a village in the Kalahari Desert. Katitu Mamombo was the youngest of the four. She was small, but clever and wise.

The three big girls went into the veld one day to gather food and wood. Little Katitu ran after them, but her sisters sent her back.

“Go back Katitu! You are too small to come with us! Stay at home!”

Katitu did not pay attention to them. She followed them from a distance. When they noticed her, they were too far away from home to send her back, so she joined them.

While she was walking behind the older girls, Katitu cut herself a branch of wood from a tree. She made herself a bow and an arrow. There were lots of ripe berries to pick so the girls walked, picked, walked, picked until the sun dropped in behind the Kalahari horizon.

The girls had lost track of time. It had become dark. They were lost.

The girls saw a tiny light flickering in the distance and walked towards it. They found a deserted village with a hut in which to spend the night. Next thing, they saw an old woman sitting next to this hut. Little Katitu went to greet her.

“Oh?” answered the old woman, “What are you doing here? This is Big Snake’s village. He lives in a big hole in that cattle kraal over there.”

“When people come here to milk the cows, he eats them. If you stay here he will come to your hut in the middle of the night while you are asleep – and kill you!”

Wise little Katitu did not panic. There was nowhere else for them to go in the dark, so she made a plan.

Katitu asked the old woman for a hard cowhide to cover the door of their sleeping hut. She covered the door opening with the cowhide and tied it up tightly. She decided to rest and sleep just for a short while, so that she can feel alert and stay awake for the rest of the night.

“When the wind begins to blow,” she said to her sisters, “you must wake me up.”

Katitu went to sleep. The wind came up. Shuu, shuu, shuu...

The sisters woke Katitu up and then they went to sleep. Katitu fixed the hard cow hide tightly against the door and made a little hole in the middle – for her bow and arrow. Much later that night Katitu heard Big Snake approach.

Big Snake chanted:

“gom-gom, gom-gom, gom-gom, where are they?”

The clever little girl answered him with her own chant:

“Here they are, here they are, here they are!”

Big Snake rushed towards the hard skin that covered the door. Just before he could reach the hut, little Katitu shot her sharp arrow through the hole in the cowhide. Yes, she shot him. The little girl, Katitu, killed Big Snake.

Katitu quickly woke up the older girls. “Sisters, sisters, sisters,” she whispered, “get up, get up, get up!” When they woke up they saw a big snake lying outside the hut.

“Come, come, sisters, come, we have to take him back to his hole!”

They rolled him up, rolled him up, rolled him up and they put him back into his hole.

“Hurry, hurry, hurry! We have to run, run, run!”

The girls ran. Before the sun came up, Big Snake’s wife told his children to go and look for him. When his children found him lying dead in his hole, they screamed:

“Our father is dead! Quick, let us go after those girls!” All the snake’s children went after the girls. The oldest one was Lizard. Then came Skink, Gecko and Monitor.

Katitu heard them approach and said to her sisters:

“Turn into trees!”

Yes, trees. When the snakes arrived at the spot where they had seen the girls, all they found were only the trees standing there. The snake children were tired and lay down under the trees to sleep. When they were fast asleep and snoring, Katitu told the girls to quickly turn back into human beings. Into the dangerous night they ran, ran, ran.

At sunrise the girls, who were now tired and thirsty, reached a waterhole. None of the older sisters wanted to go down to scoop water from the deep well. They asked Katitu to climb down the well, as she was the smallest.

“Sisters, sisters, will you help me out of the well if I climb in?”

“Yes, Katitu, we will help you. Of course we will. We will.”

Katitu went down into the deep well and scooped water and passed it to her sisters. Each girl drank and then walked away. They all left and walked home, leaving Katitu down in the deep well.

Later that day, the elephants came to drink, as they always did at sunset. One of them drank and left. Another one drank and left. The last elephant drank and with the water he swallowed Katitu! A few drops of Katitu’s blood sprayed onto the reeds growing around the water hole.

Meanwhile, Katitu’s sisters had arrived back home without any food or wood – or Katitu!

They pretended to cry and told the family that Katitu got lost.

Everyone started searching for her. Her father, mother, uncles, aunts and brothers. And all the neighbours. They searched and searched. Her brothers went far off into the distance to look for her.

The boys became tired and rested next to a waterhole. Katitu’s one brother cut a reed to make himself a flute. When her brother played on his flute, the flute sang by itself:

*Is this my brother who plays for?*

*My sisters left me behind*

*and the elephant came to swallow me, swallow me!*

The boys rushed home and Katitu’s brother handed the reed to his father, who played it. And again, the reed sang.

The father handed the reed to Katitu’s mother, who played it. And again, the reed sang.

Katitu’s father then called all the young men of the village and ordered them to search for the elephants’ tracks and follow their spoor. The young men hurried off into the distance. Katitu had to be found.

The young men came across a herd of elephants along the way.

“Elephants, elephants,” the young men said, “have you seen the oelephant who swallowed our sister?”

The elephants sang:

*Ha!*

*We walk lightly.*

*we carry nothing.*

The elephants walked away. The young men then met up with an old elephant in the bush.

“Old elephant, old elephant, have you seen the one who swallowed our girl?”

*Ha!*

*I walk lightly.*

*I carry nothing.*

Just then the young men heard a little voice coming from inside the belly of the elephant.

They listened carefully...

“Cut him open!” said the little voice, “Go on, cut him open, on the left side. Carefully, because I am sitting on the left side !”

The boys held the old elephant down and made a deep cut in his belly. There was little Katitu – inside him!

The young men took her out and carried her home. The villagers welcomed Katitu. The older girls were banished from the village and now had to find their own way in the dark.

Katitu’s family prepared a huge feast in her honour. They celebrated her homecoming with singing and dancing, singing and clapping and dancing late into the night.

## 11. The Elephant Wife

There was a man who lived far away from his family. In this far-away place, he married an elephant. Yes, an elephant. They had a baby boy and the man named him after his brother, Dimo.

The man went home to his family to tell them of his baby's birth. He told them that he had named the baby after his brother, Dimo. His family was very happy. "This is good," they said, and promised to visit him and his family.

The man's brother, Dimo, went back home with him. While they were walking, Dimo saw the spoor of many elephant on the ground. Close by were the spoor of a baby elephant. Dimo said: "But there are only the spoor of elephant here! Is this place filled with elephant?" But his brother said it did not matter, they should just continue walking.

When they arrived at the man's home, they made a fire and waited for his family to arrive. The man's wife was still out in the veld, looking for fruit and vegetables, as a woman does.

When a man is unsuccessful in hunting for the pot, the woman brings home veld foods. This way, the family always has something to eat.

Ho! And while they were sitting at the fireside, the elephant wife and baby came out of the bush. The mother was talking to the baby in a loud voice, as he was still little and could not walk the whole day. She encouraged the baby elephant to walk the last bit. "Come, come, pick up your feet, let us walk, let us go home!"

Dimo was afraid of the elephant's loud voice. Were these the elephant whose tracks he had seen? Why were they coming in this direction? His brother said nothing because he knew it was his wife and child. But Dimo exclaimed, "Oh! I may die today!"

The elephant wife was not worried. She simply came over to greet him, knowing that Dimo was her husband's brother who had come to visit him.

Dimo was worried and thought to himself, has my brother gone mad or what? We are people, how can he marry an animal – and such a large one? He looked at the elephant. No, he did not understand this. And he said to his brother: “But the old people, I heard them say, this here, this animal, is meat.” But his brother simply said: “This is my wife.”

That night, Dimo kept peeping at the couple. While sleeping, the elephant opened her ear and the man lay on it. Dimo thought: “No! Look at him, look at my brother! He is lying on an elephant’s ear!” Dimo looked at this and thought his brother had gone mad.

Dimo did not sleep well that night. He peeped and peeped at his brother and the elephants, slept a little and peeped and slept a little, peeping all the while.

On the second day, the man and his elephant family went into the bush together to find food. Dimo was hungry, but stayed behind, thinking, I see my brother has married flesh. He married food. Dimo started preparing everything he would need to kill the elephant and her calf: a knife, a spear, a bow and arrows. He did this because he knew that this was not a person, not a wife. It was meat. So he gathered everything together he would need to kill the elephant.

Now, when they all came home that night, Dimo noticed that the elephant was limping and had a sore place on her foot. This place had been there for a while because it was rotten and had a strong smell. That night when they went to sleep, the elephant put her foot close to the healing heat of the fire. The foot had a hole in it, big enough for Dimo to see the fat inside her, next to the bone.

Dimo kept looking at the foot and the fat the entire night. He was hungry. He smelled the meat and listened to the fat dripping slowly from the foot.

And so, he took the veld food, bulbs and roots he had gathered that day from his bag and dipped it into the boiling fat in the foot. The elephant woke up with a loud groan, asking: “Oh! What is going on now?” Then she went back to sleep. Again, Dimo dipped his food into the hot fat to eat, and again the elephant woke up with a groan. “Oh! What is going on now?”

Then came the third day. The brother went hunting, the elephant and calf went gathering food and Dino stayed behind, making plans. He saw his brother going this way and the elephants going that way. He said to himself, I must go and hunt that elephant. He took his weapons and tracked the large elephant's spoor on the ground. When he found her and her calf, he first shot the big elephant and then the small elephant. He slaughtered the mother, cut up her white meat and then slaughtered the calf. He chose the best meat and carried it home to his brother's place.

Dimo made a big fire. He roasted the meat. It made a delicious smell in the air. He ate a piece and put some away for his brother. On returning home, his brother was worried about his wife and baby, why are they not back yet? Why were they staying in the bush so long? She should be home as the sun is already dying for the day.

Dimo said: "Leave this story now and eat first." His brother agreed and asked where the meat came from. Dimo replied saying: "Eat first, we'll talk later." The brother ate and asked, "Why is this meat so good?"

After supper, Dimo said: "My brother, you are a big man. You know that the small elephant is not your child. It is an elephant child. The big elephant is not your wife. It is an elephant. Animals are meat. Why do you think meat is wife?"

After they had eaten, Dimo asked, "What shall we do now? Shall we go to our parents and bring all our family here to come and eat in this place of plenty elephant? You say this is your wife, but this is not your wife, it is meat. You must not say this is your family. You gave this small elephant a name, Dimo, but it is not my brother, it is an animal. These are animals and we are people, we eat meat, not marry it."

"Yes," said his brother, still chewing the meat. "It is very good, very tasty. Yes, we can go and fetch our family."

Dimo and his brother argued about who should fetch the family and who should stay with the supply of meat. “You must go alone,” said Dimo, “I must stay here and eat this good meat and look after it.”

“No, you can’t stay here alone, we must go together to fetch our people,” replied his brother. “No,” said Dimo, “We cannot leave this good meat here.”

The man walked off by himself and left Dimo behind with all the meat. It was then that the animal spirit came and swallowed Dimo whole. Yes, swallowed him up!

When the man came back with the family, they found Dimo missing. They searched and searched, but could not find him. Then the mother declared: “No, no, no, something else has taken your brother away; it is the elephant spirit, the spirit has swallowed him!” She knew how to change this.

Dimo’s family made a fire, they sang and clapped and danced so that the elephant thing, this spirit thing, could hear their song and feel their dance. The elders said, “The spirit thing likes it when people sing; the singing makes him come.” So, they sang:

*Head on this side*

*Body on that side*

*We must kill the spirit thing*

*We must save the man inside*

*There are snakes and things*

*Inside, with the man, inside.*

And when the elephant spirit monster came, because of the singing, they chopped off its head. The sun was now rising. The brother emerged from inside the spirit thing. But first, snakes and

poisonous things came out. The family chopped all these horrible things – dead, dead, dead. Then Dimo came out. Alive!

The family made a fire, ate well and danced deep into the night to celebrate.

## 12. Beautiful Zebra Girl

A long time ago there was a crocodile that lived in the deep Okavango River, as he still does up to this day. One day, a herd of beautiful zebra came by to drink water near Crocodile's home. When Crocodile saw the pretty stripes of the zebras' hides, he swam closer to have a good look at the interesting black and white patterns.

He asked them: "Where do you come from?"

They replied: "We come from our home in the bush, and because our hearts became dry we had to come here – to cool our hearts – and drink near your home, because we are thirsty!"

"Yes", replied Crocodile, "You may drink here so that I can look at your beautiful hides."

Crocodile said to a young zebra close to him: "Young woman, you are so beautiful. Just look at your stripes! Where do you come from?"

"From far away, far from here, from the bush," she replied.

"Can I go home with you?" asked Crocodile, "You are so lovely. Look at your pretty stripes! I want to marry you. Now!"

Zebra Girl was afraid of Crocodile but she said: "Oh, you are making a very good choice. You are, however, a water animal. How will you come with me and follow my family on dry land? You will not survive because you need water."

Crocodile told her that she was so beautiful that he would just go with her – no matter what. So, he staggered out of the water. When the zebras finished drinking, he walked after them, following them into the bush.

Crocodile was soon dragging his feet, struggling through the thick sand, huffing and puffing.

He was thirsty. He was hungry. And he was drying out. He was not used to this kind of walking on dry land!

Beautiful Zebra Girl left him behind and ran ahead. Crocodile could not catch up with her, however hard he tried.

In the meantime, Hyena was moving through the bush looking for food, as usual – hyenas are always hungry. Hyena came across Crocodile, who had dug himself a hole in the sand to hide from the sun.

“Are you dead or alive?” asked Hyena, kicking Crocodile in the ribs, wondering if it was safe to start eating Crocodile – hyenas eat anything.

Crocodile pretended to be dead. He was hoping Hyena would drag him back to the water. Everyone knew that hyenas soak their prey in water before eating it so that it can be soft and chewy – hyenas hate dry food – they cannot swallow it because it gets stuck in their throats.

Hyena decided that it was safe, that Crocodile was indeed dead. Hyena grabbed hold of his tail. Hyena pulled and pulled Crocodile all the way back to the river, and pushed him into the water.

By this time, Crocodile was furious at both beautiful Zebra Girl and stupid Hyena. Crocodile was also starving. He opened his huge, wide, ugly, toothy mouth, snapped his jaws around Hyena and pulled him into the water with a mighty splash. He swallowed hyena there and then.

The news travelled fast, of the silly, lovesick Crocodile that was tricked by the beautiful Zebra Girl. From that day on, the animals stayed away from crocodiles and mix only with their own kind.

Therefore, to this day, the crocodile lies quietly underneath the water, hiding, always hiding and not talking to anyone, just waiting to strike when another one comes near him.

### 13. The Mud Baby

There was once a woman who longed for a child. Her husband was not interested in having a baby and did nothing to satisfy her desire. Her yearning for a child became too much to bear.

Secretly, the woman went to the Manyeka, the village healer and talked to her about her longing for a *daza tzema*, a baby.

Manyeka told her, “You must go and dive into the river. Swim to the bottom and collect mud from there. When you have done that, come back here.”

The woman went back home, where her misery soon drove her to take the healer’s advice. She swam to the bottom of the river. She gathered the mud. She returned to the surface. Then, she went back to the healer and placed the mud next to her fire. Manyeka started to make a baby from the mud, while the woman sang a song. It was a healing song, expressing her faith in the healer’s abilities to invoke the spirit of a baby.

*Ya che ya !kung*

*Ya !obe ya Kdza*

*Che che che cha*

*Ha-hum ha-hum ha-hum*

*Kaka kaka*

*chu du chu du chu du chu du ...*

Manyeka shaped a little arm from mud and the woman sang. Manyeka made little legs from mud and the woman sang. She made the baby’s body and the woman sang. Manyeka made the baby’s head and the woman sang. And so, while the woman sang her song of faith next to the healer’s fire, Manyeka shaped the river mud into a baby for her.

Manyeka then named the baby Mari'a. She instructed the woman to take good care of the baby, to keep it inside her hut, and not take it outside. It should always remain fully covered in skin blankets.

The woman made a little bed from scraps of leather and soft feathers. Inside the dark grass hut she tucked the baby into its little bed.

Later, she and her husband sat outside around their hearth. They kindled their fire and talked to each other. Suddenly, they heard a cry from inside their hut. The woman rushed inside. The woman went to have a look and called her husband, "Come and look, we have a real baby now!" she exclaimed. Her husband was astonished at her behaviour. He could not understand what she was doing with this baby. After all, it was not real – it was made from mud!

The next morning, her husband, who was still not interested in having a baby, insisted that the woman accompany him into the bushveld to look for food. He was secretly hoping that something would happen to the mud baby while they were away. The woman asked her sister's children to look after the baby for her. She told them to keep the baby inside the hut and inside the blankets.

The children took the baby outside to play with her in the veld. It started raining.

The woman and her husband returned from the veld with their food. They saw that Mari'a was not in their hut. Oh no! The healer had told her not to take the baby outside until it was ready.

When the children took the baby into the rain, it got wet. The water had fallen onto the mud baby and so, it returned to mud.

#### 14. The Python and Little Child

A mother and her friends went into the bush one morning - it was the berry season and the trees were full of little red fruits. They reached a water pool, drank some water and then went

in different directions to pick. The mother loosened her carrying pouch and put her child down on the ground. The child was heavy and she wanted to fill her bag with lots of fruit to take home.

The little child crawled behind the bush. It saw a big snake, a python, and cried for its mother. The mother called back and told her child to be good. She told her that the people went to bed with empty stomachs the previous night. She needed to gather food.

The child cried out again and again, but the mother told her child to be quiet while she gathered.

Meanwhile, the snake slithered closer to the little child. The snake opened its mouth wide and took the child. Yes. It swallowed the child slowly.

The mother continued to gather berries. When her bag was full, she went back to her child. She saw the Python with a huge bulge inside its long body – she screamed when she realised it had swallowed her child.

The other women heard her cry and came running. The mother sobbed and sobbed, explaining that she had left her child alone and that is why the snake had swallowed it. The women wasted no time – they pushed their sticks down the python's throat so that it would vomit. The python vomited the little child out.

The women killed the huge snake and took it home, where they cut it up and roasted it on the fire. They ate berries and soft meat that night. They talked about the python and how it swallowed the child. They talked about how the mother left her child alone, how they had saved the child and killed the snake. They talked and talked and talked.

## 15. The Sisters and the Ogre

There were once two sisters who went into the veld to gather food. They found an ants' nest, opened it at the side with their digging sticks and scraped the red ants into their skin bags. Red ants are tasty when fried over the fire.

The sisters noticed a freshly dug mound of earth nearby - with a bow and arrow next to it. Who was digging here? There was no one else around. They were curious and started digging into the mound with their sticks until they found a few *gharo* roots. The younger sister stuck her stick deep into the ground and suddenly, they heard a baby crying.

"Oh!" she said, "I found a baby, a baby, for me!" The sisters quickly made the hole bigger and dug the child out of the hole. They laid it onto the ground and covered it with a carrying-skin, but it cried and put its little hands up into the air.

"A-aa, a-aa, a-aa"

The sisters looked at each other and wondered what they should do with this baby. The younger sister said, "It is mine! I dug it out!" But the older sister refused, "No! You have not even had your first period yet. I am older and I am the mother of this child. Come, let us go, let's make a little hut and shelter for the baby."

The older sister picked the baby up and put it into her carrying-skin. They walked on to find a good spot to make camp. They found a tree and the older sister laid the baby on her beaded skirt. She took her skirt off to cover the child. Then they went to collect wood and grass to make a little hut.

When the younger sister returned with a bundle of wood on her back, she heard a strange voice coming from the child:

"Let the night come soon so that I can do what I must do."

She dropped her wood and he was quiet. And then, when she came close to him, he cried again.

“A-aa, a-aa, a-aa.”

The younger sister said, “Be quiet, child, be quiet.” Then she rushed to find her sister said, “Sister, sister, that baby spoke in a man’s voice and said that he will do what he must do when it is dark! Why is this?”

Her older sister said, “That is a lie! A child does not speak like that!” But the younger sister said, “Go over there and listen for yourself. Don’t argue with me.”

The older sister sneaked over to the child and heard him say:

“Let night come soon so that I can do what I must do.”

When she dropped her wood next to him, he suddenly went quiet and cried.

“A-aa, a-aa, a-aa.”

She rushed over to her younger sister. “It is true, I heard him speak in a man’s voice. What is this child? Go, go and get my carrying-skin and skirt that he is lying on and lay him down on these small little skins and then hurry back to me.”

The younger sister went and when she lifted the child from the skirt, it cried – and she put it down. And she took the skirt again – and it cried. Then she spread out the little pieces of skin and laid him on it, took the skirt and carrying-skin and rushed back to her older sister. The older sister filled her carrying-skin with sand and the girls ran away quickly.

The child lay waiting for them in vain while the clouds above began to gather. There was lightning and the rain came. The child stood up and said, “I see I have allowed those two

women to escape from me. They are gone.” He took his bow and arrow and followed them. “Let there be lightning again so that I can see the trail of the sisters. I must find them.”

The lightning flashed and he saw their trail on the ground. Then it was dark again and again, he said, “Let there be lightning so that I can follow the trail of the two sisters.” The lightning flashed and he saw their trail on the sand. The ogre pursued the sisters until he came to a tree where their trail stopped.

The sisters had climbed into this tree and were sitting high up in its branches, clutching their carrying bags. One with sand and the other, with the red ants they had gathered earlier.

He looked up and said, “Hmm, I smell you!” The older sister took the sand from her bag and threw it into his eyes. He rubbed his eyes and said, “I am coming up!”

The younger sister said, “No, why don’t you clean the ground nicely under the tree, then you lie down and we will jump onto you?” And he did that - he lay down so that the sisters could jump on him.

The sisters jumped and he grabbed hold of them. The younger sister opened her carrying bag and shook the ants onto his stomach where it crawled in between his legs. The ants bit him and chewed his flesh. The ogre screamed.

The sisters ran and ran until they were back home, where they told their family everything that had happened. Yes, said their mother and father, it is true, it is true. They knew about this ogre.

Meanwhile, he was still screaming with pain and ran to the healer - who stitched up his wounded testicles. So now we know why men have stitched up testicles.

## 16. Lion’s Fire Sticks

This story starts in the old times when animals and people lived together. In those days people did not have the right to fire. They ate their food raw. Only Lion had the power of fire.

The people and the animals came together to make a plan. ‘What can we do to get the fire from Lion so that we can cook our food?’ they asked. They decided to wait until evening and started singing and singing, clapping and clapping, calling everyone together.

*Come dance with us Come dance with us Come dance with us.*

Many animals came from the bush to join in the dancing and singing. Lion brought his fire sticks. He rubbed the sticks, rubbed and rubbed. Soon a little smoke appeared beneath the sticks. Lion blew on the smoke; he scraped some dry grass into the smoke. A little flame appeared and everyone brought a piece of wood. Soon everyone was dancing around a fire.

Hare was a cunning and fast animal. The people said to him, ‘While we are singing here and while Lion is dancing with us, you must take his fire sticks and run. When he chases you, we will kill his fire.’

Hare grabbed Lion’s fire sticks and ran. He did not make it because Lion caught up with him and brought the fire sticks back. Lion sang a boastful song:

*To me it does not matter,*

*I don’t have a problem.*

*I will eat you – with hair*

*Or without hair!*

*I don’t have a problem,*

*All of you are food to me.*

Springbok could run very fast and jump high. The people said to him, ‘While Lion is dancing and singing here with us, you must grab his fire sticks and run.’

When they were dancing and singing, Springbok grabbed the fire sticks and jumped away into the veld.

But Lion said, ‘Why do I not hear the clip-clop-clip-clop of Springbok’s hooves behind me?’

Lion turned and saw Springbok running into the veld with his fire sticks. So he ran after Springbok, caught him and came back with his fire sticks.

Again, Lion sang his boastful song.

Then the people whispered to each other. They said, ‘Let us ask Duiker. He is small and very fast. Duiker, they said, while Lion is dancing and singing here with us, you must grab his fire sticks and run away.’

When they were dancing around the fire, Duiker grabbed Lion’s fire sticks and ran into the veld.

But Lion said, ‘Why do I not hear Duiker snorting behind me as before?’

He turned around and chased after little Duiker who was darting into the veld. Lion caught up with him and returned to the fire with his sticks.

Again, Lion sang his boastful song:

*To me it does not matter, I don't have a problem. I will eat you – with hair Or without hair!*

*I don't have a problem, All of you are food to me.*

‘Oh,’ sighed the people. ‘Which animal can help us now? Ostrich has the longest legs of all, let us ask him.’ They explained the plan to Ostrich and he grabbed Lion’s fire sticks this time.

Lion said, ‘Why do I not hear Ostrich’s high singing voice behind me anymore?’

He looked around, saw Ostrich running away and chased after him.

After a long time Lion returned, with a tired face, for Ostrich ran too fast for him.

‘From this day forward,’ he said, ‘I will not leave any of you in peace. I will hunt you all and chase you and eat you!’

And this is how Lion came to be everyone’s enemy and how people got the power of fire.

## 17. The Duiker Wife

This man brought home a wife. A beautiful wife. Her skin was lovely with a nice red shine. Everyone admired her lovely skin. His mother-in-law was very happy. She wanted to have grandchildren. Hmm, her grandchildren will be beautiful with a bright skin.

But this beautiful wife did not know how to cook. She did not want to eat meat. She did not want to eat porridge. Yes, she was a vegetarian. She wanted to eat vegetables and beans. Beans, beans, beans.

When the family went into the veld to look for food, the mother-in-law noticed that the wife hopped around from plant to plant, eating this leaf and that leaf. She knew where to find nice vegetables and soft leaves. She was good at finding food in the veld. Not the mother-in-law was pleased. This wife could gather well. She knew which plants was poisonous and which plants were delicious.

When the family went home that evening, the mother-in-law noticed that the wife did not join them. She secretly hid behind a bush and saw the wife walk away. What! The wife had turned into a Duiker! She was hopping around, eating from the bush! This was not a person,

it was an animal! What daughter-in-law had her son brought home to her? What children would they have? No. This was wrong.

The wife sang:

*I don't eat meat*

*I eat beans*

*I don't eat meat*

*I eat beans*

*No meat*

*Beans, beans, beans*

*Beans, beans, beans*

The mother-in-law told her family what she saw in the veld. No, they said, you are lying, This is not possible. So the mother-in-law agreed with the family that they would leave the veld in small groups the next day and hide behind bushes to see for themselves how the wife turns into a Duiker.

The family saw the wife turn into a Duiker. They exclaimed. The wife heard them and turned around. She saw them and ran away into the bush. She never returned.

## 18. The Lion Woman

There was once a man who quarrelled and disagreed with his wife. He did nothing to help solve their problems. Finally the woman had had enough and decided to return to her parent's place.

She walked and walked for a long time, collecting ripe berries from the bush and putting them in her gathering skin. Towards evening she found a tree with honey, made a fire and used a smoking log to chase the bees away.

She filled her calabash with honey and decided to camp there for the night. She gathered more wood for the fire to protect her from the wild animals and keep her warm.

Darkness fell and the woman lay down next to her fire. It was not long before a terrible roar woke her from her sleep. A lion was standing over her with his horrible mouth wide open. In the moonlight she could see into his mouth! Oh, she thought, am I going to die tonight? Is this lion going to swallow me? But then, the woman reached for her honey calabash that was standing next to the fire. By now the honey had melted and was very hot. She poured it into the lion's open mouth and then thrust her digging stick deep into his throat. The lion groaned and fell down dead.

When the sun came up again, she walked to her parent's place. She told them how she had killed a lion at her fire – with her digging stick and hot honey. They would not believe her.

They exclaimed: “Since when can a woman kill a lion? You take us to this lion that you say you killed!”

When the family came upon the dead lion, they were surprised and said, “How can a woman kill a lion? You are a strong woman.”

They skinned the lion and the woman cured its hide. Now she had the best blanket to sleep on. Everyone respected this woman.

In the meantime, her husband decided to look for her. When he arrived at her parents' place and heard the lion story, he said: “Oh! My wife can kill a lion!”

The man went back home to fetch their children. He became a good husband and helped her by bringing food home to eat.

## 19. The Jackal and the Sun

Once upon a time, long ago, Jackal lived with his old father. One day, the old man said to his son: “Hey, my son, you should look for a wife who will cook for me when you are away, because you can see how old I am now.”

Jackal went into his kraal and took his goats out to graze. Far out in the bush, he saw something shining on a rock and thought to himself: “What is shining so beautifully over there on that rock?”

He remembered what his father told him about finding a wife, and went closer and closer to see the beautiful shine on the rock. When he got there, the shine was even more beautiful than he had thought. He asked the shine: “Are you a human being or what are you?”

“No, I am not human.” The shine answered. It is just me. I am the sun.”

Jackal said: “I am sorry I did not know it was you. Why are you alone?”

The sun replied: “I was left alone when my people moved on, because my parents did not want to carry me. I am hot.”

The Jackal said: “But you are beautiful! I will carry you. No problem! I will take you home for my father to see you.”

The sun looked doubtful but at last she agreed. “OK, it is fine, carry me, but do not complain!”

So, Jackal put her on his back and started the journey home.

The sun started burning Jackal on his back. “Will you please come down from my back, so that I can rest?”

“I told you,” said the sun. “No complaints. Please carry on.”

Jackal did not think he could manage to carry her for much longer. His back was hurting so much that he could hardly walk.

But then Jackal saw a log across the path. He crawled under the log so that the sun would fall off. He crawled through – but the skin and the fur on his back was left behind with the sun.

The Jackal went home without any skin on his back. His father treated his back with a special animal’s oil. After some time, the Jackal’s back recovered and the fur grew again. But it was always a different colour from before – just to remind jackal not to be foolish again.

## 20. The Water Women

Early one morning two sisters left their reed huts and went down to the river to fetch water in their calabashes. One sister was married with children while the younger sister had only just grown breasts.

The sun sparkled like stars on the river and lit up a luminous, white water lily. The younger sister put her calabash down on the muddy bank and waded into the water to pick the flower. She pushed into the river’s strong current, she reached out and touched it.

Suddenly the water swallowed her. She disappeared without a sound, ripple or trace.

The older sister stood at the water's edge. She was shocked. `she stood stock still on the spot. Her hands clasped together in fear, she gathered her courage and entered the dangerous water. She searched among reeds and rocks. She called out and cried for her sister.

Then she gave up. There was nothing more she could do but run home to tell the family. Word of the missing sister spread quickly around the village. The elders gathered at the family home. They told everyone to stay calm – they knew where the sister had gone. They knew how to call her back, back, back from beneath the water.

The oldest healer in the clan ordered the villagers to fetch firewood and gather at the riverbank at sunset.

Later that night, as the flames of the red-hot fire were leaping into the darkness, the healer started to sing softly. The people clap-clapped in a circle around the healer, they clapped-clapped while their voices travelled through the bush.

*tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh*

*teta-teta-teta-teta-teta*

*!xu teta !xu teta !xu teta*

*ka ch-i ka ch-i ka ch-i*

*tuh-tuh*

The healer bent down, with her face close to the shallow water, to listen, to hear the message she had to deliver to her people. She knew how to talk to the ancestors, how to ask for help, how to hear their spirit voices, how to sing those ancient songs, the ones that could be heard only by those who had come before her, those who had already passed into the other world.

The people chanted deep into the night. The healer ascended on threads silver as spider webs until she entered the spirit world, home of the ancestors.

By early morning she returned from the village in the sky and declared that the younger sister was alive.

The healer ordered the people to sacrifice a goat to their ancestors. While the villagers prepared for this ancient ritual, the missing girl's mother, sisters, aunts and nieces went to her hut in silence. The healer had told them to lay a new floor with fresh dung and mud.

The healer then told them to leave a bare patch of soft ground in the hut. She said:

“Your sister will soon appear.”

She explained that it was the water women who had lured their sister into the river, where she had now joined them in their beautiful mud homes, where they loved her so much that they licked her cheeks until she too became incandescent, like the flower.

In the underwater world, the sister married the Water Snake. She gave birth to a baby boy. They were content, living with their new family.

And so the time walked and walked and walked.

One day, a whirlwind appeared on land, in the village she came from. It spun around, churning

up sand as it moved in small, swift circles. In this swirling gust of wind and dust the sister and her little boy appeared in the hut. They appeared upside down, both of them, just like that ... upside down. Their feet appeared first, then their heads.

The sister sat down quietly with her family. Calmly she explained to them that under the water she had become a healer – and that the child at her side was a born healer.

She said that she had more children with the Water Snake, and that they continued to live peacefully under the water. She explained that in future she would be her people's healer. She asked that they should not be afraid of her. She would visit her river family from time to time and her invisible children would come to see her here in the village. She asked the people to accept them because they were spirit people. She repeated: "Do not fear me."

In this way, the sister lived between the river and the land while healing the people. The river continues to flow and villagers still live their lives alongside its waters.

## 21. Kulungu-kulungu

There was this man whose name was Tshengu. He married a beautiful woman and brought her back to his mother's house. Her name was Teria Mengu.

On arrival, he looked around his village and thought to himself, "No, no, there are too many men here." And so Tshengu decided to take Mengu away to another place. They moved far away from the village.

After only one day in their new home next to a river, the husband said to his wife,

"Wait here while I fetch our clothes and other things." Mengu waited and waited, but

Tshengu did not return soon. She wondered if he had another wife somewhere, but thought to herself, “No, I cannot survive in this way. I must make my own garden.”

And so she did. She planted maize and tobacco. She used stones to grind the dry maize she had brought with her. She made porridge from the maize flour.

Mengu stayed alone in the house at the river’s edge. But one day, at sunset, she heard a strange sound: kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...

It was a giant! He was rowing across the river in a canoe. Leaving his canoe at the water’s edge, he walked over to Mengu’s place. He knocked at the door and said, “May I come in?”

Mengu was afraid and replied, “Yes, you may.”

The giant asked her for a chair and she gave him one.

“Where is the porridge,” he asked. She gave him bowl of porridge.

He ate it and asked, “Where is a pipe?” And Mengu gave him a pipe.

The giant asked, “Where is the tobacco?” And Mengu gave him tobacco.

When the giant had eaten and smoked, he asked for a drink. When Mengu gave him the drink, he asked if he could sleep.

“No,” said Mengu, “The sun is about to rise.” The giant saw the sun rising, so he got into his canoe and went back to where he came from.

Kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...

When the sun began to set the following day, the giant returned. And again, he asked,

“Where is my chair?”

“There it is,” replied Mengu.

“Where is my porridge?”

“There it is.”

“Where is my pipe?”

“There it is.”

“Where is my drink?”

“There it is.” calmed her fears and put out the chair, the porridge, the pipe and the drink. The same happened as before. Each morning after the giant left, Mengu set about her chores. At night, she put out the giant’s food.

Then, one evening, her husband came back. He saw the food she had put out and asked, “You are alone here! How can you put out all that food for yourself? Who are you doing this for? Is there another man?”

While Tshengu was raging at his wife, she said, “Keep quiet and listen to what I have to say. I am in big trouble, but I have a plan.”

She took her husband and painted his head black with river mud and charcoal from her fire. She dug a hole next to her bed and told her husband to get into it. She closed the hole up to his neck so that only his head was visible.

“You told me that I was cooking for another man. Now do not be afraid when you see the one you call ‘my other man’.”

Then they heard that sound.

Kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...

Mengu whispered, “Remember what I told you. You must keep very quiet and just watch what happens.”

The giant knocked at the door. “Open up so that I can come in!” He did not ask his usual questions. He simply looked at the painted head and said, “What is that and why does this place smell different?”

“It is only a tree stump that I carved and painted,” replied Mengu.

Soon afterwards, the giant again remarked, “This house is not as it usually is, what is that?”

“It is only a tree stump that I carved and painted,” Mengu replied. “Eat your food now.”

When the giant had finished eating and drinking, he asked if he could sleep, but she said, “No, the sun is already rising.” The giant left and crossed the river on his canoe.

Kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu, kulungu...

When the giant had disappeared, Mengu dug her husband out of his hole and asked, “Did you see what that man looked like?”

Tshengu was very frightened. “Let us get out of here quickly!” he said. And the husband and wife ran from that place.

When the giant came knocking on the door the next day, there was no reply. “That carving was another man,” he said to himself. “Now I am too late. If I had known it was another man, I’d have eaten them both!”

## 22. The Slave and Godola Plant

You see, children were never safe. Other people, black and white, would take advantage of us because we were smaller in figure and we did not have powerful armies or guns. You will see how people just took our children in this story that has been around for a long time, I remember it even from my childhood: One day there was this !xun family. The father had shot one of the Ovambo man's cattle in the north. Then this man found the !xun family and told them that he was going to take one of their children to work for him as payment for the animal the father had shot. His parents were afraid of the big man and could not do anything.

A long time passed. Then one day, another !xun family came travelling down from the north. They said that they had seen the child, who was now a man. The families celebrated as they thought their child had long since died. They also decided to go and find their child.

They walked and walked, passing the trees and the rivers that the other family gave them as landmarks. Finally, they found their child with the black people. They told the Ovambo man that their debt was now paid off and that they wanted their child back. Well, he agreed to this.

In the meantime, the !xun boy had learnt to hunt and the Ovambo man had shown him how to plant gadolo. So, the boy asked the man for a few seeds because he liked to eat gadolo.

When the !xun family arrived back in their place, the boy planted the seeds and this was how they started farming with the gadolo plant.

### 23. The Spirit Tree

A hunter went out into the bush to look for a good tree. He wanted to cut branches from which to make arrows for his bow. He found a good tree and cut the top branches off.

Suddenly, he noticed that the tree's heart had started bleeding. The tree bled from its branches.

The tree grew feet and hands and they too started bleeding. The blood flowed on to the ground.

Then, the hunter's fingers grew into branches. He grew another arm, which looked like a wooden club.

Then the hunter started to fade. His soul left him. His spirit flew up.

Then another hunter appeared from this spirit.

The spirit hunter became the greatest of all hunters. He knew which arrows to cut from which tree for hunting.

### 24. Hare, People and Lion's Cattle.

There was once a powerful lion that moved from place to place. One day, he met a herd of cattle and said to them, 'Listen, if you come and make a garden for me, I will give you gifts.'

The cattle came from their place and created a garden for the lion. When their job was done,

the Hare arrived and said to the lion, 'You took the cattle from their place and told them that if they make you a garden, you would give them gifts.'

The lion replied, 'I do not have gifts to give them. There is a garden now with vegetables and mealies. They can harvest some of it and take it to the market to sell. With that money, they can return to their own place.'

When the cattle heard this, they went to the garden to harvest the crops. The leader of the cattle walked behind them and when the lion saw him, he waited. When the cattle were not looking, the lion grabbed him from behind and killed him. Frightened, the cattle ran away.

While they were running and crying, the Hare came to them and said, 'Listen here, that killer was the lion, he is not friendly, he is a devil. You made a mistake to trust him.'

The cattle returned to their place, still crying.

## 25. The Road

According to this story, the car paid for the road with its third-party license. The donkey, the dog and the goat do not have this third party.

The car saw that the donkey, the dog and the goat kept on using the road and said, 'Come, let us hold a meeting.'

'Why?' asked the others.

'I paid for the road,' said the car, 'but now all of you are using this road. Is this right?'

'No,' said the dog, the goat and the donkey, 'It is not right.'

'Everyone must pay,' said the car.

'But how much?' asked the donkey.

They all agreed on the right amount and said that everyone must pay in full.

The dog said to the car, 'I do not have the right amount. You must give me change.'

The goat said, 'I will go and fetch my money.'

But he did not, he ran away instead.

The donkey gave the car the right amount.

Then the car drove away.

And this is why today we see the donkey lying dead on the road. He insisted that he had the right to lie there and then the car drove over him. The dog is always chasing the car because he still owes him money. And the goat? Well, whenever he sees the car, he runs away into the veld.

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