

A HISTORY OF THE OVAMBO OF
NAMIBIA, c 1880-1935

VOLUME 2

APPENDIX 7

METHODOLOGY AND SELECTED TRANSCRIPTS OF
ORAL HISTORICAL RESEARCH IN
OVAMBOLAND, NAMIBIA, 1989-90



PART 1. METHODOLOGY

Introduction: placing the researcher in time

Speaking about the 'other' as a subject is far from enough, until we see ourselves as subjects among others and we place time in ourselves and ourselves in time.¹

I conducted oral research in Namibia between February 1989 and April 1990, during the transition from colonialism to independence. Based in Windhoek where I undertook archival research, I travelled regularly to Ovamboland. My initial contacts were mainly through the churches. In September 1989 I moved north full-time, teaching in a private church-run school at Oshigambo.

The year 1989 saw tremendous political change in Ovamboland and Namibia. In February the South African Defence Force (SADF) and their Namibianised security forces² and police counter-insurgency unit, Koevoet, were still highly visible in Ovamboland, the 'war zone'. The independence process was scheduled to begin in April, with the arrival of UN personnel and troops to supervise elections and demilitarisation. The air of expectation was very powerful. People openly wore the nationalist colours and made clenched fist freedom salutes at the smallest excuse, which I was informed had not been possible before. People had been living under accumulated tensions, frustration and hardship, but there was a light at the end of the tunnel. It was a positive sense that change was coming, repression would end. This atmosphere, battered though it became, more than anything else carried the oral research forward.

¹ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories. Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York, 1991), p 76.

² The South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF).



The breakdown of peace in April was retrogressive in every sense. PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) combatants crossed the border from Angola in the early hours of 1 April, the first day of the transition to independence, in contravention of the tripartite peace agreement between South Africa, Cuba and Angola, of which SWAPO had not been a signatory. They headed for non-existent UN assembly points. South African military retaliation was immediate and more combatants on both sides died in a few weeks of intense fighting than in all the previous years of the war. Approximately 360 people died.

At first I believed this would entirely jeopardise oral research, but during the next month the peace plan gradually went back on track with the arrival of properly equipped UN troops. In time they took precedence over South African military and quasi-military police activity, though not completely able to suppress the latter. The dust however did begin to settle and it became feasible once more to envision trips to all parts of Ovamboland to conduct oral interviews with rural residents.

But the April episode in Ovamboland had particular implications for research fieldwork. Where an area had been badly affected by the April fighting, research remained extremely difficult and it was often a trespass against a deep reservation about the activities of any white person. Nearly half the casualties in April occurred in Ongandjera; without support from Oshigambo students and the staff at Okahau mission, it would have been simply impossible to interview anyone, and insensitive to even try. In the whole of Ovamboland this south-western extremity suffered some of the worst intimidation and fear remained very palpable.

In the rest of Ovamboland, political tensions and hopes bubbled on with the voter registration exercise, campaigning for elections, the return of the exiled president, voting, and the suspense-filled wait for the results of the elections. The return of exiles and refugees in their thousands, most of them

to Ovamboland, brought some of the greatest joy. Their return quickly changed the face of Ovamboland as new shacklands grew up alongside the tarred roads to house returnees.

Overall, flawed and angst-ridden though it was, the independence process constituted an opening-up, a sort of southern African *glasnost*, which offered an oral historian unprecedented possibilities.³ This was not so much because prior to this Namibians would have been reluctant to talk about history, but because South Africa had been keeping researchers out.⁴

My aim was to interview a cross-section of people from what were in the last century separate Ovambo polities. These now overlap, and parts have been transformed by the infrastructure developed largely for South African military purposes. More elderly informants tended to be located deep in the rural interior away from these roads and conurbations. The methods of locating and selecting oral sources were through church channels and personal contacts established in communities, the most important of these being Ondobe and Onangwe in Oukwanyama. The community around Oshigambo was also a great source of contacts.

I was known to have a base in Ovamboland, at Oshigambo High School, which explained my presence and my assistant's relationship with me. I am grateful to the church board, headed by Bishop Kleopas Dumeni, and the school principal, Timothy Ndakunda, for accepting me on to their teaching staff at Oshigambo for this short period of time. I taught mainly history, an interesting experience in itself. It was in Oshigambo that I found my assistant, Natangwe Shapange. Besides sharing with his fellow students a critical and questioning outlook on the world, particular talents suited Natangwe to oral research. He was interested in Ovambo history however localised and always conveyed this to informants. His own memory was

³ This unfortunately did not extend to southern Angola in this period.

⁴ Saunders, 'Towards the decolonisation,' p 84.

phenomenal. He was soon able to cross-reference new interviews with previous ones in mid-interview. His skills developed rapidly and his questioning grew confident. During interviews, initial questions were usually put by myself and translated by Natangwe, which were then followed up with responses fed back to me through translation.

In circumstances where my grasp of oshiKwanyama was very basic, where my skin was white, in a region which was still affected by South African intimidation, dialogue with informants was inevitably affected. I have no conception how much: my imagination and experience are unequal to the task. It seemed it could vary from interview to interview.⁵ In principle at least I was meeting people on their own ground, though as this ground had been invaded by white or white-employed soldiers only too recently I am not sure how much this statement is worth. One can never get away from the question of power.

One reassuring aspect is that I was frequently challenged. Personal details were solicited, and my Zimbabwean background was always of interest. The question frequently arose: 'What's happened to Ian Smith?' Maybe this was my 'objectification' as a white person. But answering this question usually broke some ice and I would silently thank my compatriots yet again that Zimbabwe was independent. For those Ovambo I was meeting, I was obviously not their ideal informant on life in post-independence Zimbabwe. A peasant would have been infinitely more interesting, I suspect.

On the whole I observed that an oral historian asking questions about the past was less threatening than an aid consultant asking about agricultural practices. Being a woman may also have been a slight help. What was at times too helpful was my association, however loose, with a church institution. It

⁵ For a Namibian researcher's perspective on mistrust while conducting fieldwork in the same period, see Williams, *Precolonial Communities*, p 3.

was in discussions of missions and Christianity that I sensed people most often said what they thought I wanted to hear.

All around me and in my interaction with informants, I could perceive the importance of the historical moment. The peculiarity of my research task also meant that I saw great similarities between events in 1915 and the past. The April killings with its mass graves read like the Portuguese conquest, not to mention the coincidence of southern Angolan famine in 1989-90. But at the time I was incapable of integrating the meanings Ovambo informants were putting on their history, and my perceptions remained largely cerebral. Portelli is right to say that the oral researcher stumbles, changes and grows through the encounters with subjects.⁶ I had been given strong hints as to why memory was so important to Namibians, especially in the context of gaining freedom from colonialism. In my obtuseness, and despite the frequent exhortations from Natangwe Shapange to 'open your mind!', this did not sink home for some time. It probably never will completely, but I think the stumbling forward did begin.

Almost by chance I learned that there was a Mbandja community in Okalongo, tucked far away from the main roads and nestling up against the Angolan border. I was fortunate in having as one of my students the grandson of the Lutheran pastor of Okalongo, Reverend Lucas Dama. This is how I gained access to a place I had not imagined existed, after Portuguese conquest of the two kingdoms in 1907 and 1915. Research into Okalongo's history revealed its reconstruction from the scattered remains of the 1915 Mbandja dispersal. The grandson of the king of greater Ombandja, Mtwamoneni, lived a few kilometres away from the son of Sheetekela, king of lesser Ombandja, both kings driven into exile by the Portuguese in 1915. Okalongo was a community with integrity, prosperous from migrant labour earnings, centred around the church and militantly pro-SWAPO. They were

⁶ Portelli, *Luigi Trastulli*, p 76.

organised enough to give me a professional vetting, and secure enough to offer hospitality.

When I interviewed Mtwamoneni, he recited at one point all the waterholes where battles were fought with the Portuguese in 1907 during the first conquest of Ombandja. I duly recorded these and from experience wondered how accurate they might be, especially chronologically.⁷ They did not seem to me to be the most interesting thing to come up in the interview.

A few months later I was sitting in the archives in Luanda. I was perusing photograph albums from 1907, the Portuguese record of their occupation of Ombandja. I was suddenly dazed to realise it was but a visual version of Mtwamoneni's account. But it was not just the factual accuracy which dazed me: it was the sheer fact that Mtwamoneni's account exists.

When Luisa Passerini argues that the retrieval of memory contributes to the emergence of freer cultural attitudes,⁸ this is particularly poignant in the case of Namibia. It instates the problem of freedom at the centre of history.⁹ Mtwamoneni's chronicling of the waterholes that the Mbandja defended - and everything else he said - is an assertion of Mbandja existence and history despite defeat, dispossession and dispersal. His oral discourse has been part of the reconstruction of the Mbandja community in Okalongo, as has Sheetekela's, and is part of what binds it today. It was not just important in the prelude to independence; it has always been important.

The same must be said for the oral informants everywhere else in Ovamboland. Gradually, despite tuning-out from my own culture, ignorance and preoccupations, they placed something of Namibian time in me.

⁷ Methodological discussions in oral history and oral tradition have long focussed on weaknesses of chronology. See Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London, 1985), pp 173-90; David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London, 1982), pp 96 - 105.

⁸ Luisa Passerini, 'Memory', *History Workshop Journal* 15, Spring 1983, p 196.

⁹ *Ibid.* For an impression of the recent development of oral history movements in Eastern Europe as part of social reconstruction, see Joanna Bornat, 'Memory as Evidence: Oral History in Eastern Europe,' *Oral History*, Vol 19 No 1, Spring 1991.

Oral history into written text

It is important to problematise processes of dialogue, recording, and interpreting, because like memory itself, they are subtle and complex¹⁰ and involve creativity.¹¹

The way in which my assistant and I selected interviewees was through recommendations from contacts. They informed us that particular people were knowledgeable about the history of their area, or their life-stories were important or unusual. On a minority of occasions it was women who were suggested. A few people who became aware of our presence and purpose in a community offered themselves voluntarily as informants. Several times the interviews were collective, as with the Kwambi informants and Reverend Dama's participation in the interview with Sheetekela. All in all thirty-nine people were interviewed, five on more than one occasion.¹²

The advantage of collectively interviewing the Kwambi group was that different lines of questioning were raised and the interaction was with other informants, not just questioners.¹³ The information about Ipumbu's treatment of young men summoned to his residence was unexpected; not knowing the background to the informants very well we would never have asked direct questions. Reverend Jason Amakutuwa facilitated and participated in this interview.

As we progressed through interviews and made our cross-references, we developed new angles on questions. When a new point was brought into the dialogue, we took it up in further questions and further interviews. About

¹⁰ Paul Thompson, review of *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* by Alessandro Portelli, in *Oral History*, Vol 19 No 2 Autumn 1991, p 74.

¹¹ Portelli, *Luigi Trastulli*, p 47.

¹² See Appendix 6.

¹³ Leslie Witz, *Write your own history* (Johannesburg, 1988), p 80; Thompson, *Voice*, pp 205-6.

half way through the fieldwork we drew up a list of questions that had come up, and gave these to informants when we set up interviews, so that they could peruse them before recording and gain some idea of what we might ask. Some informants wished to see if there was anything that interested them before being interviewed. The list of questions was never adhered to like a questionnaire in the actual interviews.

The whole process involved interviewing, recording, taking notes. Then, as transcription took so long, we had to work on notes taken in interviews and Natangwe's memory to assess information which could feed into possible follow-up interviews. Obviously, the more interviews one does the more experience is gained. The roughly forty interviews we did is hardly adequate for detailed cross-referencing, especially as we interviewed extensively over different locations rather than intensively in one area. This is even more apparent when it comes to interpreting the meaning of the information in the interviews. It makes this oral historical project a very modest one.

Transcription was a complex process in itself. Not all interviews were fully transcribed; it was an expensive and lengthy process and resources were limited. This explains why not all interviews quoted in the thesis can be included in this appendix, aside from limitations of space. Where interviews were not transcribed from the existing recorded tapes, the detailed notes taken during the interview have been used.

The main transcriber was a returnee, Dan Haipinge. He settled in Windhoek after the elections. His father was a Lutheran pastor in Ongandjera, though of Kwanyama-speaking background. Dan Haipinge was familiar with the dialects of the south-west, as he had grown up there. The educational institution he attended was Ongwediva. Part of his exile years had been spent as a combatant, and part in university in Eastern Europe. His English was

fluent. When at its literal best it conveyed some of the language usage of the oshiWambo-speakers he has translated and transcribed.

Dan Haipinge at first transcribed from the tapes into oshiWambo, then used this transcript to write a translation in English. As research progressed we no longer had sufficient resources to maintain this procedure, and tapes of interviews were transcribed directly into English. Of the interviews included here, all but one (Johannes Shihepo) were transcribed into oshiKwanyama or oshiNdonga, then translated into English. One interview was transcribed by Ambrosius Amutenya, a returnee journalist, who processed Josua Hamamudibo's interview while Dan Haipinge was very busy. This was very capably translated and the English slightly smoothed out by myself later. Transcribing commenced only after the completion of the elections in November 1989, some months after the interviews were conducted. Transcriptions were therefore not usually available for quick post-interview assessment and follow-up interviews.

Dan Haipinge had been an official SWAPO election campaign worker in Ongandjera, which had re-familiarised him with the peasant situation deep in the Ovambo interior. His English vocabulary is at times idiosyncratic, marked by two things. There is a political-military tone which comes I think from his training as a guerrilla where the language of the liberation struggle was dominant. Secondly, his philosophy degree from a Rumanian university equipped him with conceptual abstractions which occasionally find expression. In both cases I am not qualified to assess whether this is an accurate rendition of the oshiKwanyama: I can only suggest that it might be the guerrilla or the philosopher being creative. Phrases such as: 'the perpetuation of the South African domination of our country',¹⁴ Mandume's order to 'take this man and execute him by firing squad',¹⁵ or simply 'boozing,'

¹⁴ Interview with Aline Heita, Onamukulo, 11.10.1989 (p 125).

¹⁵ Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (p 48).

owe more to Dan's interesting vocabulary as a modern *engagé* Namibian man, I suspect, than the gentle oshiKwanyama of elderly rural informants discussing a past era.

In literary criticism there is an enormous difference between working on a text in its original language and working on a translation of it. 'The most literal translation is hardly ever the best, and a truly faithful translation always implies a certain amount of invention.'¹⁶ In this case I am dealing with a transcription, and a translation - doubly removed from the original.

More generally in transcription, meanings change subtly in the transition from oral history into written form. Portelli reminds us that 'the transcript turns aural objects into visual ones, which inevitably implies changes and interpretations.'¹⁷ The process of making the transcription readable involves punctuation, which breaks the prose down according to grammatical rules. The role of pauses particularly in the reciting of oral tradition is different to that in written prose. As Portelli notes, 'regular grammatical pauses tend to organise what is said around a basically expository and referential pattern, whereas pauses of irregular length and position accentuate the emotional context, and very heavy rhythmic pauses recall the style of epic narratives.'¹⁸ Similarly, the velocity of speech, where slowing down may mean greater emphasis as well as greater difficulty, and acceleration may show a wish to glide over certain points, or a greater ease with the subject matter, are lost in the creation of a written text. These are the site of crucial narrative functions: they reveal the narrator's emotions, his or her participation in the story, and the way the story affected him or her. 'By abolishing these traits, we flatten the emotional content of speech down to the supposed equanimity and objectivity of the written document.'¹⁹

¹⁶ Portelli, *Luigi Trastulli*, p 47.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p 48.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

This is especially true, I think, of rural informants with primary schooling, or basic or no literacy. The lilting intonations of Kwanyama rural speech were musical even to my untutored and largely uncomprehending ears. Informants may be poor in abstract vocabulary, but are richer in range of tone, rhythm and intonation than educated, relatively urbanised speakers. So much humour is conveyed in intonation, pun and proverb, difficult to convey in the monotone of writing.

It is because of these modifications from speech to written document that the tape recordings of interviews will be deposited with the relevant archive in Namibia. It was with the transcriptions that I was working when writing up the research. They are appended to the thesis because they are texts created by the interviewees, interviewers and translator-transcribers, made available here for critical reference by readers to assess their blending into my historical text in the thesis.

The uses of oral history

Historians using oral evidence know enough about memory now to avoid the naive assumption that it is a 'verbalised reflection of personal truth and social reality'.²⁰ This has influenced the movement of oral history into interpretations of consciousness. My argument here and implicit in my thesis is that oral history is a powerful form of discourse, with all the ambiguities that this implies, but retains validity as testimony. Forms of testimony that I have used will be discussed first, in relation to the transcripts appended. My discussion of the larger dimensions of meaning in oral history follows in the next section.

²⁰ Luisa Passerini, 'Memory', p 195.

This is especially true, I think, of rural informants with primary schooling, or basic or no literacy. The lilting intonations of Kwanyama rural speech were musical even to my untutored and largely uncomprehending ears. Informants may be poor in abstract vocabulary, but are richer in range of tone, rhythm and intonation than educated, relatively urbanised speakers. So much humour is conveyed in intonation, pun and proverb, difficult to convey in the monotone of writing.

It is because of these modifications from speech to written document that the tape recordings of interviews will be deposited with the relevant archive in Namibia. It was with the transcriptions that I was working when writing up the research. They are appended to the thesis because they are texts created by the interviewees, interviewers and translator-transcribers, made available here for critical reference by readers to assess their blending into my historical text in the thesis.

The uses of oral history

Historians using oral evidence know enough about memory now to avoid the naive assumption that it is a 'verbalised reflection of personal truth and social reality'.²⁰ This has influenced the movement of oral history into interpretations of consciousness. My argument here and implicit in my thesis is that oral history is a powerful form of discourse, with all the ambiguities that this implies, but retains validity as testimony. Forms of testimony that I have used will be discussed first, in relation to the transcripts appended. My discussion of the larger dimensions of meaning in oral history follows in the next section.

²⁰ Luisa Passerini, 'Memory', p 195.

It is often the inadequacies of written documentation which lead social historians to the use of interviews.²¹ Historians of southern Africa,²² including Namibia,²³ have argued exhaustively that gaps and silences for the pre-colonial era, and for the ruled/dominated/marginalised of more recent periods, can be filled by recourse to oral tradition and oral history. I wish to be cautious about the representation of history as a hypothetical 'whole' or 'truth', with gaps that can be 'filled'. This in turn can lead to naive triumphalism about oral sources. I prefer the notion of silences, a particular problem in histories of the colonised, for it implies absent perspectives. These are shifting, multi-faceted and innumerable.

Another caution in the African context is that written and oral sources do not reflect a simple coloniser-colonised dichotomy. Interchange between the two results in absorption of parts of their respective standpoints. Colonial subjects may internalise or resist mission or administrative worldviews; either response affects their discourse, however subtly. Likewise, colonial representations of Ovambo society are heavily influenced by input from African sources, especially elites.

My treatment of the uses of oral history will relate specifically to material gathered in Ovamboland during my own fieldwork. As stated, I was in search of absent perspectives. I gained an increasing awareness of what written documentation was available in the archives. It left me with questions about why migrant labour started and continued; what effect labour migration had on domestic production; the experience of famine during

²¹ Paul Thompson (ed.), *Our Common History: The Transformation of Europe* (London, 1982), p 14.

²² Tim Keegan, *Facing the Storm. Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa* (London, 1988), pp 159-69; Paul la Hausse, 'Oral History and South African Historians,' *Radical History Review* 46/7, 1990, pp 346-56.

²³ Brigitte Lau, 'Collecting Oral History in Namibia', in Siiskonen (ed.), *Studying the Northern Namibian Past*, pp 95-106; Neville Alexander, 'Three essays on Namibian history,' in Kenneth Abrahams (ed.), *Namibia Review Publications*, No 1, June 1983, p 33; Saunders, 'Towards the decolonisation,' p 84; Werner, 'Economic and Social History of the Herero,' p 2.

colonialism; viewpoints on Ovambo rulers such as Mandume; pre-colonial trade and pre-Christian beliefs and cultural practices; and the fate of people scattered by war and famine in 1915. There remained many other huge silences, but these were the starting questions I took into the field. The type of people I wished to interview were accordingly elderly ex-migrants, elderly peasants (women in particular) and elderly notables who might have inside knowledge of rulers' dealings with colonial authorities, and who additionally might have been entrusted with royal traditions.

The specialised telling of oral traditions by appointed 'professionals' does not appear to be strikingly the case in present-day Ovamboland. Williams argues that while clans and families passed down their traditions fairly informally, in the past 'strict rules' governed the transmission of royal traditions. These were usually through trusted close counsellors of kings.²⁴ She notes that the practice of appointing elders to pass on oral traditions is dying out; those who now do so are largely motivated by 'their own personal interest' or by their prominent position as councillors or clan heads.²⁵ The informant Kaulinge is arguably a good example of the latter. The transmission of oral tradition in Ovamboland has therefore become less systematised over time.

Ideally, interviewing would have been intensive in all parts of Ovamboland. Lack of resources, however, dictated that fieldwork was extensive rather than intensive in any one place. The decision not to concentrate on one area alone arose from a realisation that marginal western areas had the least documentation of the entire area. Fragmentary references to the Mbandja community inside Namibia for example led me to interview four sources in Okalongo, which could be cross-referenced slightly, and

²⁴ Williams, *Precolonial Communities*, p 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p 67.

outside Okalongo as well, to find out about Mbandja women who had married into other communities during the 1915 famine.

Paul Thompson urges great caution in the use of oral testimony for the reconstruction of events.²⁶ He speaks of course in a literate European context where cross-checking from written sources is more feasible. Where written documents are completely absent, as is often the case in pre-colonial African history, cross-referencing is more difficult. Intensive interviewing on the same themes in the same area becomes necessary. This cross-referencing is essential in order to address the problems of human memory, which as Keegan puts it 'is given to error, misconception, elision, distortion, elaboration and downright fabrication.'²⁷ As Keegan goes on to argue, the 'skilful historian can usually navigate these rapids with a liberal resort to the rhetorical arts of scepticism and speculation.'²⁸

Where some written sources do exist, oral history can provide alternative interpretations. Here it can be handled with greater confidence, for this involves blending and 'splicing'²⁹ it with other discourses. The fragment in Alina Heita's interview concerning the punishment of women if they travelled south was useful to counterpose with King Martin's reported statements and the terse official accounts. Unfortunately this interview is very short: Alina Heita did not wish to be interviewed for very long.

The testimony of Johannes Shihepo, formerly interpreter for the labour recruitment office in Ondangwa, gave a useful insight into policies towards Angolan labour in far more explicit terms than official documentation. The silence of migrant workers in written documentation of labour organisation led me to seek out informants with early contract experience, though this was difficult as my period of study ended in the 1930s. Another obvious

²⁶ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, Second Edition, 1988), p 240.

²⁷ Keegan, *Facing the Storm*, p 162.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Renato Rosaldo, 'Doing Oral History,' *Social Analysis*, No 4, September 1980, p 95.

alternative perspective is provided by the simple fact of Native Commissioner Cocky Hahn's nickname, Shongola. Hahn strenuously denied this arose from ever taking a whip to any Ovambo,³⁰ but oral informants insisted he did.

The collective interview from Uukwambi offers details of Ipumbu's tussle with colonial authority, and provides alternative interpretations on different levels. We hear of his refusal to pay cattle fines on the grounds that Uukwambi is his kingdom and the cattle his property, not the colonial state's - a language of resistance which does not come out in the same way from the written documentation. But his control over the sexuality of Kwambi women and the organisation of young male labour also emerges, as do instances of resistance. These alternative perspectives reveal more of the internal complexities of the kingship than any written documentation.³¹

Josua Hamamudibo's testimony offers additional perspectives on Ipumbu's anti-colonialism. Many Ovambo (especially Kwanyama) informants I interviewed compared Ipumbu unfavourably with Mandume in terms of resistance; his matter-of-fact account of Ipumbu's unheroic capture is therefore unsurprising. It undermines the modern nationalist portrayal of Ipumbu. When I first collected this interview, I was intrigued by the mention of Kwanyama being 'rounded up' to fight the Kwambi king and tried to follow up exactly what Hamamudibo meant. Through translation during the interview, it appeared confusingly close to his account of contract workers being press-ganged into Hitler's war. On both occasions, it seemed, military service was not voluntary. This was interesting because written documentation gives a different impression. The latter has its own reason for doing so; compulsory military service was against the terms of the League of Nations mandate to rule Namibia.

³⁰ NAN MWI 1/2/55, Town Council Minutes No 551, Extraordinary Meeting of Windhoek Location Advisory Board, 26.7.1946. (With thanks to Marion Wallace for this reference.)

³¹ The caveat here is that I have not been able to utilise Finnish mission sources from Uukwambi.

However, I have decided not to use the oral evidence in the thesis text concerning Hamamudibo's military service against Ipumbu, except for the account of the fighting. There seems to be conflation of two events: 1932 and World War II. (The extraordinary reference to Mandume was most likely a mistake and Ipumbu was really in question, though other interpretations are possible of course.)

While factual details must obviously be jettisoned where so much doubt has arisen, the faultlines open up interesting questions. Chronology is allegedly the point where memory is weakest, or most manipulative, in oral tradition³² and oral history.³³ Portelli discusses his working class informants' psychological motives in their 'horizontal' chronological shifting of the death of Luigi Trastulli to coincide with factory layoffs in Terni in 1953.³⁴ Subjective memory rearranges chronological detail in this case, he argues, in order to heal the sense of humiliation and loss of self-esteem 'following upon the impossibility of reacting adequately to the comrade's death (and to the loss of power it reveals).'³⁵

Faulty recollections are generated for a purpose: to make sense out of crucial or traumatic events and history generally. Paul Thompson argues that consciousness and its changes can be interpreted from contradictions in oral history, from self-censorship and from what is said spontaneously.³⁶ In the case of the contradictions in Hamamudibo's testimony, it is possible to surmise that coercion to fight 'the Germans' has been conflated with any suppression which was directed by the South Africans. In his oral historical representation, military service is always involuntary, because in the historical context of the interview - the liberation struggle - those who fought

³² For a discussion of chronology in oral tradition see Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London, 1985), pp 173-90; Hamilton, 'Ideology and Oral Traditions,' p 67.

³³ Thompson, *Voice*, p 240.

³⁴ Portelli, *Luigi Trastulli*, pp 24-5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p 26.

³⁶ Thompson (ed.), *Our Common History*, p 18.

for the Boers were *makakunyas*,³⁷ sellouts. Such painful issues are symbolically defused by memory, through the suggestion of an historical pattern of coercion by the South African administration.

I may be unfairly imputing meanings to Hamamudibo. But in the absence of resources to do detailed follow-up work, I shall only point out that these supposed flaws in oral history often reveal the most interesting things about consciousness, which may be as important as factual accounts. 'The diversity of oral history consists in the fact that "untrue" statements are still psychologically "true".'³⁸ The discourses during the struggle were not within the period of my thesis, but would be a very fertile area of further research.

A more general role oral history can play is to flesh out accounts put together from written sources. It provides texture which enriches social history in particular.³⁹ This experiential texture has been drawn out of famine testimonies of 1915 and 1929-30. Like Hagopian however, my argument would never go as far as to say we should grant 'experience' sole interpretive authority - it would be placing too great a 'burden of truth' on the oral narrator.⁴⁰

Meaning in Ovambo oral evidence

Although the themes arising in the interviews selected here revolve around the purpose of the thesis, the dimensions of their implicit worldviews

³⁷ One literal translation of *makakunya* was given to me as 'an apple chewed right down to its core.'

³⁸ Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History,' *History Workshop Journal* 12, Autumn 1981, p 100.

³⁹ For an excellent example of this see Bill Nasson, "She preferred living in a cave with Harry the snake-catcher." Towards an Oral History of Popular Leisure and Class Expression in District Six, Cape Town, c.1920s-1950s,' in Philip Bonner, Isabel Hofmeyr, Deborah James and Tom Lodge (eds.), *Holding their Ground. Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1989), pp 285-309.

⁴⁰ Patrick Hagopian, 'Oral Narratives: Secondary Revision and the memory of the Vietnam War', *History Workshop Journal* 32, Autumn 1991, p 142.

are much larger.⁴¹ The most important dimensions emerge in the testimony of Vilho Kaulinge. Three interviews were conducted, but the transcription here is of the second, the fullest. Kaulinge was born around 1903 and his testimony ends in the early colonial era. He has a conscious preoccupation with kingship. A direct descendant of King Mweshipandeka of Oukwanyama, as a youth he was in close proximity to the last Kwanyama king, Mandume. After Mandume's death he converted to Christianity and later became a pastor in the Lutheran church.

I must enter a caveat here. I did not make a systematic effort to interview royal insiders in Oukwanyama. Two problems emerge from this: limited ability to cross-reference against other royal sources, and the absence of genealogical detail which might place Kaulinge.⁴²

Nonetheless, discussion of Kaulinge's testimony in itself raises fundamental questions about oral history and oral tradition. The transcription reveals an overlap between the two, between personal recollection and reconstruction on the one hand and a received body of tradition about the origins of the Ovambo and the Kwanyama kingship on the other. It mixes ancient and modern eras.

Carolyn Hamilton points out that, while oral accounts which have been relayed across a number of generations demand special analytical skills and methods different from those needed for the utilisation of more contemporary eyewitness accounts, these differences in methodology draw attention away from the fact that both kinds of evidence are formed in the same process, by word of mouth.

Oral traditions are communicated through time by means of an ongoing process of *testimony* and constantly mesh with the personal experiences of informants. Similarly, *testimonies*, as the first-hand experience of informants, often draw on *traditional* historical perceptions and, in turn, themselves enter a chain of

⁴¹ See also Williams, *Precolonial Communities*, p 8.

⁴² See the genealogy in Williams, *Precolonial Communities*, p 190.

transmission, ultimately to evolve into the body of historical information transmitted as 'tradition'.⁴³

Kaulinge's testimony is a good example of the relaying of a body of tradition which has passed through a chain of transmission, adding to it from his own lifetime's experience which has been interpreted and made coherent⁴⁴ in a remarkably complex fashion. Certainly the Mandume period is in the process of being transformed into an integral part of a tradition. The trauma of the cutting off of the Kwanyama kingship arguably made this imperative. The account of Mandume has been polished and rounded off, made cohesive, by repeated formal tellings both in the pulpit after church service and in Kaulinge's homestead where visitors came to listen to him. His audiences have informed me of this. If intellectuals are defined by their place - directive, organisational or educative - in the ensemble of social relations,⁴⁵ then these activities of Kaulinge qualify him, since they are educative.

Passerini's argument that memory is 'an active production of meanings and interpretations, strategic in character and capable of influencing the present'⁴⁶ is particularly relevant in Kaulinge's case, for he has intended to and succeeded in influencing people. The most powerful proof of this is the currency of beliefs that Mandume committed suicide. Not only this: many Ovambo strongly believe Mandume's head was cut off and buried in Windhoek.⁴⁷

⁴³ Hamilton, 'Ideology and Oral Traditions', p 68.

⁴⁴ Extracts from another researcher's transcription of Kaulinge's testimony in a separate interview show parity with the testimony in this appendix. See Williams, *Precolonial Communities*, pp 153-7.

⁴⁵ Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals. Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, 1990), pp 5, 18 and 21.

⁴⁶ Passerini, 'Memory', p 195.

⁴⁷ So important is this oral version of Mandume's death that a question was raised in the Namibian National Assembly in 1990 as to whether his head could be located, for the purposes of erecting a national monument. A formal request was put to the Windhoek archives to uncover documentation as to its location and the matter is being pursued with the SADF archives in Pretoria. Brigitte Lau, personal communication, 8.8.1990.

This testimony should be treated with great seriousness and its content analysed because it offers a unique opportunity to set an African discourse against a range of European discourses. Its form, as a transcript, is frankly a flawed mutation from oral discourse, mediated through at times dissonant questions and the process of transcription and translation into English. But it nevertheless represents the creation of an alternative subjectivity. My argument is that people forge subjectivities in response to sets of historical conditions and in the face of imposed subjectivities. These processes are intrinsically connected with the question of power. And it is not a 'question of power' in some absolute sense, but *questions* of power in a very concrete sense, on several levels, which concern Kaulinge as a Kwanyama subject-historian and intellectual.

What becomes so valuable in oral history is the obvious point that because this construction of history is not found in written documents, it contains hitherto unsuspected terrain for the literate, non-Ovambo researcher. For myself, whilst examining the Kaulinge tradition, it was a revelation as to *what* questions of power exercised this subject-historian. There were several prominent questions: colonial power, power struggles between fractions in the royal lineage, between kings and *omalenga*, between *omalenga* and subjects, between king and subjects. Gender relations are also addressed, albeit marginally.

Once I had perceived where these questions of power were centred, I became increasingly convinced that Kaulinge draws on tradition about Mweshipandeka, his grandfather. My argument is that in his youth, this 'tradition' was probably in the same stage of production as his own contemporary construction of the Mandume tradition. His testimony as a whole is an amalgam of both tradition and oral history which is a tradition-in-the-making. For what are so striking in his overall testimony are the echoes between Mandume's period of internal reform and Mweshipandeka's era.

There is symmetry in their centralised legal systems, their prohibition on internal raiding and their emphasis on work, in Kaulinge's testimony: in short, their *control* over the Kwanyama polity. Peace and harmony were equated with reform on Mandume's terms, entailing centralisation.

The idealised features emerging from the reigns of both Mandume and Mweshipandeka - industriousness, central organisation and unity under the king - resonate very closely with Steven Feierman's discussion of Shambaa discourse, though the limited discursive material from Ovamboland and my use of an English transcript do not permit me to explore whether powerful idioms such as 'harming the land' and 'healing the land' were current.⁴⁸ In Kaulinge's testimony the idioms are peace and plenty versus chaos and hunger. Some excerpts from depictions of 'good' and 'bad' kings exemplify this.

Mweshipandeka, says Kaulinge, urged his people:

to cultivate their crops and punished those who were lazy. It was during Mweshipandeka's rule that people began to cultivate bigger lands. People had enough food to eat. The headmen's council continued its hearings as usual. In olden days the hearings were done at the villages but during the time of Mweshipandeka, all the hearings were done at the palace. The people's court was at the palace.⁴⁹

By contrast, King Shimbilinga 'did not have good control over his people.' They 'suffered from hunger and malnutrition because of the lack of sufficient food supply. There were no rules or orders which compelled people to go for work.'⁵⁰ From the 1880s, the three kings who governed after Mweshipandeka and before Mandume - Namhadi, Weyulu and Nande - allowed conditions to become harmful again for the Kwanyama polity. This coincided with

⁴⁸ Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, p 7.

⁴⁹ Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (p 35).

⁵⁰ Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (p 29).

merchant capitalism and decentralisation of power by *omalenga*. In Weyulu's time,

all the orders and rules were set up by the headmen. They had the power to decide people's punishments, or to send people to war. The rule of law was no longer in the hands of the king. Every senior headman had the right to make his own decision. Things did not go well at all. People began to suffer because the little they owned was taken away from them... People were starving a great deal.⁵¹

In the end, 'his country became chaotic.' In the metaphor used in the discourse of another African polity, it was 'harming the land.'

European penetration occurred during the same period as the reigns of these three kings and was indirectly a cause of the 'wrongs'. But it was also fortuitous, because written documentation by outsiders reflects that these 'wrongs' were being voiced at the time. Indeed, this thesis has catalogued written documentation of these 'wrongs' and attempted to problematise them.

My argument is therefore that there was almost certainly a construction of the Mweshipandeka era in current discourse at the period when Mandume was attempting to implement reforms. I have no concrete oral evidence, because I was not interviewing Kaulinge and many others in 1911. But even if it is mostly a retrospective construct, all traditions which succeed in taking root are grounded in a strong basis of reality. The making of a tradition about the suicide of Mandume, for example, has a basis in Mandume's own repeated statements that he would kill himself, and it is not only Kaulinge who tells us,⁵² but Hahn, Manning and umpteen intelligence reports from the period. Another strength in Kaulinge's account is that he is not always reductionist in terms of 'good' and 'bad' kings. Weyulu, who allowed *omalenga* to usurp central functions and bring hunger to the land, was, we are told, also responsible for abolishing many of the old 'dictatorial'

⁵¹ Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (pp 39-40).

⁵² Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (pp 66-8).

laws which had in their time brought suffering.⁵³ There is space for complexity in the Kaulinge tradition.

To return to the original line of argument, hints about the production of a Mweshipandeka tradition in Mandume's time can also be picked out from written documentation, from 'traditions' collected by missionaries around this time. It is true that Kaulinge is more likely to focus on such aspects than other transmitters of oral tradition because of his relationship to Mweshipandeka. I fully acknowledge that he may be likely to exaggerate its benefits, for the same reason. But this does not diminish its existence and its fundamental legitimacy as a source.

There is a great need to be clear on a further point. No explicit statement is ever made by Kaulinge that Mandume identified his reforms with some halcyon era under Mweshipandeka. My argument is that the link is made implicitly. It is and remains a powerful unspoken ideal for Mandume's time, because of the way oral tradition is meshed with oral history in Kaulinge's testimony and because of the ideological function of oral tradition in both Mandume's and Kaulinge's time in rural Kwanyama society. Dominant discourse works best when working subtly.

The question of Kaulinge's precise genealogical relationship to Mweshipandeka and Mandume is crucial here, but remains very difficult to answer. That Kaulinge himself has an identity of interest with the ruling section led by Mandume seems probable, though matrilineal succession excluded Kaulinge himself from royal position. This is the section forging ideological ties with Mweshipandeka, opposed to the ruling section represented by Weyulu and Nande who had tried to kill the young Mandume.⁵⁴

⁵³ Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (p 33).

⁵⁴ For accounts of these rivalries between Mandume's section and Weyulu's, see AVEM c/k 22 No 1, Wulfhorst, 'Erastus Omalodu', ca 1910-33; c/i 20, Wulfhorst, Rückblick, 1917. The Rhenish mission view may be over-simplified.

laws which had in their time brought suffering.⁵³ There is space for complexity in the Kaulinge tradition.

To return to the original line of argument, hints about the production of a Mweshipandeka tradition in Mandume's time can also be picked out from written documentation, from 'traditions' collected by missionaries around this time. It is true that Kaulinge is more likely to focus on such aspects than other transmitters of oral tradition because of his relationship to Mweshipandeka. I fully acknowledge that he may be likely to exaggerate its benefits, for the same reason. But this does not diminish its existence and its fundamental legitimacy as a source.

There is a great need to be clear on a further point. No explicit statement is ever made by Kaulinge that Mandume identified his reforms with some halcyon era under Mweshipandeka. My argument is that the link is made implicitly. It is and remains a powerful unspoken ideal for Mandume's time, because of the way oral tradition is meshed with oral history in Kaulinge's testimony and because of the ideological function of oral tradition in both Mandume's and Kaulinge's time in rural Kwanyama society. Dominant discourse works best when working subtly.

The question of Kaulinge's precise genealogical relationship to Mweshipandeka and Mandume is crucial here, but remains very difficult to answer. That Kaulinge himself has an identity of interest with the ruling section led by Mandume seems probable, though matrilineal succession excluded Kaulinge himself from royal position. This is the section forging ideological ties with Mweshipandeka, opposed to the ruling section represented by Weyulu and Nande who had tried to kill the young Mandume.⁵⁴

⁵³ Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (p 33).

⁵⁴ For accounts of these rivalries between Mandume's section and Weyulu's, see AVEM c/k 22 No 1, Wulfhorst, 'Erastus Omalodu', ca 1910-33; c/i 20, Wulfhorst, Rückblick, 1917. The Rhenish mission view may be over-simplified.

My final remarks concern a curious silence in Kaulinge's testimony. Gaps themselves in oral history and oral tradition can offer sources of fruitful interpretation.⁵⁵ Kaulinge makes no reference to the rain-making powers accredited to Ovambo kings. These play no part in his explanation of hunger or plenty. There were occasions when kings had been deposed in the past for failure to fulfil this religious function.⁵⁶ It is self-evident that there has been a shift in cosmological belief since the last century when this was the case. This now emerges in the powerful domains of ideology and history through Kaulinge's creation of discourse. The conviction is hard to avoid that Christianity in Ovamboland, which has been very strong and should be taken seriously into account when dealing with Ovambo oral history,⁵⁷ has influenced Kaulinge to suppress elements of pre-Christian beliefs from his tradition. The most striking example is rain-making. The likelihood of this modifying process comes out most clearly in statements such as Mandume 'ascended the throne as the one who was truly chosen by God to lead the nation, and to bring it out of a mess.'⁵⁸

We cannot really say that this almost certainly Christian interpretation is a palimpsest, for Kaulinge is the creator of the tradition concerning Mandume. However, he also makes no mention of rain-making in connection with kings whose history has been transmitted through oral tradition.

As the oral evidence is confined to one elite and christianised informant, we are here in a sense the victims of Kaulinge's success. A promising area in which to pursue the general question of rain-making powers would be oral history from the time of reconquest and famine in 1915,

⁵⁵ Thompson, *Our Common History*, p 18.

⁵⁶ The most recent case had been in the Nkhumbi kingship in 1891, admittedly not in Ovamboland itself. J.P. do Nascimento, *Da Huila ás terras do Humbe* (Huila, 1891), Prologue.

⁵⁷ This emerged most strongly from the written history by another peasant intellectual, Petrus Amutenya in Ongandjera, who kindly allowed me to read his work. For a discussion of the effects on Christianity on Ovambo oral traditions, see Williams, *Precolonial Communities*, p 13.

⁵⁸ Interview with Vilho Kaulinge, Ondobe, 30.9.1989 (p 42).

collected from sources with backgrounds different from Kaulinge's. They might uncover a range of explanations for the calamities suffered by the Ovambo. Representations of rain-making might be recoverable. Evale, seat of the greatest rain-makers, may well be the most fertile terrain for such sources. Where Kaulinge might imply one 'healing' solution for famine - namely centralised kingship - Vale informants from diverse social backgrounds may well have had alternative formulations for survival.

In conclusion, Kaulinge appears to have been reconciling belief systems, making it tougher to obtain a sense of the pre-Christian cosmology. But it has not been a one-way traffic. Pre-Christian Ovambo religious ideas have fed into the local conception of Christianity. Some Ovambo intellectuals call this their 'African Christianity.' Perhaps the only way to 'unpack' Kaulinge's interpretation is to problematise these innovative and powerful Ovambo theological ideas, which I have been informed cause missionaries considerable *angst*.

PART 2. TRANSCRIPTS OF SELECTED INTERVIEWS

Interviews in these transcripts have been edited only in so far as English grammar has been corrected. Slight adjustments have also been made to the translator-transcriber's punctuation. Interviews have not been abridged and the full text is retained. The transcriber worked from a first transcript in oshiKwanyama or oshiNdonga to translate into English in the cases of Ambambi, Benjamin and Sheetekela/Dama; all other interviews were transcribed and translated directly into English in one process. The spelling of certain names of people and places remains problematic and that used by Dan Haipinge, the Kwanyama-speaking transcriber, has mostly been retained.

INTERVIEW WITH VILHO KAULINGE, ONDOBE, 30.9.1989

Vilho Kaulinge was born in the first few years of the century. A member of the Kwanyama royal family, he grew up in various royal households and was then closely attached to the court of Mandume ya Ndemufayo. He is directly descended from King Mweshipandeka, referred to here as his grandfather. Kaulinge converted to Christianity soon after colonial occupation, later becoming a pastor in the Lutheran church. The initial recommendation to interview him came from a missionary; he is widely recognised as the most authoritative source on Kwanyama history. I interviewed Kaulinge three times, the first during April 1989, when sporadic fighting was still taking place. This did not interfere with the interview in the least. I interviewed him again in September, from which this transcription is taken, and in February 1990. In all three interviews the audience was myself, my interpreter and on average a further two interested auditors. Consistency is very striking throughout all three interviews, giving the impression that Kaulinge has polished and repeated his account of the Kwanyama kingship from its origins to the reign of Mandume many times.

Tatekulu, would you please tell us how the Kwanyama tribe came to settle here, and where they came from?

Traditionally, we used to have evening conversations with our parents. They told us about past events and advised us on how to behave and so forth. I cannot say that I have enough information concerning your question because when a person is not educated he cannot provide you with necessary information.

From time immemorial, the story started with the large exodus of people from the lake region in East Africa. We used to be told about the lakes

in that part of Africa, but in which country they are to be found, nobody knows. That is where they lived before they came to the south of the African continent. They came in many groups. In the first place, when they arrived in what is now called Ondonga, they settled at the place called Ombwenge. Most of the people remained at Ombwenge while some of them went eastwards and found the place called Oshimholo. This area was good for agricultural projects. It was deep in the bush where wild animals could be found in their thousands and where grazing areas for cattle, sheep and goats could be found. I don't know why there are not so many people there, but I think God made them vacate it. All the tribes such as Ovambo and Herero came together from the east and settled at Ondondonga, later known as Ondonga. They stayed here and also at a place called Oshamba.

In olden days people lived mainly on hunting, and because of this, the Kwanyamas left the rest of the group at Ondonga and came to settle here. They went hunting, found a good place for both hunting and cattle-rearing and decided to settle there indefinitely. There was also enough water. At the beginning when they started to go for hunting, they used to return to Ondonga, but one time they never came back. We were called Kwanyamas because the people who came here first were after meat. *Nyama* is meat, hence Kwanyama tribe.

I understand that they were the same people as the Ndongas, Hereros, etc., but I don't know how they communicated. But I think there was no problem, because even today there is no translation between the Ndongas and the Kwanyamas. We understand one another very well. In short, the Kwanyama people came from Ondonga, and the name Kwanyama is derived from the word *nyama* which means meat.

As a tradition these people also had their ruler. The first one I understand was Chief Kapuleko who later on was succeeded by King Hautolonde. Both men were kings from the royal families. People started to

cultivate their pieces of land. They started with small fields and later extended them. King Hautolonde died and was succeeded by King Shimbilinga. King Shimbilinga did not have good control over his people. His people suffered from hunger and malnutrition because of the lack of sufficient food supply. There were no rules or orders which compelled people to go for work. He is the one who is reputed to have cut people's fingers. He was upset by the fact that people were not doing anything and that there was no food in the country. In order to assert his authority, he thought of a plan to discipline his top leadership.

One day he summoned all senior and junior headmen in the country to his palace and posed the following questions to them: 'Why is it that people are not working in the country? Why are they not working at all?' At that time there was hunger in the country. He told his headmen that because you don't let people work I will give you work to do so that from here you will learn a lesson of making people work. There was a big tree in his field known as *omukwe* with big and long roots. He ordered them to chop it down with their bare hands. There was nothing they could do but to start scratching immediately. If they refused they would have been executed one by one. They spent many days scratching that tree with their fingers. Sometimes they went home and came back in the early morning hours, and sometimes they spent the night at the king's palace. In reality, one cannot cut down a tree with his bare hands, and that is exactly why he ordered them in order to discipline them. Snuff-takers were lucky because they used their tobacco containers to scratch the tree, but in secrecy. Because Shimbilinga's watchmen were around and could report them if they were found using any other tool than a person's own hands. After a long and hard struggle to cut the tree down with their hands, the king pardoned them and let them go home to start working hard. But that tree remained there intact. Myself and many others of my own generation saw it.

When King Shimbilinga died he was succeeded by King Heita who turned out to be equally cruel. He did not last long. His grandsons such as Hamangulu gave him a hard time. After the death of King Heita, King Hamangulu took up the throne. He also ruled for only two years and was overthrown by Haimbili and Mulonda. He was on his way to Onkhumbi when they followed him and killed him in the forest. At that time Haimbili and his brother were in exile in Okafima, and immediately after killing King Heita they came back to rule the country. Haimbili took the king's 'chair' straight away at the traditional palace while Mulundu waited for a while. Meanwhile Mulundu decided to have his share of ruling the country. He felt he was also entitled to rule after taking part in the assassination of his grandfather, Heita. He thought he was braver than his brother Haimbili. Most people believed that he was responsible for the overthrow of King Heita. It was on this basis that the country was divided into two parts. Haimbili remained in the palace, while Mulundu took the part of Onambambi. That was how things went on. Those of us who were under the leadership of Haimbili disregarded those from Onambambi, because we felt that King Haimbili was the only legitimate leader.

King Haimbili had tough laws, and members of the royal family both men and women disliked him. So many of them were born during the reign of King Heita. These very people posed a threat to King Haimbili because he believed that they would kill him as he himself had killed King Hamangulu. He organised a big feast called *epena* and invited almost everybody to attend. *Epena* was a very important feast for the Kwanyama people. It was during this feast that new laws and regulations were established and given to the headmen for execution throughout the country. Laws on issues such as the cutting of the grass in the fields were given. It was prohibited for anyone to go in the field at any time and start cutting the grass, in the same way no-one was allowed to harvest before the crops ripened. *Epena* rules included

harvesting, cutting of grasses, hunting, as well as waging war against a neighbouring country. The king was the only one who could order the people to go to war and bring the spoils such as cattle home. However, during the periods of kings such as Weyulu and Nande, anyone could decide to go to war on his own provided that he had enough manpower with him. But at that time such a decision rested with the king only.

My grandfather Mweshipandeka, my mother's father, was born during King Haimbili's rule. They were four male children. There was another prince who had three sons.

In that feast which was organised by Haimbili, two prominent members of the royal family were executed. While the people were busy assembling, Haimbili had already instructed his men to carry out the executions. They were told to kill specific people during the feast. He told them that they too will be executed if they fail to fulfil their tasks. In fact four men died during the feast while others fled and took refuge in neighbouring countries. Those who fled to Ondonga were Haikukutu, Shimweefeni and Nghishiimonima. These were King Mweshipandeka's sons. The rest of the royal family members went to a country in the east where they stayed for an indefinite period of time.

Haimbili remained isolated from his people. They disliked him because of his deeds, and he died later from natural causes. Nobody assassinated him. After his death the headmen's council was called in to decide the fate of the country as usual. They considered the fact that there was no king in the country and that members of the royal family who were supposed to succeed the king were in exile. It was decided that the kings who were in exile should be recalled. The main question was which king was best qualified to be invited to rule the country. It was agreed that Haikukutu should be invited because he was the eldest of them all.

There was another rule which stipulated that anyone taking up the position of king must have undergone a traditional process called *etanda*. *Etanda* is the process which members of the royal family underwent in order to be eligible for kingship. This process also applied to males of any clan who wanted to take a wife.

They chose Haikukutu because he had undergone *etanda*, unlike Sheefeni. When Haikukutu arrived in the country he was brought before the headmen's council to be informed of the council's decision to install him as the next king of the nation. He was told that the decision had been made, so he should rule them with honour and respect. They [the council] warned him not to behave as the late Haimbili who ruled the country ruthlessly. Haikukutu in response told them that he could not stay in the country without his brother, and informed them that he was going to bring back Sheefeni. He went and collected his brother Sheefeni whom he left at Okafima. They lived together, unlike Haimbili and Mulundu who divided the country. The borders remained intact, but they were not so famous as they were during the era of Haimbili and Mulundu. As a tradition a new king cannot take over the palace straight away, soon after becoming or being proclaimed a king. He had to build a house or stay for a short while in a special house built for him by the people as a temporary residence. It was called *oshimbala*. Here the new king stayed for a period of two years and then moved into the palace. Haikukutu took up the king's position because he went through *etanda* immediately after he arrived in the country. Such a decision was taken because of the fact that the immediate death of the king would have found them with no-one eligible to take up the position. When Sheefeni arrived he was immediately processed and kept in waiting.

Ruling the country became very difficult for King Haikukutu. He did not rule the country in accordance with the people's expectations. He followed mainly the ruthless methods set up by former dictators. Usually

these repressive laws could not be overthrown so easily. Some of them became invalid or were invalidated by King Weyulu. The others remained because the final decision was to be taken by the *epena*.

King Haikukutu died and was succeeded by his brother Sheefeni. Sheefeni was the son of Hamukwiyu. During the large exodus of members of the royal family from the country, those who went to Ondonga were related mostly to King Shaningika. Immediately after Sheefeni ascended the throne he sent a message to King Nangolo of Ondonga to send his people back to Oukwanyama. In the first place, it was King Haimbili who sent his messengers to King Nangolo Amutenya of Ondonga to ask him to send back his people because he was no longer angry with them. When these people arrived in Ondonga they found that Mweshipandeka had already been taken to Uukwambi by King Nuyoma Eelu of the Kwambi. The messengers told King Nangolo that King Haimbili was no longer angry with his grandchildren, that he was getting old and wanted them back home. They demanded to take them back. The king told them that one of the people they were asking for was in Uukwambi and promised to send people to collect him. He sent his people to Uukwambi, and Mweshipandeka was brought to Ondonga, and together with the others, he was asked whether he wanted to go back to Oukwanyama. He explained King Haimbili's message to them very clearly and urged them to return with the messengers. Nghishiimonina agreed to return while Mweshipandeka refused. Nghishiimonina was older than Mweshipandeka, and decided to go back to Uukwambi. King Nangolo told the messengers that the people had made their own decision in public and no one had the right to force them to remain in Ondonga or to accept King Haimbili's message. He then told the messengers from Oukwanyama to bring Nghishiimonina with them and to inform King Haimbili that Mweshipandeka took his own decision to go back to Uukwambi. These messengers had already been given an order to kill these people on their way

back home. They had been provided with an assegai with which to do the job. When they reached the border between Ondonga and Oukwanyama they finished off Nghishiimonina just as they had been ordered to do. After killing him they proceeded with their journey to go and tell the king that Mweshipandeka had refused to come with them, and that they had done as they were told to do as far as Nghishiimonima was concerned.

After the death of King Haimbili, Haikukutu became the king and was succeeded by Sheefeni who was also from exile in Okafima. Sheefeni was the brother to those people who fled to Ondonga; that is why he decided to call Mweshipandeka from Uukwambi. When they came home they found that an atmosphere of uncertainty prevailed in the country. There was a king of course, but his presence could not guarantee peace in the country. When Haikukutu died Sheefeni took over, but did not go in the palace straight away as usual. There was a caretaker who was leading the people as was the normal practice when the king died.

Sheefeni lived and died at the same place as Haikukutu. Mweshipandeka came back from Uukwambi after learning that both Haimbili and Haikukutu had passed away and that his brother Sheefeni was ruling the country. After two years with his brother, Sheefeni passed away and Mweshipandeka took over the throne.

Mweshipandeka had not undergone *etanda* and when he was asked to take over his brother's palace, he refused, saying that he was going to build his own palace. And so he established his kingdom at Ondjiva. Since he lived at Ondjiva all the legal matters about governing the country were sent to him from the [old] palace, because the council of headmen always assembled there and sent their decisions to Mweshipandeka at Ondjiva for approval.

When we were brought up we were told many stories about King Mweshipandeka. We were told that he liked war very much. The main reasons for waging these wars were to go and capture prisoners, and to bring

as many cattle as possible back home. It is even speculated that Mweshipandeka carried out about twenty to thirty wars during his rule. He used to go as far as Ombwenge.

When I grew up in my father's home, he used to tell me that it had not taken him much to get the cattle he owned. All of them came from Ombwenge where they used to go for war.

In short, Mweshipandeka's rule was accepted amongst his people. He urged them to cultivate their crops and punished those who were lazy. It was during Mweshipandeka's rule that people began to cultivate bigger lands. People had enough food to eat. The headman's council continued its functions as usual. In olden days the hearings were done at the villages but during the time of Mweshipandeka, all the hearings were done at the palace. The people's court was at the palace. There were specific people to attend the hearing and if any one of them was absent, the entire hearing could be called off. Members of the council used to stay in the palace for up to a month with the king who was responsible for their well-being and food. Certain houses were allocated for them so as to enable them to complete their work. After hearing the whole case they took their own decision which they took to the king for approval. If the decision they took was good, then King Mweshipandeka gave them the go-ahead. If he thought their decision might endanger the security of the person in question he took his own decision or asked them for amendment. Local people used to attend the hearings, but were not allowed to say anything during the proceedings. Only the people with authority had the right to ask questions or to comment. That's how it happened during King Mweshipandeka's era.

In addition, many princes were born during Mweshipandeka's rule. For instance, King Weyulu, Nande, Mbishi and others. During Mweshipandeka's era only one member of the royal family, by the name of Nailavala, was banished from the country. She was a female who gave birth

to a single son, who also turned out to be stubborn. He was killed and his mother expelled from the country. She went to Ondonguena. She did not stay there for a long time and came back, only to find that she could not reconcile herself with the rest of the family. She was again expelled from the country and went deep into the forest to a place called Oshimpolo. She stayed there among the Bushmen together with two or three of her servants. One day a group of white men passed through Oshimpolo from Ombwenge on their way to King Mweshipandeka's house. They found this lady and asked her why she was there in the bush. She told them that she had been expelled from the country by her uncle. They asked her what her uncle's nationality was. She said he was a Kwanyama. They told her that they were on their way to Oukwanyama and wanted to take her along with them. She refused, arguing that she had been banished.

The white men proceeded with their journey to Ondjiva. They arrived at Mweshipandeka's palace and asked him about the lady they found in the bush, and why she was there. They also told him precisely what she told them about the king. King Mweshipandeka told them that the woman they found in the bush was stubborn, hence she had been expelled from the country. When the white men ended their visit at King Mweshipandeka's house, they went back and passed via Oshimolo. They found Nailavala there and took her with them. It is often said that those people were Britons. Nowadays we hear that Nailavala lived in America. We also learned that she gave birth to sons and daughters there. She was the only one, we understood, who was expelled from the country during the time of King Mweshipandeka.

King Mweshipandeka received the first Germans and British missionaries in Oukwanyama. People were happier during his rule than during any other king's rule. No fighting took place during his era as it happened during King Namhadi's rule. Mweshipandeka was the uncle of Namhadi, who succeeded him after his death. When Namhadi got to power,

he found many members of the royal family, both males and females, who were born during King Mweshipandeka's rule. Namhadi did not assume his rightful place in the palace, instead he built his own palace at a place called Ondjedi. While King Namhadi was preparing to move from his house to the traditional palace, he received guests from Britain and Germany. These were traders who claimed to have come to establish good relationships with the king. They were not the first white men to arrive in Oukwanyama, since King Mweshipandeka had already accepted white missionaries in the country. He accepted them and also allowed them to build their house close to his.

After a short while these men were followed by a Portuguese [party?] from Onamhinge who also came to pay a visit to King Namhadi. The aim, they said, was to establish friendly relations between the king and the Portuguese government. With them they brought a lot of heavy drinks, guns and a horse as gifts for the king from their government. They delivered their message of friendship from their government to King Namhadi and presented him with the gifts they had brought.

One day the king went to the place where they were staying. He found them busy selling beer and strong liquor to the locals. The king was welcomed with the same strong liquor. He climbed into one of their wagons, started talking too much on every subject while at the same time giving beer to his people who were with him there. Finally the people realised the king was in a high state of drunkenness because he could not even breathe properly. They decided to take him home only to find that he had stopped breathing completely. What they brought home was only the king's dead body. They told his people that the king was poisoned by the white men who were selling drinks in the country. When the people learned about it they became incensed and set off to fight those Portuguese. The fighting broke out instantly, and one missionary was killed. The rest were driven out of the country by force.

When King Namhadi was involved in drinking his countrymen were suffering. He used to send his men to go and get the cattle from anywhere in the country in order to pay for the drinks he consumed. At the beginning he was requesting his people provide him with such means, but later he became intoxicated and behaved ruthlessly. The people could not stand it and in return they started fighting the king's messengers which was a strange thing to do at that time. There was nothing they could do because Namhadi's messengers were taking everything including cattle, goats, clothes, horses and even guns. They had not experienced such practices before. During the time of King Mweshipandeka they used to offer the king a cow or anything in response to his request, whenever he had a guest or wanted to buy something. He never took the people's properties by force. Namhadi used force as if he was waging a war against his own people.

Soon after his death, Weyulu became the king, but he was so young to be ruling the country. He also refused to enter the palace and decided to build his house at Ondjiva. Immediately after taking power his country and people began to flourish. He was the one who started importing foreign goods, especially clothing. So many people were impressed by European clothes. Firstly, people were wearing a metre of red and white cloth which did not cover the whole body. Anyone seen in a full shirt and trousers was regarded as a very important person. Most elderly people bought European blankets, but did not use them because they argued that one cannot cover oneself up in a blanket in one's own house. Sometimes they used them when they went for a visit. Meanwhile, Weyulu followed the steps of King Namhadi. His men used to go into the country and forcibly take people's cattle, illegally. The people got fed up and started to retaliate, in order to protect their property. There was frequent fighting, people were drinking too much, and work did not get done properly as it had been during King Mweshipandeka's rule.

King Weyulu lived together with his two brothers Nande and Kapa. Some members of his extended family were Hamalua, Haufiku, Kanime and Nandjingu. They were all born during the time of King Mweshipandeka. Kapa was a brave man. He used to go to war with neighbours who were not friendly with us. He even met his death while fighting. He did not become king, because he died when Mweshipandeka was still alive.

King Weyulu had a strong relationship with the whites who arrived in the country during the time of King Mweshipandeka. He also allowed them to have their houses built near his palace, so they could avoid being troubled by the locals. King Mweshipandeka told them that he liked them very much and that they should start manufacturing weapons. He thought that every white man could produce a gun. They answered him that they did not know how to make guns. They also told him that not all Europeans knew how to make guns, but only a few. That answer made the king angry with the whites but he never chased them away.

King Weyulu also invited the German missionaries to build their houses in his field at Ondjiva. He did not want them to be troubled by anyone. They stayed there carrying out their missionary work. Whenever there was a sermon, the king used to send someone to take his wives there in order to listen to the gospel of God. During his rule oppression escalated even more than during King Namhadi's rule.

The country was entirely in the hands of Hiililewanga. He was King Weyulu's uncle. Hiililewanga and his brothers did what they liked, and did not listen to what the king had to say. At the same time, all the orders and rules were set up by the headmen. They had the power to decide people's punishments, or to send people to war. The rule of law was no longer in the hands of the king. Every senior headman had the right to make his own decision. Things did not go well at all. Poor people began to suffer because the little they owned was taken away from them. They no longer kept their

cattle at their own homesteads, but gave them to the headmen for safe-keeping. In case one wanted an ox to exchange with something, the headman only gave him a small one which will not be sufficient for his needs. People were starving a great deal. Weyulu did nothing to help them. Many people were drinking too much. Some of his headmen had the tendency to rob poor people without any good reason. One day he [Weyulu] sent his servants to go and rob the cattle from the people. He ordered them to bring the owners of the cattle along with them because he did not want the servants to take some of the cattle, as they usually cheated him. His country became chaotic.

He even went to the extent of expelling some members of his family from the country, such as Nandjungu and some of King Mandume's relatives. At that time there were many brothers of Weyulu, namely Hamalua, Mbishi and others who were also members of the royal family. When the servants returned from their looting expeditions, they came with wagons full of drinks. When they took the wagons to the king's palace the others started to complain. This resulted in the others taking their own decisions to go and fight for cattle.

King Weyulu established a good relationship with the Portuguese. The Portuguese afterwards came and attacked Ombandja. They also came to ask for soldiers from King Weyulu. In this regard the king's advisers told him not to provide them with the soldiers on the grounds that the Portuguese would turn against him after defeating Ombandja. They took this decision because they were angered by the king who in the first place provided the Portuguese with soldiers without consulting them. They warned him not to do it again. He agreed with them because he was not as stubborn as the late King Namhadi. King Namhadi used to tell them off whenever he was given sound advice.

The king's relations with the whites became strong. Many of his headmen and advisers went under the influence of alcohol. They took the

Portuguese drinks on credit and went to beat the locals in order to get the cattle to pay for their debts. At that time the future king Mandume was still young.

In those days people used to get crude iron or copper from which they made axes, knives, hoes, etc. No one could go and collect that copper without the permission of the head who was appointed by the chief. When the time came for the crude iron to be melted and processed into tools, the head of the site informed the king who then gave them the go-ahead. People used to go there at a specific period, not at any time of the year. When they came back they brought a lot of things: the metals with which they made hoes, assegais, axes, arrows, knives and so forth. People from other areas such as Ndongas, Kwambis, etc. did not have these metals. They used to come to us for exchange.

There was a rule or order set up by King Weyulu that traders must not be interfered with. No one should try to take his or her things without the owner's consent. That order did work, because even during the time of war, foreigners found doing business in Oukwanyama were not harassed even if their country was at war with us. Although foreigners were allowed to come and buy things like axes, knives and hoes from Oukwanyama, they were not allowed to visit the place where these items were manufactured.

There was no peace at that time, but there was development. People got the idea of farming bigger lands for agriculture. The methods of cultivation they employed during King Weyulu's era differed completely with those used during King Mweshipandeka's. King Weyulu himself did not order the people to work, but his headmen used much influence on the peasants to work.

These headmen worked through the headmen's council which used to meet at the king's palace under the banner of *epena* to make rules and regulations governing the country. In this council only responsible headmen

were allowed or chosen to take part. They were selected by their fellow headmen in the council of headmen. When they finished choosing members of the council, they referred their names to the king for approval. This same council or administrative body worked together with the king in administering the territory. They advised him on various aspects of the day-to-day life.

When King Weyulu died, he was succeeded by King Nande Hedimbi. He was a very kind man, but was not as strong as Weyulu. King Weyulu was very strong and during his time many wars were fought.

I was brought up during King Mweshipandeka's time, when more wars had been fought than in the time of King Nande. During King Weyulu's period he was the only one who ordered people to go to war. But when Nande took over power anyone could wage war on his own account provided he had enough war material and manpower at his disposal. While the king was at his palace, he used to see these people bringing back cattle and prisoners of war.

As I said earlier, Mandume was still young at that time. And when he viewed how things were being conducted he was not feeling good. He used to tell people that if he became king of the nation, he would not behave like his uncles in many respects. When King Nande passed away, Mandume took over the crown. He ascended the throne as the one who was truly chosen by God to lead the nation, and to bring it out of a mess.

King Mandume started with a brief order. He convened the Council of Headmen which was still operating and said: 'I have invited you here so that we can discuss just as you usually did. I would like to inform you that although I have taken up the crown you must not leave me alone. I also will have something to feed you. I am a man of peace and do not like the bad things which my brothers have done to the nation.' The king went on to say: 'I

want to give you something, discuss it, and come up with your own proposals when you finish.'

He started with the fruit trees and said the trees had been created by God who gave them to the people. 'The trees bear fruits that are edible to human beings. Therefore I do not want to hear that people are beating off unripe fruits from the trees, especially from *omuandi* trees. When the fruits become ripe, they fall down on their own. And when they fall down the children can pick them up and start eating. The same applies to old people. When you shake a tree, unripe fruits fall down and get spoiled.'

He told his headmen to take the order to the people. At the same time he organised his secret police to go around the villages to check whether the king's rule was being complied with. The headmen were also told to notify the king in case the people did not agree with what they had to tell them. He told his policemen to bring whoever found [unripe] fruits on the ground, together with the fruits, to the palace. The headmen took the order to their people and at the same time the king's secret policemen followed suit to verify it. One day those men found a man whose *omuandi* tree's fruits were lying unripe on the ground. They collected the fruits from the ground and took them to the king together with the owner of the tree. They reported to the king that they found the unripe fruit on the ground and that they had brought the owner. The king told them to take the man to the general hearing place where people were assembling to hear the day's cases. When King Mandume arrived he was immediately given the floor by the presiding headman to interrogate the man:

Mandume: My son, what brought you here to the palace? There are many incidents which can force a person to come here. Some of these are as follows: a person could be beaten up by others, he could be robbed of his properties, and could feel threatened and decide to report to the authority. I just feel that

perhaps something is troubling you and therefore I would like to ask you to tell the house about your problems.

Man: I got arrested and was brought here by force.

King: Who arrested you?

Man: One of them is this one.

King: What have you done to deserve arrest?

Man: They said they found unripe fruits from my tree on the ground and arrested me.

King: Didn't you hear that the fruits must get ripe on the trees? That order came from me that the fruits must be allowed to get ripe on the trees. Or do you eat unripe fruits?

Man: No.

King: I think you ate them, that's why you hit them off the tree before they are ripe. Where is the basket with the fruits? Where are these fruits from?

Man: They are from a tree in my field.

King: Don't you know about the present laws concerning fruit trees? These laws stated that the fruits must be allowed to get ripe while on the tree. That they must fall down on the ground on their own, or be taken from their mother trees when they are ripe. Are these unripe fruits really from your garden?

Man: Yes, they are from my own garden.

King: Didn't you hear what your headman had told you? Was this rule made known at your village?

Man: Yes, it was made known by our headman.

King: You have admitted that it was made known. Now start eating your unripe fruits!

The man started eating his unripe fruits. At the beginning he was eating with great morale but at the end he stopped, staring at each and everybody without knowing what to do next.

King: Don't waste my time, finish up your fruits!

The man continued to eat his fruits till he finished.

King: Take him back to his home.

That basket with unripe fruits was immediately known by almost everyone in the country. From that day on no-one tried to get unripe fruits from the trees any longer. They waited till the fruits ripened before harvesting.

That was not the only problem which faced the country at that particular moment. There were also the problems of guns being fired indiscriminately in the country. Whenever they started shooting, a person's life was lost. It was again on this ground that the king was forced to call another meeting.

King: I've called you here to give you another order. Before doing so, I would like to know whether the order I gave you worked or was it just a waste of time?

Headman: That order worked very well, your excellency. Unripe fruits are no longer found on the ground. The people are so happy because they eat enough fruits.

King: If things went like that at the beginning then we could have a prosperous country by now. By now I have got a second order which I would like to make known to you. The firing of weapons is becoming too much in this country and many lives have been lost as a result. When a person buys a gun, does it necessarily mean that he buys it to kill another person? People must continue buying their guns but what I don't want is the unprovoked and

unnecessary shootings any more. You must also remember the fact that we are still waiting for war against the whites who will be coming to take our land from us. You also know very well that the guns and ammunition we possess came from them. If we misuse them, where are we going to get them in case the war breaks out? Where there is a cattle competition, you receive a report of a shooting incident. At wedding ceremonies and other festivities incidents of this kind take place at an alarming rate. It is on this base that the order from now on must be the cessation of all unnecessary shootings in this country. I called you here to give you this order so that you take it to your respective people in the villages. Whoever fires a shot, arrest him and bring him here. If you don't want to arrest him, come yourself to King Mandume. Do you understand?

Headmen: Yes, your excellency.

Mandume: Well, it must be well understood that no-one will be allowed to fire a single shot in this country. Such a step will not be tolerated in the future. Those who possess guns and would like to practise with them, let them go and do it deep into the forest. Not among the people. I don't prohibit people from doing it in the forest, but in populated areas of this country. Note it well, in Mandume's territory, a single shot is a trespass.

Soon after the order was introduced in the country a certain man from Okashashi in the eastern part of the country went against it. The local headman was Shikongo Kafita. He arrested the man and brought him to Mandume as they were told to do, and reported the incident.

Shikongo: Your excellency, I brought you one of my men who fired a gun.

King: So you brought your man who fired a shot by yourself. Why didn't you give him to others to bring him to me?

Shikongo: No, your excellency. This man is a troublemaker. Therefore I decided to bring him myself.

King: Well, Shikongo, did you tell your people about the order which went into force some weeks ago?

Shikongo: I gave the order to them and also made it clear that whoever goes against it will appear before the king and be punished accordingly.

King: Where is that disobedient servant of yours?

Shikongo: He is around, let me go and fetch him.

King: Take him to the general parade.

Shikongo went away and together with his man they arrived at the parade where many people were waiting for the day's hearings. The king also arrived and started questioning him.

King: My son, where do you come from?

Man: I come from Okashashi of headman Shikongo Kafita.

King: Can you tell me why you are here?

Man: I just came to pay a visit at the palace.

King: No, don't waste my time. Say what has brought you here!

Man: Well, I have fired a shot from my gun.

King: So, you fired a shot. Why and how did you do it?

Man: I really don't know how it happened. It seemed as if some supernatural forces were acting on me. I think someone bewitched me.

King: You said you were bewitched. Does witchcraft exist?

Man: Yes, it does exist. And I do strongly believe that it happened to me when I fired.

King: Did you get the order from your headman that unnecessary shootings will be regarded as offences?

Man: Yes, your excellency. He made it clear to us.

King: That particular order came from me, King Mandume. It was not brought in by your headman. Whom do you disobey, myself or him?

Man: No, there is not one of you whom I disobey.

King: Look here, my son. I'm not going to have any sympathy with you. Compassion in this regard does not work. I want to have sympathy with the whole nation. If I let you go, the nation will be spoiled and will start blaming me for such a state of affairs. Servants! Take this man and execute him by firing squad, in the general parade in front of my palace there.

The servants took the man to the general parade and executed him by firing squad. When we were busy doing our own things we heard the shooting at the palace. The man was really shot dead. The headmen returned to their respective villages to inform their people that the shooting they had heard had been the execution of a man who fired a shot. They also reminded them of the fact that whoever did so would personally report himself to King Mandume. Or if you didn't want to, you should get out of the country. During the interrogation of the executed man, the king also stated that a member of the royal family had passed away, but no gun was fired at his funeral procession. He was the king's uncle. No one fired a single shot for that particular occasion for the simple reason that they were preserving the order of the country. So he was just giving an example. From that time, no-one was tempted to fire a shot.

Another thing which irritated the king was the way senior headmen were operating. They were the ones who appointed sub-headmen of the *omikunda*. This practice was inherited from King Weyulu. There were taxes which were decided by these headmen in their houses. When a person bewitched or poisoned another, the hearings and the decision would be taken by the headmen. So the king decided to call the council to a meeting.

Mandume: I have called you here in order to discuss a very serious matter. The matter I would like to tackle today is the question of trying people by

senior headmen in this country. Some of the people you tried are those you called the naturally rich people. These people are so important to the nation, and yet some people are plotting to get them killed so that they take away their crops and cattle. These very people will help to save the nation during a serious period of hunger. As a matter of fact, if this state of affairs is allowed to continue the country will suffer the consequences. If people are being killed because of their property, then others will not have courage to work hard and accumulate property because they fear for their lives. It is on this basis that from now on all these hearings must take place here at Ondjiva. No longer at senior headmen's houses. You must also expose to the public every evil deed which had been done during the rule of King Weyulu.

The king cleverly and gradually introduced his orders to his headmen. First it was the order of the fruit trees, then the firing or shooting order, followed by the one on senior headmen to stop trying people at their homes. At this juncture, all the senior headmen were puzzled by the king's remark. They were just sitting, staring at one another and feeling offended. They no longer had the right to take people's cattle or crops. Countrymen were now happy because the ruling protected them a great deal from the headmen's raiding. This daylight robbery took place especially during the time of King Weyulu and Nande. The headmen really suppressed the nation during the rule of those two kings.

At the time of King Weyulu, there was one man called Shikongo Hakutunina. He told the king lies and said: 'Your excellency, a certain man to whose field you usually go for pleasure is also using the field for chicken feeding.' He also added that while the king used poles from the forest in his house, that man used iron poles. These fabrications were purely designed to annoy the king, which would make him refrain from any action to harm those who were going to go and kill that particular man. When the king was told

about this, he was just laughing. He did not make any comment or send somebody as King Mandume usually did. Because he already knew that the man was going to be killed and that he would be given his share of cattle and other property. All the things which I mentioned here were prohibited by King Mandume.

There were also wars which were waged against neighbouring countries just for the sake of obtaining cattle and prisoners of war. King Mandume in his bid to put an end to these barbaric acts called in all the war generals and addressed them on the issue. These were the very people who led the battles in foreign states. He invited them to the palace where the council of headmen was also in session. The king addressed his headmen.

Mandume: I have invited you here so that we can talk together with the war generals. I am fed up with war generals from the time of King Namhadi, Weyulu and Nande. I want to tell you that I don't want any more war generals of any kind. The reason why I say this is because these generals carried out wars on their own initiative, and worse still, they attack countries with whom we enjoy good relations. At the same time, to go and kill people without good reason is a very disturbing act. You go there, kill people and come back with all their property. Those who you leave behind will have nothing to feed themselves. Therefore, I would like each of you to consider this matter seriously.

Headmen: Your excellency, if we put a halt to the kind of wars we usually carry out, the country will suffer the consequences. There will be nothing to eat. There will even be no progress in the country.

King: No, the country's development cannot be affected by those things. It can only suffer if the people do not want to work. They must work hard in their fields to get enough food for themselves. As far as the wars are concerned I have decided to stop them. Any decision to carry out such a war in the future

will be taken only by myself. To you generals, I have called you here so that I can give you the order which will be followed from now on as far as attacking neighbouring countries is concerned. You used to do this on your own. You attacked neighbouring states, came back with a lot of cattle, the majority of which you kept for yourselves and brought a few to the palace. With regard to the prisoners, you usually sold them in order to get valuable materials for yourselves. From today on I will be the sole authority to give you notification of going to war. If there is a need to do so, you come to me and ask permission. If I feel that it is not worth doing I can always stop you from carrying it out. Some of these countries are our friends, especially the country of ovaMbwelas. These people have been oppressed by the Kwanyamas. Let me tell you that some of these people came to us and asked for peace between us and them. They told us that there was a war situation in their regions and requested our help.

Headmen: Your excellency, the idea sounds good, but we still feel that it will be good for the dogs to continue their hunting, that is, the war should still be carried out.

Mandume: The dogs used to be led into hunting. Therefore, the order respecting this will be essential in guaranteeing peace in the region. To you generals, no more war must be carried out from here without my permission.

Then one day, one of King Mandume's headmen named Hangula yaMutumbulwa went to war at the place known as Ekamba. He brought a lot of cattle back with him. When he arrived home, he gave some of the cattle to his men, kept some for himself and brought the rest to King Mandume's palace. One day while we were sitting at home we heard people ululating in front of the palace. They were doing it at the top of their voices, which made the king ask what was approaching his house. One of his servants ran outside the house to check what was going on. When he came back he told the king

that there was Hangula Mutumbo with a lot of cattle. As usual when someone brought the cattle to the king, he first put them in the kraal and together with his men went and took up seats at the place called *okashila* specially made for them. They then start singing and dancing there. When the cattle arrived in the kraal King Mandume called to his servants who were herding the cattle and told them that he wanted to see them milking so as to know how much milk they usually got from the cattle. He told them to call him immediately after finishing milking. As soon as they had finished, they informed the king. When the king arrived he told them to call Hangula and his men. Soon afterwards they arrived there where the king had summoned them.

Mandume: Hangula, there is a rule that states that no-one has the right to go to war without Mandume's permission. Have you heard about it? Where are these cattle from, now in the kraal?

Hangula: Your excellency, I have heard about the rule, but I just decided on my own to go and get some cattle from Ekamba.

Mandume: Could you explain what Mandume's order says?

Hangula: Mandume's order says that we must not wage war on our own without your permission.

Mandume: What should you do before doing that?

Hangula: One must notify your excellency, the king.

Mandume: Why is it that people should state that they want to go for war with other people?

Hangula: It was said that perhaps the country with which one wants to go to war has good relations with ours.

Mandume: Did you come to ask me about the kind of relations we enjoy with Ekamba?

Hangula: No, your excellency.

Mandume: You said you did not ask, you just took your own decision to go.

Hangula: Yes, your excellency.

Mandume: Well, I'm not going to execute you myself. My servants, bring that container with milk. Hangula, drink that milk and make sure the container is empty.

Hangula started drinking until some of the milk began coming out of his nose. The king also ordered Hangula's men to take the container and drink out the milk as well. It was terrible. Hangula's men carried him home because he was so sick and exhausted after drinking so much milk and vomiting it up.

Soon after this incident the king called all the men in the country and asked them whether there was still someone who was not aware of the orders which now governed the country. He also explained to them that Hangula was not killed because he wanted people to look at him and see him as an example. Finally, the king re-emphasised the fact that no-one should carry out war unilaterally, but that the order should be obtained from him. Hangula was told to go home with his cattle.

I have learned that around the year 1930 a certain Kwanyama organisation was set up to fight the Boers. Do you have any knowledge about such an organisation? I understand it was created after Mandume's death.

I have not heard anything about such an organisation. I only know about the whites when they came to fight King Ipumbu ya Shilongo. If such an organisation was established after the death of King Mandume, I don't think it existed. No such attempt was made otherwise I would know about it. I only know about Shongola, because at the time of King Mandume he was just a small boy. He used to be sent to deliver messages to King Mandume, that's why I happen to know him. We were very good friends. Shongola replaced the Boer administrator at Ondangwa, and soon after that the quarrel with

King Iipumbu started. When it became unbearable Shongola turned to the Kwanyamas for help against King Iipumbu. His request was accepted, and both the Kwanyamas and the Ndongas encircled King Iipumbu in collaboration with Shongola. At that time I was at school in Ondonga. The fighting did not take place, it was called off. It is said that King Iipumbu paid some money in order for the battle mission to be called off. At the same time, when Shongola finally went to dislodge King Iipumbu from the throne, he asked the Kwanyamas to accompany him. I know it very well, but I don't know anything about any organisation that was set up to fight the Boers, whether it was a Kwanyama, Kwambi, or Ndonga organisation.

Tatekulu, I heard that there was one king of the Ombandja tribe called Sheetekela. Could you tell us something about him?

Sheetekela was the king of the Mbandja tribe. Do you know that Ombandja was attacked by the Portuguese several times? So, King Sheetekela was the first to fight the Portuguese. His first Portuguese enemy was known as Nghihula. It was this Portuguese who, as I told you, came to ask for help from King Weyulu. King Sheetekela was chased out of Ombandja by the Portuguese and came to Oukwanyama. King Nande was ruling Oukwanyama by then.

He lived in Oukwanyama during both Nande and Mandume's rule. At the same time the First World War was in full swing in Europe. When the Germans lost the war, those who were in Windhoek decided to come here in search for a safe route back to Europe. A German commandant by the name of Franke came here searching for the way. When he arrived here the Portuguese learned about the presence of Franke in the region, and they fled northwards. When Franke returned to Windhoek he found that the German administration had collapsed and that the British flag was flying over the city.

When King Sheetekela learned that the Portuguese had fled northwards in fear of Franke, he requested King Mandume to assist him with troops to take him back home. King Mandume gave him the troops to take him back to Ombandja. A few years later the British toppled the German colonial administration in Windhoek. The German missionaries who were in Oukwanyama told King Mandume that the Germans no longer had power, and that power belonged to the British. They advised him to send people to Windhoek to tell the British that King Mandume wanted to talk to them. At that time King Sheetekela was in Ombandja. It was not long before the Portuguese returned and Sheetekela was again hunted out of his country and came to Oukwanyama. He stayed with us and together we fought both the Boers and the Portuguese.

That is how we were encircled by the two enemies, the British and the Portuguese. King Sheetekela survived and stayed at Etomba after the death of King Mandume. Before his death King Mandume told us that whoever survived the battle should take the king's belongings to King Martin of Ondonga. He mentioned it because he already knew that he was not going to come out of the battle alive. After the battle many of us who were Mandume's servants fled to Ondonga together with most of the Ndongas who were here.

King Sheetekela remained at Etomba. When the Ndongas passed at Etomba on their way home, King Sheetekela fired at them and killed one of them. The rest of them fled and when they reached the palace of King Martin, they told him the following: 'We are coming from Oukwanyama. On our way from there we passed via Etombo and were fired at by King Sheetekela. One of us has been killed.' King Martin did not wait any longer, he took the matter to Ondangwa where Shongola was the head of the colonial administration. Soon after Shongola was given the full account of the incident, he made out an arrest warrant for King Sheetekela. He was arrested and taken to

Okavango where he stayed for a considerable period of time. That is all I know about King Sheetekela.

I understand that King Sheetekela was once asked by King Mandume to go to war against the Portuguese, but he refused. How far is it true in this regard?

No, that's not true. The day we went to fight the combined British and Boer troops King Mandume called all his men including King Sheetekela and said: 'Today will be the end of our administration because I am going to die in the battle we are now facing. I am not going to be captured alive by any single white. But they will kill me because I am also going to inflict heavy losses among them. I now want to tell you that anyone of you who feels that he cannot take part in the battle and would like to leave now, please do so and give us the gun so that we shall be able to fight the enemy.'

King Sheetekela was among those who chose not to fight. There was Vilho Weyulu, the son of the king who lived at Ohaingu, and Shipahu who died at the same spot with King Mandume. These two men decided to follow King Sheetekela and to take away the guns from him, as well as to advise him not to leave his brother Mandume at war with the whites. King Mandume told them not to do so. He expressed the view that King Sheetekela had failed to fight for his country, Ombandja, so how could he fight for the country which did not belong to him? That is the only bit of story I know. Sheetekela did not refuse to go and fight the Portuguese. I know almost everything which happened during the time of King Mandume because I was one of the senior people close to the king.

Another question is this: during Shongola's rule, people crossed the border from Angola when the borderline was drawn up. When they reached this

side of the border they found that there was not enough place for them to cultivate their crops, neither for them to live on. We understood that Shongola advised them to go eastwards, because there was enough space for living and cultivating as well as for grazing their cattle. People were afraid to go there due to the belief that if you go to the east, you will never return. We would like to know why those people were afraid to go to the east and in case some of them went there, who were those who were sent there?

That remark did not come from Shongola, but was made by his successor by the name of Nakale. When Nakale left Oukwanyama, he went to Okavango where he became the first ruler. The time he was in Ovamboland, people were living close together and there were not enough fields for ploughing and cattle grazing. The Kwanyamas, Kwambis and Ndongas were all sharing the limited land available for cultivation.

It was on this basis that Nakale told the headmen that due to the lack of sufficient land some of the people should go further into the bush. The Kwanyama had a lot of cattle. They made their cattle posts at Oshimpolo because there was enough grazing as well as water for their cattle. So they refused to go there, arguing that if they went there they might spoil the grazing for their cattle.

One evening we were sitting around the fire with a certain white man from Germany. We were discussing this and that and some people were posing questions to him. Finally this white man said that they were very much impressed by the way King Mandume ruled his country and that they were not going to change many of his orders. They were so good that no-one could improve on them, he said.

There are allegations made by certain people that Mandume was killing people. Of course, he did kill some people. But those people who got

side of the border they found that there was not enough place for them to cultivate their crops, neither for them to live on. We understood that Shongola advised them to go eastwards, because there was enough space for living and cultivating as well as for grazing their cattle. People were afraid to go there due to the belief that if you go to the east, you will never return. We would like to know why those people were afraid to go to the east and in case some of them went there, who were those who were sent there?

That remark did not come from Shongola, but was made by his successor by the name of Nakale. When Nakale left Oukwanyama, he went to Okavango where he became the first ruler. The time he was in Ovamboland, people were living close together and there were not enough fields for ploughing and cattle grazing. The Kwanyamas, Kwambis and Ndongas were all sharing the limited land available for cultivation.

It was on this basis that Nakale told the headmen that due to the lack of sufficient land some of the people should go further into the bush. The Kwanyama had a lot of cattle. They made their cattle posts at Oshimpolo because there was enough grazing as well as water for their cattle. So they refused to go there, arguing that if they went there they might spoil the grazing for their cattle.

One evening we were sitting around the fire with a certain white man from Germany. We were discussing this and that and some people were posing questions to him. Finally this white man said that they were very much impressed by the way King Mandume ruled his country and that they were not going to change many of his orders. They were so good that no-one could improve on them, he said.

There are allegations made by certain people that Mandume was killing people. Of course, he did kill some people. But those people who got

killed were those who were undisciplined. Mandume killed those who trespassed against the law. He stopped unnecessary killing in the whole country which was appreciated by the majority of the people with open hearts. These people do not know who exterminated a lot of people in this country.

Some of his senior headmen left him when we were at Oihole. That time, people were starving and many of them died. King Mandume ordered the people to collect all the skulls of dead people. When they were brought to the king, he sent them to Ondangwa to show the administration that the people were dying in the country. King Mandume was a wise man. He really behaved like a Christian. He was guided by the truth. He used to turn away those who told him lies because he disliked them. He also used to say that there was no creature or human being like a Boer. 'If you agree with the Boer on a certain point, he will come with a different one tomorrow. The *Boere* do not have truth.' We have discovered that in the real sense of the word the *Boere* are untrustworthy people.

People talked about King Mandume being the butcher of so many people; yet even the whites who claim to be civilised took people to court and if found guilty were sentenced to death. This practice had been put in action to deter people from committing crimes. In actual fact King Mandume had laws that protected his country and people. Nowadays we are experiencing a country turning into a desert. The reason why it is so is well-known: people have cut down all the trees, and the result is soil erosion. All this happened because there was no rule to prohibit people from cutting down trees unnecessarily. Mandume had laws which prohibited people from doing harm to any kind of trees.

There are laws and regulations guiding the day-to-day life of the Kwanyama people. This includes the way in which the kings used to take up the crown, his death, his successor and his behaviour. When the Kwanyama

came here, they settled at one place only. This place was known as Ombala. It was from Ombala that people started dispersing in search of better places to live. We arrived from Ondonga. The reasons for coming here were enough water for both domestic consumption and for the cattle herds. Another reason was the large number of wild animals which used to be found there. In brief, the Kwanyamas used to go hunting, travelling long distances from Ondonga where all the people were settling down, including the Hereros. One day they informed the other tribes that they were not going to return to Ondonga, but to stay at their new place, Ombala. Never did they return. The other tribes named them Kwanyamas because they were attracted there by meat.

Does it mean that when the Kwanyamas went for hunting they never returned?

Yes. Only a few of the hunters returned to show or direct the other people how to get to the new place.

When these people came from Ondonga and settled in Oukwanyama, did they have their own king or did they take one from Ondonga?

When they arrived here they set up a temporary base. At the same time they gathered together to choose a person who would lead them. When the people came from the east to what is now called Ondonga, they were in clans. The revision of clans also took place here. There was a certain clan which possessed a lot of cattle. This clan was known as Ovakwanangombe. This particular clan was chosen to be the ruler of the nation. That is, anyone who became the king of the country had to come from this clan. Even at that time they chose their leader from that clan. And from there, the Ovakwanangombe ruled the country before it expanded.

Who was chosen as their first king?

Hautolonde was chosen to become the first king of the Ovambo tribe. He took the crown immediately. The people started to build their settlements with the permission of the king. This process continued for a long time till the country finally expanded. People were provided with axes to go and start their settlements. No-one was allowed to take up a position on his own initiative.

Could you tell us whether King Hautolonde had headmen or not?

He had headmen with whom he was working at that time. At that time they used to be called the advisory council. The name headman just appeared recently. Those people in the advisory council used to live with the king, unlike the headmen. When the people were building their settlements the council used to advise them on how to build the settlements, and worked out in which direction and which place. A specific number of them were allowed, but I forget how many.

Did the people pay any tax during that period?

No, there was no payment at all. The advisory council was responsible for the drafting of laws and regulations of the country. Anyone who trespassed was then punished accordingly. King Hautolonde died and the people chose one from his clan to replace him. It is said that he was a good king.

For how long did King Hautolonde rule the country?

I understand he ruled for more than twenty years. I only know about the exact ruling years of King Mweshipandeka and others.

May I ask again if people bought their seeds from Ondonga, or found them here and just started cultivating?

They came with their seeds, especially for the *mahangu*. Only the maize seeds were obtained from foreigners, especially the Portuguese.

Who succeeded King Hautolonde?

King Hautolonde was followed by King Shimbilinga.

Which other kings do you still remember?

The kings from the Ovakwanangombe clan came to an end when a split broke out amongst its members. Hautolonde was succeeded by Kavongeka whom they described as a good king. He was followed by Hamangulu. King Hamangulu did not rule for a long time. He was overthrown by his grandson, Haimbili. When King Kavongeka died, all members of the royal clan assembled in his palace to choose his successor. The split came about because some of them objected to Hamangulu becoming the next king. They told him straight that they were not ready to be ruled by him and started threatening him. He then fled the country. On his way to Onkhumbi where he planned to seek refuge, his grandson followed him and killed him on the way. After killing Hamangulu they assembled again to choose the king.

You know already that the country was then ruled by the Ovakwanangombe. At the assembly, the rebel group got out and took another place where they decided what to do next. They decided to go back to the

palace crying at the top of their voices. The idea was to find out whether the people in the palace would run away or remain there. The people in the palace heard a loud noise from outside. They started asking themselves about the fate of those who left the palace in opposition against Hamangulu whom they wanted to install as a king. So they grew fearful that the rebels might have decided to come back and disrupt all the arrangements that had been made so far by force. Before the rebels reached the palace, the other group came out and fled in fear. The rebels were very happy and entered the palace with the final aim of ruling. From then the country came under the rule of the Ovakuanankali. This clan was given that name because the people were assembled to remember that someone had passed away, and this started a revolt. Shimbilinga was the leader of the rebel group and he became the king after the crisis. When the others returned from the assassination of King Hamangulu they found that an interim leader had already been chosen. This leader was then chased away by the mourners and replaced by King Shimbilinga.

King Shimbilinga was a very bad king, according to reports. He made people cut a tree with their bare hands because they were lazy, he claimed. From there the people decided that such deeds could not be tolerated any longer. They kept an open eye on him. Shimbilinga was the brother of Hamangulu and was succeeded by King Haimbili. The clan of Onakwanangombe ended its leadership there and was replaced by the Ovakwanankali clan.

How long did it take the people to overthrow King Shimbilinga?

King Shimbilinga did not rule the country for a long time. People starved during his rule because there was no law which forced them to work or to produce food. There was no peace at all during his time.

Who succeeded him after his death?

He was succeeded by King Haimbili. The country was then divided into two parts because he was too young to rule such a big territory. King Haimbili took the part which included the traditional palace, while his brother took another part. People praised him because they said that he had good orders and regulations which guided them. His brother's name was Hamulungu. He ordered his people to open the mine which provided crude iron for making axes, traditional knives as well as hoes.

Did the people sell these items?

There were many people who used to make such items and sell them. These items were not available in the country in large quantities and even the people from Ondonga area came to buy them here. I can't remember for how long he ruled the country before he died, but I know that his brother Hamulungu died first. King Haimbili was succeeded by King Haikukutu, the son of Nyiki. He ruled for two years only and died from natural causes. He was succeeded by his brother Sheefeni Nyiki.

Was there a trade relationship with other people, especially the Europeans who were in Angola?

At that time the Portuguese were just arriving in the south of Angola. King Sheefeni also did not live long and died. One time the king called on the meeting of *epena*, the legislative body of the country. He had in mind the killing of all male princes whom he believed were endangering his position. During this time many of the would-be kings fled the country into exile. Only

Mweshipandeka remained behind due to the fact that he was too young. They returned after the king's death. Haikukutu and Sheefeni fled to Okafima, while Mweshipandeka and Nghishiimonina went to Ondonga.

King Mweshipandeka's father was Shaningika. He is my mother's father. He ruled for nearly forty years. The Portuguese came during King Mweshipandeka's rule. They were later followed by the Germans and the British people. Trade was not important at that time. It became important during the time of King Namhadi. They were exchanging cattle for guns and horses. During the time of King Mweshipandeka a war broke out between the Kwanyama and the Nama. The latter came from the south to attack the Kwanyama. The Nama were beaten off and left behind a large amount of weapons and ammunition, as well as horses. The main aim of their coming here was to raid cattle. When they were defeated the people only took the guns and horses and burned the wagons. Fights between the two tribes took place at Okawe and Onandjamba.

Did they have enough weapons to protect themselves from any external attack?

Yes, they had enough weapons and guns to repel any invasion. Meanwhile King Mweshipandeka died and was succeeded by King Namhadi. Most of the guns were acquired when people started to go to work in the south, and they brought back the guns after their contracts expired. This took place during the period of King Weyulu.

Did the Kwanyama possess a lot of cattle?

They had a lot of cattle but by now only a few were left by the droughts which affected our country during the last years.

The German missionaries arrived here during the time of King Mweshipandeka and he accepted their presence. They went to Ondonga where they were requested by the people there to provide them with enough missionaries. They returned to Germany and many missionaries were sent here.

Did the kings accept the missionaries without any reservation whatsoever?

Yes, they were accepted without trouble.

I understand that there was a certain missionary who came there, unfortunately he was killed by King Namhadi. Is that true?

There came the Roman Catholic missionaries who built their house near the king's house. King Namhadi was a drunkard. One day he drank too much and became completely intoxicated. His servant took him home dead and his people felt that he was poisoned by the whites. They retaliated by killing many traders, including one missionary.

Was he a good king or ruler?

He was a good ruler, but the whites brought him problems. They brought him the guns, it was all right. But the drinks they brought in this country were not good at all. In order for the king to drink he had to sell some of his cattle. Sometimes he got the cattle from his subjects. At the beginning he used to ask them, but later he sent his men to go and take the people's cattle by force.

Did he send them to take cattle from outside his own country?

A lot of wars have been fought here. Each and every king of this country did send his own men to go and fight for cattle in neighbouring countries. They also brought prisoners of war.

What was the aim of bringing people with them?

When the wars were fought prisoners were taken, but not all of them were taken to the king. Everyone had the right to take his prisoners to his own homestead. This was done for the purpose of selling them to anyone who needed a servant or a slave if you like, because they were treated precisely as slaves. Some of the captured people used to be sold to the Portuguese. Women and children were also included among the prisoners of war. King Weyulu and Nande did most of the selling of people to the Portuguese, people they had inherited from King Namhadi.

How did it go as far as the paying of tax was concerned? Did the authority charge you at all?

Taxation took place exactly as it happened with any other king.

If you buy a prisoner of war, did he become a member of your family or clan?

Yes, he became a member of the family of the person who bought him/her. People had not been taken prisoner for the purpose of marriage. In olden days there were people known as war generals. They had the right to send people to war for the sake of acquiring cattle just as the kings did. At the same time, there were specific places where they could send their men, and also places where only the king could send his men. First of all, they used to send

reconnaissance teams to reconnoitre the places which had a lot of cattle. When the team came back, the general could then report to the headmen that he found the place where a lot of cattle could be found and requested for manpower. That's how they did it.

When you compare the present lifestyle of the Kwanyama with the old one, do you see any differences or are they just the same?

We had our lifestyle which we are still longing for. A lot of changes have taken place. Some of these changes in traditional norms and customs are unacceptable to many of us. Life was very good, more especially during King Mandume's rule. Some people talk about King Mweshipandeka's time which was good, but I consider Mandume's period to be the best. This is because King Mandume put an end to unnecessary wars. He also ordered the war generals not to go to war without his permission. Such unilateral actions had worsened relations with neighbours in the past.

During the time of King Nande and Weyulu you could not keep many of the cattle you owned at your own house. To avoid trouble you kept them with well-known people such as headmen or members of the ruling clan. In case you are in need, you could then go and get it from where you were keeping it. When King Mandume got to power, he ordered everyone to keep his/her own property, including cattle, without fear of prosecution. The people were extremely happy to hear that and immediately started collecting all their belongings from whoever kept them. This was a fantastic move because the headmen and the like were just eating people's cattle knowing very well that those poor people had no power to claim it back.

Does it necessarily mean that the fact that the kings and headmen's behaviour of misusing people's property triggered off the idea of going to look for work in the south?

People started to go to the south in search of jobs during the time of King Weyulu. King Mandume's rule brought peace and prosperity in the country and the people were so happy, especially because no more wars were being fought with neighbours for the sole sake of acquiring cattle and men. King Mandume not only stopped the war against our neighbours, he also put an end to the fighting between his people at home. He stopped unnecessary shootings, the main reason being to avoid unnecessary loss of life as well as to spare ammunition in case the country was invaded by the enemy. Working in the mines had just started with the arrival of so many white people in the country. Mineworkers suffered a lot. They also used to go for jobs in the mines during King Mandume's time, but not so many people were doing so.

Did they ask permission from the king to go for jobs in the south?

No, they only informed their relatives and their headmen before they left. On their return home, they used to offer gifts to the king or headman which was done by the people of their own free will. Mandume was a good leader because he used to tell the people what should be done and what not. So the people were happy because everyone in the country knew what the king had said and what he/she ought to have done.

What happened if a person went wrong?

Those who trespassed were tried by the people's court and punished accordingly.

Do you still remember King Mandume?

I was brought up in different palaces. I started in King Hamalua's palace, then King Nande, and ended up in King Mandume's palace. During King Mandume's rule I was in charge of the liquor section in the palace. When the war broke out I had my own detachment. I was responsible for giving out weapons to the soldiers. I last saw him in the battle the day he died.

Can you tell us something about his life?

King Mandume's father was Ndemufayo. He [Mandume] was not married. He said he was not going to get married as long as life in the country was still in bad shape. That is why he tried to break all the dictatorial rules which were passed by former kings and their senior headmen. Some of these kings had laws which stipulated that females had no right to own cattle. King Mandume gave or restored these rights to the women. No one had the right to kill another in Mandume's time. Those who did were either executed or punished severely. Orders were given and disseminated thoroughly with the help of children who were sent to deliver the messages to their parents at home. He ordered the people to take care of their livestock, cultivate crops, and collect grain at his house or palace in readiness for any unexpected drought. He owned a lot at his palace.

Is it true that all the kings in Ovamboland were not allowed to go outside their respective territory? If the story is true, how is it that King Mandume used to go with his soldiers outside the borders of his own territory?

Our kings are not allowed to travel up and down by our tradition. Even Mandume himself was not allowed to do so. He only did that when he went to war, but he had the right to travel anywhere he wanted in his own country.

Was he having any problem with the Portuguese?

There was a hell of a friction. King Mandume refused them entry into our country. At the same time, our country was given to the Germans by King Weyulu. The Portuguese used to come here illegally. They used to bring strong drinks which spoiled many of our people and destroyed life in the country. They also used to penetrate the country illegally during the time of King Nande. When King Nande died, they used to come to ask Mandume for the restoration of good relations which they enjoyed with Nande. King Mandume refused, saying that they spoiled his country by bringing in liquor. This was the very reason that brought the conflict between him and the Portuguese. The selling of people also took place during the rule of King Nande to which King Mandume strongly objected. The Portuguese wanted to come in because we had a lot of cattle which they needed.

When did the Portuguese start to fight Mandume?

That happened recently. That very year one of our missionaries called Ashipala told King Mandume that the Germans had lost the war, and that they had no more power to help the king in any circumstances whatsoever. He advised the king to send someone to Windhoek and to arrange for a meeting between himself and the British. It was during the time when Mandume sent a person to establish contact with the British that the Portuguese attacked us. The battle took place at Oihole in 1917. The first encounter between us and the Portuguese took place at Ondjiva in 1916. This

time the king's messenger was in Windhoek. Ashipala, who was a German missionary, told King Mandume to urgently contact the British because he knew that the Portuguese were preparing to launch an attack against us. The battles were fought and the messengers to Windhoek brought the British with them as the king had ordered. They stopped at Onamakunde, and one of them [messengers] came to Omongwa where we were fighting the Portuguese. They informed the king that the British had arrived at Onamakunde, and that he should go and meet them there since they were not ready to visit the battle zone.

King Mandume took some of his senior headmen and ordered the rest to continue the fight while he went to meet his British guests at Onamakunde. He spent the night at Ondjiva. He also sent me a message where I was busy giving out guns to the combatants. We left the others there [at Omongwa] and went to Ondjiva where we found the king. Some of his belongings had also been taken there. He told me to go back because the combatants might mishandle the weapons there while he continued his journey to Omupanda to meet his guests there. I woke up early in the morning and started off to the place where the soldiers had transported the materials.

British: King Mandume, we have come here to hear what you have invited us for.

Mandume: I have invited you to come here so that we could sit down and discuss. I have problems with the Portuguese who want to take my country. I don't want this country to be in the hands of the Portuguese, I would therefore like to ask your protection. I am requesting this of you, because the country has been a German protectorate since the time of King Weyulu. The Germans were the ones who brought us up from Weyulu, Nande, up to myself. Now the war has come, initiated by the Portuguese. The Germans told us frankly that they don't have any more power to help protect us from the

enemy. I therefore would like to place my country under your protection from the Portuguese, if you can allow it, as it was protected by the Germans from time immemorial.

British: We accept the responsibility, but we would like to let you know that we are also at war with our enemy there. So you have given us the responsibility over your country. Take this letter and send it to the Portuguese.

At that time the Portuguese were based at Omongwa. They received the letter, and wrote a reply. Both Ashipala and King Mandume took the letter from Ondjiva to Onamakunde where the British envoys were waiting. They handed the letter to the British who read it without delay. After reading it they asked King Mandume whether he was aware of the border which existed between his country and Angola, from the Cunene River up to the Kavango River. The king agreed and added that the border-line crossed his *mahangu*-field. The British then told him to go and collect all his belongings and bring them some way inside his own territory. He did as he was advised to do by the British envoys. That's how things happened.

May I ask you exactly when the war started?

The war started in 1915. Let me tell you about one thing. There was one English man called Kaluapa who knew very well that the borders stretched from the Cunene up to the Kavango River. He also knew that it passed via Ondjiva. It was on this basis that they advised the king to collect all his belongings and settle a bit deeper inside his own territory. King Mandume went to Ondjiva, took what he was able to take with him and set his palace on fire. Everything got burned down including the food; although there was now a great famine no-one was able to carry the food or save it from burning. They

left and came this side of the borderline. The operation was so swift because they were told by the British that the Portuguese were coming, and that it was good to get them on the other side of the border.

Where did the British envoys go? Did they go back or stay at Onamakunde?

They stayed at Onamakunde from the time they told the king to shift from Ondjiva.

Peace arrangements between King Mandume and the Portuguese got bogged down. Do you know who was responsible for the breakdown?

Peace arrangements were hampered by the British envoy who came to King Mandume and told him to hand over all his guns with which he fought the Portuguese. The king refused and the conflict started. The Portuguese used to come and attack Ondjiva on a regular basis, while the British were just at Onamakunde. Mandume never provoked them.

Did many people die because of hunger at that time?

So many people died because of hunger. Many soldiers also died. When Mandume left Omongwa for Onamakunde, he also left the battle at its highest peak ever and the Portuguese were withdrawing from their combat position.

One can say that the king almost surrendered to the British because he once received a letter from Windhoek inviting him to attend talks with the British people there. He called in all his senior headmen to inform them about the invitation to Windhoek. At the same time the question of the handing over of weapons was still unresolved. The headmen refused on the grounds that he could not go for discussions anywhere while the enemy was still

occupying Ondjiva. They reminded him of the fact that the British ordered him to surrender all his weapons, which he never did, and warned him of serious consequences after the discussions with the British. They also reminded him that the British had lied when they said that the Portuguese were not going to attack Ondjiva, and then did so within a short time. Therefore the headmen decided not to allow him to go to Windhoek for talks with the British.

How many times did the Portuguese attack Ondjiva?

They launched their attack on Ondjiva twice, but were repulsed by King Mandume's soldiers. During the first attack the king was not present. Only his senior headmen commanded the battle. Secondly, Mandume sent a message to the British envoy at Onamakunde informing him that he was going hunting and that he was not going as far as Ondjiva. The British envoy sent a message to the Portuguese at Ondjiva to inform them that Mandume was going to be in the area, hunting. This action triggered off the second round of fighting.

Did you also participate in the second battle?

Yes, I was also there. So many Portuguese soldiers perished at the battlefield this time. This was caused by the fact that we had a lot of guns and ammunition. From there we came to Onamakunde where the king used to have discussions with the British. Ashipala, a German missionary, came with us from Ondjiva. The British told the German missionaries that they should go to Windhoek because they were in a dangerous war situation. King Mandume requested them to allow Ashipala to remain behind with him. The rest of the missionaries left for Windhoek. One day while we were at Oihole a

man came there and asked to see the king. He was well-known, even by the king himself. He was then taken to the king for discussions.

He told the king as follows: the Portuguese arrived yesterday with their guns at Onamakunde, and entered the room where you usually have discussions with the British. In case there will be another discussion with the British, don't enter that room any more. I have come here to alert you about this danger.

Mandume: I don't understand what the British want to do to me any more. First, they told me that the Portuguese were no longer coming to attack us at Ondjiva, but they did attack us twice. Now they are bringing them to Onamakunde where we usually have our meetings with them. What the hell is going on?

One day the king was invited to go to Onamakunde. He refused to go there. They then asked him to find a place where they could meet for further discussions. King Mandume chose the house of one of his senior headmen near Onamakunde as a venue for their meeting. He ordered Haufiku Kasheeta to prepare the place. He informed the British about the venue and also asked them to let him know whenever they had anything to discuss with him. One day the British sent him a message to meet at the very place he had chosen. The king agreed, and to his astonishment he found out that they were still demanding the handover of weapons, the subject which had jeopardised their relations at the very beginning. He told them quite frankly that he was not going to surrender his weapons as long as the Portuguese were still at Ondjiva. He was well aware that the Portuguese presence there was only aimed at facilitating their attacks against our positions, which he was not prepared to tolerate.

Who was the head of the British delegation which used to have discussions with Mandume?

I don't know him by name. I only know the one who was at Ondangwa by the name of Major Felix. We nicknamed him Mandjafela.

I understand that there was no borderline between Angola and Namibia. When was the present one introduced?

The current borderline was set up in 1925.

How was the people's reaction to this arrangement?

The reaction was quite negative. Most of us felt that the drawing of the borderline was unfairly done because the best part of Oukwanyama became part of Angola. We felt that it should have stretched from where the battles used to be fought and away from Ondjiva. We really felt threatened.

When the borderline was set up, on which part or side of the border did most of the people want to settle?

Most people wanted to settle down on the Namibian side of the border. During that time good grazing fields were the only advantage one could enjoy in Angola. The Portuguese were suppressing the people by beating them every now and then. Many people were forced to join the army against their own will. This side of the border enjoyed peace and tranquillity.

Well, the meeting between the king and the British took place as scheduled, with the British side still demanding the surrender of all weapons by Mandume. As I said earlier, King Mandume was an honest man. This time

he felt betrayed by the British people because of the fact that they don't keep their word. They tell you one thing and then do another.

Did he enjoy the overwhelming support of the people?

Yes, they liked him and supported him very much.

How did it go from there, would you please elaborate?

The meeting did not go well and the king told them the following: 'I think that the idea of getting security from you is no longer there. You said earlier that you were preparing to launch an attack against us. This idea is still in your minds, you haven't forgotten it. Therefore I would like to tell you that from now on I will be here any time. I am ready to meet and respond to any challenge that might come.' His senior headmen advised him to leave the country and go to Ondonga. He told them as follows: 'I was given this country together with my two sisters by my people. I will not go anywhere, but die here at Oihole.' He then told the entire nation that he will die in Oihole. Everyone received this message before the death of their beloved king. He also told his soldiers that they should be ready for a decisive battle ahead, and anyone who was not prepared for the fight should leave beforehand.

I understand that the king's palace was also attacked at Oihole. Is it true?

One day while we were at home we heard the sound of a zooming car. This car belonged to the English people who came from Ondangwa. It stopped by a tree in front of the palace. A person left the car and came towards the palace. King Mandume ordered the car to be observed and he was told that a

person was coming towards the palace from the car. The person arrived and was asked what this mission was all about. He replied that he brought the guests from Ondangwa. This person's name was Ndjukuma, one of the king's senior headmen.

Mandume: Ndjukuma, where did you get those whites?

Ndjukuma: I brought them from my house.

Mandume: Did you take them from your house to bring them to my house?

Ndjukuma: They found me there and asked me to lead them here.

Mandume: So you brought them here to my house. What do they want from me?

Ndjukuma: They told me that they want to discuss important matters with you.

Mandume: Does it mean that you have come so that we can go together to meet them?

Ndjukuma agreed and the king called his men and myself included. He called those he trusted for his maximum security. We were eight in total. We all had guns except the king. We followed Ndjukuma to the car which was standing still. When we arrived there, the king immediately started negotiating with the British people. Soon after that he came to us and told us what they were discussing. He went on to say that the British told him to accompany them to Ondangwa if he wanted to stay alive. The entire British force was at Ondangwa, they said. 'They asked me to take an immediate decision whether to go with them or to face death. I told them that I had left Ondjiva and that I will make no more concession to move out from my present palace. I prefer to die here.' We asked him if it was worth killing them and preventing them from going back.

Mandume: I don't have any trouble with messengers, therefore I would like to advise you not to do them any harm. I want them to go back, reach safety and deliver the message that I'm alive and ready to fight for the defence of Oihole. That I have decided to die here rather than anywhere else.

The king went back to the British people and informed them of our decision to remain with him. It was Wednesday when they left us, and on Friday the war broke out. For strategic reasons, the king deployed one battalion at Ongha to serve in the first echelon. This battalion inflicted heavy losses on the enemy soldiers there. When the fighting broke out we were digging in, in readiness for a decisive battle. We could hear the sounds of the guns. Our troops made a tactical retreat and some of them went straight home. The enemy came to Onamakunde and spent the day there. On Monday they launched their attack on us at Oihole. We were expecting them to come from the direction of Onamakunde but to our surprise they attacked us from all directions.

Early in the morning the king called those of us who were present and told us the following: 'Dear comrades, the battle we are facing right now will not leave me alive. So anyone who is not ready to stand it can leave, but make sure you hand over the gun to enable us to fight back effectively.' By then a large group of men, women and children had already left. They were ordered to leave the war zone and to take food and other materials to safety. While we were in our positions there came some of our neighbours, and Mandume said: 'Those of you who will survive the battle should take all my belongings to King Martin of Ondonga.' Before the king stopped another group came in and told us that they saw a large group of white soldiers passing with a lot of war machines. Immediately after learning that we set off to go and meet them. They came and soon after King Mandume saw them, he ordered the fight to start.

So the war started, and many people perished. King Mandume was not killed by anybody. He shot himself just as he told us that he would not be captured or taken alive by anyone. He was shot by one bullet only, a clear indication that he really shot himself.

I only came to see his head when we brought his belongings to Ondonga. We took them there and spent the night at King Martin's palace. The following day a message came from Ondangwa stating that all those who brought Mandume's belongings should go to Ondangwa. The king called us and informed us, mainly senior commanders, about the message to go there. He said that the whites wanted senior commanders to go to Ondangwa for interrogation. We told him that we could not go to Ondangwa and face the very people with whom we were fighting. He said that he would give us some of his senior men to take us there, which we declined. In the end he told us that he would take us there himself, to which we agreed.

Early in the morning we prepared our horses and set off to Ondangwa. We stopped at a tree where we found many people who were wounded during the battle. One of the British majors came to us and took the king with him. Within a short while we were called to a place where we found the British war generals sitting.

The British major greeted us, he knew some of us because of the good relations we had enjoyed with them in the past. He addressed us with the following words: 'I am proud to inform you that the battle you fought together with your King Mandume was a decisive one. You fought it bravely, hence congratulations.' He then turned back towards his colleagues and introduced us to them. He told them that we were Mandume's soldiers. He did not hide the fact that he knew some of us personally. One of them told us that we had fought with valour, and that they were keeping the king's head. He then asked us whether we were going to stay in Ondonga or return to

Oukwanyama. We answered them with one voice that we were not going back to Oukwanyama.

Although the king was not present at that moment the British promised us that they were going to take care of us and that it was their wish for us to get back home. We were prepared by the king when it came to answer questions, not everyone had the right to answer. So our spokesperson answered the following: 'Before our king died in battle, he told us that the survivors should bring all his belongings to King Martin. Now we are following what we had been told to do. King Mandume did not tell us to become subjects of King Martin. He mentioned his properties of which we are part. Therefore we will remain with King Martin and not return back home.'

The British advised us that we should reconsider our decision very carefully while in their midst. They went further to state that if we did not want to go back to Oukwanyama, we would not be allowed to stay in Ondonga either. The administration will do everything in its power to take us in the bush and settle there. We told them that it was impossible to be forced to settle in the bush. If it was the order of King Martin, we would agree, we told them. We made it clear that we were going to stay in Ondonga just as King Mandume instructed us.

The argument went on. Later they told us that they did not want us to live there because we might instigate King Martin as we had Mandume. He said we had good tactical military experience. His last remarks threatened us with tough administrative actions if we continued to stick to our early decision. We did not give in to threats but told him that they could do anything they wanted, but the situation remained that we were going to get back home. They did not say much and told us to go away and reconsider our decision and to give them an answer the following day. We went home but refused to go back the next day.

They also sent a message that if we wanted to see the head of King Mandume, we would be welcome to do so. We went there and they showed us his head. They said that you can look at his head, but rest assured that we are not the ones who took his life. He killed himself. They even showed us where he had shot himself. We told them that that was what he used to tell us. His expectations were not to be captured alive by any white man so that they would go around boasting and asking him strange questions. He preferred to kill himself once he realised that he could not contain the situation.

This entire story came from my own practical experiences. No-one told me anything concerning what I have told you here. I have told you exactly what I know and what I saw myself during the war. King Mandume was buried in his palace while his head was taken to Windhoek where it is kept up to now. These days we, the Kwanyama, would like to raise a fund for putting up a memorial sign on his grave. The grave is currently in bad shape since we cleaned it in 1961, the year I went to Finland. In 1951, three big stones fell on his grave. One was taken away by the Portuguese and the other two, as I understand, still remain there.

Where did they take the king's head?

The king's head was taken to Windhoek where it is kept in a very nice room. If you go there as a tourist you would be allowed to see it. You will be allowed to go inside the yard only, but not inside the room. But the people who are working there are saying that when SWAPO increased its activities, the Boers took out the king's head. No-one knows where they have taken it. People suggest that they did it thinking perhaps that SWAPO would come and take it away.

When the British people cut off Mandume's head, what do you think they were going to do with it?

Now that I am a committed Christian, I think that it was done to illustrate the reality of the king's death. When David killed Goliath, he cut off his head to demonstrate that he really killed him. The same was done by the British although they were not the ones who had killed him, only to show that he had died. The Portuguese used to argue that King Mandume did not pass away, because they never saw his head nor his dead body. I happen to believe that this is a traditional European belief.

Did the people accept the successful government after the death of King Mandume?

Yes, they accepted it and it was also the end of hostilities. In reality a person complains only when he knows that someone somewhere would give him a helping hand.

Things went like this: there are senior tribal headmen in Oukwanyama. Each of these people had their own groups of supporters. Those in power were clever because they leaned too much towards their supporters and their headmen. Senior headmen did not take their own way. If they did so, they could not have accepted the white administration which in turn might have made the situation deteriorate into a further bitter struggle. You may remember the words which a white man said to us at Ondangwa, that they wanted us to get back to Oukwanyama and lead the nation as usual.

Do you see King Mandume as a hero of the Kwanyama people?

Yes, I see him as a hero of the Kwanyama people. Most of us who were with him regard him so because we have seen how brave he was. He always kept or stood by his words or rather translated his words into deeds. He was an honest man. Most of today's leaders lack his character, because today they tell you this and tomorrow they do that. If you listen to stories about Mandume from people like me who were with him personally, then you will appreciate the fact that although he is dead, the people will keep him in their memories.

Did he have a child before his death?

No, he was not married by then.

After his death, do you think there was anyone else who could become king?

The death of King Mandume also brought about the crucifixion of the kingship in Oukwanyama. The system of tribal headmen was installed.

Would you tell us about the situation of the missionaries after the death of King Mandume?

Soon after the death of King Mandume, all German missionaries returned to their respective country. There was one man called Simson, a disciple of the German missionary, who was a committed servant of God and who helped to disseminate the gospel of God among thousands of people in the country. The government, in close collaboration with the church leaders, also helped the words of God to grow roots among the people a great deal.

Did many people turn to Christianity?

Yes, so many people were converted to Christianity. The black churchmen who were left behind by the German missionaries were strong believers. They worked so hard that the majority of the people came to believe in God. Senior headmen who were left behind by King Mandume, such as Weyulu and Kaluvi, had no hatred for the church.

During that time Christianity grew stronger and stronger. They [the headmen] really helped a lot in getting the gospel of God to the people. Most of them also became Christians, such as Nicodemus Kaluvi who was a servant of both King Weyulu and Nande. We were baptised together by the Finnish missionaries who by then were coming from Ondonga. He was also a brave man indeed. Most of big Weyulu's children were also baptised, such as Elia and Vilho Weyulu. Vilho and I are of the same age because we were born on the same day.

Did the government give more power to the headmen who became Christians or not?

Yes, they were encouraged by the government. They also played a role in convincing the other headmen who did not accept the gospel of God to redeem.

For instance, if a girl got married in a traditional way and wanted to become a Christian afterwards, did they allow her in the church?

There was no rule which went against that practice. Whoever wanted to become a Christian was welcomed provided that he confessed. Every Christian was an atheist to begin with.

How did the king view Christianity?

King Mandume himself was not a Christian, but he did not reject Christianity as such. His close adviser was a missionary called Ashipala. This man advised the king very well during the time of both peace and war. Most of us think that it was only because he died so soon, otherwise he could have become a Christian. Some people were even speculating that he was baptised by Ashipala, but in the real sense of the word he was not baptised at all.

What effect did it have on Christians in general when they were oppressed by the Portuguese while at the same time attending church services done by the Germans who were also whites?

Nobody cared a damn about that. People were so friendly with the missionaries especially the Finnish missionaries. When our church sent me to Finland some time ago, the head of the Finnish Mission Society invited me to his house, and among many questions he posed to me was whether the Finnish missionaries they had sent to Namibia were still there, or were we already finished with them? I told him that they were in good health and enjoying their stay in Namibia without any problem. He said jokingly that they were planning to bring them back home. I told him that to do it could only harm the good relations Namibians were enjoying with the Finnish people.

END

INTERVIEW WITH JOHANNES SHIHEPO, AKWENYANGA, 28.10.1989

Johannes Shihepo gave his date of birth as 1906. He is a headman near Ongwediva, of Kwanyama origin. His father was also a headman, prior to colonial rule. He was baptised in 1920. While on contract labour in Tsumeb, Shihepo attended night classes in English run by a Sotho migrant. English language was a fairly unusual skill, which helped Shihepo into the job of interpreter for the government labour recruiter in Ondangwa from 1930. He is also fluent in Portuguese. His recruiting trips into Angola and intelligence work there during World War II make his knowledge of conditions under Portuguese rule very useful. Familiar with most aspects of the migrant labour system, he is uniquely positioned to discuss the history of the north from different angles. He was recommended as an informant by a long-standing SWAPO activist in Oshakati. Two formal interviews and several informal visits were held, both the former with just the author and her assistant who interpreted. The latter was necessary because Shihepo preferred to discuss history in oshiKwanyama.

Can you please tell us your date and place of birth, and your historical background?

I am a Kwanyama by tribe. I was born in the area of Oukwanyama which became part of Angola after the country was divided by the Boers and the Portuguese. I was born in a village called Nkoshimbali, west of Onamakunde. My father was later given another village which was a bit bigger than Nkoshimbali, known as Oipembe near Ondjiva. We moved there when I was a small baby, and that's where I grew up.

I grew up there and could see how my father and others used to go for war to Ombandja with the sole aim of capturing cattle. They also went to the other surrounding areas such as Ombalantu with the same purpose. My

father was taken prisoner in Ombandja from 1912 to 1913. He was later released after his family paid some cattle. Others who were taken together with him were sold to the Portuguese and were conscripted into the Portuguese armed forces.

I lived with my father most of the time. My father's second wife was Moidiva Tapata, daughter of Veikala Mulundu. Mr Veikala Mulundu was a brother of the late King Haimbili of Oukwanyama. During that time I used to observe how old people practised superstition and all types of magic-related things in our house. They did not care about chasing us outside the house because they thought we were too young to be interested in them.

Many kings used to pay us visits. The person I knew best was King Mandume. Whenever he came to pay a visit we used to be called to perform traditional dances while the king and his companions ate and enjoyed their drinks.

What I would like to tell you now is about something wonderful. This wonderful story is about the Portuguese who used to come from Onkhumbi with ox wagons. Their main purpose was to look for slaves. I can say that during that time many people were sold as slaves. People were sold at cheap prices such as a few bottles of wine, clothes and some cheap ornaments. We saw people coming from as far as Ondonga to be exchanged with bottles of wine, because as we understood it they had annoyed their king. Those Kwanyama who were claimed to be wicked people or practising witchcraft and the like were brought in large numbers, strong and weak, but the strong ones got many bottles. The big fish were then enjoying their drinks while their servants sorted out trading affairs with the Portuguese.

Long, long ago we understood there were Roman Catholic missionaries in Oukwanyama. Those missionaries came one day to conduct church service at a certain village which I cannot remember well. They stayed close to King Namhadi's palace, as the normal practice was in olden days. The

aim was to get protection in time in case someone tried to trouble them. One day King Namhadi fell ill and the missionaries were brought in to provide him with medical treatment. They gave him some medicine in order to cure him; unfortunately the king died instantly. From this, the people reached the conclusion that the missionaries were responsible for the death of their beloved king. His servants together with his junior brother, Nande, became annoyed with the missionaries and started to attack them. One of their helpers was killed on the spot. The missionaries under the leadership of Mr Hakaongo fled in the direction of Evale. All their trading property together with other personal belongings were taken from them by their assailants. Another trader was also robbed of his goods and fled to Onkhumbi.

All these happenings brought about a major clash between the Kwanyama and the Portuguese. The Portuguese were claiming that the Kwanyama kings should pay compensation for the death and damages they inflicted on the missionaries and traders. The Kwanyama remained for quite a long time as if nothing remarkable had happened. After some time the Portuguese became tired of the behaviour of the Kwanyama and decided to do something about it. One day, I was a grown boy by then, a certain Portuguese passed via Evale on his way to Okafima in the far east. King Mandume was hunting in the same area by that time. He was warned that he should take care because the Portuguese were in the same area. King Mandume became angry with them, because he said it was a provocation on the part of the Portuguese to pass via his own territory without any notification. So he decided to teach them a lesson. The Portuguese were attacked. Stories mentioned that there was a Portuguese lady who was very brave and shot a number of the king's men. One Portuguese man was taken prisoner and brought to Ondjiva.

This incident added to the already tense situation between the Kwanyama and the Portuguese. It was on this basis that the Kwanyama tribe

had something to pay for the Portuguese. The missionaries had been there since they arrived in the time of King Weyulu. As time went on without the Kwanyama paying back, the Portuguese grew more angry. They sent a message which stated the following: 'If you don't pay for the person you have killed, or compensation for the damage you inflicted on Portuguese property, we would like to let you know that we will be coming to see you soon.'

After the arrival of that note, the missionaries advised King Mandume to pay what the Portuguese were asking otherwise the consequences would be too ghastly to contemplate. The king rejected the idea outright. He argued that he could not pay anything because the Portuguese were guilty of entering his territory illegally. Meanwhile a certain German by the name of Franke paid a visit to the mission house on several occasions. During his visits he always brought guns and ammunition to King Mandume. At the same time the missionary settlements were at four different places, namely Omupanda, Ondjiva, Onguma and Onamakunde. Although the Germans stayed a bit far away, they became good friends with the Kwanyama.

On August 15th, 1915, the Portuguese launched their attack on us. The attack came from Ombandja after they had already taken over that country. Another reason for the Portuguese to attack us came from the fact that King Mandume used to give support to the Mbandja kings when they were at war with the Portuguese. One day while we were looking after the cattle we heard deafening sounds. Immediately after that we saw people running towards the king's palace carrying various types of traditional fighting equipment such as pangas, knives, assegais, knob-kieries, etc. The next morning we learned that people had already gone to Omongwa to fight the Portuguese forces which were there. My father was also one of those who had left.

There was not enough food at that time. There was a terrible famine in the country and many people from Ombandja fled their country just because of hunger. Most of them came to Oukwanyama. While the majority of the

Kwanyama people were confronting the enemy at Omongwa, the country was invaded by Mbandja people who took a lot of cattle and grain by force. There was chaos in the country. The battle at Omongwa lasted for two weeks and the Portuguese succeeded in repulsing the Kwanyama offensive. This was caused by the fact that the Kwanyama force carried their war materials on their shoulders and the distance to Omongwa was also too long to carry a sufficient amount of ammunition. They could not wait for their ammunition to run out completely, so they just decided to retreat back home. The Portuguese had trucks which carried large amounts of guns and ammunition. This was the first time we saw vehicles. They also had camels with them. The beginning of the fall of the Kwanyama kingdom started there. King Mandume burned down his own palace which was in Ondjiva at the time.

The situation in the country became so confused that people started to pose many questions amongst themselves. Such a war situation also had a bad effect on the senior headmen, that some of them even panicked and changed sides. King Mandume went to Oihole while some of his senior headmen gave themselves up and started collaborating with the enemy. Some remained neutral, they were neither on the side of the Portuguese nor did they join the king at Oihole. They were even involved in robbing the nation due to starvation. They never realised that they were taking the people's properties in conjunction with the Mbandja people.

While the war situation progressed between the Portuguese and the Kwanyama, the Germans were also getting it hot in Europe. King Mandume had great hope that the Germans, under General Franke, could render a helping hand against the Portuguese. The German missionaries who were in Oukwanyama by then just informed the king that their government could not do anything because they were also in the same boat. Their country had already fallen into the hands of the British together with their European allies. They told the king that they were also under siege by people from South

Africa who told them to pack up their things and leave. The German missionaries returned in 1916. The country fell into the hands of the Portuguese. The British people came and chased the Germans up to Okashana. After that they were told by the Portuguese that some Kwanyama kings were troublesome and did not want to obey their rules. They came and established their headquarters in Ondangwa, while King Mandume was at Oihole. The Portuguese also came and settled at Onamakunde.

King Martin of Ondonga collaborated with the British and told them that his country was at peace and that the trouble could only be found in Oukwanyama. He welcomed them whole-heartedly. The British delegation which had talks with King Martin left. But to his surprise he later found that the British were in close contact with the Portuguese. The British came as far as Onamakunde where they met with their Portuguese counterparts.

King Mandume liked the British people very well. He used to have good and friendly discussions with them. One day the king's advisers told him that he should be careful otherwise the British would betray him and hand him over to the Portuguese. They questioned the British people's sincerity if they held talks with King Mandume and with the Portuguese at the same time. The king was so surprised by the news and became convinced that he might really be sold out one day.

But in actual fact the British wanted to convince the king to go to Windhoek to have discussions with the senior British representative in order to place his country under British protection. They wanted him to make such a commitment, which he nearly did. His senior headmen refused. They told him that traditionally the king was not allowed to leave his country. If he did, his country would be ruined. They did not hide the fact from him that if he decided to go to Windhoek he would be going alone.

The most senior headmen such as Weyulu and Mweshipandeka did not like the king. They started hating him because he was against corruption.

Africa who told them to pack up their things and leave. The German missionaries returned in 1916. The country fell into the hands of the Portuguese. The British people came and chased the Germans up to Okashana. After that they were told by the Portuguese that some Kwanyama kings were troublesome and did not want to obey their rules. They came and established their headquarters in Ondangwa, while King Mandume was at Oihole. The Portuguese also came and settled at Onamakunde.

King Martin of Ondonga collaborated with the British and told them that his country was at peace and that the trouble could only be found in Oukwanyama. He welcomed them whole-heartedly. The British delegation which had talks with King Martin left. But to his surprise he later found that the British were in close contact with the Portuguese. The British came as far as Onamakunde where they met with their Portuguese counterparts.

King Mandume liked the British people very well. He used to have good and friendly discussions with them. One day the king's advisers told him that he should be careful otherwise the British would betray him and hand him over to the Portuguese. They questioned the British people's sincerity if they held talks with King Mandume and with the Portuguese at the same time. The king was so surprised by the news and became convinced that he might really be sold out one day.

But in actual fact the British wanted to convince the king to go to Windhoek to have discussions with the senior British representative in order to place his country under British protection. They wanted him to make such a commitment, which he nearly did. His senior headmen refused. They told him that traditionally the king was not allowed to leave his country. If he did, his country would be ruined. They did not hide the fact from him that if he decided to go to Windhoek he would be going alone.

The most senior headmen such as Weyulu and Mweshipandeka did not like the king. They started hating him because he was against corruption.

During his rule nobody was allowed to cut trees any way he liked. The firing of guns without a clear purpose was prohibited. Headmen were also stripped of their right to take anything away from ordinary people as they usually did during the time of former kings. King Mandume put a stop to all these practices. Now when the British came, some of these headmen also joined them against the king. Only a few of them remained loyal to him. He retained only those he himself trained and gave the responsibility to rule. Most of the seniors defected to the British. Among those who defected were Ndjukuma and Kauluma. We only used to hear about headman Hamukoto wa Kapa, one of his senior headmen who remained loyal to King Mandume and who fought heroically with him against both the Portuguese and the British people.

The Portuguese were exploiting people greatly with their huge tax. People used to pay many cattle. The number of cattle paid annually always increased rather than reduced. They also brought in goods for exchange with the cattle. So many people lost their cattle due to cheating by the Portuguese. There was no money therefore people were tempted to sell most of their cattle which the Portuguese wanted the most. The Portuguese also exploited the people with their jobs. While at work, people neither got paid nor were they provided with food. People were made to construct roads. Everyone participated including women, children and old people. They did not possess road construction equipment which was why they took manual workers. In addition to their jobs they had their black policemen who were brutalising people all the way down. Those policemen were drawn mainly from the Ovimbundu tribe in Angola. They were so cruel that if they told you to do something you ought to have done it in no time.

Did the Portuguese conscript people into their army?

Of course, yes. They used to take people by force. This particular practice was known as *olusika*. In the beginning people used to run away, after some time they became used to it. Some of them even joined the Portuguese army voluntarily. People who were brought up by them could join in, but could only serve for four years and were then allowed to leave. Those who ran away were followed and forced into the army. At that time people were rounded up during the night.

It was difficult to kill a person at that time, those who did were taken into custody by the Portuguese authorities. The Portuguese did not kill them, only one could never go back. The Germans killed people once they arrested them. Unlike the Germans the Portuguese took their captives to islands such as Cape Verde and the like. They took people far away to make it impossible for them to return home. People from these areas or countries were then brought here. Most of the people who lived in Sao Tomé were brought there in such a manner. That is how they treated our people during those days.

At that time Ondangwa was the only exit to the south. There was no other chance to go there without a travel document which they called a pass. If you went there without a contract you should carry a pass as well as clear documents to indicate who you intended to visit. But it was not allowed for people to travel just for the purpose of visiting. If you are an Ovambo, then you were only allowed to live in Ovamboland. The same applied to the Kavangos. You are only allowed to work on the farm or otherwise. One was only allowed to go to the south on a work permit. The most favourable job they offered was to work on the mines.

My first master or boss was Mr Reuben Steven. I was working in the kitchen. The Secretary of SWANLA [South West Africa Native Labour Association] was based in Grootfontein and his main function was to distribute people to various kinds of jobs. I also worked there and we used to tell people that, you got a job here to go to work on a certain farm. They were

not told exactly at which farm they were going to work. If they agreed they got a red thing with two holes. This was used as a number plate. If you obtained Number A, then you were a big fish. C was regarded as medium and E for small boys. That was how we arranged them to go and work on contracts. People who got an A were mainly chosen to go and work for CDM, a diamond mine in Oranjemund. Those who got a B were sent to Walvis Bay to work in the fishing industries. Sometimes we sent them to go and work with the railway companies or to Grootfontein where they could also be provided with some other jobs. So you walk from Ondangwa to Tsumeb. We gave them uncrushed *mahangu*, but not mealie-meal, and off they went. They travelled for up to seven days.

How long did the contracts last?

The first contract lasted for twelve months. In the meantime it was increased to eighteen months and was again reduced to twelve months. So we gave them jobs. The funniest thing occurred when you were recruited to look after sheep. You know that a sheep has long hairs. When it goes in thick bushes with thorns it would be difficult for it to come out. If you lost that sheep, the master or boss would have to send you back to find that sheep. If you don't find that sheep, he will beat you with a sjambok every day.

Sometimes the boys ran away to Ovamboland. You know here we write down all their particulars, so if he runs away his boss would go through his files and get it. He would then send a police commissioner to Ondangwa with the aim of finding that boy's home. They would go to the headman and tell him the particulars of the boy and ask him to go and get him. What the headman had to do was only to co-operate in finding that particular person. The policeman remained at Ondangwa while the headman had to go and bring the boy to him. After the person was found he was given over to the

policeman who in turn handed him over to his boss at his work. Some of the unlucky ones got jail sentences. For the sheep he lost, sometimes his master told him to work for it. He would then work for months without pay. After the end of the contract you could find that some people did not have anything. You could also find out that they had worked even for three years. After the end of the contract, his master, the good one I'm referring to, gave him clothes and money and took him by car to Grootfontein. From there he then walked to Ovamboland on foot.

Then came the car. The person felt that the contract was good, because he was given a chance to go back home and see his families and relatives. He gave whatever he worked for to his parents and after some time he returned back to work. If the company (SWANLA) wanted, they sent him to his former boss. If they did not want or in case they had another customer who offered to pay them well, they could send him there. They had a say when it came to the distribution of workers. Sometimes you went to a railway job and to your surprise you would find that you don't get the money you were offered in the contract paper. Sometimes they gave you nine pence per day. So clever people knew how much they ought to get per day. If they were not given that money, they went on strike or informed the police about it. Sometimes the police could tell them that their approach was good and advised them only not to leave their jobs. You would be told to continue asking for your money there. When it came to a strike people did not go to work for some days. It was difficult for the boss to send them to jail, because you were so many. They applied clever tactics of checking and noticed people by faces and after the strike they arrested some of the people they thought might have been responsible for organising the strike. Later they would send the rest of you back to work or you faced jail sentences if you happened to refuse. Well there was nothing we could do other than to obey your master's orders. The main group had to go back to work while four or five of them went to prison. There

they would be told to stop creating any more trouble of teaching or instigating the other workers to go on strike. There was little you could do because they did not send a large group to prison. A group of four or five was enough to be sent there in order to frighten others not to go on strike in the future. The only thing they could do was just to accept the charge and go back to work. At the same time the number could not exceed four or five because the owner of the farm would not be able to pay you all.

Some of these farmers were so poor, because they just came from Angola or Botswana and settled here. These people spoke a certain language which the Ovambos could not understand. They occupied the area around Outjo where there is a good farming area. They also extended their farming up to Grootfontein. They employed a lot of Ovambos and gave them a hard time during the contract. From that time the Ovambos started to hate or dislike anyone who came from South Africa. They just did not like them. Paid or unpaid, you just had to work. Those people did not have enough money. Some of the cattle they owned were provided to them by the government in the form of a loan. So for that reason they could not pay their farm workers all their dues. They could not even pay for the land they had hired for farming. Because they were whites they used to be provided with the land by the government.

What happened to the poor Ovambos? They were given nothing apart from the food which was also of a poor quality. The only people who could make a successful strike were railway workers, mineworkers as well as those who worked for the fishing industries in Walvis Bay. They were in large numbers, but they had to be careful not to talk too much, otherwise some of them could be regarded as big mouths and could be thrown into jail any time. Or they could call for the people who worked there for many years, pretending as if they were giving them good jobs, but in the real sense of the word, to trap those who organised a strike and discipline them. So they

started calling for people who worked for various mining companies etc. They started asking them questions such as: for how long did you work for CDM [Consolidated Diamond Mines]? How many strikes did you organise there? These questions were so carefully prepared and posed in a manner that could possibly and ultimately find those who were responsible for organising the strikes so that they might be silenced. So, those who were found to have knowledge about the strikes were immediately sent to jail, while others were warned and sent back to work. Those who did not want to go back to work could also decide to go back to Ovamboland.

That was how the contract system worked here. If we found out that we did not have many people here and that the farmers were in need of many people, or if we found out that the mines were not paying enough money and their workers knew that they did not get enough money, we used to send these people to Angola. Even I myself was sent to Angola to recruit people. I know how to speak their language and some of them even know me very well. So when I got there many of them were puzzled to see me talking to those whom I already knew in their own language and they started asking me questions about who I was and where I came from. The others informed them that I was coming from Ondonga with the aim of recruiting people to go and work in the south as contract labourers. I started explaining to them that the jobs waiting were plenty. So they were happy to learn that and promised to come within the shortest possible time. I consulted with their headmen, gave them jackets, shirts, and told or informed them that they should tell their people about the availability of various kinds of jobs at Ondangwa. We also used to give them sweets to give to their women and children. The old men we provided with smoking pipes and tobacco. So, they used to be happy whenever we went there.

We used to recruit people from areas such as Onghumbi, Evale, Ondombodhola, Nghuanghua and other places. These people then

disseminated the news further northwards to other people in Angola to come and work in Namibia. They had to come to Ondangwa for registration. As I said earlier, there was no other place at that time to get a pass, even to go for a visit. When they arrived at Ondangwa they were provided with the papers which they took with them to their masters so that they could be given jobs. Sometimes they came on their own and sometimes I had to go all over the place to look for workers.

Why did you go and look for people from Angola and why should they come over here?

The people there were poor. They also wanted to work like we did in Namibia. They were in need of both the money and clothing. The only thing they possessed was cattle which they exchanged for blankets, jackets and many other items to take to their country. In this regard, they used to be cheated on many occasions. When they came here they used to exchange one blanket for a cow or an ox just because the demand for blankets was very high at that time. The Portuguese items were so expensive, and of poor quality. They were only lucky because they got their cattle through cheating.

The Portuguese sold wines, beers and different types of strong liquor. When a person got drunk they would then ask him to pay more cattle. They usually gave two bottles of wine for a cow. It was so funny up there. Do you know what the Portuguese crooks did? They used to sell a barrel of red wine for three cattle. In the first place they took a nip of hot stuff called Constantine and mixed it with another nip of ordinary red wine and would give it to a black man for a taste. When he tasted it, it tasted much stronger than an ordinary red wine in the barrel. This very Portuguese would then tell him that the wine inside the barrel was as strong as the one he had just tasted. The man would then be tempted to sacrifice all his three cattle for a barrel of wine

thinking it was really the same stuff as he was told by his Portuguese counterpart. In the end he would find that he was cheated and there was nothing he could do to follow up the case. That was how the Portuguese cheated so many people.

It was so funny, you know, during the years 1915-17, the Portuguese used to come here as soldiers to fight against our kings. They did not know how to read and write. Where they came from, I don't know, but they said that they came from Portugal. Even the first master with whom I worked did not know even an A. It's really funny.

Did all these Portuguese soldiers stay only in the south of Angola or did they go anywhere else?

They came here when they were retired from the army. They just came here when their government gave them the right to move wherever they liked. They made business all over the country. They were involved in cheating people by giving them a lot of wine and later claimed that the person had ordered more wine and that he had promised to pay two or three cattle. They drew their cattle from all sections of society without considering between the rich and the poor. People in this country came from different parts to exchange with the Portuguese. Ondjiva was the main trading town by then. Later the Portuguese set up other trading centres at places such as Osheedi and Onamakunde. There was no money at that time. The Portuguese were also involved in buying people from Ovamboland in exchange for beer. These people were bought as slaves and they were made to do heavy and dirty work for their masters, whether they liked it or not. Some of these people were later sold to the British and Americans and they are known as American negroes. When the Boers came, they introduced a bill which prohibited the

selling of people. It was later learned that the Portuguese had also put an end to that barbaric trade.

Every criminal activity stopped. When a person killed another person, he had to escape to Angola to seek refuge. The Portuguese did not about care punishing him or bringing him or her to book. They rather offered him a job. When a person ran from Angola to Namibia, they sent their intelligence service men and policemen to come and hunt for him. They did not execute people after they apprehended them, but sent them overseas instead. It was difficult for them to return.

Nowadays we do not have guns. So many people in this country possessed guns, but they were taken from us by the Portuguese. In case the war breaks out we will have nothing to repel our invaders so as to defend the territorial integrity of our motherland. They had even deprived us of our own traditional fighting equipment such as bows and arrows as well as assegais.

In 1925 I was working in the mine. That was the very year the first plane touched down on Ovamboland soil. All the kings, headmen as well as ordinary people were invited to see the plane. People went there in their thousands because that was news to them. Even the whites who were born in Namibia went there just because it was their first time to observe a man-made flying object.

Do you know how the trouble started with King Iipumbu Shilongo? King Iipumbu was a man with a lot of wives and children. He got married to any woman he felt like marrying. Once upon a time he wanted to get married to a girl who was born to the sister of one of his wives. This girl was very beautiful. King Iipumbu forced her to marry him, but the girl refused and ran to the mission centre to ask for protection against the king. One day he told the girl that she should undergo traditional procession of marriage to enable her to become the king's wife. So the girl refused and decided to go and hide in the missionary's house.

The following day, during the early morning hours, the king fired shots at the mission centre with the aim of scaring them so as to run away from the centre. They asked the people who were working there whether the girl in question was still working there. The answer was not satisfactory to the king and the king ordered his men to enter the mission centre by force, take her out and bring her to him alive. The missionaries were clever enough to hide the girl on top of the roof in one of their rooms. They arrived there and started searching everywhere, but to their astonishment they could not get the girl. The missionaries took the girl, covered her nicely and took her to Ondangwa undercover. From their unsuccessful search on the mission premises, the king used to order his men every now and then to carry out similar searches in the centre. After a while the missionaries became fed up and decided to report the case to the head of the *Boere* administration at Ondangwa. He was known as Mr Shongola. Mr Shongola knew very well that King Iipumbu was a difficult person to deal with, because he used to defy orders which he received from the administration.

On one occasion he was told to build a road, but he refused, saying that he was not a slave. After Mr Shongola received the report that the king forced the girl to marry him he took a decision to go and talk to him personally. He told him quite frankly that he was not allowed to force anyone to do what he liked in any way whatsoever. He also told him to leave the girl alone so that she becomes a Christian too. This remark made the king angry with Mr Shongola. The argument started and the king was told to pay fifty head of cattle. He refused, claiming that those people had no right to tell him to pay, because they were in his own land and at the same time under his laws. The result was catastrophe. He was sent to exile imprisonment in Okavango.

END

INTERVIEW WITH JOSUA HAMAMUDIBO, ONDOBE, 17.9.1989

Josua Hamamudibo did not supply his date of birth, but appears to be in his seventies or eighties. He lived close to Natangwe Shapange's home in the deep interior of Oukwanyama, where people recommended him as an informant because he has had very long experience of migrant labour, though he now makes his living from the land. He was willing to be interviewed, but had no warning of our arrival or our questions, which might partly account for the freshness and lack of ironing-out in his interview. The other factor is arguably that he is not as used to unfolding his story as better-known oral sources such as Kaulinge and Shihepo. I deliberately requested contacts to recommend informants who were not of the élite, to try and listen to voices of the historically more submerged, and Hamamudibo was one such voice. I interviewed him at his home with my assistant and another student observer from Oshigambo.

Hamamudibo: I was born during King Weyulu's era. I personally do not know King Weyulu because he died when I was taking care of my father's cattle. I can say with certainty that I became a big man during Mandume's era. Mandume was a good ruler. Mandume had women rulers as his subordinates.

During the period of King Weyulu, cattle which belonged to women were robbed from them by the king himself. If a woman had many beautiful cattle of various colours, then they were taken away from her. A woman was not allowed to possess many cattle. A large number of cattle which belonged to women were taken into the custody of senior headmen.

First Mandume fought his countrymen - going to Ombandja and robbing them of cattle or people. In the process a few were of course killed. He fought against Evale, Ombalantu and other parts. While he busied himself

with those activities, the Portuguese were spying on his country, planning to come and take his country away from him.

The Portuguese invaded Mandume's country from the direction of Ombandja and Evale - which meant they had already conquered those parts. It was only Oukwanyama which had not been conquered. The Portuguese came through the area called Omongwa. Omongwa used to belong to Naholo Daivinga, the father of Paulus Naholo. When the war started it was joined by headmen such as Naholo Daivinga and Kalola Sheetekela. That year, of the war, Mandume was away from his palace. He went hunting. People followed him to alert him and found him in Oshimholo. Mandume came back speedily as soon as he heard the news of war. He was with Vilho Kaulinge. Mandume used to live in Ondjiva. He used to leave there to go hunting and to rest. Mandume passed through his palace and went to the front. Our house was situated at Okashala in Ondjiva. There was famine that year. The *mahangu* plants were burnt by the sun and eaten by insects.

We were taking care of cattle. The war became unwinnable and the Portuguese were pursuing the king, Mandume. People fled with their cattle and Mandume (who was not married at that time) also fled with people from his palace, who were many. Before he fled he set his palace on fire. The Portuguese found the abundant millet and corn on fire.

We fled with cattle and ornaments. Mandume told the people to go to Okavango. Some young people said they did not want to go to Okavango, but rather to Ondonga. Later they decided to remain and fight against the Portuguese. We came to Oihole. Mandume refused to move further. The Portuguese were from time to time coming to fight us. We killed plenty of them. I also got a gun.

When the Portuguese realised that they were unable to defeat Mandume, they asked the Boers for help. Many Boers came and together with the Portuguese they came to Oihole. By that time Mandume had four wives.

The Boers alone, without the Portuguese, reached us at 9.00. We decided to go to Ondonga. Mandume refused and decided to die in his land. He instructed us to take with us his wealth and give it to King Martin kaDhikwa of Ondonga whom, he said, 'is my brother'. We took the cattle and at 9 o'clock they met with the Boers in February 1917. Mandume was killed in that battle and eleven of his soldiers. Mandume finished all his ammunition. He was shot with four bullets. When he was wounded he retreated into a *mahangu* field and shot himself with the remaining one bullet. The number of the Boers who died in the battle was higher than ours. Among those who died in the battle were Nehalo Iya Haisho, Hamulo noo Shihapu sha Weyulu. The number of Boers who died were ninety-nine, plus those who died on their way to Windhoek.

We went to Ondonga. Martin the king of Ondonga received us cordially and we gave him the possessions from 'his brother'. Martin did not want to inherit the wives of Mandume because he was a Christian. He proposed to the senior headmen of Mandume to take the wives; they did. We gave him cattle and guns. In some cases he returned some cattle or guns to us. We stayed in Ondonga. Our land was then occupied by the Boers. Some of us remained in Ondonga while some went back to Oukwanyama.

What did the kings do with war captives?

Some were exchanged as well as cattle with the Portuguese. Some remained slaves in the palace but they were not being overworked. Those whose relatives cared about them were reclaimed by exchanging with cattle. Others remained forever the people of the king or other captors. Cattle were given to the captors. Mandume did not take everything for himself. He was a good fighter and a great lover of his country.

Mandume gave a ruling that nobody should get fruits from trees by throwing, only by climbing. If you were found guilty of taking down raw fruit, then according to King Mandume's law you would be punished by having to eat those raw fruits.

During the rule of King Mandume, were people asked to buy land?

No, you did not buy the land. Mandume was an honest king. He did not rob anybody, like Mweshipandeka and Weyulu. Mandume was a good and honest king. He was brave at the battlefield and undefeatable. During the war he always remained in the forefront.

Do you know how the Mbandja fought the Portuguese?

They fought the Portuguese more than five years. The Mbandja were fought by the Portuguese with light weapons. We were attacked with big weapons, after the whites had got experience about blacks. Mbandja were fighting also with bows and arrows plus spears. The Portuguese at that time did not have sophisticated weapons, no cannons were used.

Why did no king succeed Mandume?

There were no more kings. There was a problem because the king's family used to kill each other, especially men. They did [not?] want to remain in the same country at the same time, especially in the world of Mweshipandeka and others. Women also became fewer and could not bear any more children. The last woman was the mother of Mandume, and she had only one son, King Mandume. When King Mandume died she was alive and was living in Onekwaya village. The only king with many known children was Hanyanga

Hamutenya from Uukwangali who bore Nghiloleelwa and Kalinasho. Others died. Mandume had only two daughters.

Do you know who was the king of Ombandja at that time?

Sheetekela shAngula. When he was defeated, he came to hide in Oukwanyama. He was living in Etombalo while [inaudible] were living in Ehole.

Is it true that Mandume refused to marry while there was no peace in his country?

It is true.

When Sheetekela came from Ombandja to Oukwanyama, was he given a village?

He was given Etomba lyaHamupembe village which is close to Ondonga and Mandume preferred to stay in the direction where the Portuguese used to come from. Sheetekela came a poor man because he was robbed by the Portuguese. He also did not come with many followers and possessions. His people remained under the Portuguese.

When kings were fighting were they united against the enemy or did they fight individually?

They were fighting individually. A good example is when the Boers came to fight Mandume, they passed through Ondonga. King Martin kaDhikwa only sent a message to Mandume, alerting him of the coming of the Boers, saying

that 'they are coming but very strong, you can't manage to defeat them.' They passed close to Martin's palace, followed the road of Ondangwa via Engela, Onamakunde and then attacked Oihole. The Ovambo kings did not defend one another.

When Mandume died was he succeeded by headmen?

The headmen sided with the colonial representative Majola who served for a short time. He was succeeded by Shongola. Headmen like Nikodemus Kaluvi Okatale Ndjukuma sided with the colonialists. The senior headmen did not want Mandume. They are the ones who betrayed him. The junior headmen were very [inaudible] with the state of affairs. Mandume was elected by the people and the senior headmen did not like it, they sided with the Boers.

How did the senior headmen rule the people, under the influence of colonialists?

They oppressed us severely. They were paid with blankets and given also guns and money. They were also given areas to rule and were oppressing us till Nujoma's era.

Did you have guns? How did you get them?

We bought them from Portuguese traders. At the beginning the Portuguese were our friends. We exchanged guns for cattle.

How did Shongola (the colonial representative) rule you?

They only cared about the headmen. They made us build roads without paying us, and many other things. Such as having to go to senior headman Kaluvi's house to build or renovate it without being given anything, even food.

Why was Shongola given that name?

He used to beat people with *ongola*, a sjambok or whip.

When the Portuguese came in Angola, were Kwanyamas living in Angola?

Oukwanyama used to extend up to Evale and Omongwa, and finally to Ombandja.

When the Portuguese invaded Oukwanyama (at Ondjiva) did people from elsewhere come to the aid of Mandume?

Mandume fought with his own people of his environs. The Portuguese came with blacks from Angola. Mandume was also fought by some Mbandja and many different people. Some Kwanyama headmen also sided with the Portuguese against Mandume.

Was there enough land for Mandume and his people?

There was enough land.

We heard that people were afraid to visit the western side because of certain myths. Is it true?

It is true. The west was regarded as important and nobody was even allowed to set a house facing that side. The south side was regarded as humanity. We did not even like somebody to attack us from that side as we fought against the Portuguese from that side (south). If an enemy attacked you from the south then you will be killed. If an enemy comes from the west side then he will die. The Boers defeated us in a short time, because while we were asleep they attacked us from the south.

Is it true that before colonialism kings used to go to Evale to look for rain?

Is it true?

It is true. We did not know the modern God. Our God was the one who was helping us at that time. A black cow used to be taken to Evale and slaughtered near a river. When the rain came then we said it came from Evale.

We heard that in the old days people used to be circumcised. How did it happen?

I have also heard about it. I heard that some Kwanyama also went through this. But it seems the process originated from whites. *Etanda* came to our country from Nkhumbi and Mbundu. *Etanda* means initiation of man. I also noticed it among Germans with whom I worked. Many of the Kwanyamas did not take up this tradition, because after Mandume's death many of us accepted Christian teaching.

What do you remember about weddings in your traditions? Were kings invited and if so, how and where were they given the opportunity to give speeches during the wedding ceremony?

It is true. The west was regarded as important and nobody was even allowed to set a house facing that side. The south side was regarded as humanity. We did not even like somebody to attack us from that side as we fought against the Portuguese from that side (south). If an enemy attacked you from the south then you will be killed. If an enemy comes from the west side then he will die. The Boers defeated us in a short time, because while we were asleep they attacked us from the south.

**Is it true that before colonialism kings used to go to Evale to look for rain?
Is it true?**

It is true. We did not know the modern God. Our God was the one who was helping us at that time. A black cow used to be taken to Evale and slaughtered near a river. When the rain came then we said it came from Evale.

We heard that in the old days people used to be circumcised. How did it happen?

I have also heard about it. I heard that some Kwanyama also went through this. But it seems the process originated from whites. *Etanda* came to our country from Nkhumbi and Mbundu. *Etanda* means initiation of man. I also noticed it among Germans with whom I worked. Many of the Kwanyamas did not take up this tradition, because after Mandume's death many of us accepted Christian teaching.

What do you remember about weddings in your traditions? Were kings invited and if so, how and where were they given the opportunity to give speeches during the wedding ceremony?

The parents used to ask for permission from the king or his subordinates. A special house used to be selected where weddings should take place regularly. Only those people who were circumcised were allowed to preside over the weddings, they could be local or foreign as long as he had undergone initiation.

The first day of the wedding brides without bridegrooms went into a hut over a [piece of] wood with a 'V' form.

They drank beer from a big cup which an initiated man has stirred with his penis. After the girls have drunk the drums are brought and people start beating them and ululating. The next day the same process is repeated.

Does the king attend the wedding and give a formal speech?

The king attended the wedding but did not give any speech. He only came to enjoy refreshment, beer and food.

Did people ask for permission when they wanted to harvest or cultivate the land?

Yes, they used to ask, but it was known when in the season to harvest and herd. May and June is harvesting time, while in July people herd. In August people clean the land. People did not ask permission to cut trees or bushes. But later during the period of senior headmen people were required to get permission if they wanted to cut big trees or branches from trees. If one was found to have cut a big tree or a branch from them a punishment of six cattle was meted out.

Did you believe in witchcraft?

Yes, we believed in witchcraft. If somebody has died from a disease then witchcraft is used to find the culprit. The witch does it by putting sticks in the fire and knives. Then certain colours are identified by experts. The sticks and knives only represent adults.

Did people ask permission to dig wells from kings?

A long time ago I presume people had to ask for permission to dig wells. But some of us had our own plot of land and if we wanted to dig wells then we had to do it within our boundaries. Only when there was a need to do it in somebody else's land did we need to ask for permission.

When Mandume was defeated and Oukwanyama was divided, did those who were inside Angola have conflict with the Portuguese?

Yes, there were a lot of problems of conflict. The Portuguese were oppressing our people, making them build roads without payment. They had to work on the land of the Portuguese, and anyone who did not come to work was beaten or imprisoned.

Did those Kwanyama colonised by the Portuguese escape to Namibia?

Many came to Namibia, including Mbundu, Mbandja and Vale people.

Did they get land?

Yes, they got land and that is why we are overcrowded today. They also went to Ongandjera, Ondonga and other parts.

Did people take any cattle to the cattle posts in Angola?

It was not done because if the headmen heard about it then you would be arrested and taken to the Boers to be punished.

Was there trouble between Namibians and Angolans after the death of King Mandume?

There was trade in food, because in Angola they had big stocks in their shops. The Angolans also used to get better rains than us.

Which colonialism was better, that of the Portuguese or of South Africa?

Those who came from Angola said we were better off and that is also what we noticed. Our brothers on the other side were severely oppressed.

During Mandume's reign did you go and work on contract and how did you go?

We went to work for the Germans and had to walk on foot from Oihole to Tsumeb. We used to be paid half-expenses daily. And we used to buy clothes and cattle. And during colonialism we continued to go to the south for the same purpose.

Do you remember the Germans, and the Herero war?

I do remember well. The Hereros used to be in their land eating meat. They don't cultivate land. Windhoek, Okahandja, Omaruru were kingdoms of the Hereros. The Hereros had possession of cattle, goats and sheep. The Germans

came to settle in those parts. The Germans discovered copper in Tsumeb. In Windhoek they had also troops where a German whose statue was erected (a man on a horse with a gun) was killed by the Hereros. The Germans came as traders and started prospecting. Later they started fighting each other.

Do you know of any organisation which fought the Boers before the founding of SWAPO?

There was Ipumbu Tshilongo. He trained his soldiers and said 'we should fight like Mandume'. He faced the Boers. The Boers asked him whether he was able to do it like Mandume.

Did he have guns and where did he get them?

He had guns which he bought from the Boers.

Where did they confront each other in battle?

No real battle took place. The Boers rounded us up to go and fight Ipumbu Tshilongo. We were moving in trucks. Planes were also sent to attack Ipumbu. The Kwambis adopted bad tactical warfare. They were just standing in front of Ipumbu's palace. When they saw planes - three - they ran away. We arrested Ipumbu where he was hiding with a big bag of money among some palm shrubs.

There is a story that Ipumbu wanted to get married to his stepdaughter (daughter of his wife), but the church was against it. The church reported this to the Boers, because it was against the move. The missionaries hid the girl. That is why Ipumbu was attacked. Is it true?

Yes it is true.

How did Mandume feel about the missionaries?

Mandume used to like missionaries, but he didn't like Christianity. In Ondjiva and Omupanda there were missionaries. They even used to hold church service in Mandume's palace.

What was the attitude towards missionaries of those headmen who betrayed Mandume?

It was excellent. Kaluvi, who betrayed Mandume, used to be called Hamukoto Kaluvi, was baptised by the Finnish missionaries as Nicodemus Kaluvi. Many of the traitor headmen were baptised.

Who rounded you up to fight in the war, was it the Boers or your headmen?

We were arrested on our way from the south, the industrial area. I lived some time in Walvis Bay with Wilhelm Shali, my friend. We joined war during Hitler's war. There was a lot of unemployment. The Boers arrested us to go to war to fight Mandume and the Germans. I was arrested at Ondangwa. I was enrolled to go and fight Hitler but my name was withdrawn on the recommendation of my uncle Shipena because two of my brothers were also enrolled. He told Shongola (the colonialist representative) that all my three sons cannot join the war.

In the olden days you had traditional healers. Can you remember some medicines which were used to treat people and how did a person become a doctor?

One used to go to the doctor and get medicine, but the doctors did not tell where they got medicine. People learnt the skill from other doctors. Even today people do go to African doctors for treatment, including Christians.

In olden days what happened to a girl if she became pregnant before 'traditional marriage', and the boy who impregnated her? Were they punished?

Yes, they used to be punished, but it was not worse during Mandume's period. My sister was killed because she became pregnant before marriage. During Mandume's period it was only babies who were killed but not the mothers. My sister was killed during Weyulu's period. Boys did [not?] get any punishment. My sister (Shiwele Hafeni) was set alight with fire and died on the spot.

Did you have women rulers? How powerful were they? Did they choose husbands for themselves?

There were many of them. In our days there was Meekulu Nekoto, Hanyangha yaHamutenya from Uukwangali. They used to choose husbands for themselves. If you are chosen then it is difficult to refuse. First they give wealth to the man they want. If they get fed up with the husband they can even kill him and get another husband. Hanyangha Hamutenya killed Ndiwede. Ndiweda was jealous because his wife slept with another man, a neighbour.

We have come to the end of our interview. Please say something about the future government and the present situation.

We want a good government and not an oppressive one, which fears God, which is not mean and not aggressive. In short SWAPO-Nujoma government. That is the government I want. It is the government I prayed for, me Josua Hamamudibo in Ondobe.

What do you think about today's youth?

The youth of today should fear God. They should advise the elders and should also listen to elders' advice. We should maintain unity, love and peace.

END

INTERVIEW WITH ALINA HEITA, ONAMUKULO, 11.10.1989

Alina Heita is a peasant widow of about sixty to seventy years, occupying a homestead just within the Kwanyama border near Oshigambo. In Oshigambo I had mentioned the lack of female informants I was able to interview. The young school librarian, Carolina Nghiiipandulwa, who had helped to interview a woman informant with me in Ondonga, suggested Alina Heita, her grandmother. Again, it was her non-élite status which was an attraction. Alina Heita's interview was however one of the most difficult. We visited her in the early evening when many tasks had to be seen to; moreover she would have preferred to have known me better. There was some reticence, despite the interview team consisting of only Carolina and myself. Her statements tended to be clipped, but nonetheless very suggestive. Ideally much more time invested in building up a relationship might have elicited greater insights into her experiences and her view of history.

Alina Heita: King Mandume fought and killed many Portuguese soldiers. When he found out that he could not win the battle at Omongwa and that their ammunition was about to run out he withdrew to his palace at Ondjiva. He knew that they were following him, so he set his palace on fire and shifted eastwards towards Oihole. It was there where the big battles were fought between him and the Boers. During the course of the battle against the Boers Mandume decided to kill himself and his servant with whom he was fighting. He did not want to be killed or to be captured alive by the Boers. His servant's name was Shihapu. Mandume was a brave man and both the Portuguese and the Boers knew it. That's why his head is still in a garden in Windhoek.

Could you tell us how people starved from hunger?

I was born in May during the big drought. The crops grew tall but were spoiled by insects. Then came the hunger which starved too many people to death. The following year the rain fell so heavily, and people worked hard to get food. So many people were born during that year.

Could you give us a brief background of your family?

My grandmother's name was Endombo Amunyoka, who gave birth to my mother Mukwankala Shamingwa. They first lived in Uukwaluudhi before shifting to Uukwambi, Uukwanyama and later to Ondonga. Here I got married to my husband who died some time ago.

Would you please tell us about your traditions?

At that time we used to wear our *omihanga*, with the rest of the body being naked. We never had clothes of this kind to wear. In case one is getting married, many more ornaments than usual will be put around your hips. We also used to put on the Kwanyama traditional gear which resembled those put on by returnees. Sometimes we put on cattle's skin.

How did your wedding processions take place?

Girls used to come from many different houses and huts were set up away from the houses. The housewives were then ordered to brew local beer in abundance to prepare for the final day of the festivity. We spent four days in those huts beating the drums, singing songs and doing traditional dances. On the first day, our husbands brought our gifts and afterwards we were allowed to leave for home.

Did men give gifts to other women as well?

No, he brings gifts to the fiancée only. For example, the man comes from Mr Shimbulu's house, people shout at the top of their voices, saying: 'The gifts from Shimbulu are there!' Immediately after that his fiancée is brought out of the hut into the open. All his beer and food will be put aside and the beating of drums and dancing commence. Such a process is then repeated with every coming man.

At sunset all the brides are ordered to get into the huts and remain there for four days. No matter how many you are you will be crowded in there. On the final day you will be allowed to go home, but not to your husband's house. He will send the people to come and collect you after a few days. He then pays his *lobola* in the form of a cow, hot drinks and eight hoes. An ox is given alive in Kwanyama tradition unlike the Ndonga whose cow is to be slaughtered.

Where did they get the hoes then?

Before a man gets married, he has to prepare himself and the goods he is going to spend on his marriage, especially cattle, goats, grain, traditional gear, etc. The hoes were the major problem during those years because people used to go far away to Oshimanya to look for them. They were not sold to the public because there was no money at that time. They used to get them free of charge.

Who authorised the traditional weddings to take place?

The kings or the headmen had the right to order the weddings to take place. For instance in Oukwanyama there is no king at the moment, therefore that

power is vested in the headmen. You cannot find a king in Oukwanyama. There is a story which says that they used to eat some herbs that sterilized them so that they cannot produce any more children. For that reason their clan diminished. The kings can only be found in Ondonga, Ongandjera and Uukwaluudhi, but traditional weddings in Ondonga have also come to a halt.

Can you briefly tell us your autobiography?

I was brought up in Oukwanyama at a place called Onanhula. My father's house was there by then. We then moved to Okaonde. The man who brought us to Okaonde passed away and after that I went to Omambonde where I got married. During my childhood I used to go to King Martin's palace. Our wedding got underway through the church and now we have been together for fifty-five years.

How did you get involved in the church?

I used to go to church school while I was a kid, and before I got married. My mother told me to undergo traditional wedding because my fiancé was not baptised, he was not a Christian. When he was baptised I had already had my traditional wedding. He came and a cow was slaughtered for our wedding feast. Later we got married via the church which was conducted by a missionary called Saali who was based at Oshigambo.

At that time were people still undergoing traditional weddings?

Yes, they can throw you in even if you are baptised. You can be in baptism school, but they can take you out just for the sake of a traditional wedding.

But now such practices are being done far away in the bush, not here close to the public.

How did the missionaries convince you when they converted you to Christianity?

I think the Holy Spirit helped them to fulfil that task. The missionaries worked hard to preach the gospel of God. At the moment the number of non-Christians is very limited. A person can even get annoyed if you call him an atheist.

Do people still practise superstition?

People do not bother with those things any longer. They no longer exist. As you know Christianity existed in this country for over a century now, people have become used to it. They are now leaning towards the past. They do not fully take part in the activities of the church, because of alcoholism.

Alcoholism is destroying this world too much.

Examples of superstitions are: do not pour water in the house during the night because the snakes will come in; do not pull anything in the house during the night because the snakes will come in.

The Kwanyamas believed certain things about the east side. Have you heard about it?

It is said that if you throw an object to the east, it will come back and face the west. In the real sense of the word, the east is very essential because if you go there you can always come back unlike the west. Those were their mysteries.

Do you know anything about Shongola?

Yes, he was here and we used to sing about him saying: '*Shongola nge okweya mumangeni*'. This means if Shongola comes back he must be chained. He had his orders, but those of the Boers cannot be compared with his. They were too harsh. None can stand them. During his rule our headmen were allowed to exercise their power just as they did before his arrival. He did not stick his nose into the traditional business. The Boers were arrogant, that is why they burned down King Mandume's palace and caused him to commit suicide. They are racists and did not like our kings.

At the time of hunger it was difficult for anyone to feed himself. How did you survive?

You try by all means to get food for yourself.

What caused the people to go and settle in the south? Was it because of hunger or because they needed clothes?

I can say both. People didn't have clothes. They used to wear animal skins. The skin is softened skilfully and made into a sort of clothing for people to put on. This was in Uukwambi. The Kwanyama soften the skin of a cow or ox, cut it nicely and off he goes. When they came back from the south, they brought nice clothes, shoes, etc. and started wearing them. Men used to go to the south on a twelve month contract period. During this time his wife took care of the house and children and remained there until her husband came back from work.

Nowadays women are being spoiled. You cannot leave a house for twelve months and expect to find her right in there. She will first chop

everything and then involve herself in prostitution. Alcoholism also is to blame in this regard. Although some people misbehave in such a way, the church is playing an increased role in shaping the society in which we find ourselves. The church's call has reached every corner of the globe.

Did women go to the south in the past?

No, they never went there. Their movements towards the south were triggered off by hunger. You used to be beaten if you made the mistake of going there. And if a person makes a mistake to become pregnant, she will be burned alive.

Do you think SWAPO is fighting the same way Mandume was fighting?

No. SWAPO's struggle is incompatible with that of King Mandume. Mandume's fight was for a small part of the country which involved only a small section of the Namibian society. SWAPO's struggle is countrywide because the movement wants the liberation of the entire country. That is why the overwhelming majority of the Namibians are members of SWAPO.

Did peace prevail in this part of the country after the death of King Mandume?

Well, after the king's death no war took place on a larger scale. But ordinary people were not feeling happy with his death because he was then king. The headmen felt happy because some of them disliked him due to the fact that he stripped them of their privileges. They wanted to have their seats as they are now having them.

Did the Boers trouble you when they first came?

Their mission here was to fight King Mandume. They did not bother themselves with ordinary Ovambo.

You said the headmen were happy when King Mandume died. What exactly did they want?

They wanted to accumulate their wealth. For example, they used to go and take other people's cattle which Mandume had forbidden. Even right now some of them do not want to see SWAPO winning over power. They are still siding with the enemy of this country.

How do they organise their campaign against SWAPO?

They have a few people working with them in secrecy. They want the Boers. They are not interested in the well-being of the people. The nation had suffered a lot in their hands. People such as Nicodemus Kaluvi and Immanuel Ipinge are presently collaborating with the Boers. Without shame they are having armed guards at their homes, the so-called Makakunyas.

How did Shongola's men operate?

Shongola's men were men such as Kauluma and Kaluvi as I mentioned earlier. Their operations were always against their own people to satisfy their masters. These very people are to blame for the perpetuation of the South African colonial domination of our country.

When the Boers came here, local people were practising their superstitions. Some were even good traditional healers using herbs. How was the attitude of the Boers towards these people?

The Boers had nothing to do with those people. They operated in a normal way. The church was the only obstacle when it came to our traditional practices. If one visited a traditional healer, he or she will be regarded as one who trespassed against God's commandments. You will then be told to stand in front of the congregation for forgiveness. Even today the church is absolutely against those practices. But nowadays civilisation has gone a step further and people have come to realise what is good and what is wrong. Even myself, I do not like some of these traditional healers because they cheat people. But in some cases they really cure people well.

What type of things would you like to take place in a future independent Namibia?

I would like Namibia to become independent so that we can get jobs, even people of our ages. We want sufficient water supply in this country, we need medical services which are free of charge. We hope that after independence things will become much better. Your children could even come and take you to Oshigambo in a car. Let our independence come, and down with apartheid!

END

INTERVIEW WITH ADOLF AMBAMBI, OSHIGAMBO, 23.9.1989

Adolf Ambambi's date of birth is given as 1908. We did question him as to whether he had been a contract labourer, but the turn that the interview took did not provide a straight answer. The crucial point is that most if not all of his life has been spent as a peasant. He was exposed to Christianity at an early age, which was probably fairly typical in Ondonga. There are useful contrasts in his testimony to those collected in Oukwanyama, which was why the 'extensive' interviewing approach was followed. He was recommended as an informant by a staff member at Oshigambo, who was aware of my emphasis on the need for the testimonies of 'ordinary' people. Adolf Ambambi came to Oshigambo from his nearby homestead for the interview. Natangwe Shapange interpreted my questions and the answers as well as recording, as was our usual procedure, while a second student took his own detailed notes of the interview which he later made available to me.

Tatekulu, we would like to ask you a few questions if you don't mind.

They are as follows: what have you been doing throughout your life? Have you ever been at the cattle post? Did you serve as a contract labourer in the south? But first, before we start asking you these questions, we would like to know your full name, your place and date of birth as well as the name of the king who ruled this area during your childhood.

I was born and brought up here in Oshigambo, and according to what I have been told, I was born in Ondembu, in that village where you have just passed through. My parents told me before they passed away that I was born in 1908. They did not tell me the exact month and day because they were both illiterate. Nobody could read and write at that time. This was during the time the church came to our area. The missionaries first arrived at Omakalukuma,

the remains of whose buildings you can now see. I was brought up by my parents and later my father left us with my mother. The aim, he said, was to go and look for a better place for farming. He left me with my mother saying that he could not take me along with him. I think we were living at Okahenge. That is where I heard the sound of the bell ringing, calling people to go and attend the Sunday church service.

It is there at Okahenge where I became a grown-up boy, able to look after our cattle and goats. We enjoyed looking after the cattle because we did not go far from home. There was no need to go any further because there was enough water and enough grass. I stayed with my mother for some time until my uncle came and took me from Ondonga to Oukwanyama to a village called Onankulo ya Ashiyana. I stayed there for three years with my uncle.

During that time there was a big drought that I think was experienced throughout the whole country. We call it *ondjala yokapuka*. I came back home to find that people were given rations at Gelata's place. People were coming from all over the area to get food and some of them died on their way. We were given things like bread which you mix with water in order to accumulate [?] before you start eating. That's how it was. Even though I was in Oukwanyama, my mother used to get my ration in my absence. When asked if she had kids, or how many kids she had, she mentioned my name as well, and told them I was at home. For that reason she had enough to eat at home.

On my arrival from Oukwanyama I found that the rain had come, the drought was over and people had much to eat. My uncle told me that he decided to take me back to my mother because there had been enough rain and that people there had much to eat. He then brought me to Okahenge, where we remembered those who had passed away because of hunger. My uncle with whom I stayed was thinking of going to the south to look for work. He had a few cattle with him, so he brought them to us in order to take care of

them. Due to the fact that there was not enough food for the cattle, my parents decided to take them to Oshitambi. A few years later there was enough rain and everyone wanted their cattle back home. To our surprise, we were told that all of them had perished. But those people who were given the responsibility of looking after them still had theirs.

My uncle then carried out his decision of going to the south. He took a small amount of peanuts and carried them in a leather bag. They took the road to Okaukueyo on their way to the south. According to the stories, some say he died on his way there, while others say he died at Okaukueyo. This was common during that time. Some people went to Zaire and never came back, it was only their friends who brought the news together with their few belongings.

Where exactly was your uncle going?

My uncle was going to Karibib to look for work. Another story is that when they arrived there they were given food to eat and because they had spent a long time on the way without eating, they ate themselves to death. That's how it went.

Tatekulu, would you please tell us about how King Kambonde and King Nehale had been running this area? Did they carry out war against each other?

They did quarrel a lot. One said he was his own master at his own place, the other said he could not tolerate shit in his own country. That resulted in wars between them. We call these types of war *ekumbu*. Nehale was the most troublesome because he used to come to Onekwaya pushing through Etuntu,

Eshisha and Omukwiyu gwEmanya. There he beat up people - if they were lucky! - and robbed them of their cattle and goats.

We have learned that King Nehale was a very strong and harsh man. How was his behaviour towards the missionaries?

He did not care much about them. He only took trouble over them in case he wanted to get guns and some other things from them. These guns he obtained from the missionaries enabled him to go and fight at Namutoni.

How was his rule in Oshitambi? Would you please tell us whether he was a good or a bad king?

He ruled his own way, hating some and favouring others. Let me tell you a short story about him. When there was a feast, he invited all the people to his palace. They then started dancing and singing. He did not like ugly people. If he saw an ugly person talking to one of his wives (as he was married to a lot of wives) he would think that the wife would give birth to an ugly child. He would then order the immediate execution of that poor man.

During the festival people used to sing in a round formation. The king himself used to take his knob-kierie and stand in the middle of the ring. As he did not like tall people he used to check those who were taller than others and knock them down with his kierie. That is how he was, a cruel man indeed.

We understand that he had a lot of women and that he used to take other women from their husbands by force. Is this true?

Of course yes, who could challenge him? He did what he liked.

Can you tell us how it went when the fighting broke out between the white settlers and King Nehale's troops at Onamutoni?

I understand that King Nehale and his troops went and assembled there at Onamutoni. The enemy saw them while they were a distance away and took positions in their buildings. When they came at close range the enemy started shooting at them through the holes which were made specially for firing. So they suffered heavily. Some of King Nehale's forces are said to have crawled over and taken position in the building where the enemy stored his food and war materials. Some of these troops died because they started eating everything they found in the building including various acids which the enemy used for military purposes.

The battle continued and when the whites realised that they were not going to win it, they started to withdraw. Coming up from the upper part of the building where they started their fight, they fell into an ambush of some of the king's troops who crawled into the building. In this way the whites suffered heavy casualties and fled. And the battle ended.

Did they bring anything from the battle?

Oh yes, they brought cattle, ox wagons, guns and a lot of things they captured from the whites.

Is it true that King Nehale exchanged people for liquor?

Yes. He did call people from the villages and sent them to the south or to Angola in order to be exchanged with liquor. Especially those who were tall or ugly, he did not play with them.

Who took them for sale or exchange?

He had his own men who used to take people to Angola and exchange them with the Portuguese. The Portuguese used to just give them a litre of red wine and they would then let them go. Even Mr Nakamela used to invite King Nehale in the radio broadcasting when he says: 'Exchange them, exchange them with liquor so that we become happy!' He got it from King Nehale. The first people to be exchanged for liquor were ugly people since they were spoiling the nation, he said. Those are the characters of the kings. You don't stay with him and believe you have found your real friend. Things can become different within a short period of time.

You told us that the king had a lot of wives. Could you tell us if he used to give some of them to his favourite headmen?

You said it. That's exactly what he did.

What is the function of the headmen in general, and what did they do at the palace?

They played an important role at the king's palace. They were just like you travelling with those people [foreigners]. You are responsible for telling them what everything is all about in this area. They also played funny games there. For example, if one did not like you, or you possessed more cattle than he did, he could tell the king whatever he liked in order to get you killed. He could tell the king that you have insulted him, or that you possess a lot of cattle, more than the king, and you felt proud of yourself. And many other stories which can infuriate the king. The other reason they give is to tell the king that you own a cow that gives a lot of milk. When it gives milk, the sound made

by the milk in the container is louder than that of the thunder. The king will then order his men to come and kill you and take away your property.

These sorts of actions have led to the deaths of many people in this area. You could be killed because you are healthy. Even as we might be talking here, those who owned a large herd of cattle couldn't keep them at their places. For their safety they give them to their herdsmen. You cannot make a single mistake otherwise you get killed. He could just send his people while you are asleep, with an order that you must not see the sun. If someone gives you a hint, you could then collect a few things which you carried and leave the place. You just had to collect a few things and leave home, leaving the house and most of your property there, or you died. Those were the things that happened during that time.

Did you pay for the land during Nehale's rule?

We used to pay for land just as it's being done today. The bad thing though was that people got killed because of their lands. You could have a nice piece of land, someone could easily be sent by the king to take it. They could do it at night when you were asleep. If you heard the sound of a gun, it meant that someone had died because of his land. Similar practices almost took place during the era of our former King Martin. It didn't quite happen, thanks to God. He could send one of his headmen to go and take over one's own land. That person could again be told to occupy the other's land and the latter would remain empty-handed. So, he would be forced to buy another land if he did not get killed. They could force you out of your land without telling you where to go and without compensation.

We have learned that King Iipumbu of Uukwambi did much worse than that. If he didn't want a person to own a certain piece of land, he sent a message that he or she should leave that very day. It could happen during the

rainy season, having cultivated your crop etc. You would be forced to go on the run leaving behind all your belongings. He would then send his own men to collect them for his own use.

What about the person who took over your land? Would he get some of the goods left behind?

He would not get anything because he would still have to pay for it. Also, there would be nothing left because your properties had been taken away by the king's servants. You can ask about these things, but I'm telling you, they are complicated and full of danger. People used to trick others like this:

He is looking after someone's cattle and now he wants to cheat him. What he does is he goes to the headmen and explains to him about his plan. They will arrange a nice deal. Then he informs the headman to send the message to the king that he [the owner of the cattle] was dead. The king will then order his headmen to collect everything from the house. In a short time you will go to the headman and share the cattle and the owner of the cattle is lost. He cannot come and ask you because the cattle were taken on the king's order.

We have learned that King Mandume did not like the white settlers who came to this country. We also learned that when they went to fight him they passed via here. How did King Martin allow them to pass here and what relationship did he enjoy with them?

That question is complicated. Really tough. People like Vilho Kaulinge know very well what exactly had taken place. Those people came here in different groups with different aims when they arrived from where they were sent.

Some came here as traders and some were missionaries. Things do not happen as you like, the same happened to King Shikongo sha Kalulu. This king had bad luck *omupya*. We do not have that word *omupya* in our mother tongue. We say *enima lyowala* which means a very stupid person. The word itself *omupya* has a sarcastic meaning whenever it is used.

King Shikongo shaKalulu, as we learned the story though we cannot fully tell it, was a true son of this land. He was born by his mother who was also born by the kings of this land. Unfortunately he was using his left hand. And according to tradition, the country cannot be ruled by a left-handed person. That's how things got worse. From there Shikongo fled to the south to look for help from the Germans. He told the Germans that he had his land which was robbed from him by his relatives. He managed to convince the Germans until they decided to give him troops to restore him to power.

There is an expression that says *omusi a ka talele ongolo* - the dead man brought the whites. So the white men came with him, fully armed and in their hundreds as well. War broke out instantly after their arrival. Due to the superiority of their weapons, the German troops won and restored king Shikongo sha Kambonde [?] to power. The very people who helped to put Shikongo to power came here with various aims: to assist Shikongo, to do business as well as to carry out other objectives. They settled down and started selling guns and ammunition. Briefly that is how they came here. The same situation prevails today. There is hunger, everyone wants to get himself something to eat. To feed yourself is the main problem. Things went like that and at the end King Shikongo was reinstated at Oshitambi by the Germans.

Where was King Martin by then?

King Martin was small but had just taken power.

Do you mean that when the white settlers came here they were brought by King Shikongo?

Yes of course, he brought them from the south to put him into power.

So they passed through here to go and fight King Mandume? This means that the Boers were led by a legitimate leader to go as far as Oukwanyama and fight King Mandume?

Yes. When they came here they first helped King Shikongo sha Kalulu. They stayed for a while and learned about King Mandume. This took place during the time of King Martin who allowed them to pass through. When the Kwambi heard about it they became furious about the Ndonga. King Iipumbu ya Shilongo described King Martin as a bloody coward because he allowed the whites to go and fight the Kwanyama. He urged him to kill the whites, but Martin was advised by a missionary called Nakambale not to do so.

So Nakambale advised him not to engage in fighting?

Yes. And these missionaries went in the direction of Uukwambi. When Franke arrived, he fired his long-range artillery which fell in the area of Evale. There were many things one could tell at that time.

Tatekulu, we would like to hear about how King Shikongo sha Kalulu ruled the people and how his end came.

Look, I am going to explain that question thoroughly. Those people came in two groups. There was a group of Hiskia and Vuluhusa which came here. Another team was located at Omupanda. All these took shape during the era

of King Mandume. The group of Martin remained here. I cannot remember exactly because Martin later left for Ongandjera. He took some books, religious writings. Even the first two groups of Hiskia and Vuluhusa used to transport books and stayed there at Ondjiva and Omupanda as I mentioned earlier. They know that history because they can speak Kwanyama very well. A few of them remained here. Some of them wanted to go to Uukwambi, but were refused permission by King Iipumbu ya Shilongo because he was critical of the whites.

Martin's groups remained in Ongandjera, though the king there did not like it. He even beat him up until his jaw got broken. This happened when he was doing church services. He could not do anything against the king because he was a servant of God.

There was also a certain king at Ongandjera who stayed with two missionaries called Heiki and Saari. They stayed there and one day the king asked them to build a house for him. Mr Saari considered it very carefully because this could interrupt his work as a missionary. He then decided to do it, but first he had to look for a suitable soil for making bricks.

The work started but the bricks were of a poor quality, soon breaking down. The king was still demanding his house should be completed. He told Mr Saari to make the bricks while his own men provided him with water. Mr Saari was clever. He decided to play a trick on the king. He chose the site for the brick-making to be a distance away from the well so that the people became tired when bringing water and gave up. The work started and everything went according to what Mr Saari had planned. The distance was long, and at the same time the containers they were using to transport water were not modern. They got tired and gave up. Mr Saari was also released from the job.

How was the attitude of King Shikongo sha Kalulu towards the missionaries?

King Shikongo began his collaboration with the whites since the date they brought him to power. He got his land and at the same time King Martin grew up under their influence. So the relationship was fairly good. In my own opinion his relationship with the missionaries was at a low point. He could speak Nama language as well as the missionaries since they were also using it as a medium for preaching, and I think they could understand one another better. But if he had any friend among them, that much I do not know.

Those who lived at Etindi know better, because the missionaries first arrived there at Okangili and later moved towards other directions. Those people are complicated; if you ask people at Okangili you could learn a lot of things. From Okangili they came to build at the river near Onampungu where Mr Tobias and others were baptised. From Onampungu you will then arrive at King Nehale's palace.

Tatekulu, we would like to ask you a few questions about Mr Shongola. We would like to know how he got here, how they began their colonisation of the country, what changes did they make and why was he called that name Shongola?

The name Shongola means a whip. This name was given to him by the people because he used to whip them. Shongola was born of a certain Hahn who lived at Ondangwa. He replaced him when he later returned to his country. He was also cruel like his son. Although he was so cruel, he applied carefully thought-out methods and tactics of punishing people similar to those used by the inhabitants themselves.

We used to go to Outjo with ox-wagons to collect things for our masters. If he found us on the way he always beat us. Sometimes we took the oxen, the next time we took donkeys. Sometimes Shongola gets you with a wagon pulled by donkeys. He will immediately order you to release them. He then stood beside the wagon or camel, which he also used on several occasions, and checked carefully if there was any donkey with a wound anywhere. If he found any, we all had to suffer that day. He would deal us blows saying that we were also punishing the donkeys. It was tough that time, you whip a donkey in order to rush to the water, Shongola also delayed you on the way which you suffer from thirst. He hits you and tells you to allow the animals to graze. Sometimes the water can be found at a long distance, say for example at Ozizi. Yet you are told to allow the donkeys to graze! Are you not going to die from hunger and thirst?

The bush was also full of wild animals such as lions, adding to Shongola's threatening behaviour. When he left we would start moving immediately. He used to tell us that if he sees our tracks on the road we will get it, so we listen carefully and release the donkeys immediately if he comes, to avoid the beating.

Does it mean he used the Ovambo style to beat you up?

Oh yes. That man also used *ekumbu* style of war. *Ekumbu* means a king sends his men to attack another tribe with the aim of capturing cattle, goats, people and other valuable properties. One day he told Martin, when the people were busy constructing a road, that he should do as they used to do in olden days. (Meaning that he should attack them and capture everything.) Martin did as he was told. He ordered his headman called Petrus who started raiding from Okathitu kaMbulumbulu, Onandjokwe until here at our village. He took everything with him including goats and cattle. When we followed them in

order to get some of our cattle back, we found nothing there. There was nowhere you could find them.

Tatekulu, you know well that the Boers came here and consolidated their colonial administration. There was a time when the people suffered a lot from hunger. Can you remember what the Boer administration did in this regard?

During the period of Shongola they used to send us maize and distribute it among the people. But I am going to tell you what they have done recently. They dropped the maize at the churchmen's houses, and gave them responsibility to sell it. When it was finished he [the churchman] took back the money and the empty bag, and got other bags of maize to sell. People were buying according to what they possessed. One cannot talk about those things in the public, they are complicated. If you want something to write down I can tell you about the tax cards they were selling. Some people paid, some did not, but they did not cost much, only fifty pence each. A lot of problems used to be faced at their office where you get these cards. You don't have money. When it rains well and you have a satisfactory harvest, you can then take maize or grain.

These people were so clever, they set up a very big drum in which to store grain. Everyone took his grain or maize at places such as Ongula or Omapundo. We could go wherever was nearest to our houses, there was no restriction. That's how they collected the grain until all the drums became full up, followed by a big drought. People were not having any maize to pay for tax or to eat. That was the right time the administration was waiting to exploit the people peacefully. Messages were sent everywhere for people to go to the government sites to buy grain for themselves. This was the very grain they paid in the form of tax.

Nothing else we could do, we had to collect the small [inaudible] we had in order to get the grain. Some people had money, some hadn't. People came from far away and some of them could not get a chance to buy the grain the same day and so they went hungry. We used to go in large numbers, in thousands. When they realised that we had no more money to pay for the food, they decided to give it to us free of charge. At this stage only rich people and those who were well-known benefited from the distribution. Poor people did not get anything and after the rich received their rations you will be told that the remainder belonged to the government or that we should go and pay for it the next day. They took the money they got from the grain and what they did with it, no one knows.

Those people collected the grain from you in the form of tax, and during the drought they sold you maize and grain through the missionaries. Do you think this did some good?

Sometimes it was good, sometimes not, because it involved favouritism. Many people suffered because of those unfair practices. There were no store-rooms at the headmen's houses, we built them. People were ordered to build them. We did this to show loyalty to our leaders as it was done throughout the world. The king ordered his headmen and the headmen ordered his village people to do the job. We did not only work at the headman's places, but also helped to construct the king's palace. That's how the coloniser behaved, they oppressed us carefully using our own kings and headmen. We are just realising it.

Tatekulu, do you think that the parents in this area do not want their kids to go to school or are telling them to keep away from schools or churches?

In the time you are talking about, people were well aware of the importance of education, their eyes were not closed. They needed their children to be taught at school. But the main problem lay within the kids themselves who did not want to attend classes. Another problem is the school fees, many people do not have money to pay for their kids. Some do not have even grain to sell so that he can take his or her child to school. They are asking too much to pay for schools which the people do not possess. In short, they do want, but the school's demand is too high.

Another question is that they have the problem of who is to look after their cattle when the kids go to school. It may happen that a person possesses the cattle, but there is no-one who can take care of them. Such a situation brings about hunger and a lot of suffering. Some of the cattle get lost in a complicated manner which involves the king and his headmen. When the cattle or goats get lost and happen to appear at one point, no-one will be there to identify them, people will come from somewhere and take away and sell them.

Especially the Kwanyamas used to come here. They came here as if they are looking for grazing places and big fields to cultivate their crops. Kwanyamas do not come to settle in the middle of this area, but they pass through towards Omithiya and Omangeti where there are nice fields.

Were there enough places here to accommodate so many incoming Kwanyama?

This situation has been created by the farming equipment such as ploughs and hoes. The number of people has also increased dramatically, which causes them to move from one place to another. Long ago people owned small fields where they cultivated their crops. This was due to the fact that

they had no modern equipment. Now they are using tractors to plough their lands which provide them with enough food for their families.

Would you please tell us if any of King Mandume's headmen came from Oukwanyama to settle here?

Some of them came to settle here. I know of headman Kautwima who came to settle at Omapimba; Hashoongo Amutete settled at Oshandi shaMalangu and died there. They were here from there, the reason why they came here remained a secret.

Do you mean the present Kautwima?

No, I mean the late Kautwima, the elder brother of this one. He died some time ago. That's why people say Omapumba gaKautwima, meaning that it was his village.

Do you know any others from Oukwanyama?

I don't know anybody apart from those two.

This area used to be ruled by one king only. But there came a time when it was ruled by two kings, namely Nehale and Kambonde, and after their deaths it was ruled by one king again. Do you have any knowledge about why this was done?

There were many kings such as King Nekwaya, Nangolo dhAmutenya, to mention but a few, I cannot remember all of them. Their main palace was at Oshaamba shaMbundu, right in the centre of our kingdom. They succeeded

each other and then came King Mumbwenge gwaNakateta, who lived at Ombala yaMumumbwenge.

According to the story the river there used to run throughout the year and King Mumbwenge moved in his boat through places such as Okadhila, Iinkete, Oneumba, Oshiohombo, Omakuku, Omatelo, Ontsime, where the river branched off up to Nampungu, where he found most of the members of the family called *aakwanamakunde*.

How did it happen that Nehale and Kambonde happened to divide Ondonga and rule it?

Those were complicated things resulting from their birth by the late King Kambonde kaNankwaya, and others who died some time ago.

Tatekulu, we have discussed a lot, but we have only learned about King Nehale. We know now that he disliked ugly people, that he disliked tall people and that he had many wives. What about King Kambonde?

King Kambonde lived at his palace there, a distance away from us. I understand he also used to send his men to carry out war so that they can get cattle, goats and other things, but not to the extent that could make him as fearful as Nehale. Nehale was troublesome. He did not like his brother, and both are said to be sons of Queen Mutaleni gwa Mpingana. She liked some of her children, but did not care a damn about others. That's how it was with the entire family.

Does it necessarily mean that Kambonde was completely quiet?

King Kambonde and his people lived there at Onamayongo and the other side (Nehale's) looked at them as powerless ones. Another fact is that he lived closer to the missionaries at Olukonda. He could not do anything because he used to get regular advice from them not to engage in wars. As I told you earlier, Nehale was mad. He used to come every now and then to fight his brother and take away the cattle.

How was the attitude of King Nehale towards the missionaries? Were they on good terms?

Yes, they were good friends indeed. He accepted them wholeheartedly. One of his sons was a namesake of one of the missionaries as well. They really had an excellent relationship.

Tatekulu, please tell us about the relationship between King Mandume and King Martin of Ondonga. Were they on good terms or not?

The things you are talking about do not resemble the way the whites do their things. Do you understand what I mean? A black man remains at his house. No one goes to trouble others in their own areas. Another thing is that our kings do not talk to one another. It is said that they are having *oshidhila* (traditional belief preventing one doing something). The king does not go to another area himself, he sends his men. He stays in his surroundings. King Iipumbu did not come here, Mandume did not come here and Martin did not visit them either.

Do you have any knowledge of King Martin complaining about King Mandume in any manner?

No, no. King's businesses are very difficult to undertake. They have many complicated stories. When they discuss their things at night-time here, there should be special people to guard against intruders. You cannot have an overnight talk in Ondonga and leave for Uukwambi tomorrow, you will die half-way. I'm telling you, they will kill you.

As I said earlier, King Iipumbu did not like the Ndongas. He accused them of being cowardly when they allowed Shongola to settle at Ondangwa. Why should they let him in? So, he had bad words against our king, that he was a coward. In fact there was nothing he [Martin] could do. He was getting good advice from the missionaries who loved peace and hated wars. And in reality, if he could move an inch against Shongola, he could have been killed.

King Iipumbu was there trying to be funny, it did not take even an hour when they came to take him away. Just a minute and he was under arrest. First they distributed leaflets throughout the area by air. His people collected them and took them to the palace. In short, the king never went abroad. Only poor people like us.

Tatekulu, it seems as if we have sat down for quite some time. Let me just inform you that we are thankful and that we come to the end of our discussion. And before we depart may I just ask you how you feel about the forthcoming government? What are your expectations and wishes?

Yes, what you say is precisely what we want. We hear about the elections to come in the near future. That's what we admire unless we fail to vote where we are supposed to vote. Because they tell us to look carefully if you are literate and vote for the party of your own liking. If you cannot read or write you can then ask for someone or take someone to vote for you. We wait with uncertainty, because such talks have become common now. If you look at them they seem to be many. Some teach you this and the other teaches you

that, but we know what we want. Well we are waiting for it to be done as scheduled, the only problem is failing to put a cross in the right place.

I wish everyone to do exactly what the majority of this country is yearning for. You can even read from the faces of the small kids, they want what the majority of us are asking. We are prepared to listen. November seems to be far at the time, we want to be free. Let come what may. We pray God to be with us during this period of trial. This election programme had been made by people with greater knowledge than us. We have been behind the walls, the one who is behind the wall does not hear what we are talking here. Thanks a lot.

END

INTERVIEW WITH JEREMIA BENJAMIN, OSHIGAMBO, 2.10.1989

Jeremia Benjamin, like Adolf Ambambi, is an elderly peasant (born before 1911) who lived near Oshigambo. He was recommended as an informant for similar reasons. His perspective on Mandume has slightly different emphases from that of sources closer to royalty. The poorer peasantry's perspective also emerges in what he says of famine relief. His mobility between Ondonga and Oukwanyama was also unusual among my informants. I was unaware of these aspects prior to the interview, which again was facilitated by an Oshigambo staff member familiar with his life history. Jeremia Benjamin came to the school to be interviewed, with myself, my assistant and a student observer present during the session.

Tatekulu, would you please tell us when and where you were born, as well as where you were brought up?

I was born at Onayena. We moved to Oukwanyama country during the time of King Nande Hedibi. King Nande died and was succeeded by King Mandume. We then returned to Ondangwa immediately when Mandume started the war with the Portuguese. I was then brought up at Onayena till I got married. Moving up and down became my habit and we shifted again to Oshigambo.

Would you please recall the lifestyle and rule of Kings Mandume and Nande?

When we went to Oukwanyama I was still a kid. I lived there for only a year and Nande passed away. He ruled only for two years and died. Mandume succeeded him. He came to power from his mother's house at Onankoshi. His

mother's name was Ndapona Shikedi. He built his palace in the eastern part of Ondjiva. Our house was just a few kilometres from Ondjiva. Because Mandume disliked Christians, we stayed close to the missionaries because he could do nothing in their presence.

Would you give us Mandume's personal characteristics and how he ruled the people during his era as king of Oukwanyama?

Mandume was a cruel king because he used to kill people. He did not like people who practised superstition. If one did, he was shot dead. Anyone who trespassed against King Mandume's code was either killed or had to pay.

Did Mandume order his people to attack his neighbours?

Yes, he used to send them, some to Ombandja, and others to Ondonga. The main aim was to get cattle and prisoners-of-war.

Was he only doing business with the Portuguese?

Yes, he did business with the Portuguese.

When he fought the Ondongas and the Ovambandja, what was his main target?

His main goal was to get cattle and prisoners so as to exchange them with liquor from the Portuguese in Angola.

Were you in Oukwanyama or Ondonga when Mandume was fighting the Portuguese?

I was there at the very beginning of the war. The Portuguese came from the far north, he killed them all. They came back again, he finished them. After those unsuccessful attempts, they drew up a strategy of how to get him. This time when they came again, Mandume was in the forest hunting for an elephant. There was a drought that year. The Portuguese assembled their weapons and all sorts of war materials at Omongwa to enable them to attack Mandume from a nearby point with abundant logistical means.

Early in the morning we used to hear the sounds of guns from the direction of Omongwa, but nobody knew exactly what went wrong there. We also suggested that perhaps it was rain, because we had never heard the sound of big guns before and they sounded like thunder. At last we learned that it was the Portuguese firing their artillery guns at Omongwa in preparation for a big battle with Mandume.

How did the people survive during the period of drought in this area?

Drought periods affected this country twice. There was a drought when the people didn't get anything from their lands or fields. The second drought came as a result of some strange insects which spoiled our crops like mad. So Mandume went hunting for his elephant while the Portuguese concentrated their forces at Omongwa. A person came running to Mandume's palace and said: 'Owala ouli mOmongwa', meaning that the war was in Omongwa. Immediately a messenger was despatched to go and deliver the news to the king in the forest. Immediately after receiving the news Mandume came home to prepare his men and material to take to Omongwa for the big battle with the Portuguese.

When he got there he found that the Portuguese were so numerous and at the same time well-prepared that he would not be in a position to

defeat them. The battle broke out and when Mandume realised that his ammunition was about to run out he ordered his men to pull back from the battle. He came to his palace, set it on fire and went to the place they called Oihole, where he later fought his great and final battles and died.

At Oihole he found a headman called Ndjukuma whom he drove out by force. Ndjukuma didn't resist and moved to Omhadi. That's why you hear about the place called Omhedi ya Ndjukuma close to Engela. In reality Mandume killed many Portuguese at Oihole. When the Portuguese realised that Mandume was about to finish them all off, they signalled to the Boers who came swiftly to their aid. The war came to a high stage now.

The missionaries who were stationed at Ondjiva were told to evacuate the place and leave for Windhoek. The Boers, for their part, came to Ondangwa and established it as their logistical and assembly point from where they should launch an attack against King Mandume at Oihole. They went further to establish another forward point at Onamakunde which was quite close to Oihole. At this time the Portuguese had stopped fighting. The Boers should feel the black magic.

Tatekulu, did you take part in the battles?

No, I was a young boy then. But I could see what was taking shape.

When Mandume was fighting both the Portuguese and the Boers, were all the Kwanyamas behind him in the fight?

When Mandume started to fight the Boers, the Portuguese stopped. The Boers then used Onamakunde as their launching place to attack Oihole. Mandume was giving them hard times as well, because he was using black magic. He was fighting together with his single servant called Shikololo.

Was it just the two of them fighting?

Of course yes. They were using magic as I said earlier. The magic power made them invisible so that when the Boers arrived at Oihole they could not see them at all. They came in a column on horseback. Mandume was then knocking soldiers from their horses. The Kwanyamas were doing nothing. They did not participate. They were busy killing one another because there was hunger. If one was seen to have grain at his home, they would come during the night, kill you and take the food with them.

How did the people feel when King Mandume was killing the whites?

At that particular moment the Kwanyamas were also fed up with Mandume. At the same time they could not take part in those battles since he was using magic. They remained silent while their king was killing the whites.

Did they collaborate with the whites?

No. At that time people believed in atheism. None could [inaudible] himself with the whites against the king. The country was struck by drought for the period of two years without food. When the situation deteriorated, the people moved from Oukwanyama to Ondonga, only to find that the Ndongas were in the same boat as they were. They then proceeded further south. This drought is known as *ondjala yekomba* which means the hunger which exterminated a lot of people. That hunger killed so many people in our country. People came from neighbouring countries and died under the trees there, while those who tried to go to the south died on their way. They had nothing to eat and at the same time there was no water to drink. People were

just falling down and dying. It was given such a name because the way people were dying was just like someone sweeping the room.

When Mandume was fighting you were in Ondonga. Does it necessarily mean that a lot of food could be found there?

No, we were just going up and down desperately. Since we originated from there we thought that if they had food, they could have given us, but in vain. We found ourselves in the same boat. The drought was world-wide.

During that time Martin ka Dikwa was the king of Ondonga. How were the relations between him and Mandume? Did Mandume attack him?

No, Mandume did not send his men to attack him. He did fight with previous kings such as King Nehale when they were ruling Ondonga. Nehale himself was a mad person, you could deduce your conclusion from the way he went to attack Onamutoni.

How was the relationship between Martin and the missionaries?

They were good friends. King Nehale was the only one who disliked them. He did kill them. That time Ondonga was divided into two parts. One under the rule of King Nehale Mpingana and the other part under the rule of Kambonde Mpingana. Nehale was mistreating his brother Kambonde. Therefore their father sent Nehale to Oshitambi to establish his own kingdom there, across the river. He lived there with his madness till he went to attack Namutoni.

First, before he undertook the mission, he sent a message to his brother Kambonde that he was going to attack Namutoni. Kambonde sent his servant

to go and ask advice from a missionary called Martin Rautanen who was based at Olukonda. Rautanen told him that the people whom Nehale was going to fight were more cruel than Nehale was, and at the same time they were well-armed. So he advised Kambonde not to go there. Kambonde refused to go. He accepted Martin's advice. When Kambonde and Nehale died the country was ruled by King Kambonde Ngula in its entirety. He only ruled for two years and then passed away. He was succeeded by King Martin ka Dikwa.

Could you tell us about Martin Rautanen?

He was a friendly missionary. Together with other missionaries at Olukonda they spread the gospel without hindrance.

Martin Rautanen, Nakambale Kanene as they called him, was a close friend of King Martin ka Dikwa. What influence did he exert on King Martin?

They were good friends. He named his son Reinhold after the king, that demonstrated how close they were. Reinhold lived with his father at Olukonda and both died there. Martin also became a Christian although his mentality was dominated by old theories and beliefs. He encouraged his people to go to church and to attend school. Anyone who disobeyed him and stayed away from church and school was punished. Some never went to church and died unbaptised.

King Martin ka Dikwa was a strong man. Did he accept missionaries with an open heart?

They lived together in peace until he was baptised. His real name before he was baptised was Mutaleri gwa Mpingana, the brother of King Nehale. His baptism name was Fred. He lived at Onamungundo. He asked huge taxes from the people during his time. He let people pay on simple charges, for instance if a person failed to attend work at the palace he could be punished and asked to pay a cow. Although he misbehaved in one way or the other, he liked Christianity. He was a good friend of the Christians.

In as far as the traditional customs of the Ondongas were concerned, the king's mother was given the right to exercise limited power. Was it the same with the Kwanyamas?

No, it was not the same. The right to rule the country was solely in the hands of the king. No woman was allowed to rule the country in Oukwanyama. In case the king died and the one to succeed him was still young, he could take over as king, but his mother together with the king's council gave the order of what was to be done or not. No woman could become a king at that time.

When the Boers came here, did they take all the powers from the headmen or did they allow them to run their own business?

Shongola was a soldier who lived peacefully at Ondangwa. He neither took their power from them nor did he rob them of their cattle. He only stuck to his administrative business which did not have anything to do with the Ovambo affairs. If someone misbehaved, perhaps he could have sent him to the higher authority which was based in Windhoek.

How did you feel when the Boers settled in this area for the first time?

We just saw them already in the area. First, they came to assist the Portuguese when they were hammered by King Mandume. They settled at Ondangwa and we lived with them just like that. In fact they did not scrap our traditional regulations and laws. We did what we used to do in their absence.

They became suppressive right at the time of war with SWAPO. They would tell you that they belonged to the Defence Force while at the same time they beat you up. They destroyed our crops, our fences and took away our cattle by force. If they found you somewhere and asked you about something of which you are not aware, you will be beaten by this so-called Defence Force. Elderly people suffered a little. The young generation suffered the worst in this country. That's where we experienced their cruelty. When they finished Mandume they came here and arranged the contract system for us to go and work in the south.

Did you pay any tax during the Shongola era?

First we paid in *omahangu*. Later we were made to pay money starting with fifty cents up to one rand.

Do you know why Shongola asked you to pay tax?

No. In fact they told us that *omahangu* was being collected to save the country from hunger, in case famine breaks out. But it happened the other way round. We bought it. The behaviour of some people was also strange. A person in charge of selling the grain could give the chance of buying first to his friends and relatives. He would sell to you later or tell you everything was sold out. You went hungry. They accepted bribes. If you gave him some money or a goat, told him that your family is starving, he would not refuse but would

give you after a while. But the aim of the Boers was that the *omahangu* was to be collected to save the nation in case of a big drought affecting the area.

END

INTERVIEW WITH AROMAS ASHIPALA, JASON AMBOLE, PETRUS
EELU, VILHO TSHILONGO AND JASON AMAKUTUWA, ELIM,
26.9.1989

This group of informants was selected by Reverend Jason Amakutuwa of Elim mission in Uukwambi. I had approached him for possible contacts on the recommendation of Bishop Dumeni and Frieda-Nela Williams. He brought the group together at his house on two occasions, though on the second occasion Petrus Eelu was absent. This transcription is from the first interview. The criteria I had relayed to Amakutuwa for selecting informants was diversity of social background and familiarity with issues such as the Ipumbu affair. The informants gave their dates of birth as follows: Aromas Ashipala 1905; Jason Ambole 1910; Petrus Eelu 1916; Vilho Tshilongo 1950 and Jason Amakutuwa 1917. The informants' backgrounds emerged during the interviews. Ashipala oscillated between serving lipumbu and contract labour, revealing the tension between the two. His Christianity also brought him into royal disfavour. Eelu was also a contract worker. Ambole is a headman in Iyale, his testimony focuses on cultural aspects and political tensions with kings. Vilho Tshilongo was by far the youngest informant. He was a contract worker, then took a job as caretaker at a local high school. He is a grandson of lipumbu, conducts his own research on Ovambo culture and history, and has published a praise poem about Mandume. He and Amakutuwa, despite the difference in generation, were the intellectuals within this group and their testimonies represent their own research as well as testimony. Interviewing collectively as we did made it difficult to follow up each speaker's individual testimony, but there was compensation in that they sparked off responses from each other which may not have emerged in single interviews. I have reconstructed the voices in the transcription from my interview notes which mostly indicated where speakers changed; however this was not always

completely accurate and individual identity becomes slightly confused on pages 177-8 and 180, for which my apologies are due.

Tatekulu, would you please tell where you were born and who was then ruling the country?

Ashipala: I was born in a village called Omuthitu gwa Luami, during the time of King Negumbo Kandenge.

Could you tell us how you grew up during that time, what you used to do and how you assisted your parents at home?

Ashipala: I grew up at my parents' house. The job I particularly performed was to look after the cattle. When the grass and water became scarce, I took them far away from home where we set up cattle posts. I could remain there until it rained and bring them home again. At home I used to help in cultivating the land. This was done by almost everyone.

Tatekulu, could you kindly tell us your date of birth?

Ashipala: I was born during the dark years, when the people did not know how to read or write. But as I learned, it was said that I was born in 1905.

You have told us that you were born during the time of King Negumbo Kandenge. Can you please tell us how he ruled the country?

Ashipala: Although I was born during his time I was too young to remember or to consider how he ruled his country. I was a small baby.

Do you know who succeeded him in Uukwambi?

Ashipala: He was succeeded by King Iipumbu Tshilongo.

Can you tell us anything about King Iipumbu, for instance how he ruled his people?

Ashipala: As far as I know he was a good king and had ruled his country well. I was one of those who lived in his palace as his servant. He looked after the cattle and on several occasions he sent us anywhere to deliver messages or to collect something. Sometimes we used to be sent around the country to collect boys and girls to come and work in the king's field. He had even provided us with guns.

Does it necessarily mean you were one of his headmen?

Ashipala: Although I did not reach that stage, I can claim that I was one of his men. I spent most of the time there at the palace and when the missionaries arrived in the country we used to go and attend the church service. It happened like this until one day I came across some boys of my age who were planning to go and work in the south. I made the decision and accompanied them to go and look for a job in the south. We were all sent to Tsumeb, when we came back from Tsumeb, we returned to the king's palace. During this time the king prohibited us from going to work in the south as well as from attending church services. I was given the responsibility to look after the donkeys which were taken by force from their owners by the king. You know how difficult it is to look after donkeys. So I spent most of the time just keeping watch on them not to disperse, otherwise I could be punished by the

king. I used to take them to my original village for grazing so that I could also have a chance to see my parents and the whole family.

One day I went there and informed my family to prepare enough food for me so that I would be able to travel to the south to look for jobs. Since it was against the king's will I told them to be ready to wake up at night because I was going to pass the night there. They agreed and I returned to the palace. When I arrived at the palace I told my friend that he should also make up his mind to accompany me to the south. I informed him not to worry about the food because I had already asked my parents to prepare enough food for us. We were worried about the food, because at the palace you could hardly get anything to eat unless you went to the neighbourhood to ask for it. So we made our plans and during the night we went past our house, got our food which they had prepared for us and off we walked to Ondangwa. We arrived at Ondangwa and joined the line for Pumuna. Later in the day both of us were chosen to go and work in Oranjemund at the diamond mine. That's where we worked till the end of our contract and came back home.

May I ask you another question about the king's rule? Were you in any way asked by the king to pay any kind of tax?

Ashipala: Well, at that time people used to pay tax, especially those of us who worked in Oranjemund. We used to pay one pound in tax. In addition to that we used to give some shirts, a knife, if there were any, as gifts to the king. In case you said you did not have them, they would follow you and get something from you at home. This happened especially to those who were known by person.

The king was very angry with us and really wanted to get us back to the palace. At the same time one of the missionaries, Mr Tylvas, wanted us to stay with him at the mission house. So we used to overnight there. But we

were not baptized by then. We were just learning so that at least we might be baptized. Due to the fact that we were illiterates, we cannot remember everything which took place at that time. We can only remember some of them.

For instance, people who were followed up due to their failure to pay taxes. Some of them escaped and returned back to their jobs in the south. Some of them shifted their houses from the country for their safety. This did not worry the king too much. He felt it was his right to claim taxes from them and anyone who did not want to comply with it should leave the country as well. So we were just forced to pay even if we did not want to. Members of our families also advised us to pay, for our own well-being.

Did you pay anything when acquiring a piece of land as is the practice nowadays?

Ashipala: Well, it involved double-dealing. Those who were known by the king and his senior headmen were given the land free of charge. Unknown people were asked to pay one head of cattle.

When King lipumbu Tshilongo was ruling his country, did he experience any attack or aggression from either the Kwanyamas or the Ndongas?

Ashipala: No, such incidents never took place here.

Did he himself carry out such attacks with the aim of acquiring properties from his neighbours?

Ashipala: Of course, he acquired most of his property through carrying out wars against his neighbours. He attacked especially Ombalantu and

Ongandjera. Do you know how it happened? People in those countries were jealous about one another. It happened that some of them came to tell our king that some people from Ongandjera were coming to take cattle from here. These very people who brought the reports were apprehended and were also made to lead the attacking force from Uukwambi. When they reached there they started attacking and robbing everyone, including those who were not part of the report.

Did they only take cattle or did they also take people?

Ashipala: They mostly took the cattle with them. But some times there could be two missions signed at the same time. Here you could find that one group was told to take prisoners of war while the other was not given such orders.

They could also be told not to bring any prisoners at all. Whenever they were told to take prisoners of war they were not given a free hand to differentiate between males or females. All these persons were in the same boat and were captured just as if they were identical. This was done in such a way that their families could pay a lot of cattle if they wanted them back.

Let me ask you about the prisoners of war who were taken to King Iipumbu's palace. Were they oppressed, discriminated against in any way, or pardoned?

Ashipala: Whenever a person was taken prisoner and brought to King Iipumbu's palace, he immediately became the king's son or daughter. That is, he or she became adopted by the king. He or she could then be called the king's own child. These same people were granted privileges which most citizens were denied, such as building a big house or to be allowed to buy and

Ongandjera. Do you know how it happened? People in those countries were jealous about one another. It happened that some of them came to tell our king that some people from Ongandjera were coming to take cattle from here. These very people who brought the reports were apprehended and were also made to lead the attacking force from Uukwambi. When they reached there they started attacking and robbing everyone, including those who were not part of the report.

Did they only take cattle or did they also take people?

Ashipala: They mostly took the cattle with them. But some times there could be two missions signed at the same time. Here you could find that one group was told to take prisoners of war while the other was not given such orders.

They could also be told not to bring any prisoners at all. Whenever they were told to take prisoners of war they were not given a free hand to differentiate between males or females. All these persons were in the same boat and were captured just as if they were identical. This was done in such a way that their families could pay a lot of cattle if they wanted them back.

Let me ask you about the prisoners of war who were taken to King Iipumbu's palace. Were they oppressed, discriminated against in any way, or pardoned?

Ashipala: Whenever a person was taken prisoner and brought to King Iipumbu's palace, he immediately became the king's son or daughter. That is, he or she became adopted by the king. He or she could then be called the king's own child. These same people were granted privileges which most citizens were denied, such as building a big house or to be allowed to buy and

possess a horse. If the person in question was a woman, the king had the sole right to choose a man to marry her. None could just propose to her.

Well, the following question seems to be directed to you personally. Can you please tell anything which you could remember and which had taken shape in the past, but very important?

Eelu: What kind of stories do you want? Because I don't know anything as far as the kings were concerned.

What about the time of the arrival and establishment of colonialism? How did it come here and how was the situation in general?

Eelu: Colonialism came to our country step by step. It came with the arrival of the white men in the country. They introduced the contract labour system. People queued up at Ondangwa and were sent to the south to work for a few shillings per month. The system grew stronger and stronger every day. It was introduced in a very clever way.

Can you remember if there was a time when Uukwambi experienced a big drought in which so many people starved to death? And in case it happened could you please tell us how you survived?

Eelu: There was hunger which took place in 1959. That time the people were supplied with maize meal. Many people who were at their cattle posts did not have wagons to transport this meal, so we helped them a lot free of charge. That period is unforgettable because so many people died. Not only the people perished, but the majority of livestock was lost. It went so up to the present time.

You told us that you used to go and work in the south. What was forcing you to go and work there?

Eelu: We were in need of clothing. Things like boxes of matches, shoes and other material items were not found here at all. At the same time things were so cheap that one could afford to buy a bread at ten pence. You could also buy a piece of bread at three pence. Another reason was to obtain modern ware, because people were so fed up with the traditional dress. In Deutschland people wore the skins of goats just as those we used to get from our parents. The difference was only that the ones from Germany were well prepared and fashioned. Those of you who lived in Oukwanyama knew well about it. When Christianity took its place amongst us we were also compelled to hate our traditional clothing. Whoever put it on was regarded by the missionaries as an atheist who did not want to accept the gospel of God.

Tate Vilho, can you please tell us about your date of birth, and who was ruling the country by then?

Vilho Tshilongo: I was born on the 15th of December 1950, in the village called Eesholke at Engela. This was the time when the rule of kings was no longer there and the country was ruled by headmen only.

Would you please tell us about the history of your time? You can tell us anything you have read or heard about in the old history of the kings.

Vilho Tshilongo: I can clearly remember the time I was brought up. There had been a lot of food to eat. There was enough rain. We used to eat porridge which was made from the flour of the *omahangu* which people produced in

abundance in their lands. We drank *ontaku* (a home-made drink) and ate a variety of fruits and vegetables. There was a great need of items which we now buy with money from the shops. They were just not available anywhere at all. When I was a small boy, I used to see people covering themselves with ordinary blankets just because there were no jackets, shirts or anything of that kind available. We needed shoes, but they could not be obtained anywhere here. So everything was just in a state of confusion. We were so confused that we could not determine who was good between the kings and the whites who were establishing themselves in the country by that time.

Questions were posed as to whether the whites by terminating the powers of our kings would be able to meet our demands. And that was how I happened to be interested in the history of our traditional kings, the need to help us out of this mess which was intentionally created by the whites. People need shoes to protect them from cold and thorns, but there is no money to buy them. They need sugar to make their tea, coffee or even their home-made drinks, but there's no money at all. This kind of situation raised a feeling in me to ask how our former kings used to rule their people.

I was surprised to learn that they were so kind and helped the poor. When the headmen tried to trick or rob them, the kings used to defend them against such practices. That time, I understood that the people were not allowed to shoot out from their guns the way they liked without the king's notification. In short, the kings were really the protectors of the nation. I went on to ask about the kings whose countries or powers were taken from them by force. I happened to learn that King Mandume fought several times until his death. The aim was to kill him and take over his country.

The same thing happened to King Iipumbu Tshilongo. He was fought, taken prisoner and was taken to Okavango where he lived in exile. It was on this basis that I learned about the kings who were stripped of their powers

and those who were so keen and brave enough to fight for the dignity of their people.

I also learned how King Iipumbu used to describe or talk about himself. He used to say as follows:

'Ondilimani homukunda gwAmupolo, hooShingwiya mwAabudhi. Iita kiilala, yeenguloshi neengula. Anuw'omakati okafuuli, kenongola piikesho. Okanakamuma keli mOngandjera, mby'Uukwaluudhi kuuma sha, oyo ooyene yako. Amoolo goolongela gwahi koNdowishilanda, kOvenduka nokakadhona, kiile mpa nomatamba. Atuka pe ndun'ongomb' ondumentu tiinana ha lamanana. Jo Aakwanyama taati: Neema lyomukonda, Aangandjera taati okanakamuma, se Aakwambi atu ti othewa hotshizimba, ha nikila nawa Uukwambi.'

Well, I'm so sorry to dwell on what our forefathers used to say. Do you still want me to continue with that?

Tate Vilho, can you please tell us about the tradition of the Kwambi people and how it changed after the arrival of colonialism?

Vilho Tshilongo: The major task of the colonialist soon after their arrival in the country was to teach our people to hate our own culture and tradition. That was the work of the European colonialists who came to Africa early those years. They taught our people that to follow our cultures and traditions was a matter of atheism.

It did not matter who they were. Missionaries who claimed to preach and spread the gospel of God took part in that shameful design. Traders played a greater role since it was part of their strategy to secure their interests. They really succeeded in discouraging our people to drop their culture and tradition. They bought our traditional riches such as ornaments, traditional fighting tools or equipments and took them to Europe. They kept on

preaching that to maintain such things was tantamount to atheism. The people were made to believe in that way and forget most of their traditional and cultural norms. Some of them became committed Christians, some of them became involved in boozing which made them drunkards and useless persons. They were really made to believe that their own things had no value at all.

The history of the Kwambi traditional marriage is one of the many things forgotten by our people as a result of blackmail. The first wedding in the year starts during the month of March. The traditional venue was Otshuungu. The second took place in April at Onenongo, and the third at Onatshiku, this very village in the month of May. The fourth and last took place in June at Oyoongo. That means such events took place four times a year only. During the good years, when they had good rain, it happened four times. This was because the people had enough to eat and enough water supply for cooking and brewing locally. When there was not enough rain they only allowed two or three feasts per year.

Let me ask you another question. How was the wedding procession done and what was traditional dress like in comparison with ordinary dress?

Vilho Tshilongo: The bridegrooms usually put on their special clothes. These were called *limpanga*, *uulembe* and so forth. They would then be brought in a parade to sing and perform traditional dances. This was done in a spirit of great happiness. In the first place, the parents of the bride-to-be sent a message to the would-be husband that their daughter was ready for marriage. It was not conducted in the same way as they do in church where the man has to go and apply for marriage. It was the father's responsibility to initiate the wedding during the old times.

Let me ask you again how it usually rained here in Uukwambi. I asked so many people both from Ondonga and Oukwanyama, and to my astonishment I was told that they used to go and collect the rain from the place called Evale. Was this also the case in Uukwambi?

Ambole: Yes, that place still exists where the people used to get rain. They used to take a black cow to Evale in exchange with the rain. After their return home, they kept on prophesying. The old men and women sat down with containers of cattle fat. The men applied that fat and sat sweating in the sun, while the women crushed faeces of the cattle with sticks, saying that they were catching frogs. Later on all those things were brought to the old palace.

Tatekulu, allow me to go back and ask you a question concerning the wedding. During your time, when people got married, were you entitled to marry one wife or could you decide on your own how many wives you wanted to marry? Nowadays the church prohibits polygamy and encourages the people to stick to the system of monogamy.

Ambole: In the real sense of the word, tribes differed in their approach when it came to marriage. As far as the Kwambis were concerned ordinary people got married to a single wife only. The king, the headmen and all those from well-to-do families were the only people who used to get married to up to six or more wives. But that was not a rule. It depended entirely on a person's ability to take up such responsibility.

Would you please tell us whether divorce existed?

Ambole: There were limited cases of divorce during that time. The fact that minimized it was that the majority of people believed in God of this world.

People used to worship various things such as *oshula* and *aathithi*. By worshipping these gods, they believed that no matter how difficult their marriage would prove, their God was with them and could render them a helping hand at last. They also believed that if he or she divorced, no one would help him or her out of trouble.

Another thing again was that after the wedding procession the ladies did not go straight to their men. They had to wait for the finalization of their weddings which usually took place in the month of August. After that they went with their men.

Would you please tell us again about the history of the kings and how people used to go and collect the rain from Evale?

Ambole: Well, normally it just happened as I explained to you earlier. Senior people usually took the decision for the rain to be collected after they found out that the normal rainy season was in its midst. They could then order the people to go to Evale. It was not the task of each and everybody to go for the rain, but selected people chosen by them. They used to be ordered to hurry up before the crops died due to the drought. So they went. Soon after their arrival in Evale they presented their gifts or payment if you like, to the man in charge of the rain. They could then be told to wait for a while before they were allowed to go back home. The man was so clever because he waited to see if there were to appear clear signs of rain. Once it appeared that the rain would soon be falling he would then let them go home. He usually told them to speed up in order not to be caught by the rain on their way back home. Sometimes that had good luck because it rained just immediately after their arrival. Sometimes it never rained at all and they were asked to go back to Evale. On their arrival back at their country they went always to the old palace where they found many people waiting to welcome them. They found

everything already prepared for them such as enough meat, various kinds of food and plenty of local beer. They really had good times back home.

Does it mean that a cow had to be slaughtered for the delegation when it came back from Evale?

Ashipala: Of course, yes. It had to be slaughtered after the rain had fallen. This was an indication of great happiness on the part of the nation to welcome their men who went on a rain mission. They enjoyed themselves by eating meat and drinking beers on a cool wet day.

At the same time the countrymen hung around in great joy, making jokes on every subject and thanking the people of Evale for their generosity in sending the rain. The delegation also enjoyed chatting to their fellow countrymen and told them about the rain, saying it was still plenty at Evale. In Evale, the rain is being kept in very big pots where even fishes were to be heard making sounds. Such a delegation used to be invited to listen to the sounds in the pot so that they could be convinced that the rain was really there. After that they were allowed to go back home.

Were these people chosen by the king to go there?

Ashipala: Yes, they were chosen by the king to go there. Kids were not allowed to go there, only adults. This was so, because you could not just go to the palace uninvited. Invitations were sent to the people at their homes. When the people arrived there they would then be assigned the task to go to Evale. They went in groups of five to six men. On your arrival back from Evale you would be expected to tell the king what exactly you had seen as well as what you had been told.

Could they remember very well what they had been told?

Ashipala: First the man in charge of the rain at Evale made sure that the rain would be coming. According to the stories, he caught some fishes and put them in a very big pot which was kept inside a well-built hut. After midday, you know that the fishes this time start hunting for food, they also make sounds with the water. When a fish jumps out of the water and back it shines and one could easily think that you have seen lightning. These people were then called in to observe the movements inside the pot and after they had seen all these they would then be told to go back home and deliver the message that the rain would be coming in no time.

It usually happened that at the end of every month, during rainy seasons, it used to rain. This was the time the man at Evale used to send his clients back home. He knew that by the time they arrived at home it would be raining. Sometimes it happened precisely as they were told. They usually hurried up to avoid the rain before they reached home. Sometimes it could happen that it rained just before they could reach their homes. When they arrived they found everything green as a result of the rain. The king would then order his servants to slaughter a cow for his messengers to celebrate for the job well done.

Where did they leave the cattle they took to Evale?

Ashipala: Well, the cattle they took with them to Evale belonged to the rain man. They must leave it there. Look, apart from the cattle they also had to carry some other things as gifts for him. Otherwise he could not speed up the process, they argued.

Ambole: Once upon a time, it came to light that the people at Evale were just cheating us. A certain person moved from there and came to settle here. I understand he settled somewhere in Oukwanyama there. He went to the king and explained to him exactly what the people in Evale were doing.

He told them as follows: 'Your excellency, I want to tell you the plain truth that by sending your people to collect rain from Evale is not just a waste of time but a waste of resources as well. There is no real rain there. The man there used to catch fishes from the river and dump them into a big pot full of water. During the night the fishes make sounds with the water and shine, which makes you believe there was also lightning. When your people are taken to visit that hut during the evening and see what happens, they believed that something was really taking shape.'

From that information revealed by the person from Evale, the people deduced a conclusion that they had been cheated and that a step should be taken to punish all those involved. The message went across and people from Ondonga, Uukwambi and many other places joined up with the Kwanyamas and went to kill the self-styled rain-holder. They went straight to Evale where he lived.

Ashipala: The marriage or wedding processions were conducted in the following manner. In the first place, the father of the girl sent a message to the boy that his daughter was grown up, ready for marriage. The boy would then organise his friends together with some men to help him during the process. The people chosen in this regard were those capable of performing any type of traditional dances which included dancing, singing as well as playing traditional games. These people were sent to the girl's home to show that the boy had accepted the message and that he was ready to marry the girl. After all necessary preparations had been done, the bridegroom went with his

troop to his bride's house, singing and dancing. They sang the types of traditional songs you usually hear on the radio sung by Mr Iita Kadha.

These songs expressed the beauty of that particular girl and the boy's willingness to take her as his future wife. They said that the girl could not be moved from her place by anybody else, apart from her fiancé. If anyone did so it would be a grave breach of traditional values. They also indicated that they loved her and that they had come to prove it. They spent the night there singing, dancing and ululating.

Early in the morning they could then move into the house to start the celebration ceremony. The marriage would not take place there, but at a specific house for that. Everyone, invited or uninvited would be gathered there. The women brought their daughters who would be processed for marriage. These girls would remain there for up to seven days. Food, drink as well as other necessities for the procession would then be brought to the owner of the house. This person was called Namunganga. A dignified woman with a lot of traditional knowledge was entrusted with the task of carrying out the wedding procession.

Early in the morning Namunganga ordered all the women to hand in their grain flour. If anyone failed to do so, she was eaten up by the great Namunganga's birds. At the same time the girls would be brought outside to see the sun. They would sit there with their faces facing the direction of the rising sun. They were not allowed to do anything rather than just sit down and keep quiet. In case one of the girls happened to be found pregnant, it was regarded as a great sin. Namunganga could then order her magic birds to eat her up. She had spoiled the wedding procession and the reputation of her bridegroom, therefore she had to be eaten up.

She would then be told that the aim of the wedding was a peaceful transition of a person from childhood to adulthood, but that she had betrayed it. This was carried out with full respect of the tradition. Meanwhile the

women kept on bringing grain flour till the day when the cattle would be slaughtered. People set up many huts for the celebration. Men were not allowed to go there, only women. Men were only allowed to celebrate the occasion during the day. Night-time they were all expected to stay at their homes. On the day of the cattle slaughtering, the men brought their cattle to slaughter for their daughters. Some decided to do so at their respective places in respect of their children. After that all the girls would be allowed to go back home, but not to their husbands. Before they left for their husbands or bridegrooms they were given some beautiful ornaments to indicate that she was married and had not spoiled herself of given herself up to temptations. The ornaments were made in such a way that it fell down and was picked up again. At this time, it showed that she was accepted by her bridegroom. If the man could not get the largest ornament needed, the girl was not granted to him any more. She was given to someone else who was ready to provide her with the necessary ornament.

How much do you pay to get married at present?

Ashipala: At present we pay three hundred rands plus fifty rands for the wedding. Three hundred rands goes to the girl [s parents] while fifty rands belongs to the headman.

I have another question which everyone is welcome to contribute what you know. The question is why King Iipumbu prohibited you from going to work in the south?

Ashipala: The king prohibited people from going to work in the south because he needed them at his palace to serve him. Some of us were made to become his soldiers. He liked some of us because we behaved ourselves well.

Just imagine a person given the responsibility of looking after so many donkeys, this meant that he wanted to keep you with him only. If we could not have escaped from his palace, we could have stayed there for quite a long time. After finishing our contract we returned back to the palace. Although the king was annoyed by our escape he did not punish us. We were only told to stay at the palace. The only job we were given to do was to work on the king's small grain field. Any time we went for church service, we were immediately told to go and work in the king's field.

I used to be in charge of the others and whenever the king came to us he referred to me as a vagabond. He said that I always wanted to escape and that I did not want to carry his gun. He always accused me of letting the guns get spoiled by ants. At the same time he discouraged us from going to church, because I liked very much to attend church sermons. That's how we lived. In fact the king himself was a good man only that he wanted us to stay with him as servants all the time. He enjoyed sending people anywhere he felt like.

While at the palace, the king also used to send me to collect girls from the countryside. Do you know how difficult a job it is to be sent to collect girls anywhere in this country? I used to go as far as Otshuulu and Ombuga for this purpose. You would be told to go early in the morning to enable you to return in the afternoon. When you arrived, you would find the girl there. After delivering the message to her from the king, she would agree to accompany you, but you would have to wait for a long time before she finished preparing herself for the journey. It would be late by the time she was ready.

Could you tell me how you approached these girls?

Ashipala: We just told them straight away that they were needed by the king at the palace. Some of these girls lived at the palace and were only out to visit

their parents and relatives. Some of them were new recruits or those who worked at the palace. The king's palace was full of people of various categories. There were boys who worked externally while the girls worked inside the palace itself. When we arrived at the palace from the countryside, we skirted around it. We had to make sure that we did not arrive after sunset.

You would then hear the king asking whether the person who went to either Otshuulu or Ombuga had returned. You could not ask anybody, because you could even see him when he asked. He would then order the girl to be brought in. Without any delay, you take the girl to a private entrance behind the palace where girls always enter the palace. Inside the palace, you would be expected to sit down for quite some time until the king arrived. It might happen that after bringing her there and leaving her, she could also escape from there and return home. She would have a good time in which to run and walk because it is night-time. You had to wait there until another question came from the king to present the girl. If anyone hears what the king said, he could then inform you to bring the girl down. Sometimes he would send a girl to come and collect her counterpart and on some occasions he had to come and pick her up on his own. After she was taken away, one could then go and join other males outside the palace.

Rumours have come up that King Iipumbu wanted to get married to a girl who was born by one of his wives, but who was not his own child. I understand that this particular case was not appreciated by the missionaries who were in Uukwambi by then. Would you please elaborate how this case was handled and how it ended?

[Ashipala/Ambole?]: First the girls underwent the process of marriage just as it used to be done traditionally. After that, I understand, the king gave the message that they could join the church if they wanted to. The girls joined the

church, but the king made up his mind soon afterwards. He wanted to give these ladies to some of his newly recruited headmen as their wives. The girls refused, saying that they wanted to become Christians.

What happened to the wife's daughter that he wanted to marry?

[Ashipala/Ambole?]: The same happened to that particular girl. You know, this is a very sensitive issue which we have to deal with carefully. In the real sense of the word, the girl was the king's own child. In olden days, kings impregnated a lot of women, but after birth those children were not called after them. The child had to be given to another man as its father. This was done deliberately. He knew that the pregnancy belonged to him, but you would be told to name the child after birth. That's how it happened to that girl. She was Miss Toini Shivute.

What is your opinion about this matter?

[?]: Well, that's how it went on. The girl was rescued by the missionaries after she went in search of refuge at their station. The king's servants were immediately ordered to follow her there with the aim of taking her to the palace. The missionaries were clever enough. They prepared a big case in which they put the girl and before they sealed it they put a lot of clothes inside. When the king's servants were assembling outside the building, the missionaries came out carrying the case and told them that they were taking their clothes to Ongwediva for washing. The servants threatened them with their guns in their attempt to get the case opened. When it was opened they only saw the clothes which were put on top.

Was the girl inside at the time it was opened?

Ashipala: Yes, the girl was inside the case. So they let them go. The case was out on a wagon which was headed by a man called Alufilita. This man successfully brought the girl to Ongwediva. The servants were left there in great confusion. They knew they had failed to find her.

Ambole: Listen to me carefully. That time we were far behind. We could be fooled around without perceiving it. It happened that while we were asleep a certain man called Toivo passed here following a missionary by the name of Saukonen. Early in the morning we woke up and told the missionaries that we wanted our girl. The missionaries told us that she was afraid of us and that they would only give her to her mother. The girl went inside the house. We did not know that the missionaries planned to hand her over to Toivo so that she could be transported to Ongwediva by car. The agreed time was eight o'clock. When we were just approaching those houses we heard a car zooming up. The king ordered us to go back to the mission house. Just before we arrived, the missionaries took the case from the room and loaded it in the car, whose engine was still running. When we came closer to the car the king again told us that we should not permit the girl to be taken away.

We were scared and almost every one of us was not in any position to take the first step. Some of us argued that the king might be very much annoyed, and if we took the girl to him, he might kill her. Others were also concerned about her family who might take drastic measures against us in revenge. They argued that they had nowhere to find their protection against the girl's family. Everyone was just scratching his fingers without knowing what to do next. When the motor car arrived at the place, where there are now many shops, it was opened and the girl was taken out for fresh air.

It was at this point that the king realised the girl had really gone. He told us to call more people by firing some rounds from our guns. This was

aimed at alarming the senior headmen, Mr Anton and Nuyoma. The firing started and everyone aimed in the air. So many bullets were fired also to please the king who was very angry about the event at that particular moment.

While we were busy firing into the air, someone somewhere was busy jotting down with a pen what was taking shape. We never knew whether someone far away in Ondonga could know what was happening here. The pen was just doing its job. The message was sent to Ondonga which stated that King Iipumbu Shilongo had attacked the mission station at Elim with more than twenty guns. This report was taken seriously by the authorities since none had the chance to go there and to correct or deny the charge. To teach the king a lesson, the government decided to send three military planes and an armoured personnel carrier. These three planes plus the armoured personnel carrier caused fear and panic among the entire country's population. Heavy machine guns were mounted on the carrier and when someone pulled the trigger one could even think that only bees were coming out, not bullets. But they were real bullets.

Did they take the king as prisoner that day?

[Ashipala/Ambole?]: No, he was not taken that very day. He went out during the night of the same day. Some people said, he never knew what was going to happen that's why he left his palace. Before he left his palace, the king had this to say: 'I haven't seen my grave yet, but to tell you the truth I am no longer a king. I know that I will die just because of poverty. I am no longer a king. I left my kingstain (?) in that palace.'

While waiting for the final battle to be fought the headmen were ululating and singing war songs. The king asked them if they were ready to fight the enemy from above. He questioned them how they were going to do

it. He went on to say the following: 'Neither I nor my uncles shed the blood of any single white man in this country. They know why they are coming to fight against me. Let them burn down their house, don't shoot at them.'

We have had so many stories about what happened, especially what you have just told us here. You might have been there personally or you might have heard from reliable sources about it. What is your personal view about all these stories?

Eelu: Things happened precisely as you have been told. There was nothing wrong as far as the king was concerned. The blame should be put on the white man who was not prepared to work hand in hand with the king. Everything happened exactly as narrated by these two men here.

After the incident we learned that Mr Shongola, the head of the white administration at Ondangwa, wanted the king to pay only, but the king refused. He argued that the land belonged to him and that there was no way he could pay in his own land. Mr Shongola is said to have asked the king to pay a certain amount of cattle or horses. The king then sent a message to Mr Shongola asking him to whom belonged the cattle he was asked to pay, and told him he did not have Mr Shongola's cattle. Mr Shongola sent another message that the cattle should be delivered. The king asked the messengers about who was looking after Mr Shongola's cattle in Uukwambi and who gave birth to those cattle? What are their names before I give them? He also told them that he was not going to pay any tax in Uukwambi in any circumstance whatsoever since Uukwambi belonged to him. These remarks plus the king's refusal to pay the required amount of cattle triggered off the entire conflict. I think that if he could have paid as he was asked to do, he would not have risked captivity.

Would you please tell us about the kind of relationship King Iipumbu enjoyed with other kings from different areas such as Ondonga, Oukwanyama, Ongandjera, etc.? You can also tell us about such relationships even if it took place before king Iipumbu's rule? Did it happen at all?

Ambole: In the real sense of the word, all kings were brothers and sisters. They sent gifts to one another and exchanged visits. Conflicts between them were only brought about by ordinary people. They created rumours that brought about wars between kings from different nations. In olden days there was rule that no-one should be allowed to establish a cattle post across his own boundary. It simply meant that the Ndongas were not allowed to establish posts on Kwambi soil, neither were they allowed to establish wells or to chop poles. Anyone found doing it would be punished, because it was against the king's rule.

This particular rule was established jointly by all the kings in the region. Therefore if a person trespassed it all the kings became angry with him. He could not get any protection even if he fled from his own country to another. Every king lived in his own designated area, but had the right to pay a visit to another king. All the kings were from the same clan. They are just the same as the whites with whom we are living today. They are all brothers and sisters, but you won't hear them blaming one another. Ordinary people always bring conflicts between them.

We still have a question regarding King Iipumbu. We would like to know whether he attacked other kings from various countries such as Ongandjera or Uukwaluudhi or whether those kings initiated any attack against King Iipumbu?

Ambole: Well, in fact the king himself is a peaceful man living in his own country. As a king he is also a soldier. And if one day one of his subjects brings him a message that someone somewhere was insulting the king, he gets annoyed and decides to go and fight him. There is a story about two kings from Ombandja who fought against each other. After the death of their uncle, one of them took over the crown, but the other one did not feel happy and wanted to remove him from power. The king who wanted to overthrow the other one was called Katshawanga, but I don't know his real name. So the other one came to Uukwambi and informed King Nuuyoma Eelu about the plan. The king gave him some soldiers to go with him and quell the rebellion. This happened exactly as it does nowadays when people are reporting about one another like mad.

Did the king prepare an attack to be carried out without any report from anybody?

Ambole: In fact the king used to stay at home all the time. He did not go around in order to get information of that nature. People used to come to him with various bits of information that led to the king taking war decisions. Most of that information came from his senior headmen. In addition, his headmen also got them from people in those countries which I mentioned earlier. Say for instance the message came that the king should pay a certain amount of cattle, do you expect him to sit idle? No, he had to prepare himself for a war.

Another question is this: after the death of King Ipumbu, did you choose another king to replace him or was the country placed under the rule of headmen as is the case in Oukwanyama?

Ambole: We never had any other king after his death. We just remained as you, the Kwanyamas. After the death of King Mandume no-one else succeeded him to the crown. The same happened in Uukwambi after the death of King Iipumbu. We were just put under the rule of headmen who were also trained by the kings ever since.

How do they treat you in comparison with the kings?

Ambole: Frankly speaking, I would like to tell you that each successive king had followed the rules and orders of his forefathers. No-one could trespass against them. When a person was jealous about another, he could go to the palace early in the morning to tell the king false information about the one he wanted to put in trouble. He would for instance say the other one's daughter was pregnant and that her father aborted it. You know that pregnant [unmarried] girls were not tolerated in this country. He could also say that a certain person had taken cattle fat or grain flour to Ondonga, which was strictly prohibited then. He could also tell the king that you had bought a bull from a stranger.

All these things were regarded as serious crimes if anyone did any of them. Whenever a king was taking over the crown, these things were stipulated or listed top on his ruling agenda. They claimed that [not?] doing so would lead to the downfall of the king. So, they were taken very seriously. That was why people who had misunderstandings with their fellow countrymen always went to the king and told him about these things. The other person had to flee the country, because he knew the king would send his men to kill him in order to defend himself. It was alleged that if someone took the cattle fat from Uukwambi to Ongandjera, the king of Uukwambi would die as a result. That was why the king had to act swiftly whenever he

received such a report. It was on this basis that a lot of ordinary citizens kept on reporting one another to the king with the aim of being promoted.

Many people fled this country to Ondonga. They went there empty-handed, because there was no time to allow them to collect their properties. Some of them did not even take seed, so they only went to live temporarily on their cattle while organising for seeds. Those who did not possess any cattle had to suffer a lot. This kind of behaviour suppressed a lot of people. Whenever a report was received that a certain person's daughter had carried out an abortion, it was taken so seriously that no mercy was shown in this regard. The same happened to those who used to poison others. No mercy was given to them at all. They were only executed in public.

This question is directed to Mr Ashipala. The question is whether you have something to add on whether you have heard or seen people leaving this country just because the rules were too tough for them?

Ashipala: I think that what you have been told is enough. We have a lot of people in this country, and the more people settle at one place, the more they trespass the law and the more the laws become restrictive. On the one hand I would like to emphasise the fact that King Ipumbu was a man who adhered strictly to his principles and his country's rules and orders. Anyone who trespassed the law, no matter who he was... This included senior headmen such as Mr Iitamalo. They could not play boss otherwise they would have been fired from their positions and replaced by ordinary people. It is true that he really sent out some of the people who misbehaved. Some of those people were expelled just because false allegations were fabricated against them, but others were kicked out due to their own misconduct. Some people who did things expected that the king would not know about it, but reports on every unusual act always reached him and major steps were taken against the

wrong doings. In short people were sent out by the king irrespective of their positions or ages. Some of them did not even wait for whatever step the king was going to take against them. They just left the country soon after they discovered that what they had done had been uncovered.

[To Jason Amakatuwa.] We apologise for not giving you a chance to tell us what you yourself want to say. Could you please use this occasion to tell us what you can remember has taken place in the past?

Amakutuwa: Thanks for the chance, but frankly speaking I prefer answering questions which are posed on the same manner you questioned my colleagues.

We would like you to tell us about anything you have seen or heard with regard to the history of kings in this country. Can you tell us where the Kwambi tribe originated from and what happened when they broke away from othe tribes such as the Ndongas, Kwanyamas, Ngandjeras, Kwaluudhis and so forth.

Amakutuwa: The Kwambi tribe generally originated from Ondonga. Our first king came form Ondonga and was the one who brought people and settled them here. The name Kwambi was given to them because they originated from Ondonga. But there are some of the people who came from the direction of north-east. For example the last kings came from Onkhumbi.

When we speak about the word Kwambi, let me tell you that once upon a time I went to pay a visit to a place called Tshangalala inside Angola. I met with people from the tribe called Kikongo. This tribe lives mainly in Zaire and Angola. When I went through their hymn-book I came across the word

Kwambi. There was also written a word yaKwambi. Here in Uukwambi we speak about both words Kwambi and yaKwambi.

I asked them what they meant by the word Kwambi. They answered me that by the word Kwambi they meant a single sin. By the word yaKwambi they also meant more than one sin. It clearly indicated to me that by referring to ourselves as Kwambi and yaKwambi, also as aaKwambi mbo, these people were unshakeable. There, the meaning of this word means that these people are trouble-makers. They really are.

With regard to the relationship between the kings of the Kwambis and those of other countries, let me state frankly that good relations prevailed, especially between them and the kings from Ondonga. Such relationships can be traced up to King Nakwedhi, the father of King Ashipala Nakwedhi. At the same time the mother of the late Ashipala Nakwedhi was Nkhumbi by birth. She came from Onkhumbi, hence the close connection with the Nkhumbi tribe. Therefore they did not have trouble or war with the Ndongas or Kwanyamas, more especially King Negumbo and King Iipumbu. King Iipumbu was brought up together with King Mandume - although he was a bit older than King Mandume. He was also a close friend of King Nambala.

King Negumbo had long before established good relations with the Ndonga kings. When we look at the picture, there is a law between Ondonga and Uukwambi. It simply means that the two tribes are somehow related and the possibility of carrying out wars against each other is reduced by this bond. They cannot fight each other. They only carried out wars of aggression against countries such as Ongandjera, Uukwaluudhi, Uukolonkadhi, Ombalantu and other tribes which were to be found in the north-western region. At the time of King Iipumbu's rule our country did not have war with the people of Uukwaluudhi.

We have learned that another meaning of the word Kwambi was given to them just because they used to make pots. Is this explanation true?

Amakutuwa: No, that is not true at all. As I told you earlier, the real meaning of the word Kwambi can be found in the Kongo language. But one can also check it up with various other Bantu languages. There are Bantu languages such as ki-Kongo, moki-Kongo, kiKongo. This is one and the same Bantu language. Some of these people live in Zaire while the others live in Angola. In this language you can find the words Kwambi and yaKwambi which we also use. Don't you see any correlation between the two tribes or languages? Some of you people only say 'vakwetu,' meaning our people or fellow countrymen. But we only say 'muKwambi mukwetu,' which means fellow Kwambi person. No other tribe say so except for the Kwambi tribe. There are such claims that that they were named Kwambis due to the fact that they made clay pots which was absolutely untrue. I can agree if you say the name was given to them because their first king was called Kwambi. There I can agree with you.

So many people I met told us that there were a lot of trees and vegetables in this country. But judging from the picture of the real Uukwambi nothing of that sort can be seen. One can even conclude that this is a semi-desert territory. Which season or period of the year do you have fruits and vegetables here? Or which time did you used to have them in case they have disappeared for good?

Amakutuwa: No, truly speaking we don't have so many vegetables or fruit trees in Uukwambi, neither did we have so many of them in the past. The only important fruit tree one can mention in this respect is the palm tree. We really have a lot of them all around the country. One can also find the marula

trees from which people produce a certain type of home-made brew called *omagongo*. Some of the trees such as fig trees and others are becoming old and after they die they are no longer replaced by new ones. The disappearance of most of these trees is causing the country to be seen as a semi-desert at the moment.

Perhaps you have heard about the history of former Kwambi kings. Can you tell us how they behaved as well as how they ruled their people? We want mainly to know how the people of Uukwambi lived before King Iipumbu came to power.

Amakutuwa: To start with, King Iipumbu succeeded his predecessors. That means he followed his uncles who ruled the country before him. These former kings, I understand, ruled the country very well. They treated their people well, knowing very well the fact that they were the ones who put them in power and to mistreat them could only lead to their own downfall. They knew that their survival depended only on their subjects who kept their loyalty to them. They really tried to have as many people as possible so as to take proper care of them. Whenever a king had enough manpower, he felt secure. That is why people talked about the impossibility of invading the Kwambis.

In reality you cannot come across or hear stories about the invasion of Uukwambi, with the exception of Tshikongo who invaded them. It is often said that there had been a fence and this fence was a fence consisting of men with assegais who protected the country from any foreign invasion. It was on this base that people were taken great care of by the kings otherwise the consequences would be too ghastly to contemplate.

Superstition also played its role during that period. People believed in it and if anyone did something which was believed to be magic or

superstition, it could cause him the death sentence or to be expelled from the country. Some people left because they feared that one day they might be involved in those kinds of practices and face execution.

There was a treaty signed between the king of Oukwanyama and the king of Uukwambi to enable them to prosecute those who fled their countries after they committed a crime. It became then very dangerous for the people to search for refuge there since once it was established that they were there the king had the right to send a message to the king in Oukwanyama so that the person in question could be executed. Therefore fleeing to Oukwanyama did not help the people so much. This was not the case with the Ndongas. They did not carry out executions on orders from abroad, because no such treaty or agreement had been made between the two countries. Those who fled to Ondonga were not followed up unlike those who went to Oukwanyama. They only did so to their own disadvantage.

Could you please tell us the date of your birth?

Amakutuwa: I was born in 1917, the year King Mandume was assassinated by his enemies.

END

INTERVIEW WITH SHEETEKELA AND LUKAS DAMA, OKALONGO,

27.12.1989

Sheetekela interviewed here is the son of the Mbandja king Sheetekela, exiled twice to Oukwanyama after Portuguese conquest and re-conquest. He was born before 1907, by which date his father was king of lesser Ombandja. His relationship with the late Mbandja king was the main motive for interviewing him, though I had not learned of his residence in Okalongo until my first visit to the community. Sheetekela was frail and the interview did not last long. Reverend Lucas Dama also participated, clarifying chronological details and filling in some of Sheetekela's gaps. Cross-referencing of the latter later confirmed the cogency and accuracy of Dama's interventions. Sheetekela's son, Simpson Sheetekela, a migrant worker on a break from Walvis Bay, sat in on the interview. He commented that his father did not normally talk about history and he was learning things about Ombandja he had never heard before, which suggested the interview was successful in the circumstances, but that probably the Mbandja kingship did not have the equivalent of a Kaulinge to historicise it for posterity.

Tatekulu, can you tell us when and where you were born?

Sheetekela: I was born in Ombandja at the village called Oindele. This was during the time of the late King Shuulwa sha Haihambo.

Could you please tell us about your father, what sort of leader he was, whether he was a headman or head of state?

Sheetekela: My father was a king by birth, hence the head of state. Ombandja itself is a big area. I know only a few things from the time we were chased out by the Portuguese up to the present day.

Would you please tell us what happened then?

Sheetekela: The Portuguese came with the intention of taking the country, but our kings refused to give in to their demands. When the kings rejected them, fighting broke out between the Portuguese and the ovaMbandja people. The Portuguese were beaten off and retreated. Within a short while they came back in their hundreds. The war broke out again and because they were many and possessed modern weapons we were forced to flee the country.

Hunger was also one of the main reasons which forced us to flee to Oukwanyama and look for help from King Mandume. The Portuguese remained in Ombandja. King Mandume accepted us and gave us an area called Etomba to live in. After the death of King Mandume my father got involved in a shooting scandal after shooting one of the Ndonga tribesmen. He was told to either go into the ground or in the air. He told them [the colonialists] that he never knew what the sky was all about, and the only thing they should do was to put him where they put King Mandume. They sent him into exile in Okavango where he stayed for about three years before they brought him back. We were then allowed by the headmen to settle at Oshikwiya. We stayed there until we returned to Okalongo by order of the headmen.

Okalongo was just a jungle when we first arrived here. People used to live there when it was named Okalongo kaHaudano. Haudano was the headman by then and then withdrew. My father prepared a place for us all to live.

Tatekulu, is it true that your people used magic in their war against the Portuguese? It is said that when you fought against the Portuguese or any other nations, elder people or someone with magic force went in the front and then the soldiers followed after him. Can you please tell us if this was true?

Sheetekela: Those are old traditional practices which I don't think could help anyone from getting killed. They did do it. An elder person went in the front and when he came within the range of the enemy fire power, he shot in the air and retreated. He faced his back to the enemy and then ran towards his troops. The troops started attacking the enemy.

When you beat the Portuguese so heavily, did you take any prisoners of war?

Sheetekela: Yes, we did. But we were not interested in keeping them. We used to put *olukula* on them and sent them to their deaths. Only blacks were made captive as prisoners of war, but not the Portuguese.

Does it necessarily mean that the Portuguese never survived?

Sheetekela: Yes, we had no choice but to kill them. People used to call them *omakishikishi* [albinos] and asked what these people were going to eat and where they were going to stay. So we just killed them. There was no prison for a Portuguese.

Tatekulu, when your father was fighting the Portuguese, did he consider the fact that other kings such as King Mandume could render him a helping hand or did he only think of winning with his own men?

Sheetekela: Well, he used to send people to Oukwanyama to look for help from King Mandume, but the troops never came. The main obstacle was the drought that affected the area at that time. They could have come, but there was nothing for them to eat. Although we had enough cattle to provide them with the meat, none could have taken it without porridge.

Did King Mandume render assistance with troops to your father in the past?

Sheetekela: Yes, he did when they [the troops] took us back to Ombandja.

Would you please tell us how your area was affected by drought and how you survived?

Sheetekela: It was terrible indeed. People died from hunger in their hundreds. There was nothing to eat except meat and water melons, the latter of which was destroyed by insects. When the people ate the melons spoiled by those insects they started swelling which resulted in the death of a number of them. It was horrible.

Could you remember which directions people took when they fled from Ombandja?

Sheetekela: Some took the direction of Uukwaluudhi and settled there. No one went to Ombalantu because it was not frequented by that time and only a few people knew about it. The majority of people followed their king to Oukwanyama.

How did you survive on your way from Ombandja?

Sheetekela: We suffered a lot, except where the distance was a bit shorter, for example from Ombandja to Oukwanyama. It only took a day before you reached there. But so many people died on the way due to the lack of food and also water. We had cattle but people were used to porridge and to take meat for days without it made things much worse.

Dama: Listen! The mass exodus from Ombandja took place twice. First they went to Oukwanyama. As you know Ombandja is divided into two parts. There is Omhungu and Onaluheke. During the second exodus the king of Omhungu and his people took the Oukwanyama direction, while those from Onaluheke went up to Uukwambi. These were the people of King Sheetekela and King Shahuula. King Shahuula was later kidnapped by the Portuguese and was afterwards killed. The Portuguese stayed in Ombandja for some time until they left northwards.

In 1914 the Portuguese were driven out from Ombandja and the people returned back there. The Portuguese returned again at the beginning of 1915 when the second exodus took shape. And that's the exodus you are talking about now. Those people from Omhungu went to Oukwanyama and those from Onaluheke went to settle in Uukwaluudhi. Those who went to Uukwaluudhi were robbed of their cattle and other property by the people there. This made their king become angry and he later committed suicide.

Is this the year when the Portuguese fought with the Germans at Naulila?

Dama: Yes, it is. Listen again. The Germans came from the south where they already had trouble with the English. They wanted to get a way through Angola by driving out the Portuguese. When they arrived in Uukwaluudhi,

they sent a reconnaissance team to Naulila to observe the whereabouts of the Portuguese. This team was not careful enough and was killed by the Portuguese at Naulila. The rest of the German troops at Uukwaluudhi left immediately after they learned the news. The Portuguese took up ambush positions along the river. The Germans encircled them and after a short battle all the Portuguese were killed.

The result was that all the Portuguese began pulling out from Ombandja, Evale and Okafima. A few who were at Okavango were caught red-handed and killed by the Germans. The Germans encircled them coming from the direction of Ombwenge while the other group came from the direction of the river Cunene. They took hold of them and brought them to Okavango where they executed all of them. If you go there you will see the remains of King Haimalua's palace. The Portuguese withdrew from southern Angola northwards while the Germans returned to the south of our country.

Their troubles in Europe continued and the Germans lost the war. The Portuguese did not stay away longer and returned early in 1915. As a result war broke out which forced us out again. We fled to Oukwanyama where we stayed for almost three years until the death of King Mandume in 1917.

Tatekulu, you said you defeated the Portuguese during the first round of fighting. Where did you get the guns which you were using?

Sheetekela: We took the guns from them in exchange for cattle and people that we took in war.

The people you took as prisoners-of-war were only blacks, you have said. Apart from exchanging them with guns what else have you done with them?

Sheetekela: When there was something to do we let them work. Apart from that they could only be kept as captives, or when there was a need for guns the king would authorise the headmen to go and exchange them with the Portuguese.

Who was responsible for the authorisation of exchanging the prisoners, the king or the headmen?

Sheetekela: The king was the only man to do it. He knew how many people he had who were not in possession of guns. He knew how much ammunition he needed. Therefore he was the only authority to give an order.

Dama: Where they got hold of a lot of guns was from the first Portuguese attack on Ombandja. They killed so many people and took many guns from them. They fought more battles than the Kwanyama, that's why they had a lot of guns, and they acquired the rest through the exchange of cattle and prisoners as just mentioned.

When a boy was born in your area, was it traditionally the responsibility of the king to decide whether he will serve in the army or perform other activities?

Sheetekela: No, the people joined the war right at its beginning. There was no formal training or an army as such. Some people believed in superstitions or magic which in my own view just do not work.

You have the Kwanyama here as your eastern neighbours, and the Nkhumbi in the north; which of these two tribes do you think is closer to your tribe when it comes to traditions and language?

Sheetekela: We are more closely related to the Kwanyama.

We would like again to ask you about your father. You mentioned earlier that he was taken to Okavango after shooting one of the Ndonga tribesmen. Who took him there?

Sheetekela: He was taken there by a white man called Nakale. The Ndongas reported to him because he was in charge of the white administration at Ondangwa.

What exactly happened when your father shot that man? Was he provoked?

Sheetekela: I was also present at that spot. My father was shooting at some birds. The birds flew off. Unfortunately there were people coming from the other direction. They got frightened by the sound of the gun, dropped their belongings on the ground and started shooting in our direction. Without hesitation, my father grabbed his gun and shot one of them.

We later realised that they were Ndonga. That was the offence that he committed which led to him being taken to Okavango. The Ndonga were very furious with him and reported the case to the whites.

Did your father feel guilty when he shot that man? And how was his reaction towards Nakale who took him to Okavango?

Sheetekela: He accepted that he was wrong. Even if he was not feeling good about the decision, there was little or nothing that he could do. Those people were in power. They could do him more harm if he objected. He only told them to put him where they put King Mandume.

Tatekulu, would you please tell us if your people used to go to the south to look for jobs?

Sheetekela: When colonialism came to our country our people began to go to the south to look for jobs. We did not have money to buy food and clothes and the only way to get them was to go to the south.

Did you go there yourself?

Sheetekela: Yes, I did work in Tsumeb and Windhoek. In Tsumeb I worked in the mine for many years.

Your country was destroyed many times by war. During those days you used to settle in so many areas such as Uukwaluudhi, Uukwambi, Oukwanyama, etc. We would like to know if by now there are people in Ombandja who do not belong to your tribe?

Sheetekela: Not only people of my own tribe live here, there are now people from other tribes.

How strong and united are you in case some tribes want to come and fight now?

Sheetekela: We are united. In case of war with other tribes I don't think that it will materialise any more. All the tribes in our country are united and the chance of fighting one another is very, very slim. We are all for peace.

Ombandja is divided into two parts. One in Angola and the other in Namibia. Do you often go and visit your relatives on the other side?

Sheetekela: During the previous conflict we could hardly go there. Many people lost their lives at that place which they sometimes called a no-go area. You go there and you'll be shot. We used to go there a long time ago, but when the Boers started the war things changed dramatically. Now people have started to move up and down. I can tell you although there seems to be peace in our country the situation at the border is still a matter of great concern to us.

Dama: In olden days people used to visit one another. We knew of no border between Uukwambi, Ondonga, Oukwanyama, Ombandja and so on. There came a time when the border was fenced and the Portuguese began to complain about the movement of the people. They blocked us and later the war with the Boers doubled it. The war is now over and the people are visiting one another on both sides of the border. There is no further problem. The border itself was not created by blacks. It was drawn up by the white men. They set up border crossing points to make our movements much more difficult. If one does not cross at any of these points he or she will be arrested.

How did the Portuguese treat you when they took over your area?

Sheetekela: We suffered a lot in the hands of the Portuguese. None can find enough words to explain how they treated us. They beat us and made us do any kind of work including carrying the white man. I did not work, but according to the stories, people used to take the whites to Ondjiva in wagons. If the wagon was not available pairs of four people handled a man from

anywhere to Ondjiva. This was done in a manner resembling how people are being carried in the hospital.

Dama: I saw the dirty works of the Portuguese at Uukwangali. There is a road from there to Ondjiva. A big and long one, but it was made by hands only. Old people, both men and women, youths and small kids were all victims of the Portuguese at that time. Early in the morning they woke up, transported the sand and dropped it on the road. This was done during the winter. Men were chopping big trees which were first laid on the road before the sand was put down.

The whites never touched anything. He was there sitting and shouting at the top of his voice words such as 'pora!' Both the Boers and the Portuguese have done a hell of dirty work to us which I think even a fool won't forget.

Sheetekela: They never gave out anything to eat. The food you brought from home is small, and yet he made you work hard. They were demons!

There was a heavy drought in 1915, and another one in 1929 respectively. How did you survive the latter? Did the colonial administration give you food supplies?

Sheetekela: We were not given food free of charge, but they brought in mealie-meal for us to buy. These food supplies were transported up to the river where the selling took place. Some people did get a chance to cross the river to buy their cattle from Omutanu. At the same time the people from the other side of the river crossed to buy maize from the Boers.

In the case of war and drought you used to shift or flee to Oukwanyama or any other neighbouring area with your cattle. Was there enough water and grazing area for your cattle?

Sheetekela: Yes, there was enough water and grassland, especially in Oukwanyama area.

Do you still have many cattle and goats?

Sheetekela: We have only a few cattle. This came as a result of the droughts which have affected this country during the previous decade, and the war which ravaged our country.

When the Boers came here they set up their colonial administration offices at Ondangwa, in the Ondonga area. Did you see them here and if the answer is yes, what did they do to the people around?

Sheetekela: They used to come here, but did not trouble us as did the Portuguese. Sometimes they brought us sugar and other items to buy. They did not stay here for long.

How did the people feel, especially the kings, about the presence of the Boers here?

Sheetekela: Even if he felt threatened there was nothing he could do. Those people were already in power and could harm him if he misbehaved. People used to give out smiles but were burning deep down in their hearts.

Do you think the people of the other part of Ombandja which is in Angola had met with Shongola?

Sheetekela: They did not meet him. But Shongola was free to move anywhere without fear of being attacked by them. He could count on Portuguese help if he was attacked.

You told us that you used to go to work for the whites in the south. Did you understand one another?

Sheetekela: We the people of Ombandja and Ndonga have a common language. As far as the Germans were concerned there was only one translator called Lameck, but he did not stay there for a long time. He was stationed at Ondangwa.

Dama: We used to line up at Ondangwa to get jobs. Longman, a tall man, was a foreman and at the same time a translator. He was a white man. We gave our particulars there, and a paper was given to someone who seemed to understand a bit, to hand it over to those concerned in the south.

So we started off on foot from Ondangwa to the south. From Ondangwa people travelled through places such as Nguali, Okatope, Eenhana in search of water before reaching Etosha pan. It was dangerous to pass through it (Etosha or Okashana) during the day because it is too far and there is no water along the road. After passing via Okashana you get to Onamutoni where you came across some officers who asked you a few questions and let you go. From Onamutoni you proceeded further through Okafima, Oshikoto and up to Grootfontein. You carried your own food from home all the way through which can take you a month.

On the way southwards you passed via a lot of farms where the letter had to be handed to the owner of the farm. If he had one or two people amongst the group he then called their names out and the rest of the group proceeded further. They suffered a lot during that time.

How did the Ombandja people react when you first brought the Gospel here?

Dama: Well, let me say that I found the mission station already established. It was a small school built with poles. Another school was at Onambona where Mr Erastus Shilongo was the head. That old man with the name Johannes worked here for a short while and then left. In 1939 another school was set up and a certain Johannes took charge. I met him in 1940 at Olukonda and he was succeeded by Isak Shangala who was working at Okalongo. He was working with a girl, but there was not so many people.

Before they established schools and churches, the people used to go to Ombalantu, and when we came they were happy and accepted us with open arms. This area was populated by a few people only. Hyenas and lions could be heard all through the night since it was just a jungle area. Now the population has increased a lot.

I understand that up to now traditional weddings are taking place in Oukwanyama. Girls are to be sworn in, if not she cannot get a husband. Do you have such weddings in Ombandja or, rather, Okalongo?

Sheetekela: Yes, we do have our own traditional weddings resembling those of the Kwanyama.

END

